GUIDE
Limitations of Collected Data

Limitations related to the particular data collected in this research are the following:

Limitations of the Researcher

- **Access:**
During the interviewing period there were several challenges and difficulties to reckon. One difficulty was to locate Turkish Cypriots from various political perspectives to share their stories. Although we had our established network and personal contacts with Turkish Cypriots it was still difficult to gather a wide-ranging sample, as we had initially envisioned. Turkish-Cypriots who consented to be interviewed were recommended to us through our bi-communal programs link. Most of them were belonging to a particular philosophy and approach to the Cyprus problem; they were mostly leftists seeking reunification of the whole island.

   There was a quite similar difficulty with some Greek Cypriot, too. There were people with whom although we arranged a meeting they would either not get back to us or, in the cases where the interview was rearranged they would eventually say that they didn't have time to be interviewed at that point. Also, there were some Greek Cypriots who refused to share their stories despite the fact that they said that they "knew a lot." These people were often concerned about mentioning something that would affect their position in the society, and especially that of their family and children. This was mostly true for people working for the government, in the public sector. These people said they could talk to us, but they did not want to be recorded or use their real name.

- **Establishing trust:**
Another constrain was that of establishing trust with the interviewees. Mostly, it was important to establish trust with Turkish Cypriots, because the interviewers were Greek Cypriots. It was easier to establish trust with those we met directly through our bi-communal program link, rather than with those we met randomly or through friends. We managed to do so by meeting a few times beforehand with them. Often they would postpone the interview saying that it was not a good time for them, they were busy, or something sudden came up. Yet, they were willing to have another cup of coffee with us. These people were not refusing to be interviewed as long as we would arrange a meeting for an interview another time. With some people we never ended up arranging an interview, but we ended up going out for drinks. Also, some interviewees were concerned about how we would transfer their own words on paper.

- **Cultural and other type of bias of the researchers:**
Although we may be considered biased, as by nature human beings can be, as refugees ourselves, as people coming from an already segregated sociopolitical context, yet we tried to put aside all these and just think about inclusion, hearing and learning what we haven't heard and learnt previously, meeting new people, and making our experience and the stories we gathered available to the others, too. Our openness, curiosity, nonjudgmental attitude, democratic practices and way of living, as well as our need to hear and learn from those that know more, our faith in people and what they know, perceive and understand, the power of the stories, and that every person is a philosopher of his/her own life were our lighthouse. Also, in regards to the

Turkish Cypriot community, our previous long connection with Turkish Cypriots was important to eliminate our potential biases.

We approached people with an open mind, ears and heart, and analyzed their personal stories from the perspective of education and curriculum studies, hoping to give an all-inclusive dimension to the issue. Curriculum studies is a field which is concerned with issues of narration, inclusiveness, biography, autobiography, the lived experiences of people, and examination of *currere*, which is the connection of the past, present and future experiences of people and the way they affect and create or hinder educative opportunities and learning experiences.

• **Fluency in a language:**
Language was another big barrier. Since none of the project researchers could speak Turkish our research population was narrowed down. We could only include people who spoke English or Greek, besides their mother language. However we tried to overcome this restriction by seeking people who could understand English or Greek even if they had to respond back in Turkish. Another solution was to have a translator with us, but this was costly. Therefore, our sample was not as wide-ranging as we envisioned it to be and this was also narrowing down the characteristics of our sample.

Methodological Limitations
• **Truth and Objectivity:**
Truth and objectivity may be problematic concepts in oral history research; yet, this concern is eliminated by shifting focus on the performance of the participants, rather than in the truthfulness of the storytelling. In this project we were not seeking the historical truth, but rather to learn what was important for the participants and how they experienced the critical era. Errors, inventions, or lies are in their own way forms of truth.

• **Restrictions put by interviewees:**
Some participants requested that we erase some parts of their recorded story which, at the end of the interview, they felt they shouldn't have said, share, or disclose, or at least not in the way they came out of their mouth during the interview. Others asked for cautious or limited publication of their story.

• **Restrictions put by the researchers:**
The project researchers decided to ensure the following in regards to the publicly available audiorecorded and transcribed interviews:
  • Anonymity or the use of pseudonyms for individuals mentioned in the story whose actions maybe criminal and/or controversial.
  • Editing of inappropriate or unnecessary reference to third persons, unless they are public figures and reference to them does not harm them.
  • Editing of accusations to politicians or others that haven't been proven to be true.
  • Editing of inappropriate language (i.e. swearing at third persons).

• **Cultural and other type of bias of the participants:**
In limited cases there were Greek Cypriots who said that they did not want to participate in the project, since it also included Turkish Cypriots. A Turkish Cypriot journalist from whom we sought help to locate possible Turkish Cypriot interviewees

got offended and refused to help us arguing Greek Cypriots never get them involved as researchers in their projects, yet they always seek their help.

- **Sample size:**
The project's lifecycle put limitations to how far we could have gone with this project; of course, this happens with all projects, as there is always certain duration of them. This restrain reflects the number of interviewees-narrators that could participate in the project. Due to the timeline available only forty individuals could participate. With a bigger sample size, each new individual would add more meaning, nuance and perspective, adding their own mark to consistencies, contradictions and recurring themes. Of course, 'how big is big?' is relevant and always depends on the aims of a project. In this project the aim was to get the biggest diversity possible in those forty participants. Forty people with various capacities, from every possible community and with diverse experiences and stories were included, so we ensured a broad spectrum of perspectives, points of view, and meaning from the perspective of those being studied, in order to learn from and about them.

- **Amount of personal info disclosed:**
Participants in this oral history research, as it happens in all oral history projects, were informed about the method used, which involved the use of the real names rather than pseudonyms. This was both a drawback and strength. It is noted that the use of real names may have led participants to silencing or to avoid disclosing information and events, due to the sensitive issue of publicizing personal data. On the other hand, the use of real names is the strength of this type of research, as it provides a certain kind of validity and authenticity to the account, as it is connected to a known, real person and his/her story. In this way, project participants were liable to give a more accurate and personalized account. However, participants were free to choose how much information to share / disclose, which was also noted in the consent form they signed.

- **Video and audio recording:**
The audio/video-recording of the interviews made some of the participants careful, cautious, hesitant during their narration. Some others wanted to use inappropriate language (i.e. swearing or cursing) at third persons, exactly because they were being heard. Also some people who begun sharing episodes and anecdotal accounts of their life, said they didn't want to continue sharing their story in the case they would be recorded. However, they were glad to meet us and share their story as long as the microphone and recorder were switced off.
    Some people (i.e. two Turkish Cypriot merchants whom we met through a common friend and two Greek Cypriots), in the sight of the microphone, said they did not have anything important to share with us because they could not remember much, and they emphasized that they would like all of these to be forgotten so that all people live together happily. One of the Turkish Cypriots said he would write down some stories but at the end this never happened.

- **Politically sensitive issue:**
The Cyprus Oral History Project (COHP) was perceived by some people as dealing with politically sensitive issues. Also, some people were afraid about their lives. Some Turkish Cypriots we met at a gathering, they were friends of friends, although they had initially said they wanted to be interviewed and they would tell their families, too, then they emailed us telling us that it was difficult to do so because they

did not have time themselves nor their families did. One young woman, with whom we started becoming friends, sent us an offensive email a couple of days before the interview we had arranged. She cancelled the meeting telling us that we had caused her many problems with our unprofessional attitude as researchers and that neither she nor her family wanted to talk to us. She also warned us that some people who were researching this political issue or reporting on it were found dead.

Technical Limitations

There were also some technical difficulties in the COHP, relating to technical problems with our recording equipment and time and budget constraints. For example, there was an interview that was conducted but was not recorded due to technical issues. Also, there was an uncompleted interview, which we had to stop halfway because we were running out of time. Also, there were people who wanted to share their stories with us, but we did not conduct the interview because we were lacking time and resources at the time. Specifically, one woman owing a kebab house right off the buffer zone told us that she had lived through the events and that she had lots of stories to share. Another woman started narrating the events at Agios Kassianos, Nicosia in 1963, about a prostitute who got into an argument with some men, then the police interfered, some shots were fired and some people died, and that was how the 1963 conflicts begun in Nicosia and they rapidly spread out in other cities, too.