

**Department of History**  
**University of Texas at El Paso**  
**Department of History Procedures for Conducting Oral History Interviews**  
[Fall 2010 – spring 2013]

Overview of Issues

The U.S. Office for Human Research Protection, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, working with the American Historical Association and the Oral History Association, has determined that oral history interviewing projects may be excluded from Institutional Review Board oversight because they are not considered “research.” Nonetheless, in order to ensure that they grasp the ethical issues involved in oral history interviews, researchers (faculty, graduate students, undergraduates) using such interviews in a public capacity must adhere to the following procedures and receive written approval from the department’s Oral History Review Committee (OHRC) before beginning the interview process. The OHRC will be comprised of three faculty members from the department. If a member of the committee seeks approval to conduct interviews, a replacement faculty member will temporarily serve on the committee.

The procedures outlined below reflect the History Department’s intention to create a system of oversight for individuals conducting oral history interviews. As stated in the guidelines of the Oral History Association, interviews with non-vulnerable/protected populations may be exempt from typical IRB protocols, but all researchers conducting interviews must adhere to a specific set of ethical standards. This policy and the OHRC provides an internal mechanism for reviewing oral history projects and preserves the autonomy of historians as researchers in the humanities, while also protecting the researcher, department, university, and interviewee from misunderstanding or harm. If proposals do not meet OHRC guidelines, the proposals may be returned for revision and resubmission, and/or they may be forwarded to the UTEP IRB.

All interviews (whether or not they are transcribed) will be archived at UTEP’s Institute of Oral History/Special Collections Department of the University Library.

Steps for Submitting Proposals to Conduct Interviews

1. Researchers will submit a packet of information containing the following:
  - a. A completed form, “Proposal to Conduct Oral History Interviews,” which requires the following information:
    - i. Name of researcher and title of project requiring interviews
    - ii. A 250 word abstract of the larger project, including a summary of the main objective(s) and scholarly significance of the research
    - iii. Purpose and rationale for conducting interviews
    - iv. Methodology for identifying and contacting the interviewees, and overview of the significance of the interviewees (to determine whether or not interviewees are vulnerable/protected populations)
  - b. Tentative list of interview questions. It is understood that new lines of questioning might develop in the course of the project. Open-ended and follow-up questions are permitted.
  - c. Curriculum Vitae (2 pg)
  - d. Sign and submit the form, “Departmental Agreement to Conduct Interviews” in acknowledgement of procedures. If the researcher is a student, the faculty advisor must also sign this form in acknowledgment of the intent to conduct interviews.

- e. Attend a workshop on ethics and interviewing sponsored by the Department of History. Include in the proposal packet a “certificate” proving attendance. The OHRC will retain documentation of your participation.
2. Read and be familiar with the Oral History Association “Evaluation Guidelines.”
3. Once the proposal is complete, submit the completed packet to the chair of the OHRC. The OHRC will review packets on a rolling basis, and reply to you as soon as possible. The committee may ask for revision and resubmission.
4. Once the proposal packet is approved, you may proceed with the interviews.
5. **You must receive written approval from the OHRC before beginning interviews.**
6. If the proposal fails to meet one of the OHRC requirements, the OHRC may forward the proposal to the UTEP IRB Committee for review.

### The Interview Process

1. Follow the ethical guidelines for interviews as identified by the Oral History Association
2. Fill out the “Prospective Interviewee” form
3. Provide interviewee(s) with copies of your abstract, and explain the purpose of the interview. Provide copies in interviewee’s first language (not English) if requested.
4. Go over the “Oral/Video Interview Partnership Agreement: Informed Consent for Research” form with the interviewee.
5. Explain to the interviewee that you will deposit the interview with UTEP’s Institute of Oral History; and that, once processed, the interview is kept in the Special Collections Department of the UTEP Main Library; and that the interview may eventually be transcribed.
6. Clearly state that, following its use by you the researcher, the interview may be sealed for an extended period of time at the request of the interviewee; and that the interview may be anonymous.
7. Explain that the interview becomes “property” of the University of Texas at El Paso, but that the interviewer may retain the right to use the interview for professional purposes.
8. Receive written consent from the interviewee by having them sign the Agreement.
9. Use a digital or tape recorder for the interview.
10. Confirm that you will provide the interviewee with a (audio or transcribed) copy of the interview.

### Post-Interview Process

1. Provide the interviewee with a copy of the interview.
2. Deposit the interview and a copy of the Agreement with UTEP’s IOH.
3. Update your interview application on an annual basis if research is on-going.

### Institute of Oral History

Depending on the availability of staff and resources, the UTEP Institute of Oral History (IOH) may be able to assist you by providing recording materials and/or transcription services.

### **Oral History Association Evaluation Guidelines**

[http://www.oralhistory.org/network/mw/index.php/Evaluation\\_Guide](http://www.oralhistory.org/network/mw/index.php/Evaluation_Guide)

### **UTEP Institute of Oral History**

<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=12869>