

## Handout 24: Informed Consent

### Session: The Pre-Interview Meeting

During the pre-interview meeting, best ethical practices are agreed and signed in the *informed consent form*. The pre-interview meeting is where you explain to the narrator how the recorded interview will be used. That it may be part of a collection of recordings for an Oral History project, that excerpts from the recording may be shared on the internet, in an exhibition, or on a podcast, and that these recordings will become the property of the school/NGO/archive for the purposes of future research. You need to explain how the recording could be used because you need the **narrator's consent** to use the recording. Their voice, words, memory, story, and your recording of it are their *personal property*. Only they have the rights to it and, therefore, their permission and **consent are required** to not only record the interview, but also to use the recorded interview for any other purposes. As the name indicates, this process of informing the narrator of the content they are consenting to is formalized in the "informed consent" form. This is a basic building block to promote trust and transparency in the Oral History process.

Without this form signed by the narrator, you may neither use the recording nor share your findings, your understandings, or the stories that the narrator shared with you. Imagine going on a journey without being able to take photographs, buy souvenirs, or share your experience with anyone else.

As such, the preparation for the pre-interview meeting includes presenting your narrator with an *informed consent form* to sign. In effect, it is a **contract** between you and your narrator to ensure that they are informed and that they agree to the use of the recorded interview. Another way of looking at the informed consent form is that it is a written summary of all the parts of the pre-interview meeting, particularly everything related to the purpose of the Oral History interview and the use of the recording once it is finished.

What does this contract include?

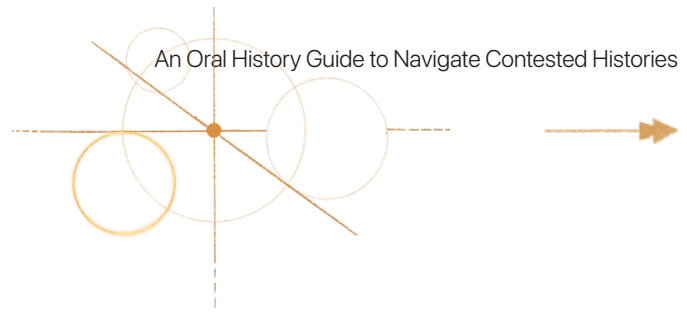
- An overview or project description summary. Since we are dealing with multi-perspectivity and contested history, these ideas should be outlined in an opening statement, such as:

*This interview is part of a larger project to explore how Oral History can help us gain an understanding of a multi-perspective contested history [such as the Lebanese War]. Through this Oral History project, we aim to collect various voices, memories, and experiences of people who lived the war. This collection of recorded interviews will help us make sense of the past and change understandings of the conflict. We seek to shift biased positions that reflect one side or another to a more balanced and accurate view that can help us move forward towards new understandings and explanations.*

Other elements that must be included in the consent form:

- A brief explanation on how recordings will be used, archived, disseminated.
- Procedures (logistics of the interview that are discussed in pre-interview).





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- The recognition of privacy rights and confidentiality of material.
- The recognition that participation is entirely voluntary.
- Specific consents with yes/no checkboxes (consent to be interviewed, recorded, photographed, as well as use of name, other photographs, and of material for projects, and for the information to be archived for future use/research).
- A space for any additional conditions requested by the narrator (i.e., they might request to use the interview only once they've listened to it OR they might let you use excerpts for the project, but don't agree to the use of the recordings by other researchers for 5 years).

Since the Oral History interview is the property of the narrator, until the consent form is signed, they have the right to withhold their name, to request to listen to the recording before it is deposited in an archive, or to cut out parts of the interview they feel are too sensitive or they are uncomfortable with. *If the narrator is not willing to sign their name and give consent in writing, it is acceptable for them to give consent orally on the recorded interview, though this is not common practice.* Once the narrator signs the informed consent, your Oral History interview is based on best ethical practices, and therefore is a legitimate and true historical source that will exist alongside other historical sources for the purposes of future research. In this way, your research is contributing to the production of historical knowledge. In taking on the role of an historian, you are engaged in the process of co-creating and discovering historical sources that will become a permanent part of the historical record.

