

Ethics Guide Summary*
(final draft 13 March 2008)

1. Mitigating harm

The experience of revisiting the painful experiences of genocide, war and displacement may prove deeply emotional and even psychologically traumatic for participants. Researchers' experiences of listening to these stories may also prove painful. The publication, reinterpretation and dissemination of participants' contributions to the project may also prove to be a difficult and upsetting experience. To address this issue, the project will arrange resources for both participants and researchers to have access to the support of social workers, counselors and psychologists (see separate guidance sheet)

In the case of refugee participants, any discrepancy between the life-story narratives provided to researchers and those given to immigration officials may have negative legal consequences. To minimize the risk of legal consequences as a result of providing oral histories, it is essential that researchers help participants make informed decisions about what they choose to disclose and about confidentiality. Similarly, project organizers will ensure that everyone working with confidential material is made fully aware of their responsibilities in this regard.

2. Obtaining informed consent

Informed consent will be obtained in consultation with participants prior to and immediately following the interviews. Interviewers will inform participants of the purpose of the interview, the procedure and participants' options regarding confidentiality and the accessibility of the recording and/or transcript. Participants will be informed of the possible uses of the interview by researchers working under the auspices of this project and that coordinators will have limited control over the use of material by unaffiliated researchers once it has been archived. Although these issues will have been discussed at the pre-interview sessions, they will be addressed in more concrete terms before the interview itself and participants will be asked to sign consent forms. Participants will be given the opportunity to modify the terms of the form after the interview is finished.

Finally it is to be noted that consent forms are right of use agreements, and there is no transfer of copyright.

3. Participants' rights and options throughout interview process

A participant may choose to end the interview at any time and may ask that the recording of the interview be destroyed. This right to discontinue will be discussed with interviewees before the start of the interview and is included on the consent form. Following the interview, participants will be given the opportunity to review the terms of their participation and make any changes to the consent agreement.

Later requests to alter the interview or the terms under which it will be made available to

researchers will be dealt with on a case by case basis. The time during which an interview is being transcribed and prepared for archiving will function as an effective grace period. As a rule, no participant will be able to request confidentiality or restrict accessibility to his or her interview after the interviews have been made available to researchers; such changes will only be considered in extraordinary circumstances. Moreover, the project's organizers will be unable to control future uses of the material by unaffiliated researchers once it has been archived. In all cases, however, project organizers will work in good faith to ensure that archived materials are used in accordance with the best interests of the participants and within the bounds of the restrictions provided by their consent agreements.

4. Researchers responsibility concerning matters of confidentiality

When participants request anonymity, their recorded interviews will be kept secure and will be made available only to the principal investigator, the chair of the relevant working group and approved archivists and transcribers that have agreed, in writing, to protect the identities of the participants involved. Project organizers will ensure that researchers are fully aware of their responsibilities to confidential/anonymous participants.

Theatre workshops and refugee youth projects: Anonymity cannot be offered for these projects, but participants can ask to have their identities protected, through pseudonyms or confidentiality, when work resulting from this research is to be published, produced or performed. When a participant asks that their contribution be made confidential, researchers will work to ensure that such a request is honoured as far as possible.

5. Accessibility of the recordings and or transcripts

Participants who provide life-stories will be given a copy of their interview either on DVD or CD and will have the option of reviewing it using facilities at the Concordia Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling. Participants will have the same access to the rest of the archive as other researchers. Those participants that are involved in the theatre workshops or the refugee youth projects will have near-total access to research results in that they will help determine the products of the projects themselves.

6. “Sharing authority” as the project’s central principle

This project is built on the framework “shared authority” (Frisch), and is a collaborative endeavour in every sense and all levels. At the research level, the project is built on the shared authority of the oral history narratives - a collaboration between researcher and researched. Communities are collaborators, and true partners in dialogue, as well as being subjects of the research (the project has developed by a team of 37 participants in the Montreal-area, including 15 community partners representing the city’s diverse immigrant communities as well as a range of heritage, human rights, and education agencies).

Furthermore, the project will devise strategies designed to share authority beyond the interview stage, enabling interviewees and community partners to help the project interpret interviews, and to participate in research production.

The project is also an explicitly collaborative one at the level of governance; it is built on a governance structure that maintains parity between university researchers and community

representatives at key levels of decision-making. The final decision-making body will be the project assembly composed of all CURA co-applicants.

7. Recruitment of interviewees

Closely related to the concept of sharing authority is the importance of recruiting the participants in a variety of different ways. Various points of entry into the collaborating different communities will be sought in order to recruit as wide a spectrum of participants as possible. The recruitment strategies will include (1) public service announcements - radio, television, newspapers within the cultural community and beyond, (2) posters and leaflets, (3) work through community groups, (4) information tables, community meetings, etc, (5) word of mouth (or snowball sampling). The interview coordinators in each working group will reflect on the nature of recruitment.

When the prospective interviewees are contacted for arranging a pre-interview, they will be given a brief description of the interview objectives, and procedures.

* This document is prepared based on CURA Research Protocol, CURA main proposal, and “outline of the workshop on Introduction to Ethics Protocol”