



Handout 23: Rough Outline of the Interview

Session: The Pre-Interview Meeting

Let's say the pre-interview meeting is going very well and you have a sense that the narrator's participation and contribution to your project is valuable and relevant. Now is the time to go beyond explaining your project to the narrator, and work together in the spirit of shared authority, to create an outline or a road map of what will be covered in the interview.

First, during this pre-interview meeting, you have to set a 'road map' with the narrator that includes some headlines that they will cover based on personal experience, without going into too much detail. If they start talking about the time they were stopped at a checkpoint and the soldier turned out to be a co-worker's relative and so on, gently interrupt your narrator as soon as you can – something you would never do in a recorded interview – and tell them to kindly save that story and others like it for the recording when it will be fresh and spontaneous. A recorded interview where the narrator repeats, "like I previously told you...", is not ideal.

So, in this pre-interview meeting, stick to the main outline of the interview topics. Explain to the narrator the points you would like to learn more about; possibly give them a list of topics you would like them to talk about, or show them a photograph that you'd like to learn more about, or ask them if they have any photographs that would illustrate the topic to be discussed. At the same time, these prompts, events, or photographs, may trigger their memory in the interval between this meeting and the recorded interview. Memories of things that happened 30 years ago take time to come back to the present in a coherent shape or form. The pre-interview meeting gives your narrator some time to recall memories and share them in the actual recorded interview session.

For example, a rough outline with the narrator might look like this:

Subject: The Lebanese War (LW)

Topic: The Mountain War 1983

Research Question: How did the Mountain War (MW) of 1983 change the fabric of community/village life?

- **Easy warm-up questions:** background information: birth, parents, school, occupation, marriage, children, village history, current residence location.
- **General questions:** general recollections of the LW.
- **Specific questions:** description of the MW – location, scope, personal experiences (close calls), life during war.
- **Specific questions:** definition of MW – at the time, in relation to LW, at present.
- **Specific questions:** Looking back at that time – current feelings.

There may be other points the narrator would like to discuss, so they should also be included in the outline – again within the context of shared authority, the premise of Oral History.

