Who's asking...?: The dialogical context of the broadcast interview.

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"Who's Asking...?: The Dialogical Context of the Broadcast Interview

by

Dermot Wilson

A Thesis Media Production
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Communication Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada 1996

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Abstract

This thesis media production includes a textual research document and a broadcast quality video. By examining and researching the broadcast interview as a popular cultural form of expression and subsequently questioning the validity of this form as a means of communicating truth or "objective" fact, the textual component provides a theoretical background and argument for the video component.

*Who's Asking...?* is a thirteen minute video shot on location in London, England in the summer of 1995. The video overturns and parodies the conventional newsgathering techniques and traditions of the person-on-the-street interviews. Instead of hiding behind the camera and asking questions of innocent bystanders, the "maker" of *Who's Asking...?* is always on camera and is shown listening to questions from anonymous people-on-the-street. The video includes several intertitles and conceptual gaps within which the viewer is invited to participate in the dialogical process.

Both components will be of interest to those studying the broadcast television medium especially as it intersects with the history of documentary film and news techniques. The text component includes a semiotic analysis of interviewing manuals and a discussion of the possibilities for a "dialogical" context for the broadcast interview. The latter is an attempt to describe a more democratic, less authoritarian and ideologically based environment for viewing and participating in the mediated interview.
"Who's Asking...?: The Dialogical Context of the Broadcast Interview

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Who's Asking...?: The Dialogical Context of the Broadcast Interview

Introduction

This thesis media production project began as an attempt to study the theories of contemporary cultural studies through the medium of a broadcast quality video. And even though the process has altered many of the specifics of the content and resulted in changes that could not have been foreseen during the initial stages, *Who's Asking...?* is still meant to direct the receiver of the videotaped message toward issues of interest to the field of cultural studies.

Part I of this document examines the interview as it has come to be employed as a form of cultural contact in television, radio, film and video. It describes the history of the interview from the first attempts at recording people's answers in popular journals of early eighteenth-century Britain, through to the stylized and ideologically controlled broadcast news interviews that exercise world-wide informational importance today. Following this chronology of the interview is a discourse analysis of several manuals used by journalism schools and by editors to teach the rules of interviewing to prospective interviewers. From this analysis, issues of authority and power are seen as central to the definition of the context of the broadcast interview and to the conduct of the broadcast interviewer.
No matter what the content, the time or the medium, the interview seems always to include a powerful questioner or questioners and a submissive subject or subjects. To reveal this hidden (or at least, overlooked) dominant/submissive relationship within the broadcast interview, this paper looks at the work of several British Cultural Studies theorists, such as Margaret Morse, Stuart Hall and Tony Bennett (to name a few), who are interested in the ideology of the broadcast media. From this ideological critique of the mediated dialogue, the discussion moves to another, more contemporary, theoretical/critical point of view, that which is referred to here as "dialogics."

The latter theoretical position, derived from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin, offers creative possibilities for the broadcast interview. If the interview is seen as a popular form of dialogue, then the application of Bakhtin's ideas of "multivocality" and "heteroglossia", i.e., his dialogical notions (to be defined in section 5 of Part 1 of this paper), will help us understand how this powerful form of dialogue may be altered to achieve greater equanimity between all the participants. This paper will illustrate and discuss what is wrong with the broadcast interview, how it fails as a form of discourse and, through an analysis of the dialogical context of the interview, how to achieve alternatives to the traditional form.

Part II of this text includes a description of the video production project itself: the methods, procedures and logistical decisions involved. The project, entitled Who's Asking...?, was conceived as an alternative to the authoritarian, patriarchal interview-based documentary program. It is an attempt to create a form of dialogical interview. The videotape employs a dialogic approach to the
interview in several ways. First, it changes the power relationship so integral to broadcast television interviewing. In fact, *Who's Asking...?* reverses the interviewer/interviewee relationship. The videomaker is always on camera and being questioned by the interviewee, while the same interviewee wields the camera. Second, the video is arranged and edited to allow for audience response and to allow time for the watcher to consider his/her own answers to the questions posed. Third, because in its final form the video includes only the questions without any answers, the interview process itself is foregrounded and the questions begin either to answer themselves or provide other information, other answers to unspoken or inferred questions. Fourth, part of the dialogue formed is between the audience and the people on-screen. The audience, each individual from her or his own perspective, shapes a "story" from these clips. Although *Who's Asking...?* may be seen as an inverted travelogue or a parody of a person-on-the-street piece, the argument, or "home truth," or instructional theme is not provided by the videomaker; it is left up to the perceiver to formulate a meaning or effect.

The objectives for this thesis media production include producing a theoretically sound alternative to the broadcasting interview-based documentary form and assessing a response group's reactions from one screening/performance of the video. This qualitative assessment discussion concludes the second part of the textual component. The main research question then for this textual support document is to establish what exactly a broadcast interview is, what its context is composed of and how the traditional and in some ways dysfunctional mediated interview can be rethought and re-presented as a more democratic or open exchange of ideas.
PART I - The Dialogical Context of the Broadcast Interview

[Bill] Grundy: Beethoven, Mozart, Bach and Brahms have all died...
John [Lydon]: They're all heroes of ours, ain't they?
Grundy: Really? What? What were you saying sir?
John: They're wonderful people.
Grundy: Are they?
John: Oh yesss! They really turn us on.
Grundy: Suppose they turn other people on?
John: (whispered) Well that's just their tough shit.
Grundy: It's what?
John: Nothing. A rude word. (Pauses.) Next question!
Grundy: No. No. What was the rude word?
John: [a schoolboy] Shit.
Grundy: Was it really? God, you frighten me to death.
John: Oh alright, Siegfried...
Grundy: What about you girls behind?
Glen [Matlock]: He's like yer Dad in' he, this geezer, or your grandad?
Grundy: Are you worried or just enjoying yourself?
Siouxsie: Enjoying myself.
Grundy: Are you?
Siouxsie: Yeah.
Grundy: Ah, that's what I thought you were doing.
Siouxsie: I've always wanted to meet you.
Grundy: Did you really?
Siouxsie: Yeah.
Grundy: We'll meet afterwards, shall we?
[Siouxsie makes a moué.]
Steve [Jones]: You dirty sod. You dirty old man.
Grundy: Well keep going chief, keep going. Go on, you've got another
ten seconds. Say something outrageous.
Steve: You dirty bastard.
Grundy: Go on, again.
Steve: You dirty fucker!
Grundy: What a clever boy!
Steve: You fucking rotter!
[More laughter from the band and fans; Grundy closes.]
Grundy: Well that's it for tonight. The other rocker Eamonn, I'm saying
nothing else about him, will be back tomorrow. I'll be seeing you
soon. I hope I'll not be seeing you [to the band] again. From
me though, goodnight.

[Closing credits and perky signature tune: Lydon looks at his watch and Steve Jones
gyrates his leather-clad hips.] (Savage, 1991: 258-259)
British newscaster Bill Grundy was suspended for two weeks after the above interview took place live on Thames Television's *Today* program on December 1, 1976. Although the administrators who reprimanded him cited a "gross error in judgment" as the cause, it seems likely that they were also reacting to the presenter's apparent inability to control both his interviewees and himself. This colourful encounter between the anarchist punk band, the Sex Pistols, and a middle-aged, middle-class reporter has been and continues to be mythologized and satirized in Great Britain (Savage, 1991: 263). For the Sex Pistols, the Grundy interview, and the ensuing uproar in the British media, marked a turning point in their popularity; overnight, they became rude household names, media martyrs (Savage, 1991: 260).

Steve, John et al. had broken a code of ethics; keenly aware of the power of the interview, these interviewees had destroyed the carefully constructed, yet almost transparent, visual and aural context which surrounds and permeates the broadcast interview. The fact that the interviewer was suspended is almost more telling than that his reviled and villified adversaries came to be applauded by the viewing audience. To understand more fully what happened to Bill Grundy and why, we must first understand the "fiction of discourse," the context of the broadcast interview (Morse, 1985: 2).

The mediated dialogue between interviewer and subject is much more than familiar to us all; we are inundated, in the print media, commercial and public television, film and radio, by other people's answers to other people's questions. How do the questioner and the contexts within which the question is asked, both conceptual and physical, shape the message? There are countless forms of
interview outside the realms of the communication media. We've all participated in economic, medical, forensic, or statistical interviews at some time in our lives. Even in informal conversations with friends there will be dialectical components; we’ll explore ideas through questions and answers. As we begin to shift away from text-based learning (reading screens instead) and toward more interactive methods of information exchange (via the internet for example), the interview may become our principal and most popular means of acquiring knowledge. As a discursive form, the interview is ubiquitous and artful; it is much practised, but, on a contextual level at least, little understood.

My purpose here is to understand better the context for the media interview. I have narrowed the focus by choosing several investigative and theoretical perspectives from which to examine the interview: first, a discourse analysis and then an extension of this description from the ideological into the regions of the dialogical. Of particular interest here is the broadcast interview, i.e., the interview as it is presented and practised on television news magazine programs and on “mainstream” news programs.

So, what is the context of the broadcast news interview? Firstly, it is important to understand the tradition that informs this information-gathering practise. This study will combine a short history of the interview in print, film, and video with an investigation of how the interview adapted in sync with the documentary film and the television documentary. As the broadcast interview developed into an accepted and massively popular journalistic practise, its style became entrenched and was duly propogated through journalism schools and interviewing manuals. A discourse analysis of several of these manuals (Brady,
1977; Metzler, 1977; McLaughlin, 1991; Rosenthal, 1990) reveals evidence as to the intent of the interview, the proper functions and control mechanisms employed by the interviewer, and how the interviewee should be “positioned.” From this semiotic examination of the words used to teach correct interviewing techniques, the paper moves toward an understanding of the ideology inherent in the broadcast interview context. We begin to see how the interview fits into our conceptions of “common sense,” and how the mediated encounter creates an illusion of objectivity and normalcy.

With this perhaps more holistic picture of the interview’s ambience and the intentions of the questioners in mind, the work will continue with a critique based on both ideological and dialogical concepts. The first of these critical “templates” focuses on notions of authority: the narrator and producers retain a certain authority over the interview, and that authority becomes powerful. A discussion of the concept of power, as it relates to the context of the interview, completes an ideological description of this event.

However, the second line of reasoning, that of the dialogical possibilities for the interview, will provide the theoretical background for a less authoritarian interviewing context. If a traditional interview presents only the semblance of a dialogue, a forum affected by the power and choices of the producers and interviewers rather than by the interviewees, then a dialogical broadcast interview will undermine that authority and require a less ideologically structured dialogue. In this age of uncertainty and possibility, a dialogical perspective on the interview context seems to be a plausible and desirable alternative to the dysfunctional broadcast news or documentary context.
Terms

There are two reasons why this paper begins with a definition of the terms to be used. First: certain terms used above, and to a greater extent below, may be defined differently in different contexts. They can be adapted to different situations and put to different purposes. Second: one of the ways to visualize the chronology and logic of this text is by relating these central definitions one to the next. Hopefully, these five terms will coalesce into a kind of conceptual schemata.

The form of communication at issue here is the media interview. "All interviews are social encounters. All interviews involve at least two persons performing specific roles, that of interviewer and that of interviewee" (Cohen, 1987: 41-48). On television, we see and hear various types of interviews: the in-depth, the man-on-the-street, the sound bite, the multiple or panel interview, and the chroma-keyed interview wherein an anchor person or in-studio interviewer directs his/her questions to an image of a "distant" interviewee. These encounters take place in various environments: on location, in the television studio, at or near the anchor desk, in front of a live audience. "Thus the reporter will need to approach his interviewees in various locations, in an office, in a studio, indoors or out-of-doors, in friendly or hostile surroundings, and at times even in secret hiding places or retreats" (Cohen, 1987: 24). Another important definitive characteristic of the news interview is revealed by Cohen's verb above: a media interview always involves the interviewer "approaching" the interviewee and initiating the interview.
The second term of import here, context, means the verbal and nonverbal "discourse" of the broadcast media interview. An interview's context will include: the physical surroundings, the appearances and performances of the participants, and the conceptual surroundings (the questions to be asked and the mental preparations for the encounter). Also the context will be influenced by an interview's interpolation into a specific broadcast schedule.

...[W]e learn from narrative theory that every narrative can theoretically be split into two parts: the "story," that is, "what happens to whom," and the "discourse," that is, "how the story is told." To recognize television's specificity, I believe we need to add a third layer, "schedule," that is "how are the story and discourse affected by the narrative's placement within the larger discourse of the station's schedule" (Kozloff, in Allen, 1987: 45)

Akiba Cohen lists the dimensions of the media interview, several of which map out a contextual terrain. These are: the goals of an interview, the initiator of the interview, the roles to be filled by the participants, and the social status or credibility of the participants. Also the selection process and pre-judgments or preconceptions brought to the interview by either participant shape the context within which the interview will take place. The degree of confidentiality or publicity of the interviewee's identity affects the context, as does the potential for future interviews. Cohen (1987: 41-48) lists several codes that visually identify or construct the interviewee and thus affect the context of the interview. There are three "situational" codes: the location, the directness of the broadcast (live or pre-recorded) and the editing; two "verbal" codes: the questioning techniques of the interviewer and the rules of etiquette; and three "nonverbal" codes: the interspatial distancing, visual and aural artifacts or implements, and filmic techniques. When we are examining the context of an interview we are noting
everything about that event except the "story," the literal meaning of the words
spoken. Situational codes will be central here; however, it should be made clear
from the outset that audience responses, counter-responses by the television
producers and audience interactivity or feedback, although extremely important,
cannot fall within the purview of a work of this scope. My focus is on the
contextual codes discussed above, on what Roland Barthes calls the "second
linguistics" of the broadcast interview.

And yet it is evident that discourse itself is organized and that, through
this organization, it can be seen as the message of another language, one
operating at a higher level than the language of the linguists. Discourse
has its units, its rules, its "grammar": beyond the sentence, and though
consisting solely of sentences, it must naturally form the object of a second
linguistics (Barthes, 1982: 245).

By utilizing discourse analysis as a method for understanding several
interviewing manuals, we can gain some insight into the conceptual framework
of the broadcast interviewer. When he or she is conducting an interview "by the
book," what might that entail? These examinations of the discourse of the how-to
books will add another dimension to a description of the context of the broadcast
interview. Above, Barthes speaks of a study of communication (in his case,
textual, in mine televisual) meant to discover meanings that emerge from
between the lines, so to speak, not only the connotations and "moods" of the text
but also how that text constructs, or tells us something about, the writer
(interview participants and producers) and the reader (the viewing audience).
This method of deconstructing the message is derived from semiotics, i.e., the
study of the life of signs, as defined by Ferdinand de Saussure.

Semiotics relates the structure of the text to the social system to explore
how such meanings are made and the part they play within the cultural
process that relates meanings both to social experience and the social system in general (Fiske, in Allen, 1987: 252).

There are two more terms of pivotal importance to the argument of this paper. They are: ideology, or more properly ideological messages communicated through the interview context, and a descriptive term applied to alternative forms of interview, the dialogical. Neither of these is an easily definable term. In this section, I simply want to clarify how I will apply them. Instead of presenting here what might be termed a prime-time news, reductionist version of ideology, I will focus on the role of ideology within the interview context.

To understand the role of ideology, we must also be able to account for the mechanisms which consistently sustain, in reality, a set of representations which are not so much false to, as a false inflection of, the "real relations" on which, in fact, they depend (Hall, 1977: 324).

In his work, Stuart Hall illustrates how the ideology which pervades our communications systems is influenced by, and tends to perpetuate, a dominant paradigm. For this discussion the term dominant paradigm will include a system of thought so deeply understood within a culture that it underlies our notions of common sense and "reality." The dominant paradigm is, in part, "simply an analytic description of 'what really exists'" (Hall, 1987: 45). When we consider an ideological perspective, we are attempting to elucidate and make clear that our "objective" bases for decisions, questions, locations, etc. are expressions of a dominant ideology. Our examination of the interview context then must understand that there is no objectivity and that every sign or message communicated by the interview is filtered through this seemingly transparent ideology.

We need to be able to identify these ideological elements, to discover the aspects of representation that embody them, to understand the place set out for us within such processes. One crucial aspect of this place is that it
proposes a way of seeing invested with meanings that naturalize themselves as timeless, objective and obvious (Nichols, 1981: 2).

The last term of import here is the adjective, dialogical. The term is derived from the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1981), a Russian literary critic who wrote extensively during the first half of this century. Communication studies theorists have, in the last decade, developed methods of dialogical analysis in attempts to understand and analyze the television medium as a field of discourse. Bakhtin's term for the multiple readings possible from one text is "heteroglossia." Each reader, translating and customizing one or more of the "languages" of the text, will glean a slightly different meaning.

Heteroglossia is Bakhtin's way of referring, in any utterance of any kind, to the two fundamentals of all communication. On the one hand, a mode of transcription must...be a more or less fixed system. But these repeatable features, on the other hand, are in the power of the particular context in which the utterance is made... (M. Holquist quoted in Bakhtin, 1981: xix-xx).

These theories of heteroglossia focus on the ephemerality of communicated meaning. Bakhtin wants to understand the multiplicity of communicative acts rather than how the content appears to shape society or the literary functions of a novel or poem. Although related to and affected by the dominant ideology (this relationship is in fact inescapable), the dialogical understanding has become important because it exposes a critical limitation of the ideological perspective: by asserting that every receiver of information receives differentially and subjectively, a dialogical perspective empowers the individual psyche (the submissive) who appears to be subsumed within a dominant ideology.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological
consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981: 276-277).

These dialogical threads include the context within which the conversation takes place. They describe historical, semiotic and ideological ways of perceiving a message and in this sense a dialogical imagination is important to understanding the broadcast media interview. Later, we will apply this method of observation to an interviewing context. A final word by media studies theorist Horace M. Newcomb may help to illustrate why a dialogical perspective is important to the analysis of television and to this essay.

Each character, then, represents a language, and each language an ideological inflection related to ongoing social negotiation. Put another way, each character responds to the central ideologies from a different perspective, making that centrality something other than a monolithic system (1984: 41).

Newcomb argues that Hall's ideological theory erects such a system. The dialogical perspective offers us the power to shape these hegemonic messages to our own purposes and to see them as voices within a "polyphonic" discourse. With these terms in place and with that last quote sending out echoes of the Grundy-Sex Pistols encounter, we move to the historical background of the broadcast media interview.
Historical Background

"Jesus Christ is an enigma," suggests one journalist, "because no interviewer got to him" (Brady, 1977: 221).

This journalist is bemoaning the fact that there was a time before the interview. In fact, many early texts involved questions and answers. Plato used a dialectical structure in his writings, a particularly persuasive teaching style which subtly goaded the student into asking the right questions, the questions that would almost answer themselves. In the middle ages there are examples of texts which use interviews between authors and popes, bishops or priests (Brady, 1977: 221).

As with all textual genres, the interview altered as its form of presentation changed; from the beginning, the content was affected by the context. In Western civilization, the interview reached new heights of popularity with the advent of the magazine in the seventeenth century. As a journalistic form it flourished. James Gordon Bennett is said to be the first journalist to use a verbatim form of interview in a daily newspaper. In 1836 he published his talks with Rosina Townsend, madame of a brothel where a prostitute had been murdered. Though considered scandalous and wicked, the story was instantly successful and accessible. "Bennett succeeded not only in causing all of New York to talk about the murder (and buy the Herald), but also helped prove that the young man accused of the crime had not committed it" (Brady, 1977: 224-225).

In Britain, another immensely successful interviewer was Henry Mayhew;
his book *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861) is still used as a primary source for historians of the Victorian period. He was said to have a talent for “inspiring trust” in a very short time. By 1875 the multiple-person interview was an important part of the daily newspaper, sometimes carried out by a “corps” of reporters. “A group of Ohio editors arrived in St. Louis by train on June 21, 1879, where they were met by some thirty reporters wearing badges that said: ‘A Soft Answer Turneth Away Wrath, Globe-Democrat Interviewing Corp, With Malice for None and With Questions for All’” (Brady, 1977: 228). Various writers, including Horace Greeley and Isaac Marcossan, advanced the journalistic interview style, experimenting to find ways of eliciting the “best copy.” Their successes led to magazines which were devoted to interview-based “personality” stories (*The New Yorker, The Paris Review*, etc.). These highly popular interviewers established the methods which would be taken up and moulded for the film medium.

Although there were many landmark documentary films without sound, including *Nanook of the North* by Robert Flaherty, *Potemkin* by Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera*, the first documentary film to use an interview format, *Housing Problems*, did not come before the public until 1935, some years after the introduction of sound to the film medium. A John Grierson production financed by the British Gas Association, this film was concerned with the plight of the London poor and about how new housing projects were improving their lives.

Its combination of voice-over housing authority and film commentator with on-screen interviews, of stock footage with models and fresh shot footage, established the basic format and technique of much television
documentary today. The spoken word is used to provide information and analysis and to allow persons to reveal themselves more fully and colorfully than was altogether possible in silent film (Ellis, 1989: 70).

_Housing Problems_ is a forerunner of a mode of documentary representation known as Expository. "In documentary film, four modes of representation stand out as the dominant organizational patterns around which most texts are structured: expository, observational, interactive and reflexive" (Nichols, 1991: 32). Although Nichols' typology does not follow a purely chronological order, by using it here we can follow the development of the interview as it has been used in each mode, i.e., each of these modes represents a different ideological and dialogical context.

The expository documentary film is still the most ubiquitous form, as it incorporates a "news" style which presents visual and aural evidence supporting the film maker's argument or stance. Early expositional filmmakers believed that the camera could not lie, that it presented "actualities" and that their role was to instruct their viewers. Brian Winston (1995: 47) identifies two formal elements of expositional film: the filmic creation of "victims" and the "problem moment" structure. "The victim documentary seeks to substitute empathy and sympathy for analysis and anger. The 'problem moment' structure removes any need for action, or even reaction, on the part of the audience."

During the thirties in the United States, a newsreel-documentary series, _The March of Time_, was the most popular and successful of a group of privately-funded films known as nongovernmental documentaries. The film series included few interviews but was marked by the paternal and authoritarian tone of the narrator's, Westbrook van Voorhis', voice. Expositional documentaries used
the narrator to explicate situations, to encapsulate information and to present "objective" facts. Paul Rothen, a British filmmaker who worked with John Grierson, was particularly interested in applying new forms of filmic argumentation. His film, *World of Plenty* (1943) included: "diagrams, interviews and trick optical effects" (Ellis, 1989: 117). In many ways the films and philosophies of British filmmaker, John Grierson have become the templates for the production of expository films. Grierson gave us the basic forms of the television news documentary.

Either in reaction to or inspired by the rapid advancement of the medium and the technology supporting the medium, the post-war period heralded the blossoming of a second mode of documentary representation: the observational. In film, this mode began with the Italian neorealist school of filmmaking. Filmmakers such as Vittoria de Sica, Luchino Visconti and Roberto Rossellini decided that "stories" imposed upon a filmic world only led to human defeat, to failures of one kind or another. Their cameras instead recorded life without the addition of dramatic form. The neorealist aesthetic led to the French film method, Cinema Verité, and its American contemporary, Direct Cinema. As the Italians had done in the thirties and forties, the French and Americans strove for "film truth." The Americans wanted to use their cameras and recorders as eyes focused on a world they had not intentionally altered. The Europeans tended to question the very possibility of "objectivity" in filmmaking and tried "to pierce the observable surface to reach this underlying truth by means of discussion, interview and a fictional sort of improvisation" (Ellis, 1989: 226). Filmmakers, including Jean Rouch, Jean Renoir, Richard Leacock and Robert Drew, were
assisted in their efforts by the inventions of lightweight 16mm film cameras and of the Nagra crystal-synchronized portable tape recorder. From this time onwards the camera did not have to be connected by an umbilical cable to the sound recorder, and shots could take place in almost any location. It meant that people could be filmed as they participated in real events and their words could be recorded even as those events were unfolding.

In the course of their work Drew Associates discovered that their method (Direct Cinema) worked best if something important was happening to their subjects -- if they were involved in an activity demanding their full attention and evoking a certain unalterable behavior (Ellis, 1989: 223).

These advances in technology altered the productions and in turn the way people perceived documentary films. When subjects are no longer placed in narratives and are no longer in the role of teachers, we, as viewers tend to believe that these are not actors and that what we are seeing is framed and captured reality. Observational films began to assert that film could be truth. “Instead of the suspension of disbelief that could be put as ‘I know very well [that this is a fiction] but all the same...[I will treat it as if it were not],’ the observational documentary encourages belief; ‘Life is like this, isn’t it?’” (Nichols, 1991: 42-43). This style is also marked by rigorous non-intervention by the filmmaker and by the medium itself, i.e., there is little narration, the takes are often quite long so fewer edits are used and neither the questioner/instigator nor the crew members are allowed into this “real” situation. People were often filmed simply talking to each other.

However, as with the Griersonian expositional documentary style, the observational films tended to shun or disguise their intrinsic social meaning,
their thematic messages. “In fact, this tendency was exacerbated by these new techniques (technological advances). Surface became all as direct cinema tried to avoid those elements of the Griersonian repertoire which, if developed, could perhaps have led to a more analytic style—interviews, commentary, graphics and ‘reflexive’ modes” (Winston, 1995: 151-152). Winston (1995: 154) also points out that the direct cinema filmmakers, in their attempts to capture “actualities,” were responsible for the entrance of the camera (and the film audience) into the “private sphere” of those they chose to film.

As developments in the documentary film world continued, a new form of electronic media began to affect the context of the interview. Although the methods employed in television’s infancy as a journalistic medium came from the documentary tradition, from commercial and public radio and the print media, the new medium added to the lexicon of the documentary and developed its own interviewing context. Although television was invented in the thirties, commercial development of broadcasting stations and “current affairs” programs, held back due to the war effort, only arrived on this continent in 1946.

A pioneering work of television documentary was See It Now. The program usually dealt with one timely news story using expositional modes of representation and a well-defined structure. Jack Ellis here comments on one of the early programs called, “Segregation in Schools”:

What seems a curious stiffness and formality today--on the part of both black and white interviewees--with stand-up microphones visible and some statements read or rehearsed, may have to do with extremely strong feelings being controlled as well as a less flexible technology than is available today. When emotion does break through...it is moving and becomes real in a way that helps us to understand more fully what is involved than do the prepared statements (Ellis, 1989: 188).
Other important early television documentary series were: *CBS Reports, The Twentieth Century* (with iconic anchorperson, Walter Cronkite), and the cinema verité influenced *Close Up!* Most of these programs used interviews to illustrate news stories and borrowed their forms and techniques from the expositional documentary mode. And as with early print interviews the most emotional responses seemed to be the most popular; they added humanity and objectivity to the story; they brought the viewer emotionally closer to the victim. It wasn’t the broadcasters who were saying these things, it was the actual people involved.

All of these types of film and television documentary, all of these contexts within which interviews took place, continued apace; they became parts of a repertoire of possible styles. A third mode, though initiated as far back as the 1920’s, culminated with a series of films called *Challenge for Change*, produced by the National Film Board in 1967. The interactive mode of representation tries to place authority in the hands of the social actors involved in the film: the onscreen presence interacts with the offscreen presence and with the camera itself. The silent authorship of the observational filmmaker is brought forward and that authorship is shared with the actors. This mode often includes verbal onscreen exchanges between questioner and interviewee.

The mode introduces a sense of partialness, of *situated* presence and *local* knowledge that derives from the actual encounter of filmmaker and other. Issues of comprehension and interpretation as a function of physical encounter arise: how do filmmaker and social actor respond to each other; do they react to overtones or implications in each other's speech; do they see how power and desire flow between them? (Nichols, 1991: 44)

*Challenge for Change* brought this mode to its logical conclusion as the filmmakers simply facilitated films that were made by the participants in the
filmed event. The film, *You Are on Indian Land*, was produced by the N.F.B. but all the crew were from the Cornwall Mohawk band. This series also assisted groups to produce their own documentary videotapes. "Lightweight video permitted citizens to tape and present their problems—as they saw them—to officials in a position to do something about them. The officials could then be taped responding to the tape, and their reaction in turn viewed by the citizens" (Ellis, 1989: 275). Television, as a means of direct dialogue, appeared to have become a reality.

Bill Nichols identifies interviewing *motives* as a key difference between expositional and interactive modes. Expositional interviews "generally serve as evidence for the filmmaker's, or text's, argument," while the interactive interview will "generally serve as evidence for an argument presented as the product of the interaction of filmmaker and subject" (Nichols, 1991: 48). The interview is very important to this mode, a method of providing the social actor's point of view; often the narrative for the film is supplied by these onscreen discussions. Ethical issues around the use of interviews and the inherent inequality of these discourses—the fact that one speaker was the interrogator and the other the confessor—are major concerns. Nichols' first two modes of filmic representation differ from the last two in that they are aware of the inherent authority of the medium.

Expository and observational films unlike interactive and reflexive ones, tend to mask the work of production, the effects of the cinematic apparatus itself, and the tangible process of enunciation, the saying of something as distinct from that which is said (Nichols, 1991: 56).
The ethical concerns may also be seen as a reflection of an increased awareness of the context created by and surrounding the film.

Both of the final two modes (interactive and reflexive) set as their fundamental goal a breaking down of the false objectivity of documentary realism. Nichols takes as axiomatic the notion that all film or video is a re-presentation of reality and that there will always be an unseen controlling factor. The argument of the film, no matter how objective and two-sided it may appear, is always inflected by the filmmaker.

Before moving on to developments in the reflexive mode of representation, an event which affected all the media of mass communication should be mentioned. This event fuelled a rebirth of the competitive, insistent and oftentimes self-righteous tactics of investigative journalism; it was the Watergate Scandal and the book and movie called, *All the Presidents’ Men*. Cited in many of the interviewing manuals as a turning point, this story of how president Richard Nixon was implicated in a series of break-ins at the Watergate Hotel in Washington represents the epitome of what a good interview or a series of good interviews can accomplish: they can topple a government. The combative, often ruthless and devious tactics of the *Washington Post* interviewers set the example for others in all media. After Woodward and Bernstein, the romantic idea of the newsgatherer as a crusader for truth was, if not born, at least resurrected (Bernstein and Woodward, 1974: 63-65).

The last mode of documentary representation identified by Nichols is the reflexive. As its name indicates, this mode tends to focus on the makers of the film or video, the processes whereby they came to film particular events, and how
they structure these processes for presentation to an audience. It differs from the interactive mode in that the dialogue seems to be between the filmmaker and the audience, rather than between the filmmaker and the social actors. Nichols (1991: 69) further divides this mode into two dimensions or methods of achieving reflexivity: the first, which he calls, stylistic reflexivity, deals with form and the second, political reflexivity, attempts to draw "our attention to the relations of power and hierarchy between the text and the world".

There are several early forerunners of the form: Dziga Vertov in the 1920's and Emile de Antonio in the 1960's who would both be considered to be illustrating stylistic dimensions of the reflexive documentary. "...[T]he textual voice of de Antonio contests and places the statements made by its embedded interviews, but without speaking to us directly" (Nichols, 1991: 24). The filmmaker combines interviews which illustrate differing, and often diametrically opposed, points of view and, in the editing, arranges the images to indicate the filmmaker's subjectivity. A central component of the reflexive film is the juxtaposition of interview statements with either ironic visuals which show the opposite of what is being said (see *Rosie the Riveter*) or with a narrator or intertitles which tends to contradict or comment upon the interviewee's statements.

What provides the litmus test for political reflexivity is the specific form of the representation, the extent to which it does not reinforce existing categories of consciousness, structures of feeling, ways of seeing; the degree to which it rejects a narrative sense of closure and completeness (Nichols, 1989: 68).

By reflecting back upon the politics of filmmaking itself or upon the culture which developed the medium, these films can widen the perspective and range of documentarists. Many feminist filmmakers have begun to question the
fundamentally patriarchal concept of realism itself. Through this careful analysis of the filmic message politically reflexive filmmakers can identify “ideological constraints” and juxtapose these with “alternative positions and subjectivities, affinities and relations of production, precisely as the feminist documentary has done” (Nichols, 1991: 67). In such a film, the traditional expository context for the interview would necessarily be questioned. Accepted methods of structuring and obtaining interviews might be eschewed in favour of methods more in keeping with the norms and traditions of a different culture or a minority culture.

So, we have seen the interview move from a sensationalist gossip device to an element in the dialogue between the filmmaker and the social actor and between the filmmaker and the viewing audience. Interviewing methods have moved from techniques of dogmatic exposition and propaganda to alleged journalistic objectivity constrained and structured by a dominant ideology, and finally to contemporary, reflexive, attempts at a dialogical approach to the encounter itself: a holistic understanding of interviewer, interviewee and audience. However, while experimental documentarists have advanced the interview form to include dialogical approaches, television and news documentaries still base their interviewing styles upon ideologically motivated traditions of “objectivity.”

The television medium is undergoing rapid change. Technological innovations, often the first prerequisites for stylistic advances in film and video, are allowing thousands of prospective video and filmmakers access to broadcast quality sound and camera equipment. Broadcasting stations are altering their
styles as the lightweight, low-light equipment becomes the industry standard. The networks are also soliciting amateur video footage and this “style” is becoming recognized, forming its own ideology (here I’m thinking of You’ve Been Framed and America’s Funniest Home Videos).

The famous Zapruder film of the Kennedy assassination, or the more recent take-up of amateur footage of a racist police assault in Los Angeles, are instances of the ways in which we accept far more readily the witnessing offered by bystanders than by professionals... (Cubitt, 1993: 137).

Interviewing techniques are also being affected by the plethora of low-priced recording devices available to filmmakers and by the changing shape of broadcasting, even as another technological leap, the interfacing of analog and digital imagery, prepares the way for the distribution of visual documents on the World Wide Web. But these shadows of things to come are just that; of more direct import here is an analysis of the ways interviewing is taught and of the ideology perpetuated by that pedagogy.
Discourse Analysis

...[A] man's quotes are as incisive an index to his thinking as a mirror is to his slovenliness (Brady, 1977: 116).

Of the five sources concerned with the teaching of interviewing methods perused for this paper, I will look at three in detail: *The Craft of Interviewing* by John Brady (1977), *How to Interview: The Art of the Media Interview* by Paul McLaughlin (1990) and a manual for film interviewing called *Writing, Directing and Producing Documentary Film* by Alan Rosenthal (1990). Brady focuses more on print media interviews, but does illustrate the ideals of investigative journalism; the context it condones seems to be a product of the post-Watergate era. McLaughlin teaches interviewing for print and broadcast media (including radio and television). Rosenthal’s instruction manual is about all aspects of filmmaking; the section on interviewing is integrated into a total picture of the filmmaking process.

From these texts, the present study will attempt to glean notions of the “common sense” that motivates these writer’s decisions; to describe, using various semiotic clues, the ideas of proper interviewing conduct. How are these rules of interviewing success presented? What is the tenor of the argument? What are the givens here, the assumptions, the things that seem right and proper for a broadcast interviewer?

Cohen (1987: 49) indicates that few of these interviewing texts actually focus on the news interview. As a journalistic environment which can be compared
across all four media, i.e., film, print, radio and television, the interview, as described in these manuals, is seen as developing in and through all media of communication. *The Craft of Interviewing* takes the student chronologically through the process from the "getting interviews" stage, to the initial selection or framing devices and the actual questions. This general chronology is followed by all three texts as are discussions about concluding rituals and advice on how to edit the raw material. *How to Interview* also includes sections on listening effectively and on how the interview may affect the interviewee. For Rosenthal, and many documentary filmmakers, knowing how to cut short an "unproductive" answer is important, as are the "ethics" of the interview.

In McLaughlin and Brady each chapter includes examples in the form of either anecdotal evidence from the author's personal experience, or anecdotes by other reporters, or transcripts of actual interviews. But it is never made clear how exemplary this evidence is. "The student reading such material doesn't know whether the interviewing practises being presented are typical or unusual" (Cohen, 1987: 49). According to Cohen (1987: 51), who studied several interviewing manuals in his book, *The Television News Interview*, there is a strong consensus amongst the authors of these manuals "concerning the actual views and perceptions of what makes for good television news interviewing". And this could be extended to include all types of media interviews. In place of the authoritarian tone of most textbooks, there is an aura of camaraderie to these texts, as though the student and some good reporters are sitting around the "hot stove" swapping "war stories."
The texts outline two, seemingly disparate, discursive roles for the successful interviewer to play. The first will foster an immediate and short-lived friendship between interviewer and subject. To elicit a "good" interview a friendly relationship must be developed, but a certain kind of friendship.

One night when Blank was interviewing a couple about a traumatic experience, the wife excused herself for a moment. While she was out of the room, the husband leaned forward to the writer and confided, "I don't want my wife to hear about this, but you should know..."

"He went on," says Blank, "having completely lost awareness that I was taking down his words for an article that might be seen by some 50 million people." Now that's rapport! (Brady, 1977: 65)

A confession is made to an ersatz friend. The implication here is that the best environment for an interview is a clandestine one, in which the interviewee is unaware that his words will be communicated to millions, that he, in fact, thinks he is whispering a secret to a trusted friend.

While the interviewee relates her or his story to the interviewer in a personal way, the interviewer must feign honesty but always remember that the subject is a source of information pertinent to his or her job. The reporter plays the role of a friend, creates the illusion of friendship, and expects honest friendship in return. "All reporting is after all role playing," says Richard Reeves. "Tell them everything, the most personal details about yourself and your life. As human beings, they respond in kind, only their answers appear in print" (quoted in Brady, 1977: 53-54). The reporter's confessions are private, while the subject's will appear before the public. Reeves is telling the student that confessions from their own private lives may be offered only as a show of sincerity, as a ploy to eke out pertinent information. Elsewhere, the authors chastize
fledgling interviewers who talk too much during the interview (Brady, 1977: 58; McLaughlin, 1990: 155-156).

Often the verb usage implies a parent-child relationship. The interviewer is shown how to "coax", "prod", "encourage", "bring along", and "nurture" the interviewee, at least until the questions start to fly. During the preliminary stages at least, the reporter must practise a feigned friendship and benevolence. "For broadcast you may have to coax nervous or hard-to-get guests with a combination of reassurance and flattery" (McLaughlin, 1990: 72). One writer discusses child interviewees. The reporter is warned not to talk down to the child and reminded that he/she can get information about the parents through the offspring. A final rule of thumb relates the child's values to those of an adult: the reporter must not ask about school because this is the equivalent of the child's job (Brady, 1977: 63-64). At least in the beginning, the interviewer plays the role of a nurturing parent.

As the interview unfolds, as the questions get more demanding and personal, the interviewer may shift her tactics. In contrast to the nurturer, a second role is suggested in the manuals. The authors appeal to the interviewer to take tactical action as a method of getting the "facts"; using militaristic words and phrases they describe methods for getting around interviewee defenses. Two of the writers Cohen studied used "military" terminology at the "control" stage of the interview (Cohen, 1987: 52). Brady extols the virtues of the hard-nosed but tactical reporter. "Some interviewers make the mistake of striking directly for the pulsating nerve" (Brady, 1977: 91). McLaughlin admits that there are many journalists who use badgering techniques to "test the mettle of their guests." However, he advises his students to become "persistent, direct and assertive"
interviewers rather than engaging in frontal attacks (McLaughlin, 1990: 155). Control strategies make up a large proportion of these texts. Once the interviewee is in position, the interviewer uses these strategies to maintain control over what is being said and to coerce the subject, or subjects, into saying more than they are prepared to say.

If a persona for the perfect interviewer is to be constructed from these manuals, then she would move gracefully and imperceptibly between two roles: that of the parent and the military strategist. She will move between these two positions, from confidante to commander, easily and quickly. As we have seen above, Bill Grundy could achieve neither of these roles in his encounter with the Sex Pistols. He obviously did not establish a friendly relationship and not only did he lose control of his interviewees, but he also lost self-control.

The interviewer is accepted as the audience’s surrogate searcher for truth, “the individual as agent of a universal reason” (Heath, 1990: 279), the upholder of the public’s “right to know,” the objective presence. Ideally, the program’s motives are to discover the truth about, or from, its interviewees, but that truth is often affected by the questioner, who plays a fictional character, a schizophrenic image manufactured both for the interviewee (as trusted friend) and the audience (as tactician).

The broadcast interview is a form of theatre played out on the public stage. In many ways, the performance outshadows the content, placing great pressure on the interviewer to be animated and attractive while also sounding intelligent (McLaughlin, 1990: 18).

Another important facet of these manuals is an attention to the “spectacle” of an interview and how these, mostly visual, elements must be controlled. There
are three visual components of all broadcast interviews: the interviewer’s performance or “look,” the interviewee’s performance, and the set or backdrop. In the manuals, greater attention is focused on the first of these components. While the interviewer must practise her image and gestures, the “best” interviewee (usually the focus of the shot) is unprepared, as this is said to assure spontaneity. It is suggested to the student that the more unprepared the “guest,” the better the interview (Brady, 1977: 92).

Students are led to believe that the interviewer’s “capacity to manipulate the interview, accidentally or deliberately, is very high” (Rosenthal, 1990: 131), and also that an interviewer’s body language and his proximity to the interviewee will affect the message. The writers also point out that within the power relationship of an interview, interspatial distance is important (McLaughlin, 1990: 210-211).

Margaret Morse (1985: 8) finds another function of the interviewer interesting.

It [the interview] is of mixed discursive status, for while the reporter can pivot and talk to us, the viewers, or to the interviewee, the subject of the interview does not look at the camera or hence at the viewer. Like the inhabitants of story space in the novel or film, the interviewee must pretend to be unaware of the camera and to address all responses to the second-degree narrator, the reporter. In other words, the interview is the site of a denial within the programme image; we cannot share looks with the inhabitants of the world. The interviewee is in the third person, while the viewer is part of a ‘we’ of discourse.

At several points, the student interviewer is reminded that part of her role is to help the subject forget where she is at the present moment. The interviewer’s body language or subtle signs of interest, the knowing nods or murmurs of assent, will help to accomplish this. If the questioner can look like she is completely oblivious to her surroundings, then hopefully, the subject will be free to follow suit and concentrate upon the subject matter of the interview (Metzler, 1977: 95).
The interviewee should be put "at ease" but must also be goaded into disclosure. The manuals suggest that interviewees be screened for charisma, i.e., the more vivacious, well-spoken and/or good-looking the guests the better. Also, the interviewee must be able to forget things. She must, in effect, heighten her awareness of everything except the present studio moment; she must ignore the lights, lenses and microphones. And, as Morse indicates, the answerer must tacitly agree to certain limitations placed on her by the context. She must not look into the camera and become a part of the "'we' of discourse," nor must she ever ask a question of the questioner. The Sex Pistols/Bill Grundy interview sets a negative example for broadcast interviewers because these "rules" are broken. Glen Matlock entered the "we of discourse" when he asked the audience if Bill Grundy was like Johnny Rotten's grandfather (McLaughlin, 1990: 94).

Rosenthal suggests that a location setting for the interview should in some way reflect the objectives or the content to be discussed. "If the story is about research, then you probably want to go for the laboratory background" (1990: 128). McLaughlin suggests that the setting be conducive to achieving "your goals" for the interview. The visual context is an important factor both before the interview, as a place that comforts the interviewee, and during the broadcast, as a projection of the objectives and biases of the producers or interviewers. The authors agree that the backdrop should never overpower the interview itself. Although its importance is downplayed in the manuals, Cohen concludes that the physical location is taken to represent (in many cases) a place where the interviewee is comfortable and "may influence the audience's perception of the interview" (1987: 27). The objects, colours, lighting effects, even activities glimpsed in the
background, reflect upon the character of the interviewee. Also, it is assumed that
the interviewer is not at home in these location settings, that the props and
backdrops are unfamiliar.

Several of the texts I looked at mentioned the interviewee who wants to be
interviewed, the “media freak.” This person is described in emotional terms as
manipulative and conniving. The authors fail to notice the irony of their de-
scriptions, nor do they see the media freak as a possible reflection of themselves.

He has seriously studied the media and he claims to know their every
weakness. He uses a weakness to his advantage. He knows, for example,
that the media love confrontation. He knows that they prefer attackers to
defenders, fighters to lovers, high profile to low, violence to peace, simple
solutions to complex, hard action to soft philosophy (Metzler, 1977: 137).

This statement in Creative Interviewing is not meant to be ironic at all. The
writer is saying to the student that these are the unwritten motives of the media;
the battle-weary reporter is saying that the public, all potential interviewees,
aren’t supposed to know these motives. The media freak is manipulative because
he or she sees through the polite friendly exterior of the interviewer. “Beware, too,
of the subject who wants to be interviewed.... Motives abound: prejudices, special
interests, ego, income. Watch out!” (Brady, 1977: 192). If the media freak’s motives
are a dark reflection of the reporter’s, then income, ego, and prejudice are also a
part of why the interviewer wants the interview. Rosenthal ends his section on
interviewing by sympathizing with the unwary filmmaker who is “being
consciously or unconsciously used by the interviewee to make a political or
propaganda point” (1990: 136).

In contrast to these descriptions, McLaughlin devotes a whole chapter to
the interviewee’s perspective and to the ethics of “spinning” the interview.
Although he does mention "schmooze artists" (a rough equivalent to the media freak), the Canadian writer sees an interviewee's preparedness and "media savvy" as being, for the most part, a benefit to the interview. Speaking from a more contemporary perspective than the other interviewing experts, McLaughlin writes:

> With interviewees better prepared to protect and explain themselves, they are not the pushovers they once were, an improvement not all my colleagues are grateful for. The more you keep someone in the dark, according to this point of view, the greater the advantage you hold over that person (1990: 82).

The writer is aware of the advantage of the interviewer, his position of authority, yet he is teaching him or her methods for increasing that advantage. The above quote also tends to position the earlier authors as the colleagues who like keeping the interviewee in the dark. A central concern of this analysis is the relationship between interviewer and subject. Above, we've seen an example of how an over-prepared subject is avoided in favour of one that is spontaneous, natural, and ignorant of the process in which he or she is participating. It is also evident that for the power relationship to be satisfied the "guest" must be submissive while the "host" is dominant.

One last aspect of the performative context of the broadcast interview is the framing of the shot, i.e., the visual composition of the message. Although highly subjective, the "readings" of this aspect of the interview will be important to an understanding of the ideology of the context. Rosenthal identifies several different "looks" used in broadcast news interviews. "The straight-on look tinges the shot with the magisterial conviction we associate with the World War I posters that proclaimed, 'Uncle Sam wants you!'....The oblique angle, relaxes the quality of
the interview, making it less authoritarian and more anecdotal, informal, friendly.” The shot framing can be used to manipulate the quality of the interview. “The two-person setup is also used when you are deliberately aiming at or expect a confrontation” (Rosenthal, 1990: 130). The composition of the images sends subliminal messages and these messages are either accidental or are coded by the producers and camera-people.

A splitting of the questioner's personality is called for in these texts. The interviewer must present an image that is both fraternal and ruthless. A successful reporter will meld these polar opposites effortlessly. The interviewee must be led out of the present moment, be led to forget the invisible supporting cast and machinery. Once the subject has forgotten the cameras and is focused upon the friendly listener, the interview will proceed to a “positive” outcome, i.e., one that moves toward a pre-planned objective. The manuals would describe a good interview relationship as one between a benevolent but dominant instigator and a submissive respondent. Although the rules vary somewhat according to medium, they tend to perpetuate an ideology focusing on an objective “truth.” In the search for that unmediated, unbiased “truth” the interviewer is allowed to disguise herself as a grieving friend or an inquisitor. That same search will force the interviewee to play a submissive, oddly distant role. And it will allow the producers to construct the spectacle of the interview, to frame the shot and to select only appropriate voices to speak the “truth.”
Ideology

Some voices—who claim to dominate, who top the hierarchy, who claim the centre, who possess resources—are not only heard much more readily than others, but also are capable of framing the questions, setting the agendas, establishing the rhetorics much more readily than the others (Plummer, 1995: 30).

Ken Plummer, in his book *Telling Sexual Stories*, identifies the power behind public disclosure and its appeal both to confessors and inquisitors. In this section, I want to filter out of the history of the interview and the analysis of the interviewing manuals some ideas of how those “few voices” assert their power and what ideology might be reflected in the context of the broadcast interview. From these, in some ways, structured and intrinsic notions of the ideological functions of the mediated dialogue, the inherent power relationships can be discussed. Previous ideological studies of television news programs have proven that, although the media still stand behind a self-constructed reputation for fairness and objectivity, their choices of content, their editing decisions, their “unconscious” preferences, etc. are based upon a dominant ideology (see Brunsdon and Morley, Glasgow University Media Group, etc.).

Stuart Hall indicates that an ideological understanding may point to the “naturalizing” affects of television practises.

It would be more appropriate to define the typical discourse of this medium not as naturalistic but as *naturalised*: not grounded in nature but producing nature as a sort of guarantee of its truth. Visual discourse is peculiarly vulnerable in this way because the systems of visual recognition on which they depend are so widely available in any culture that they appear to involve no intervention of coding, selection or arrangement (Hall, 1982: 75).
But in fact these intervening codes, selections and arrangements are always present and are aspects of an unavoidable ideological stance. No interview will ever avoid ideology. Hall and his associates ask not that media producers invent an ideology-free interviewing environment, but that they admit to and de-naturalise the codes and arrangements they have made to present the interview.

There are three areas of intervention that affect and inform the ideology of the broadcast media interview: the preliminary context (including all the selection preferences and preconceptions held by both the subject and the interviewer), the performative context (including that which is seen during the interview and the non-verbal languages exchanged), and the verbal interaction (the dynamics of question and answer). Together, these areas of intervention inform the content of the media interview. After examining the various methods of intervention or manipulation within each of these areas, the dialogical alternatives to each will be discussed in the final section.

i. The Preliminary Context

The idea of ideological pressure or manipulation of media messages is not a new one. Tony Bennett (1982: 303) identifies some of these ideological pressures as resulting from a “dominant political culture” that is “embodied in the codes and conventions of the working practices of professional journalists...” If we perceive the news or the interview as either true or false we miss the ideological skew. And yet, this is the object of an interview: to make us forget the ideology, to choose either to believe or disbelieve. The broadcast interview is a contrived event; it “is
the product of a culturally encoded and socially determined process of making which displays, in its content and form, the technical and ideological forces which bear on its construction" (1982: 295-296). Bennett goes on to opine that one of the sources of the persuasive power of the media is its ability to position the viewer as a witness, incapable of response to the evidence presented and ignorant of the actual experience of the event portrayed (296).

In an essay entitled “Representing Television,” Steven Heath identifies three ways that the television medium excludes inappropriate or selects appropriate content. The “straightforward exclusive” function simply outlines what topics or points of view are not considered important or healthy for the status quo and shuns these completely. The “quantitative exclusion” function allows improper or counter-cultural opinions token moments of air-time. The “exclusion-inclusion” function implies that so much of what is proper and positive is aired that there is no room left for “unimportant” voices. These exclusion functions come into play during the preliminary context of an interview. All broadcast interviews must pass through this ideological gateway (Heath, 1990: 291).

Once the probable content has been accepted as suitable to satisfy the public’s “right to know,” the interviewer begins researching the story, selecting the interviewee, and drafting specific objectives for the interview. Eventually, questions are formulated which will further these pre-planned objectives. Even at the earliest stages, there is an idea of how the interview will proceed, what informational or emotional points it should raise. That idea of success will be based on the producer's and interviewer's notions of entertainment value, newsworthiness, topicality and how the interview will fit into the story and the
program (Cohen, 1987: 30).

The subject is often selected according to her ability either to perform before the cameras, or to speak for a group, or both. "In journalistic interviewing there is often a situation in which the reporter wishes to present the position of the 'representative' of a particular social group such as consumers, voters, strikers or simply the 'man in the street.' With this goal in mind, the reporter selects someone to be the representative person" (Cohen, 1987: 19). The social status of the subject is noted and will affect the performance of the interview. A short encapsulating label is assigned the interviewee ostensibly to identify the guest's expertise or her affiliations and to prepare the viewer further for what will follow. This label is an important element in the conceptual and conversational "frame" of the interview.

The frame is the device which, though it cannot absolutely prescribe the content of a reply, does prescribe and delimit the range of "acceptable" replies. It is an ideological strategy, in the precise sense that, when it works, it sustains a certain spontaneous circularity—the form of the answers already being presupposed in the form of the questions (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978: 70).

During the interview, the frame will incorporate various visible components. The location backdrop is often chosen to say something about the interviewee: to show erudition, a bookshelf will appear behind, to indicate a researcher the interview may be held in a lab complete with beakers and retorts. Again the backdrop is chosen to limit the personality of the interviewee, to constrict her character. "An entire iconography has gradually developed around the use of background space in interviews, normally to provide verifications of the role or status of the interviewee" (Nichols, 1981: 203). It must be added that in
many broadcast interviews the backdrop is chosen for reasons of expediency rather than verification of a role. Lighting often dictates one backdrop over the other as well. It is also true that superimposed graphic titles, appearing occasionally during the interview, will remind viewers of the speaker's expertise or affiliation.

The interviewer's role in this preliminary stage is to calm the interviewee, to rehearse her to varying degrees and to focus the interviewee upon the subject at hand. The subject must tacitly agree to be calmed and focused during this pre-performance stage. Even on location, the lights, cameras, microphones and crew affect the preparation by their very presence. The reporter is accustomed to the situation; the subject understands that the medium will centre on her and adjusts emotionally to this attention. She has become the focus, not only of an imagined audience, but of a team effort and must (or at least should) play her part.

In effect, the purpose of the preliminary context is not to allow for a free and open dialogue. Its purpose is to support a rhetorical position, a pre-planned idea of what should be said. Researchers, directors, producers, and interviewers have chosen, to the best of their abilities, the interviewee who fits their common sense notion of what is newsworthy or entertaining. The frame is set before the first question is asked and it is a frame that empowers the interviewer while stereotyping the subject of the interview.

For the Grundy/Sex Pistols interview there was little or no organized preparation. The group was standing in for a no-show, the band “Queen,” and Bill Grundy was only vaguely aware of the people he would be interviewing, much less their musical career or cult following. The interview was altered from the
beginning by the fact that the band had brought three "fans" along with them. This partisan audience of three affected the power relationship; Grundy was literally outnumbered. Due to expediency and a need to fill broadcast time, the usual selection process was overruled. The interviewer was ill-prepared and unfriendly from the start. Bolstered by their in-studio audience of fans, the interviewees were in a more dominant position than usual and were not prepared to accept roles assigned them by the interviewer or producers.

ii. The Performative Context

The performative context of the interview includes everything that is seen during the interview and all the non-verbal messages communicated. This set of messages involves the positioning of the participants, the shot framing, the placement of objects and furniture visible in the shot and the performances of on-camera speakers. The performative aspects of the fictive discourse communicate an associated world, a place that tells of its inhabitants.

The shot is framed to position the interviewer as a stand-in for the viewer. As Morse (1985) has indicated, the interviewer may turn and speak to the camera, but usually he is either faced away from the lens, facing in the same direction as the viewer or he is not visible in the shot (known as the "masked" interview). Nichols points out that this access to the eye of the camera is ironic in that the most mediated and controlled actors have the most connection to the camera (and thus to the audience), while interviewees and especially unconscious actors have little or no connection. "The closer to an unmediated activity and real social actors
we go, the less an individual’s access to the eye of the camera, and hence to our
own, becomes” (Nichols, 1981: 178) The way an interviewee is framed in the shot
will also prejudice the exchange, will add information on a subliminal level. “The
‘close-up’ is used to concentrate on facial features of the interviewee and often
gives the impression of the camera ‘invading’ the privacy of the person” (Cohen,

In an analysis of the findings of the Glasgow University Media Group,
Bennett also discovers that, by association, environments promote certain
unidentified biases. After discovering that management interviewees were seen
“surrounded by all the trappings of authority,” he notes that union representatives
are usually seen against a “background of activity and disorder” (Bennett, 1982:
303-304). And these environments seem to predetermine what types of information
will be sought.

Whereas management representatives were usually looked on to provide
the ‘facts’ against which to view the dispute, the labour side was looked to
for ‘events’... with the result that, in visual terms, the source of discord
was most typically seen to be the workers...(1982: 305).

When the performance is “successful” then, the subject agrees not to look
into the camera while speaking; she agrees not to ask questions of the questioner
and, following from this, not to assert her own creative powers or her desire to
know. If the interviewee steps out of this role, the dynamics of the interview will
be upset.

The interviewer will waiver (as we've seen) between friend and tough
inquisitor. He will nod and emit small noises of assent and interest. At times, he
will use silence to force the subject to elaborate. “And sometimes the best stories or
the best leads come from a broken silence when the person feels the need to fill that void, and they'll just start talking” (McLaughlin, 1990: 6). On both sides, the possibility of “dead air” may create tension. Related to this is the notion that, in general, the media interview attempts to present a calming discourse (Nichols, 1981: 175). The aversion to “dead air” derives from this basic ideological function. This “propagation of quiescence” affects other performative factors: the patriarchal and benign vocal and visual image of the interviewer, the adherence to formal conventions, and the subservience of opinion and content to program flow.

A governing ideological factor at the performative stage is the notion of flow as first postulated by Raymond Williams (1974). The attempt here is to create a flow of information that draws a viewer along in the current, demonstrating that the path of least resistance lies within this flow. The interviewer must be constantly aware of the flow of his interview. He must be watching a floor manager or a television monitor or listening to a headset. Even in the least structured interviews, the questioner will be aware of the length of the answer. Impromptu, unfocused elaboration runs counter to flow; it usually slows the current. Bennett identifies these processes as deliberately shrinking the sphere of public debate. “It is a ‘double-dupe’ system, an ideological form which effects a contraction of the sphere of public debate whilst simultaneously engendering the illusion that that sphere is entirely free and open” (1982: 307).

It should be added that usually, or to varying degrees, the interviewees are unaware of this ideological attention to flow and to the propagation of quiescence. However, as the medium entrenches itself in our society, in the reality of our
lives, we become more “media literate,” we understand that interviewers will appreciate “sound bites” rather than long explanations. This understanding is again ideologically controlled; the actual mechanisms and prejudices of the medium are still held to be less important than the discourse, the verbal interactions that still seem to occur upon “neutral” territory.

Both John Lydon and Glen Matlock refused to “perform” within the normal parameters of a media interview. Matlock asks a rhetorical question of his friends: “He’s like your dad in’ he, this geezer, or your grandad?” He objectifies the reporter, switches the focus and scrutiny from their image to his. Is he simply a “dirty old man” pretending to be upright and proper? Immediately after this reversal, Grundy asks the band members to shock him and, of course, his audience. He attempts, in a most direct way, to re-focus the interview, to get it back to an examination of the questionable morals of his guests. At first, he seems to be more aware of machinations and responsibilities off-camera than with the conversation he is meant to lead. It is only after his control is threatened that he returns to the interview itself, but by that time it is too late.

iii. The Verbal Interaction

The last ideological component of the media interview is the actual verbal interaction. This includes the questions, the answers and the unplanned conversation that may result from these. The previous elements are meant to go unnoticed by viewers; it is a producer’s and interviewer’s hope that preliminary and performative contexts will fade into obscurity, or become the unaltered
“reality” of the interview. In contrast, the verbal interaction is the least ideologically controllable element of the interview, but that is not to say that, in and of itself, the verbal interaction is a dialogue between equals.

At least half of this conversation has been indirectly condoned or sanctioned by the producers, i.e., the questions. The Glasgow University Media Group identifies how certain types of interviewees are asked certain types of questions. Bennett (1982: 305-306) paraphrases their study of a labour dispute this way:

The structure and content of interviews with union leaders was said to be almost a priori prejudicial to the union interpretation of disputes in the respect that such union spokesmen were usually asked to provide explanation or justification for their union’s action. In being thus provided with an opportunity to exculpate themselves, the inevitable implication was that--in striking--unions were axiomatically involved in a culpable act.

To varying degrees, questions may “involve” the interviewees in realms of knowledge that can be socially or morally reprehensible. Although the above sentiments and findings denote a conspiratorial tone endemic to the time in which they were written, these axiomatic assumptions continue within the broadcast medium. In fact, in its capacity as an information engulfing and disgorging behemoth—as the electronic singularity that eternally draws points of view into itself to absorb or co-opt them—television often revels in its own excesses and biases.

Important for the authors of Everyday Television: ‘Nationwide’ (Charlotte Brunsdon and David Morley) are the performative aspects of translation during the interview.

In Nationwide there is a thread almost of anti-intellectualism; ‘experts’ are held in some value for what they may have to contribute, but it all has to be translatable into the language of immediate issues and everyday
concerns (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978: 7).

The interviewer shapes the answers of experts (and others) into a language of immediacy and focuses the points made onto his own or his producers’ ideas of everyday concerns, concerns that are important to “normal” people. This act of translation is also based on the preconceived objectives of the interview.

The interviewer will exercise control over the verbal interaction through leading questions. The manuals we have looked at aim at heightening a reporter's abilities to make a conversation seem “natural,” while at the same time controlling the interviewee’s answers or at least the range of possible answers. All of the elements of the interview tend to create a false logic. The producers attempt to narrow the field of response by constructing what “logically” follows given the circumstances, the imposed identifications and the nature of the questions.

Questions will also bear upon the objectives of the interview. A mode of address will be assumed and, naturally, will be directly elicited by the question. Some interviewees will be expected to respond emotionally, others to assume a pedagogical tone, and still others to relate a testimonial or unconnected objectivity. These “logical” modes of address are pre-determined. Producers and interviewers assume, using their powers of common sense, that interviewees will respond within a certain emotional range. These assumptions are based in ideology.

So, we are left with respondents whose freedom to speak is confined within a very limited sphere of public debate. Ideological constraints are, of course (and
sometimes these writers forget this qualification), only attempts at controlling the message. I have tried to avoid the implied certainty of many ideological studies of the medium. However, by virtue of their righteous attempts at impartiality and objectivity, interviewers and their producers do perpetuate a finite view of reality and in this way the message we receive does possess a disguised ideology. "...[T]o castigate the broadcasting media for their failure to be impartial in some absolute, philosophical sense misses the more essential point that they achieve their ideological affectivity precisely through their observation of the statutory requirements of balance and impartiality" (Bennett, 1982: 306). The verbal interaction within an interview remains a restrictive simulacrum of a conversation that will only with great difficulty, or through some happy accident (such as we see in the Grundy/Sex Pistols interview), transmit a message that runs counter to a dominant ideology.
A Dialogical Perspective

In the past decade, the identification of an ideological agenda imposed by "a dominant political culture" has been questioned and criticised. If we accept that every utterance embodies an ideology, then this should lessen the importance (or at least the usefulness) of criticism based in the elucidation of ideological motives. If ideology is inescapable perhaps we should accept its presence and look to other critical possibilities. Also, ideological criticism is often embedded in a Western aesthetic and does not expand naturally to incorporate other cultures, ones that may not view politics or economics or even power in the same light. Although outside the purview of this essay, debates among post-modern theorists have opened up the range of critical analyses to incorporate creative possibilities for questioning and altering the dominant ideology.

Clearly analysis needs to pose questions of ideology, of what kinds of necessity it has and how it is to be understood, at different levels: from this or that particular program through to the fact of television in its overall institution as a medium. In respect of this latter, we can come back to a sense of a loss of the ideological, its discredit, for one of the things to which television crucially contributes is a certain erasure of ideology (Heath, 1990: 290-291).

The very volume and proliferation of television images and sounds obfuscates criticism. There are so many ideologies, some readily apparent others disguised by notions of "objectivity", that they too become subsumed in the morass of the media. But, in the view of some contemporary media theorists (see Newcomb, 1984; Heath, 1990), this plethora of ideologies tends to affirm that ideological
criticism is not enough; it identifies the problem and then silently wrings its metaphorical hands over the impossibility of any escape.

Horace Newcomb has postulated a method for communication studies scholars to proceed from a "monolithic" ideological structure. In his essay, "On the Dialogic Aspects of Mass Communication" Newcomb asserts that scholars and critics of television content and practise must develop a dialogical understanding of the media audience (or, in our case, the media interview).

In order to better understand the complex, heteroglotic nature of any text, and more importantly, to understand the relations between texts and their recipient-users it is necessary to develop a sociological semiotics and an adequate sociology of interpretation. In this way we may more adequately explore the semantics of the concrete and the social, the collision of ideologies that inheres in complex forms such as the novel, and, I would argue, in the even more complex forms of contemporary mass communications (Newcomb, 1984: 40-41).

In his essay, Newcomb cites V.N. Voloshinov and M.M. Bakhtin as the progenitors (although they are thought to be one and the same writer) of his theories because these Russian writers concentrated on processes of communication, context rather than content, parole rather than langue. The notion of a dialogical interview includes the belief that all the elements of the interview (not just what the interviewee says) produce messages and that the discourse must encompass more than the "literal" sense of the exchange. It must include and grow from a conjoining, a dialogue among all the different words and languages and contexts presented.

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers,
may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile (Bakhtin, 1981: 276).

It is the task of the dialogical interview to not only present this charged and tension-filled environment but to present it in a self-conscious way. If the media interview becomes this dialogically agitated environment, participants will express themselves more completely. They will enter the discourse as formed characters, as individuals rather than types. Bakhtin, in writing of the novelistic “speaker,” touches on what the participant in a dialogical interview might encounter.

The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system that determines this word, within the alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver [note: instead of striving for “truth!”]; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system. The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener’s, apperceptive background (282).

From these liberating, but necessarily generalized notions of how one gains a "dialogical imagination", and from a mistrust of the closure inherent in ideological perspectives, Newcomb developed his ideas concerning the dialogic aspects of mass communication. However, he is quick to point out that a dialogical perspective, does not ignore the ideologies created by or embodied within a medium, in fact it insists upon them. This dialogical perspective acknowledges that the dominant ideology inherent in a message is only one component of that message.

None of this [note: the writer is referring here to a critique of hegemonic theory] should be taken to ignore the attempt on the part of the dominant groups to consciously or unconsciously impose meaning, to restrict usage and interpretation, to frame the terms of communication process and content, or to manipulate access to interpretative ability (Newcomb, 1984: 38).
What then is the dialogic aspect of the broadcast interview? Two sources of viewer and participant tension noted above in the section entitled "Ideology" will provide us with a starting point from which to identify and describe a dialogical interview. The first is the tension created by interview silence, by dead air. This may be seen as a metaphorical base from which to build a new kind of mediated dialogue. The second is the tension created by restrictions imposed by the medium, rules that tend to dictate not only how a program is made but how it is perceived and then how it is translated into public and personal actions.

However, as is indicated above, sometimes an "oppositional" rendering of the message may occur and these rules may be broken. As we've seen in the Grundy-Sex Pistols interview, this counter-ideological performance may then be co-opted back into the ideology of the medium. The interview became a lead story in all the British papers, it heralded the Sex Pistols as spokespeople for the Punk movement and has been replayed in various documentaries about the movement. By examining the anomalies, the cracks in the ideological armour, some concrete possibilities for a dialogical media interview may be discovered.

Other possibilities for change have been suggested from outside the media of video and film. Post-modern ethnographers such as Steven Tyler envision a new method of recording and understanding other cultures. This new post-colonial, post-positivist ethnography falls back on non-rhetorical discourse as a useful observational tool, one that incorporates various points of view and compensates for basic cultural differences. And these ethnographers, following in the footsteps of British social ethnographers like Dick Hebdige, James Curran,
Angela McRobbie and Tony Bennett, are interested in film and video as media to assist in ethnographic study.

Because post-modern ethnography privileges 'discourse' over 'text,' it foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue, and emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation in contrast to the ideology of the transcendental observer. There is instead the mutual dialogical production of a discourse, of a story of sorts (Tyler, 1986: 126).

This ethnographic discourse, serving here as the generic term for a new kind of media interview, would search for ways of escaping from what Tyler calls the totalizing functions of language, i.e., it would not seek after the chimera of objective or unbiased knowledge. A dialogical discourse would disown "the Mephistophelian urge to power through knowledge for that, too, is a consequence of representation" (Tyler, 1986: 131).

i. Political and Formal Reflexivity

Bill Nichols discusses two types of reflexive (or ethnographic) documentaries, one based on political motives, the other on stylistic ones (1991: 63-65).

Julianne Burton, in her book The Social Documentary in Latin America, identifies a politically dialogical point of view.

Documentary provides: a source of counterinformation for those without access to the hegemonic structures of world news and communications; a means of reconstructing historical events and challenging hegemonic and elitist interpretations of the past... (1990: 6).

Nichols discusses some recent feminist documentaries in this light. "Unexpected
juxtapositions here occur between the internal conventions, iconography, and, especially, speech of these films and the dominant (masculinist or patriarchal) ideology operating in society at large" (1991: 64). Feminist reflexive documentaries attempt to make the familiar (dominant) strange as they draw attention to the actual process of viewing and the political content of the medium. Although political reflexivity represents a dialogical motive, a search for a conversation that escapes the unbalanced and illusory aspects of a typical media interview, it will sometimes bend that ideological form to its own ideology or, even more perplexingly for the viewer, couch its ideology within a media form that assumes an opposing ideology.

The formal reflexive documentarist, according to Nichols, calls attention to the form of the medium itself and attempts to present alternatives to that form. "The viewer comes to expect the unexpected, functioning not with a surreal intent to shock and surprise so much as to return the film systematically to questions of its own status and that of documentary in general" (1991: 62). Reflexivity in film and video would incorporate self-referential elements: intitiles, crew on-camera involvement, multiple imaging, computer-generated colour and chroma effects, etc. These types of films would "insist that the representation of reality has to be countered by an interrogation of the reality of representation" (1991: 63)

This "bipolar" description of documentary film is important to a dialogical description of the media interview because the dialogical interaction will reflect both their purposes, i.e., it will regard the "discursive formations and institutional practises that characterize a given society" while also being immersed in an awareness of (and be in a dialogue with) the medium itself (1991: 65-66). It
seems that the purposes of a dialogical media interview run parallel to those of a reflexive mode of filmmaking. How will each of the three components of an interview, preliminary, performative and verbal, be affected by a dialogical approach?

ii. A Dialogical Interview

If a dialogical interview has a preliminary, it must be aware of the position not only of the subject and the reporter but also of the audience. I start with this notion but must quickly step away because this essay is concerned more with the on-screen exchange of information than the effects of interviews on audiences. Although Nichols reflects his comments back upon the audience, showing how they may receive the message differently and decode from it an inherent ideology, here the attempt is to increase the possibility for dialogue, to open the interview to multi-vocalities, multiple points of view. It may be that the first preparation is to have none, or at least to dispense with pre-planned objectives. “The purpose is not merely to unravel the text. Rather it is to recognize the essential dialogical nature of all forms of communication. The ‘languages’ and ‘words’ interact with one another to form a new totality” (Newcomb, 1984: 39). As interviewers we are preparing to be listeners and to be listened to not only by the audience but by the interviewee. The interviewer-interviewee distinction may completely disappear.
The formal elements of the performative context of the interview are easily overturned. An alternative to the dominant broadcast interview will result from undermining the performative space, framing, positioning, and participant roles. The non-object of the dialogical interview may be to allow a plurality of visual and performative elements. Within a shattered environment, within an illogical space, participants become more subjective, less related to outside allegiances or to off-camera responsibilities. However, this is not to envision a patently nihilistic approach to the traditional interview. It is to suggest that these “hidden” devices may be overturned, with an eye to destroying the ideological logic of the discourse, without affecting the “sense” of the points of view presented by the participants.

If the interview is to be edited, this act must be dialogical also. It should speak of its own mechanics and its decisions. The edit, normally a covert act performed by a filmmaker or an unseen editor, may become dialogical by including all participants in its decisions (as is suggested in Jeffery Roth’s study of videotaped research methods, The Disturbed Subject). As has been noted above, these editing decisions have traditionally been made to serve notions of continuity, narrative chronology, rhythm, pacing and pertinence to a theme or argument. Perhaps editing is intrinsically and unavoidably a dominant practise (a culling of “useless” material always is), but if the dialogical interview is to accept all perspectives, then even this electronically delimiting one should be possible. The point should probably be that producers and on-camera speakers need not prepare for or assume a flow-dictated edit. Instead of being “seamless” or “non-disruptive” the edit may be artificial and self-aware; it should be used to enhance the dialogical nature of the mediated exchange.
The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse. On all its various routes toward the object, in all its directions, the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction (Bakhtin, 1981: 279).

The concept of "dead air" is important here as an illustration of the level of representation to be attempted during a dialogical interview. As we have seen above, the tension we, in the West, feel in the presence of social silence is amplified in the media interview. There are affinities, analogues if you will, between our social experiences of conversations and the filmic or video interview. The challenge is to understand those affinities and build upon them. What other elements of social tension can be reproduced or re-presented on video? Are there moments, if not of truthfulness, at least of heightened clarity within unmediated social conversations that can be captured on the screen, analogous perhaps to those moments in improvised music when the accumulation of individually created sounds achieves inexplicable cohesion and beauty? Once the interview becomes an environment that allows for and actually anticipates conversational synergy, then it has taken steps towards a dialogical perspective.

It appears from the voices heard here, that there is something wrong with the status quo, that the standard broadcast media interview is not the outlet for creative truth that it says it is. Its language, the fictive discourse, is manipulative and powerful. Many viewers still believe (at least subconsciously) that the media interview offers us our best window onto actuality. Our individual conceptions of reality are built of these selected questions and answers. We are still satisfied that, within certain stylistic or obviously ideological limits, there is unbiased information to be gained from the standard broadcast interview.
By examining the history of the interview as it metamorphosed through the different media of print, film and video, this segment of the textual support document has attempted to reveal the purposeful construction of the interview as an informational tool, the omnipresence of that tool, and its function as a basis for much of what we know. In combination with these ideas of the traditional formal elements of the interview, the first part of this study looked at the discourse of journalistic interviewing manuals. The intent was to understand the interview at a less tangible, more ideological level. The phraseology of the manuals suggested a discursive environment focusing on regenerating an illusion of objectivity and truth, through its contexts and verbal interactions, and elevating the interviewer to the status of defender of the public’s “right to know.”
PART II - The Media Production

Process and Methods

In the proposal for this thesis media production project, presented to the Faculty on May 19, 1995, the video production component was tentatively titled: “Ideology in Question.” Here is how the video component of Who’s Asking...? was initially described:

*Ideology in Question* will be both innovative and multi-disciplinary. Its concerns will move from the examination of different styles of documentary film-making to theories of social history to aesthetic themes important to video artists. A fundamental and guiding notion behind the video is that, in keeping with post-modern notions of cultural studies, we, as persons living in a postmodern society, should subvert or controvert or overturn the traditions that have, over earlier generations, encrusted into either “canonical” or “hegemonic order.” It was in this postmodern spirit of “trying something new” that the idea to produce *Ideology in Question* was first conceived. (Wilson: 1995, 1-2)

Although in many ways the project now differs from what was proposed in 1995, *Who's Asking...?* began with these strategies of subversion and controversy and overturning. Throughout the process of making the video component of the project, the object of those strategies of overturning was the broadcast interview. The main research question became how can a new, dialogic, non-authoritarian type of interview take place?
Part I included an examination of the importance and tradition of the interview and a discussion of some alternatives to the broadcast news interview style. The present section will describe the details of how the video component was made. It will move from a description of the initial planning stages to include details of the creative process and the production methods employed to complete the video. In effect, this section is a chronology of the three phases of production: the pre-production, production and post-production phases, including all the logistical decisions that were made in order to complete the twelve-minute broadcast video entitled: *Who's Asking...?* A final phase of the project took place on May 16, 1996, when the video was screened before an audience and before four respondents, whose opinion and feedback provide the raw material for an assessment of the video: how well or poorly it presented the theoretical themes, and what reactions it prompted in these viewers. This assessment concludes the textual component.

i. Pre-Production and Planning

After the thesis media production proposal was written and circulated, the proposal presentation was videotaped for documentation and to highlight the fact that videotape would be a central investigative tool throughout the project. The project began as a videotaped documentary work which would contain experimental ethnographic interviewing and filming techniques, as well as more traditional documentary footage of various academics who were employed at the
Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham in England. The three sections of the video at this early stage included:

The first and most ethnographic segment will follow a strict chronology; the viewer will see: how the changes were forced upon the Centre, how the individuals involved reacted to those forced changes, what resulted after the changes were implemented and, finally, how the participants answered questions about this situation's relation to wider issues, concerns and strategies within the cultural studies discipline of today.

The second panel will involve the posing of questions. Interspersed between bits of the first panel, these questions will be constructed and posed by the same and other British Cultural Studies experts. The interviewer will be revealed here, quietly listening to the question but never responding. These questions will provide a visual transition from the orthodox to the ephemeral. They will involve the viewer directly and break the chronology of the more traditional "documentary" style narrative.

The third and least structured or chronological, or for that matter logical segment of the work will be the "lyrical imagistic spaces." These visual and aural landscapes will attempt to allow the viewer a time and space within which to formulate his or her own answers to the questions posed (Wilson: 1995, 2-3).

The project was meant to combine research into the theories of the British Cultural Studies theorists who had taught at the Centre with a video which would attempt to implement some of their ideas.

Due to a lack of broadcast quality camera and audio-recording equipment, an inability to contact some members of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, and the reluctance of others to participate, some changes to the production were planned during the summer of 1995. These included a resolution to concentrate upon the broadcast interview as a media tool which could be used as a case or a focus for the thesis media production. Since the production could not be shot with sophisticated photographic equipment and the logistics of recording the Birmingham faculty proved to be insurmountable, it was decided, at this pre-
production stage, to concentrate upon the person-in-the-street interview.

This type of media interview is still used today and usually entails a crew of only one or two. The interview usually involves no preparation of the interviewee and is always filmed or videotaped on location. Using portable video equipment, this highly structured interviewing context could be inverted. An inversion of the person-on-the-street interview would fit the budget and resources of the production and would also incorporate elements of the video travel diary. Instead of the reporter, the stranger to a street location, being off camera asking questions of the subjects, he would be before the camera, situated in an obviously foreign locale answering questions posed by the unseen subjects. Being a stranger in another cultural environment meant that the videomaker was in a less knowledgable position than the interviewers. Instead of constructing this foreign culture though, the on-screen character is being constructed by the inhabitants. In this way, *Who's Asking...?* runs counter to travel documentaries and diaries.

The last and best reason for deciding upon these production methods was their simplicity. The simplified content and relatively mundane imagery would allow for the theoretical implications central to the themes of the piece. As the project moved forward, it became obvious that the theories underpinning the video lent themselves to a more general, less problem-oriented, content. The video is about what happens when a traditional interviewing style is reversed or over-turned rather than about solving the problem of how to alter that style.
ii. Production

On June 9th, 1995 the production phase began in London, England. All of the inverted person-on-the-street interviews were shot with an Olympus 8 mm. camera in available light. The participants lived mostly in the Willesden Green area of northwest London. They were of all ages and from many walks of life including: restauranteurs, fruiterers, shoe salespeople, realtors, shop clerks, musicians, actors and teachers. Participants included a roughly equal proportion of men and women. The shooting continued until mid-November, 1995.

Each interview was set up in roughly the same manner. The participants were approached and asked if he/she would mind operating the video camera. Once they had agreed, the camera was turned on and set to automatic focusing, white balance and exposure functions. The participants aimed the camera and, once they were focused on their interviewee, were asked to ask of him two questions. First, they were asked to ask the interviewee (myself) one question to which he could or should know the answer. Second, they were asked to ask the interviewee one question to which he could not or would not know the answer. This second was invariably the more difficult of the two questions for the impromptu interviewers.

Questions of the ethical treatment of interviewees and participants in any videotaped document were also addressed at this stage of the project. There were no refusals whatsoever to the task of handling the camera and asking two questions. In almost every case, the taping led to long and very interesting conversations off-camera; however, all the participants understood they could
withdraw at any time and they would remain anonymous on the videotape. Most of them never gave their names. Also the footage does not pinpoint where in England the encounter took place. During the off-camera conversations, participants were afforded the opportunity to learn about the use to which the videotape would be put. In many ways, the methods employed to get the footage were predicated upon the fact that this video must, if it was to remain true to its theoretical themes, avoid exploiting its participants. The fact that only the voices are heard on the finished videotape and that the participants are not seen at all, tends to negate the possibility that they will feel in any way exploited by the completed video. In short, uninhibited participation would indicate implied consent.

The production phase resulted in close to five hours of rough footage of interviews. It should be mentioned here that the questioners seemed to enjoy the process. Most revealing at this production phase was the fact that the impossible-to-answer questions seemed invariably to be concerned with what was uppermost in the mind of the questioner, e.g., the fruiterer's impossible question was about fruit, a shop clerk asked how many varieties of goods he carried in his store. During the taping of these interviews then, some preliminary editing decisions were already being made. It was also important that the impromptu interviewers captured, in haphazard and eccentric ways, the foreign (at least from the point of view of the videomaker) soil upon which the interview was taking place. The backgrounds and locations would later illustrate an inter-cultural theme that runs through the video (more on this in the assessment section of this essay).
There were several outcomes from the shooting which became important as the project neared the post-production and editing phases. First of all, the audio recordings of the questions were of good quality because the cameraperson/ questioner was always perfectly placed for the camera's on-board microphone. These good recordings stood in contrast to the poor sound quality of the answers to the solicited but unstructured questions. Second, the medium seemed to match the content. The footage was consistently "bad" or amateurish, but that "home movie" quality seemed to match the content of the video. The interviews seemed to be communicating "home truths," or at least to be avoiding the "professional" quality of a normal broadcast documentary.

iii. Post-Production

For the post-Griersonian documentarist working in any mode, abandoning the all-powerful position of the artist is a necessary prerequisite for ethical filming. (Winston, 1995:258)

The post-production phase of the video began in December, 1995, and continued until May, 1996. This phase included the structuring and planning for the final twelve-and-a-half minute video, the paper edit process, and the off-line and on-line editing procedures. It was during this stage of the production process that the most subjective, unilateral and non-dialogical decisions were made. Interactive filmmakers, such as the producers for the National Film Board's Challenge for Change series, have proven that involving the subjects of a docu-
mentary in the editing process has definite dialogical possibilities. However, *Who's Asking...?* is more concerned with the context of the interview and how that visually apparent construct might be overturned. The interactive approach is desirable and dialogic, but aims at a slightly different part of the production process. Although the post-production phase was not as democratic as a documentary of the interactive mode and marks the point of greatest videomaker intervention, earlier decisions were influenced by ideas proposing greater subject involvement in the videotaping process. Jeffery Roth writes:

> The public's familiarity with video media as well as its growing experience with video self-inspection presents to researchers an unprecedented opportunity to invite subjects to participate in formal observational studies (Roth, 1990: 102).

Part I of this document, "The Dialogical Context of the Broadcast Interview," was written during the pre- and production stages of the video project and completed before the editing began. The textual component became a source for the structuring and editing of the video. Decisions were informed through an awareness of the history of the interview process and were made to illustrate possible ways of overturning those traditions and practises.

During the paper edit process five areas of concern or common interest (on the part of the anonymous questioners) were isolated. These included: questions concerning the process of shooting the video; questions which tended to construct the stranger; those which constructed the place or placed the stranger; those regarding work; and finally, questions about questions. The questions were initially organized into these five sets.
For the off-line edit the questions were cut together and viewed, then rearranged with an eye to narrative drive, speed and rhythm, repetition, and interaction, i.e., how one shot seemed to respond to or "answer" the previous one. The editing process resulted in many of the questions being discarded from the final product. They were rejected first of all because they seemed not to fit into the five designated sets of questions. Later, questions were rejected because they were too repetitious or because they slowed the pace of the video. Here, the flow of the program began to override the initial dialogical decisions.

Also during this stage, the first experiments at constructing non-conceptual gaps in the video were attempted. In any dialogue, some space must be made for response and interaction; these soundless, non-conceptual gaps were meant to provide such a space and to illustrate the usefulness of "dead air". During the off-line edit, several images (in themselves difficult to correlate with objects or scenes from the real world) were super-imposed to break down their significance further, to erase their conceptual correlates and to abstract the images into colours and shapes. These gaps contain no soundtrack and in this way present a strong contrast to the question sections.

The on-line edit was performed on an AVID Media Processor, a non-linear digital editing facility at the Division for Instructional Development at the University of Windsor and at the Windsor Occupational Health Information Service video editing suite. The particular advantage this digital system offered was that it saved on generational loss, i.e., it avoided the degrading effects that occur each time a video image is copied from one tape to another. The raw footage for Who's Asking...? was shot on an inferior video format. This 8 mm footage was
transferred to an SVHS broadcast quality tape that also recorded an LTSC time code. And this single step from the original was digitized, edited and outputted to master tapes on several formats including: Betacam, three-quarter inch, SVHS, and regular VHS. The digital editing was undertaken to assure that the low quality original could be reproduced at the highest quality possible. The various formats meant simply that any editing/dubbing facility will be able to start from a high quality master tape.

Several intertitles were also added during the on-line stage, as was a soundtrack. The former were added to separate the sections more completely and to add another level of self-awareness and ironic videomaker-authority to the video. The intertitles include the cover of a pulp novel by Edgar Wallace called, "Traitor's Gate" with the added subtitle: "My Inquisitor's Dilemma," and a quote from "The Cultured Man" by Ashley Montagu which reads:

So far there is no record of any viewer ever having been lethally affected by that form of consumption known as TV. But there is reason to believe that the communicators have sometimes had the feeling that their sending stations were discharging into a mass of moribund nonconductors; this has been the case, mostly, when good programs were involved. (Montagu: 1959, 42)

The pulp cover was meant to parody visually both documentary intertitles and travel posters. The subtitle was added after the cover art had been scanned and saved in a video format, i.e. JPEG.

The soundtrack was added at the beginning and end to herald the program and to accompany the credits. Also short moments of music were added as the non-conceptual gaps come to a close. These provide a further signal that the next section of rapid-fire questions is about to begin. Three musical themes were used:
the first providing notions of conundrums and questions; the second using drums and bass guitar to create a frenetic pace; and the third using computerized strings and keyboards to foster a mood of calm and foreignness. The head credits include a departmental acknowledgement of the fact that this video is a part of a thesis media production. The end credits consist of three cards with the headings: "music by", "edited at", and "thanks to".

*Who's Asking...?* runs twelve minutes and thirty seconds. The last elements of the post-production usually include the screening and the marketing strategies. In this case, the screening becomes an interactive performance and each screening will be unique as it will elicit and contain different audio responses during the non-conceptual, soundless moments. A description of such a screening and a short assessment of a small group of audience participants will complete this procedural section of the textual support document.
Assessment

The final investigation undertaken for this project occurred on May 16, 1996 at 5 p.m. during and after a screening/performance at the Art Gallery of Windsor. In an effort to discover if in fact the video was communicating some of the ideas and innovations that it had been intended to communicate, this screening/performance was videotaped and a feedback session was organized after the event with a small group of audience participants.

The screening included an introduction by a Department of Communication Studies representative, James Linton, two textual presentations, the screening of the completed video, the "responses" of four participants, and a final question period. After the screening, the focus group repaired to a quiet area and offered their suggestions and opinions on the video and the part they had played in the performance. The textual presentations were meant to summarize the project and to inform the audience of the aims of the project without hampering the video itself by offering too much explanation. The second textual presentation was a short prose poem entitled, "Billy's Journal." This element was included to offer a metaphorical or lyrical "take" upon the video, again to prepare, in a less logical or pedagogical manner, the audience for what they were about to see.

The four respondents were chosen randomly. None of them had previously seen the video or knew about its content. Of the two female respondents number 1 was in her early twenties and the other (number 3) in her fifties. The former has some art and film training, while the latter is a working person and mother. The
two male respondents are quite close in age, mid-to-late twenties. Number 2 is a factory worker with extensive knowledge of media systems. Number 4 is a photographer and artist. He is bilingual, with french being his mother tongue. The respondents were always anonymous and their participation provides implied consent.

During the screening of the video the four participants were asked to "respond" to what they were watching even as the video was unfolding. Each participant was asked if he/she would hold a microphone during the actual screening. They were rehearsed once, fifteen minutes before the screening, and were shown the video for the first time at that time. Each participant was assigned a particular soundless "gap" in the video. During the screening, as the particular participant's soundless "gap" came up, the microphone was turned up by a sound engineer at the back of the room and the participant spoke, into his or her microphone, whatever words he or she wished to say. This part of the performance/screening was completely unrehearsed. The soundless "gaps" did include slow-motion superimposed images and the participants were warned of the impending end of their "spots" by the return of the musical soundtrack.

These four interventions or immediate responses were meant to illustrate another possibility for the dialogical videotaped interview and to undermine the videomaker's position as controller of the situation, as absolute maker of the event. This screening would be unique; there would never be another quite like it, because each time Who's Asking...? is screened, the interventions will be dealt with differently. The "spaces" for these interventions have been shaped and
molded through the processes of editing and shot selection, but there is no way of predicting what audio responses they will contain.

The question period after the screening was also videotaped. It lasted only a short time, and seemed too short for most of the "non-participating" audience. They seemed to be quite stimulated by the performance and screening and were quite willing to ask questions about the process. After the question period the audience dispersed and the focus group was taken to a quiet room for a short discussion and feedback session.

i. The Responses

There were four responses that filled the same number of soundless "gaps" in the video. Each of these "gaps" lasted about 25 seconds.

The first respondent's "gap" came after the initial section entitled "process." She spoke clearly and seemed to time her speech to fit the rhythm of the slow-motion images. She said: "I'm reminded of Blade Runner and the final scene where Rutger Hauer says, 'all these moments will be lost in time like tears in the rain,' because these are the kind of moments that don't make it into that room." Later, during the discussions, this respondent indicated that she was taken by the fragments of meditated "reality" that we are not usually allowed to see. In this first section, she thought she was seeing some of those fragments. In fact, she had noticed what all broadcast interviews deliberately leave out.
The second respondent spoke after a section entitled, "Constructing the Stranger." His words were less clear and his thoughts were cut off by the engineer as they seemed to run too long for the "gap." Also, he started before the microphone was turned up and this may have affected his concentration. He said: "It's a wet dry over there isn't it? Or a wet cold...rather (laughs)...the weather. Travelled across the Atlantic to get that on video. Amazing. This world is getting very small and the topics that we see coming into our homes..." In the later discussion, this respondent would focus upon the control exercised by the video and how it was difficult to interject succinctly enough or to leap into the flow of the program. But he was also obviously reacting to the travelogue aspect of the piece.

The third respondent was the most concise and left the longest soundless space before the music. She said: "Whose children are they? The children don't belong to anyone, they never can and they never will. And where would they like to be? Anywhere their parents are." This respondent chose to paraphrase the questions and form her own answers. And the answers were given in such a way that the questions seemed absurd or uninformed.

The last respondent spoke the least clearly but with the most emotion. He responded to a section entitled, "Work." Although the response seemed not to be connected logically to the video, the final question before his soundless "gap" was, "If you had one day to live over in your life, which day would it be?" The last respondent said: "How can I ever feel warmth in my body. Dear friend, lay down beside me and watch the clouds roll by 'til the earth covers them and they are gone. Time that withers you will wither me." This is a quote from a book by
Jeanette Winterston. Later, this respondent would admit that his response was affected by the literary nature of the introductory texts and perhaps by the fact that the screening took place at the Art Gallery of Windsor.

It is interesting to note that each respondent focused upon a different aspect of the video. The first commented upon the structure of the piece, while the second responded to the place, the experience of the stranger. The third respondent questioned the questioners and the last attempted to answer, in a very metaphorical manner, one of the questions posed. Instead of understanding a particular prescribed message, the respondents seem to have constructed their own. Also, of note here was my own reaction as the maker of this finished video. The screening became a mystery to me just as it was for all those in attendance. Although I had structured the piece, edited it, etc., during this screening I was hearing the responses for the first time. I was adding those responses to the whole message and in this way the whole message was altered.
ii. The Feedback Session

The four-person respondent group left immediately after the screening and question period to discuss the video further. Although they were asked questions, it was not a formal interview; instead the respondents discussed issues that interested them with minimal input by this researcher. This discussion lasted about one half hour. As with the initial questioners (who videotaped the videomaker in Britain), these participants were free to refuse to participate at any time.

What follows is a loose transcript of the rapid-fire discussion. The respondents are identified in order of their soundless "gap", i.e., the first person to respond during the video screening will be cited as number 1, the second as number 2, and so on.

**Number 4**  Am I supposed to ask a question or what, I didn't know? It was just my favourite author, Jeanette Winterston, and I threw it in because I wasn't as prepared as everybody else.

**Number 1**  Having the first segment was good. I was thinking about wedding photos, and how you get all the posed shots but no aside moments. All those fragments are washed away.

**Number 3**  Let the ego die, that's what it was saying. Don't compete, just answer what you feel. I didn't feel I had to compete with the others [respondents]. The accent was a problem though, but it was made easier by the pre-screening; that helped.
Number 1  Yes, I could see there was a kind of implied relationship between the answerer and the questioners. Some were more friendly than others. The images [during the soundless "gaps"] really helped me to lose myself. They added a sense of lyricism. I also liked the "home video" look of the piece, it seemed to fit what we were hearing and seeing, the wonky camera angles and stuff.

Number 2  It was definitely disconcerting. I was tapping the mike to make sure it was on and stuff before I spoke. And I was just thinking, why does this have to be so...scripted? It seemed very powerful.

Number 3  I also liked the abstract images. For me... I appreciate the abstract image. What do we need order all the time for?

Number 4  I think the interaction would be way too literal if the four of us had been up front on a stage or something.

Number 2  I could see colonialism around every corner and I think that was mainly because of the prose or poetry you were reading at the beginning. That keyed me to it.

Number 4  Yes, during my part I was really looking and really concentrating to try and come up with something to say. It was a different kind of watching.

Number 1  I think everybody's pauses were good and they ended well. Also, the fragmentary things that were going on just added to the whole story.

Number 4  I would have said something different with a different text or a different section or even a different setting for the screening.
Number 2  I'm still not quite sure where the viewer is though. In this we see the maker of the thing and we listen to the others, but what part do we play? To answer?

Number 1  It was very mundane, the situations and people and places.

Number 3  Sometimes I thought they were like rhetorical questions. And I think this wouldn't have worked as a documentary. I mean as a glitzy, well-produced thing. It really fit the low budget.

Number 2  Yeah, shit is still a natural resource. Basically, I was thinking about the control elements in this video. It is very much about how controlling the TV can be.

Number 1  You know I think part of the problem is that we don't yet have the conventions for viewing things like this. But we must be getting there. And I was also starting to get interested in the construction of your person, I mean of the person on the screen.

This transcript represents only a few of the comments made during the post-screening session. The respondents were encouraged to discuss the video between themselves, to engage in debates and to add to one another's points. The comments above were recorded in shorthand during the discussion. Although the attribution is certain, the quotes are oftentimes simplifications of what was actually said. This section of the assessment is meant as an indicator of what themes and issues were seen as important to the four anonymous respondents.
iii. Conclusion

The screening and performance lasted only about 40 minutes. The audience seemed to respond to the humour implicit in the questions and even to the puzzled looks offered by the on-screen would-be answerer. Although there is no story or narrative as such in Who's Asking...? the video does not appear to drag or be pedantic. This has never been a criticism offered up during any of the screenings or editing sessions.

In both the response feedback session and the question period, the atmosphere was quite informal (even though the space was quite formal and austere). The participants seemed more than willing to offer their opinions, almost as if the video's barrage of questions had charged them or inspired them to try to answer or at least to ask questions of their own. Instead of providing the answers, the video stops at arranging the questions. For students, this open-ended quality will result in discussions and possible answers to the questions posed by the video. This charged atmosphere of pent-up answers (and questions) will power discussions and in this way the video will become a valuable teaching tool.

Although the encounters between the stranger (myself) and the inhabitants always represented an inter-cultural exchange, this theme seems to have been only subconsciously understood by the control audience. The fact that the preparatory prose-poem dealt quite blatantly with inter-cultural and "colonial" themes seems now to have been a mistake as it directed the perception of the video. However, the dialogue between on-camera stranger and the foreign location
behind him were commented upon by the respondents. It was also suggested, during the question period after the screening, that unseen questioners from other countries or cultures would react differently to this dialogical form.

*Who’s Asking...?* seems to have inspired this first audience to ask many questions. It may not have provided an alternative to the interview-based documentary. It probably doesn't answer questions the audience may have about what an alternative to the "normal" interview really is either. But if the intent of the video can be amended to include fostering an environment for real dialogue and focusing that resultant dialogue upon our conventions for viewing the broadcast interview then this interactive and reflexive video has accomplished at least a part of what it set out to do.

This document includes a description of the dialogical context of the broadcast interview and of a video which attempts to create such a context. These words are not meant as a defense or explanation of an inexplicable video. They simply provide textual background for the work. For the purposes of the thesis media production, this document provides details of the theoretical background and implications of the video. It also describes the process of making the video component of the thesis media production and documents the logistics behind the decisions that had to be made prior to the completion of *Who's Asking...*? Finally, a short and inconclusive assessment of the initial screening is provided to give the reader some idea of the audience reaction that might be expected.
References


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