According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term 'interview' entered the language in 1514, from the French *entre voir* (meaning 'to be in sight of'), hence referring to a "meeting of persons face-to-face, especially one sought or arranged for the purpose of formal conference at some point" (p.1740). These first interviews were normally between high ranking individuals and, in a world where travel was difficult and most diplomatic communication was conducted by letter, they were rare events accompanied by high ceremony. The extraordinary 1520 extravaganza, when Henry VIII of England entertained Francis I of France so lavishly that the event (and its location) came to be known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold, may have been one of the first 'interviews' ever to be so named.

By the end of the nineteenth century and the rise of modern journalism, the term interview came to have a different and more current meaning. Webster's dictionary of 1913 defined an interview as "a conversation, or questioning, for the purpose of eliciting information for publication", noting that this is a "recent use, originating in American newspapers, but apparently becoming general" (Webster 1913: 781). A more recent Webster notes that the term "interviewee" emerged in 1884. By this point, the term had lost its older ceremonial associations, and acquired its primary modern meaning as a journalistic practice.

The news interview is the invention of American print journalists, and grew to prominence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, English and other European journalists began to accept it, often under American instruction (Schudson, 1994). Early interviews were usually done without notes, and their results were paraphrased and summarized in newspaper articles. As the interview became institutionalized however, direct quotation became more common and the interview increasingly became an 'on the record' affair. In a parallel but delayed fashion, U.S. Presidential press conferences also evolved from off-record background conversations with journalists, to the full-scale on-record sessions we know today.
The emergence of the news interview was a product of changes in newspapers in the mid-nineteenth century in which factual reporting became a more important feature of newspaper content than partisan commentary, and was associated with the professionalization of journalists that accompanied this development. News interviews were disliked by proprietors who preferred their newspapers to be organs of opinion, and by editors who disapproved of the reporter's increasing independence from editorial control (ibid.). Interviews were also disliked by their subjects. In addition to their understandable resentment of journalistic ambushes on their own doorsteps, public figures found they had to accommodate to a new and more uncertain method of communicating with the public. The direct expression of their views in speeches or in writing that was typical before 1850, was supplanted by journalistic mediation concocted out of quotation and paraphrase. Because the result is a product of the questions the journalist chooses to put, the source's responses, and the reporter's selective representation of them, public figures found the expression of their opinions entangled in an uneasy process of collaboration. New dependencies emerged - on the wit and motivation of the reporter to ask the right questions, and to understand and represent the import of the answers. And collaboration brought with it a taint of manufacture and artifice - the "joint construction of... a hack politician and... a journalist", as one nineteenth century critic described it.³

What began in the newspaper business spread to broadcasting shortly after the development of radio. Once radio producers discovered that broadcasting the spoken word was more than a matter of simply reading the printed word aloud, they used mediating interviewers to help public figures and others 'in the news' to get their message across. The use of interviewers solved the problem of 'address'. As early as 1928, experiments conducted at the BBC led to the conclusion that it was 'useless to address the microphone as if it were a public meeting, or even to read it essays or leading articles.'² Interviews solved this problem of address: the public figure simply responded to the interviewer's questions. In this way, an element of conversational informality and spontaneity was injected into broadcasting, while the rigors of directly addressing the broadcast audience were reserved for newscasters, advertisers and electioneering politicians.
The same techniques were later imported directly from radio to television, and with even more urgency. As President Franklin Roosevelt's 'fireside chats' demonstrated, it is certainly possible to create an 'informal' script and read it so as to simulate spontaneous talk. However while this practice is workable on radio, it is impossible on television. Here, before the development of the teleprompter, "the speaker, being seen, was seen to be reading" (Wyndham Goldie 1977:198). Moreover, it would be many years before public figures developed any real competence in using the teleprompter in a natural way (Cockerell 1988). Thus, almost from the beginning, interview techniques were a significant feature of television current affairs shows. In America, "Hear it Now," Edward R. Murrow's interview based magazine show for CBS radio, became "See it Now" on CBS television in 1951. NBC's "Meet the Press" started as a radio show in 1945 and moved to television in 1947. The program endured many changes of slot, but it has deviated little from its original interview format. It has now become the longest running show on American television. In Britain, news interview techniques pioneered by Robin Day and others from 1958 onwards have since become a staple feature of television news and current affairs.

In this chapter, we review the normative context of the broadcast news interview, the regulatory constraints that shape its production, and trace the evolution of the news interview in Britain and America.

The 'Interview Contract'

The growth and institutionalization of interviewing, for both newspapers and broadcast media, is built on a coincidence of interest between public figures and journalists. Journalists need access to public figures for their livelihood, while public figures need journalists to gain access to what Margaret Thatcher once called 'the oxygen of publicity.' Thus an informal and unspoken contract exists between the two parties in which journalists exchange access to publicity for the kind of news content that will keep readers reading and viewers watching. These incentives also imply the sanctions that underlie the bargain: boring or uncooperative interviewees do not get a second invitation, and aggressive journalists can be boycotted. These sanctions are a valuable reminder of the tensions just below the surface of the 'joint construction' of news.
Underlying these tensions are specific journalistic values and interests which are quite frequently at odds with the objectives of politicians. According to veteran British interviewer Robin Day, writing in 1961, the interviewer is there to elicit opinions, regardless of his own. He is giving the person interviewed an opportunity to deal with attacks or misconceptions. The interviewer has a duty to see that a person with controversial views has the other side of the problem put to him. An interview must not degenerate into a platform for a man's unchallenged opinions...A TV interview does not exist to glorify the person interviewed. Nor does it exist to glorify the interviewer. It is for the information of the public. The interviewer should stick to this principle undeterred by charges of bias or self-assertion." (Day 1961:105)

As this statement suggests, broadcast journalists ordinarily attempt to strike a balance between two competing conceptions of 'objectivity.' On the one hand there is objectivity as impartiality: journalists are expected to be disinterested and neutral in their questioning of public figures. They are expected to have respect for the facts and the perspectives that their sources communicate, and to work to bring these into the public domain. On the other hand, there is objectivity as adversarialness. To achieve factual accuracy and a balance of perspectives, journalists should actively challenge their sources, rather than being simply mouthpieces or ciphers for them (Weaver and Wilhoit 1991, Tunstall 1971). In the news interview context, this second norm is one that pushes interviewers not to let the interview become a kind of platform or soapbox from which public figures can get away with their own preferred, possibly misleading, and often self-serving spin on events. These two ideals are of course just that, and there are no absolute standards for the evaluation of either. Because questions inevitably encode points of view and decisions about relevance, they can never be strictly neutral. Nor is there adversarialness that is does not involve judgements about what is, and what is not appropriate.

The two ideals, moreover, are not always equally balanced, especially among the elite journalists with whom we are primarily concerned. Successful journalists tend to be those who impart their own 'take' on events, and whose interpretations of the background and motivations of political actors are conveyed to the viewing public. As Zaller (2000) argues, this drives journalists to take a more adversarial stance towards politicians in both print and television. In the broadcast interview context, this means asking public figures questions they would rather not answer, and using questions to imply versions of
events that are unflattering to politicians. It is no accident that many of the most celebrated television and radio interviewers of the last thirty years - for example, Mike Wallace, Dan Rather, and Sam Donaldson in the US and Robin Day, David Frost, and Jeremy Paxman in the UK - made their reputations through highly aggressive styles of questioning. Aggressive questioning led to 'heavyweight' celebrity status, counter-balancing and sometimes exceeding the status of their interviewees. There are thus real career incentives for journalists who wish to achieve or maintain elite status to engage in the kind of questioning that public figures are most inclined to dislike and resist.

Setting aside career incentives, journalists tend to hold politicians in low esteem. According to Epstein:

The working hypothesis almost universally shared among correspondents is that politicians are suspect; their public images probably false, their public statements disingenuous, their moral pronouncements hypocritical, their motives self-serving, and their promises ephemeral. (Epstein 1973:215)

In terms of news interviewing, this can translate into a distinctly adversarial frame of mind. Sam Donaldson put it this way:

As to what questions are appropriate and how they should be asked, well, let's put it this way: If you send me to cover a pie-baking contest on Mother's Day, I'm going to ask dear old Mom whether she used artificial sweetener in violation of the rules, and while she's at it, could I see the receipt for the apples to prove she didn't steal them. I maintain that if Mom has nothing to hide, no harm will have been done. But the questions should be asked. Too often, Mom, and presidents - behind those sweet faces - turn out to have stuffed a few rotten apples into the public barrel. (Donaldson 1987: 20)

Jeremy Paxman of BBCtv's Newsnight was characteristically more succinct:

When he started as a young man on The Times Louis Heren was given a piece of advice by an old hack. He was told you should always ask yourself when talking to a politician: 'Why is this lying bastard lying to me?' I think that is quite a sound principle from which to operate.\textsuperscript{v}

Thus, in addition to the career attractions of taking up an adversarial stance towards politicians, journalists entertain quite deep seated sub-cultural beliefs which can license such a stance.

There is, in sum, a conflict of interest that underlies the 'interview contract.' Most public figures would prefer the kind of straightforward dispassionate questioning that is typical of the PBS NewsHour 'newsmaker' interviews, even though they may recognize that such interviews do not make for exciting
television. Elite news interviewers, often under pressure from ratings, are impelled to take a more lively and contentious stance. The last thirty years in particular have witnessed a shift from 'lapdog' journalism (Sabato 1991) to 'attack dog' journalism. As one component of this, the drive towards more adversarial interviewing both reflects and embodies an unavoidable conflict of interest between broadcasters and their subjects, one that injects friction into an otherwise symbiotic relationship.

Controlling the Playing Field: Regulatory Constraints on News

The conflicts of interest between journalists and sources do not exist in an institutional vacuum. Broadcasting in both the US and the UK is subject to a complex regulatory environment which, before the advent of cable and the internet, arose from a fundamental shortage of broadcasting frequencies. From the 1920s, both countries addressed this problem by licensing and regulating access to bandwidth, though they did so within different philosophies of broadcasting. The regulation of broadcasting in the United States emerged within a strongly market-oriented framework in which it was believed that, subject to safeguards against monopoly, consumer choice should largely determine the content of radio and television programming. Accordingly, regulation by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been relatively light and unobtrusive. Since the late 1970s, FCC constraints - on ownership, access to bandwidth, and program content - have been progressively relaxed as cable, satellite and the internet have increased bandwidth and weakened the basic rationale for regulation in media markets. In Britain, by contrast, the bandwidth problem was addressed by establishing a broadcasting monopoly - the British Broadcasting Corporation - whose potential power was limited by statute, formal powers of appointment to the governing boards of the BBC, and other, more informal means of control. For these reasons, the history of broadcasting in Britain is one in which relations between governments and broadcasters assume a much greater significance than in the US.

i) United States

In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission was established by Congress in 1934 to license broadcasting stations, and thereby to control access to the airwaves. The FCC's policies
were historically centered on the development of an informed public opinion, and "on the right of the public to be informed, rather than any right on the part of the government, any broadcast licencees or any individual members of the public to broadcast his own particular views on any matter" (Franklin 1981: 587). And FCC policy focused on maintaining a diverse range of broadcast news sources by limiting the total ownership of radio and TV stations, and by preventing overlapping ownership or control in the same market. From the emergence of television until the mid-1970s, the FCC strongly favored news programming - a generally less profitable, if not actually unprofitable, component of television broadcasting. Indeed it was FCC pressure at various points in the 1960s that led to the expansion of news and current affairs programming on American television (Epstein 1973: 53-9).

Although the FCC has the power to revoke licenses, it has historically exerted pressure on stations more indirectly. Until the later 1970s, license renewals involved an audit of news programming, and stations which fell below a certain minimum were required to justify their programming decisions. Negotiations often followed in which renewal was made contingent on an increase in news programming. Similarly, in competitive hearings, the FCC clearly favored news programming in allocating licenses (Epstein 1973:61). This more interventionist stance by the FCC gradually eroded during the 1970s, and was essentially abandoned in the anti-regulatory atmosphere of the 1980s.

Between 1949 and 1986, the FCC also exerted some influence on various aspects of news content. Most importantly, it enforced standards of balance and fairness in news programming under the "Fairness Doctrine". This required broadcasters to present contrasting points of view on controversial public issues. Also enforced indirectly - the FCC did not actively monitor news programming and mainly responded to complaints - the "Fairness Doctrine" nonetheless induced the networks to take steps toward achieving a measure of balance in their news and documentary programming. It did so by obligating affiliates to balance one-sided programs with later, additional programming (Epstein 1973:65). Consumed with the necessity of avoiding this kind of costly and unprofitable programming, affiliates insisted that contrasting viewpoints be included in network news. This significantly impacted news interview content. Epstein notes, for example, that in the coverage of a 1968 New York City teachers' strike,
executives at NBC ordered a number of stories prepared for the Evening News to be reshot or canceled because the views of black community leaders were not adequately "balanced" by filmed interviews with teachers and union officials. And it is quite common for producers to order correspondents to insert "pro" or "con" material in their voice-over narration. (Epstein 1973:67)

And the 'balance' provision of the Fairness doctrine was supplemented by the 'attack rule' which provided that public figures whose honesty, character or integrity was impugned had the right to be notified of the program, to a script or tape of its content, and to access to the broadcaster's facilities to reply. Taken together, these two provisions had a significant, and dampening, impact on the use of controversial interview material on network news.

The membership of the FCC is by Presidential appointment and in 1986 - six years into the strongly deregulatory Reagan presidency - the FCC systematically dismantled many of the content regulations which had been enforced during the preceding thirty years including the "Fairness Doctrine."

Underlying these changes was the fundamental fact that, with the emergence of cable and satellite transmissions, bandwidth was no longer a scarce resource. In this new context, the argument that bandwidth was a resource of which the broadcasters were temporary stewards lost its force. In place of the older paternalistic conception of broadcasters as community trustees, the Reaganite conception stressed the role of market forces in bringing the public the programming it chooses (Aufderheide 1999).

As FCC head Fowler put it, "the public's interest...defines the public interest" (Fowler and Brenner 1982). One result has been an increasing tendency for more politically slanted news and public affairs coverage, especially on cable and in the recently emergent Fox News owned by Rupert Murdoch. While traditional journalistic values continue to stress balance and fairness, new cable news channels, such as MSNBC, strongly promote aggressive 'attack dog' interview shows. The result has been an exacerbation of the 'argument culture' (Tannen 2000) of journalism, and a general expansion of adversarial interviewing styles. The newly deregulated environment of journalism provided a context for Dan Rather's highly aggressive prime time interview of George Bush on the CBS Evening News and may have contributed to its tenor.
In 1967, a new kind of television network - the Public Broadcasting Service - took its place alongside the existing commercial stations. Created by the Public Broadcasting Act signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson, public television was pieced together from over 100 local educational stations mainly financed by state and local government (Hoynes 1994). Its formation was a response to the sense that the commercial pressures on existing radio and television companies created real obstacles to their ability to serve cultural, informational, and educational functions - in a word, the public service function of the broadcast media. Public television was financed by congressional allocations, determined every three years, by membership of local stations and increasingly by commercial sponsorship and advertising. From the start government funding was a source of conflict with the Nixon administration which replaced Johnson in 1968. From the 1980s, the financing for public broadcasting has been heavily contested and uncertain during a period in which free market conservatism and the deregulation of broadcasting has been increasingly in the ascendancy in Washington. Persistent difficulties over the congressional allocation of funds, which can be vetoed by the President, have increased the sensitivity of PBS to the political and moral preferences of the Congress, which today constitute a pressure favoring self-censorship by the broadcasters that in some ways parallels the pressures experienced by broadcasters in Britain.

ii) Britain

From the outset, the British Government handled the bandwidth problem within a quite different philosophical framework from the US. In contrast to the competition of voices encouraged by US policy makers, British legislators concluded that "the broadcasting service should be conducted by a public corporation acting as a trustee for the national interest and that its status and duties should correspond with those of a public service." This stance favored a single broadcaster - the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) - which, from its founding in 1922 until 1955, enjoyed a monopoly of the airwaves. The BBC is funded through an annual license fee paid by owners of radios and, subsequently, television sets. The BBC's remit was summarized by its first Director General Lord Reith as "to inform, educate and
entertain." Similar principles informed the national broadcasting systems developed in Canada, Australia and a number of European countries.

In 1954, in a major shift in policy, the Broadcasting Act was passed by parliament permitting commercial television broadcasts. The Act established the Independent Television Authority\textsuperscript{vii} to ensure that the commercial companies maintained a broad public service broadcasting policy and that they provided fair, objective, and balanced reporting in news, current affairs, and documentary programs. Since this committee, like the FCC in the US, can change the allocation of television franchises, it can exert similar indirect pressures on news producers to be careful in matters of balance and objectivity. Unlike the BBC, commercial television is primarily funded through advertising revenue and sales of programs.

The British broadcasting system is one in which government plays a key role, and one which is in many ways more overt than in the US (Cockerell 1988). All the main structural changes in broadcasting - the advent of television, the introduction of commercial tv, and subsequent expansions in the number of channels - have followed reports of government committees which resulted in legislation to implement the changes. In addition to legislation, the government of the day has other resources with which to exert influence on the broadcasters.

First, there is the power to appoint. In the case of the BBC, the government appoints the Chair and the twelve governing board members of the BBC. This power is one which permits politicians to exert both direct and indirect influence on the policies of the BBC. On two occasions Prime Ministers have sanctioned the BBC by removing its Chairman although, as in the case of some US Supreme Court appointments, they have not always found the direction set by the new Chair as palatable as they had hoped. The government has identical powers of appointment of the committee overseeing commercial television, including the important matter of the allocation of broadcasting licenses.\textsuperscript{viii}

Moreover governments set the BBC’s license fee. Decisions to raise this fee are never popular with the British public and legislators are understandably reluctant to raise them any more than necessary. The license fee is thus an inbuilt source of friction between government and the BBC which is continually in search of programming resources. While withholding increases in the license fee has sometimes been
overtly used as a sanction (Cockerell 1988:133-4), it is also an area where it can be difficult to discern the dividing line between understandable reluctance to court electoral unpopularity, and tacit pressure on the BBC to engage in programming that is more favorable to government interests.

Finally, governments of both political parties have objected directly to particular news and current affairs programs. The most infamous reaction was to a 1971 BBC program titled "Yesterday's Men" about the Labour opposition leadership, which led to a long-term deterioration in the relationship between broadcasters and politicians and an intensification of the hostile relationship between the BBC and the Labour administration that took power in 1974. During the 1980s, government anger at a string of programs dealing with the IRA and other Irish terror organizations issued in various forms of pressure: explicit attacks on program makers, monitoring broadcasts for political bias, and informal - but overt - threats to limit revenue from license fees. More generalized attacks on 'media bias' - particularly in the six month run up to general elections - have also been a recurrent means through which both major British political parties have attempted to restrict the autonomy of broadcasters, often with some success.

**Participation**

Although balance, impartiality and objectivity are commonly enjoined on US and UK news and current affairs broadcasters both by journalistic norms and legal frameworks of broadcasting, this does not mean that all potential participants have equal and unfettered access to news programming. The ideal of 'balance', whether required by the US Federal communications Commission's "Fairness Doctrine" or by British norms of 'public service' broadcasting, has never embraced 'equal time' or 'equal treatment' for communists (Epstein 1973), or terrorist organizations such as the IRA (Schlesinger, Murdoch and Elliott 1983). Indeed for a period during the 1980s the British media were not permitted to broadcast the voices of IRA spokespersons - an injunction which they circumvented by having the relevant statements read by 'voice doubles' so similar to the main protagonists that the prohibition was rendered vacuous.

Leaving aside these explicit restrictions on participation, it is clear that the major news shows favor 'establishment' guests. Research by Croteau and Hoynes (1994) on participation in ABC's 'Nightline' and PBS's 'Newshour' - both major US news shows that rely heavily on interviews - documents
the unmistakable dominance of their guest lists by Washington and establishment 'insiders'. Both shows predominantly feature members of elites, less than 10 per cent were labor, public interest or racial/ethnic leaders, fewer than 20 per cent were female and the vast majority were white. These guest lists did not 'look like America.' Similar British findings were reported a decade earlier by the Glasgow Media Group (1976). This preference for 'insider' political actors and experts has its defenders. As Robert McNeil put it:

"We are a news program. When we are mounting a debate, it is at the point of action in the debate. We don't take into consideration on the air, as represented by the guests, all the various points of view that have fed the people who are going to make the decision."{ix}

Other considerations also shape participation. Interviewees should preferably be intelligent and articulate, criteria that many potential interviewees do not meet. As one British media insider observes, broadcasters need:

people who can make the language get up and walk from the first sentence. Content has to be fairly good but above all it's the way it's said rather than what is said which is important. Those who are sufficiently plausible and voluble, who know how to fashion little bullets of the right length and content and deliver them 'live' will be invited time and time again. That's why you see the same people on Newsnight night after night. Remember that out of 650 MPs a fair number will be ruled out on ground of age, dreariness, alcoholism and so forth, so it's quite a small pool of those who can perform, who can shine.\textsuperscript{x}

Similar sentiments have been repeatedly voiced in relation to American news interview participants. More recently this concentration of participation has been exacerbated by the increasing interchangeability of the roles of political 'insiders', experts, and broadcasters, which may also have contributed to the erosion in public confidence in the objectivity of the latter (Fallows 1996).

Even when they gain access to the media, not all political actors are given equal treatment. Even distinguished public figures can be treated harshly, as the biochemist and Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling found when he was interviewed on NBC's "Meet the Press". Pauling, who had organized a scientific petition against the testing of nuclear weapons, received the kind of hostile grilling that is rarely meted out to distinguished guests. Still harsher treatment can lie in store for more marginal figures such as Nazi sympathizers, representatives of militia or survivalist groups, strike leaders and others.
Daniel Hallin (1994) has observed that the domain of journalism can be divided into three regions, each of which involves the application of different journalistic standards:

The first can be called the sphere of consensus. This is the region of motherhood and apple pie; in its bounds lie those social objects not regarded by journalists and most of society as controversial. Within this region journalists do not feel compelled to present opposing views, and indeed often feel it their responsibility to act as advocates or ceremonial protectors of consensus values. The discussion of patriotism that marked coverage of the homecoming of the hostages after the Iranian crisis is a good example...

Beyond the sphere of consensus lies what can be called the sphere of legitimate controversy. This is the region where objective journalism reigns supreme: here neutrality and balance are the prime journalistic virtues. Election coverage best exemplifies the journalistic standards of this region.

Beyond the sphere of legitimate controversy lie those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of society reject as unworthy of being heard...Here neutrality falls away again and the media become, to borrow a phrase from Parsons, a 'boundary maintaining mechanism:' They play the role of exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge consensus values, and uphold the consensus distinction between legitimate and illegitimate political activity. The anti-war movement was treated in this way during the early years of the Vietnam period. (Hallin 1994:53-4)

In a parallel discussion, Stuart Hall (1971) divided news interviews and features into areas of consensus, toleration and conflict. While consensus interviewees, he observes, are the 'accredited witnesses,' areas of toleration involve 'more maverick witnesses' who are treated with an 'off-beat sympathetic human interest' approach. Finally, areas of conflict have their unaccredited cast of witnesses too: protesters of all varieties; shop stewards, especially if militant, more especially if on unofficial strike; squatters; civil rights activists; hippies; students; hijackers... In dealing with these issues and actors, interviewers are noticeably touchier, defending their flanks against any predisposition to softness. (Hall 1971:88)

These observations speak to the fact that news and news interview questioning are characteristically produced from a broadly 'centrist' or 'majority' political and social stance. The effect of this is to marginalise those whose perspectives are perceived to be significantly distanced from the center. This process of marginalization was dramatically highlighted in the media treatment of British Labor politician
Tony Benn during the 1980s. Benn, who had been a successful and effective cabinet minister in previous Labour administrations, had subsequently radicalized his political stance and his policy positions were treated in a progressively more skeptical way during this period. Benn eventually became so distrustful of media questioning and editing that he personally tape-recorded every interview that he gave. In the US Patrick Buchanan, who served in the Reagan White House and in recent years has taken increasingly populist right wing positions culminating in his departure from the Republican Party, has undergone a similar process of marginalization.

The Evolution of the Broadcast Interview

Despite the rather similar normative and, as we shall see, interactional frameworks that shape news interviews in the US and Britain, news and current affairs production has been impacted differently by the distinctive regulatory and competitive environments in the two countries. This distinctiveness is particularly marked when we consider historical aspects of news interviews. There is no history of 'the news interview' that is clearly common to these two national contexts. Instead, the development and use of news interviews has emerged and been given shape by quite different legislative, economic, and social pressures.

(i) The United States: Development by Fits and Starts

Network news in the US has rarely carried a significant amount of news interview content. From the late 1940s until the early 1960s network news occupied a fifteen minute slot and, deducting time for advertising breaks, the nightly news ran for just twelve minutes of airtime. There was no opportunity, within this short compass, to include the kind of time consuming multiple question-and-answer sequence that makes up a real 'interview'. Matters were little better when, in 1963, CBS and NBC expanded the news slot to thirty minutes (expanding advertizing time to eight of them).xi Network news carries around twenty items per broadcast, and these items must be squeezed into a twenty-two minute time frame. Thus, with the exception of special events such as Dan Rather's interview with George Bush on CBS prime time news in 1988, interview content has remained sparse.
Behind these facts lies a basic conflict of interest between the networks and their affiliates. FCC rules make the networks dependent on their independent affiliates for the 'clearance' of their news and current affairs programming. While the affiliates must share the advertising revenue arising from national news with the networks, they have no such obligation in connection with their own more popular, and more profitable, local news broadcasts (Epstein 1973). Understandably, affiliate stations resisted the expansion of network news for as long as possible. Indeed the expansion of network news in the early 1960s was as much a product of fear of reprisals from the FCC, as any other factor. In 1961, then FCC Chairman Newton Minow commented that:

Unfortunately too many television stations reject the public affairs programs offered by the networks because they can make more money rerunning old movies. This kind of broadcasting raises serious questions about responsibility and the public interest.

The implication was clear: refusal to accept national network news and current affairs programming could lead to reprisals for the affiliates when their licenses came up for renewal. The expansion of network news in 1963 was a consequence of this stance. As one NBC executive commented: "Without the FCC we couldn't line up enough affiliates to make a news program or documentary worthwhile," and it seems clear that, as Epstein concluded, any alteration in FCC support for network news product would undermine the prospects for its 'clearance' and its ultimate viability.

Moving away from news broadcasting into current affairs, matters are somewhat different for the main network interview shows - NBC's Meet the Press, CBS's Face the Nation, and ABC's This Week. These three shows are broadcast weekly on Sunday mornings, and attract a roster of highly placed politicians and administration officials. Meet the Press started as a radio show in 1945, and had its television premiere in 1947. It is America's longest running television show. Originally thirty minutes long, Meet the Press was given a press conference format in which a political newsmaker was interviewed by a panel of journalists. Subsequently, it evolved into a news interview program with three interview segments, followed by a roundtable discussion. The host, currently Tim Russert, is joined by two other journalists during the interview segments, and three others during the roundtable discussion. Face the Nation, CBS's rival show first aired in 1954, was discontinued between 1961 and 1963, and has
since continued to the present day. Its format has undergone a similar evolution to Meet the Press. Somewhat later, ABC countered with Issues and Answers which ran between 1960 and 1981, when it was replaced with the successful This Week with David Brinkley which drew on Brinkley's prestige as a reporter and news anchor. Guests were interviewed by Brinkley, conservative columnist George Will, and Sam Donaldson whose role is to be the liberal 'balance' to Will. It is currently co-hosted by Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts.

These interview shows had a difficult time establishing their current positions. Initially they aired at times when ratings were low, and their time slots were quite frequently shifted. Indeed there were periods when their survival owed something to the networks' and affiliates' need to accommodate the public affairs programming preferences of the FCC. Latterly, they have established a clear niche in Sunday morning programming. Their audience, though far from large, includes a concentration of 'insiders' to politics (including print journalists), national and local opinion leaders, and persons who are likely to vote. Thus their influence may be more substantial than their audience share suggests. Additionally, statements made in the course of these interviews often appear in Monday morning newspapers (and occasionally in network news), widening their impact and relevance.

Perhaps because they were initially modeled on the press conference format, and employed distinguished print journalists including White House correspondents seasoned in questioning presidents, the style of questioning in these 'Sunday morning' shows from the outset was robust and at times combative. Here, for example, is an excerpt from an interview with the Secretary of Agriculture (IE) in January 1960:

US NBC Meet the Press: Jan 17 1960: Egg Farmers
IR: Lawrence Spivak  IE: Sec of Agriculture, Ezra Benson

IR: An important sentence of the 1952 Republican platform said this: "The Republican Party will create conditions providing for farm prosperity and stability." Do you think the Republican Administration has made good on that promise?
IE: Yes, I do, to a very large extent, as far as we can within the limitations......
IR: Your critics insist that the seven years of your administration of the Agriculture Department
have resulted in failure, since the farmers' income has reached a 19-year low, and our surpluses are at an all time high. How do you answer that, Sir?

IE: In the first place, four fifths of our agriculture today is free of controls, and is in fairly good balance and doing fairly well...

IR: You say you are in difficulty in the one fifth, but isn't it true that there are no price supports for eggs and the egg farmers are in serious difficulty.

IE: We produce 250 commodities commercially in this country. There are only 21 of those supported......but generally speaking over the years the poultry industry has made good progress and has made a reasonable profit.

IR: Mr. Secretary, I had a telegram from a group of egg farmers in New Jersey who say they are going into bankruptcy at a rapid rate.... Would you say that they are in good shape?

IE: No I would not......

IR: These egg farmers are operating in a free market, which is what you would like to see for most farmers. How are they going to solve their problem?

This is a substantially hostile style of questioning, considering the date and the fact that the interviewee is a senior cabinet member. The interviewer comes close to contradicting the Secretary, and manages to imply that his tenure at Agriculture has been a failure. Both the individual questions and their accumulation are substantially more hostile than Presidential press conferences of the same period, and also more aggressive and 'forensic' than comparable British interview content during the 1950s. Other, equally robust styles of questioning emerge in different contexts. For example, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, questioned on Meet the Press on a conversation which she had had with the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, was asked the following:

US NBC Meet the Press: 20 Oct 1957: Khrushchev

IR: May Craig  IE: former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt

IR: You have been quoted as describing Khrushchev as being cordial, simple, outspoken. How can you think that any Communist, particularly a top official, can be simple?

IE: I meant when I said that of course, that in his manner and in the way of receiving you he was simple......

IR: You also are quoted as saying you found him very likeable though you disagreed with his views. How could you like anybody who has done what he did in supporting murder?
Here, in a context where a British interviewee of comparable stature would undoubtedly have been addressed in more bland and deferential way, the former First Lady's judgement is questioned in terms that verge on moral outrage. Questioning on Meet the Press is scarcely more adversarial than that today.

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of two major news programs that made maximum use of the news interview format. The first of these was PBS's MacNeil-Lehrer Report (now the Newshour) which began as a thirty minute news show in 1975, and expanded in 1983 to an hour long program - the only nightly one hour news show on American television. The MacNeil-Lehrer Report was the first major essay in news production by PBS. It emerged from PBS's coverage of a major American crisis - the Watergate Affair. PBS's Robert MacNeil, then on leave from the BBC, and Jim Lehrer covered the Senate Watergate hearings gavel to gavel, and supplemented this coverage with extensive commentary and interview segments. The coverage had a wide impact - effectively putting public television on the map (MacNeil 1982). MacNeil and Lehrer exploited the break by arguing for, and getting, a news show that was quite different from network news. The original conception was that the show would be a supplement to commercial television news, and it was scheduled accordingly - at 7:30 - after the network news had aired (MacNeil 1982:309). In place of the networks' twenty topics in twenty-two minutes, the MacNeil-Lehrer Report offered one major news topic in a thirty minute show. The result was an unhurried and in-depth treatment which relied extensively on interviews with a series of guests conducted, in an echo of NBC's Huntley-Brinkley Report, by MacNeil in New York and Lehrer in Washington. After its expansion to a one hour slot, the renamed MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour covered more stories. It includes a brief news summary, with foreign news taken from Britain's Independent Television News, and is now formatted to include four items, three of which are substantial news stories. Interviews on the Newshour are divided between 'newsmaker' interviews with single highly placed government and foreign officials, and discussion and debate interviews involving a mix of experts in a particular field. The interviewers themselves are rarely adversarial, and the conflicts that emerge on the program are normally originated by the guests themselves.

The second news interview show to emerge during the 1970s - ABC's Nightline - also arose from extensive coverage of a political crisis. In November 1979, after Iranian militants invaded the American
Embassy in Tehran, ABC reacted with a series of late night shows called America Held Hostage. The show was part of a long-running campaign by ABC's head of news, Roone Arledge, to increase its news coverage. Having lost the battle for a one hour prime time news show (once again vetoed by ABC's affiliate stations), Arledge believed that the 11:30 pm time slot, immediately after the affiliates' local news shows, could be a place at which more in depth news coverage could be aired. The problem was that:

"Arledge knew he needed a real crisis - one with "legs" to it - a story so compelling, so potentially profitable, and just long enough, that watching late-night news would become an American habit." (Koppel and Gibson 1996:7)

The Iranian hostage crisis was the 'hook' that brought the initial audience to ABC, and its frontman, Ted Koppel, would become the anchor for the new show - Nightline - that grew directly from it 142 days after the start of the crisis.

ABC promoted Nightline with the slogan "Bringing people together who are worlds apart." As Koppel himself notes (Koppel and Gibson 1996) this was true both literally and figuratively. It was true literally because Nightline made extensive use of newly operational satellite links to create debate interviews with participants from around the world. It was true figuratively because the accent of the Nightline interviews, in contrast to those on the News hour, was debate and controversy. The first Nightline featured a discussion between the Iranian charge d'affaires in Washington and the wife of the imprisoned American ambassador to Iran, and many highly charged interviews were to follow. In significant contrast to the more urbane News hour, Koppel himself does much more to probe and to elicit the points of friction between interviewees than the News hour interviewers, and he is certainly more prepared both to ask the truly difficult adversarial questions of interviewees, and to sanction them when their responses are unsatisfactory. At the present time, despite some blunting of the original cutting edge of Koppel's interviewing style, he and his show remain a formidable instrument of journalistic inquiry.

Reviewing the American experience as a whole, it is striking that the news interview has struggled to find a niche in news and current affairs programming. This is particularly so for the 'live' interview. Outside of talk shows and 'human interest' interviews of the type epitomised by Barbara
Walters' show *One on One*, which have consistently attracted larger audiences and advertising profits, interview shows have tended to air considerably outside 'prime time' slots and have generally had to be insulated from profit considerations. The longest running "Sunday" interview shows owe their existence in part to the networks' desire to address FCC policy preferences, while the later arrivals have achieved their successes by building audiences from major crises that occupied the headlines over many weeks and months. Moreover news interview shows do not attract the same level of public interest and specialist commentary in the US that they have in Britain. One factor in this divergence may derive from a competitor institution in the US - the Presidential press conference - which is absent in Britain. While American Presidents since John Kennedy's day have ordinarily used the televised press conference as a primary channel of communication with the American public, British Prime Ministers have done so through parliamentary questions and the one-on-one news interview. In the American context, the significance of the news interview is somewhat attenuated by the general absence of the Chief Executive from the roster of potential participants, and by the existence of an institutionalized and prestigious alternative channel of communication. In the British context, the significance of news interviews and news interviewers is enhanced by the fact that Prime Ministers have no effective alternatives to this medium of communication.

(ii) Britain: The Growth of Adversarial Interviewing

British broadcasting has always been more centralized than the US, and broadcast news production has always involved a more direct interface between broadcasters and politicians than its American counterpart. Perhaps for these reasons, the history of the news interview in Britain has a less diffuse developmental trajectory, and one which is shaped both by the changing institutional context of British broadcasting and relations between broadcast journalists and British political elites.

The news interview is a much more prominent feature of daily British broadcasting than it is in America. Its very real significance as a means by which British people came to know their political leaders is in part explicable by the absence of other channels of communication. British parliamentary proceedings were not broadcast until 1989, and the equivalent of the Presidential press conference has
never been a feature of British political life. Moreover, in a political system characterized by three week election campaigns and an absence of paid political advertising, news interviews (and particularly the big 'set piece' television interview pioneered by Robin Day) are a primary means for political leaders to connect to the electorate.

The role of the television interview is further and powerfully supplemented by radio. The BBC's radio network is a major force in news programming, presenting one and two hour news shows during news radio's prime time - the morning and evening drive-time commutes. BBC radio coverage offers a large national audience to politicians and other public figures. In particular, BBC Radio 4 runs three major news shows every day - 'Today', 'The World at One' and 'PM' - which are largely composed of interview content, frequently with cabinet ministers, major government officials, and commentators. Its presenter/interviewers, which have included Robin Day, Brian Redhead and John Humphrys, are major public figures in their own right, and have moved freely between television and radio. The relative weights of the more workaday radio interviews and their television counterparts is quite well caught by the Conservative former finance Minister, Kenneth Clark. Referring to Newsnight - the BBCtv's flagship nightly current affairs program, Clark observed that appearing on Newsnight is "a big risk - bigger than the Today programme... I'd only go on the programme if I thought I'd made a pig's ear (of other interviews) during the day".xiv

But if major 'set piece' television interviews are the equivalent of the American press conference, they carry the potential to be significantly more attention-grabbing, dramatic, and risky. Whereas the press conference involves a large number of questioners often pursuing quite different news agendas, the one-on-one news interview permits more sustained and pointed lines of questioning than are normally possible in the press conference. The emergence of the news interview progressively introduced a dimension of justification and political accountability that could be dramatic and confrontational. For the politician, the risks of failure in this context were balanced by the very substantial benefits of doing well.

Ground zero in the British story, as in America, is the early 1950s. At this point the BBC was the monopoly broadcaster and took an intensely conservative view of its role in news production. This conservatism had its origins in its statutory obligation to maintain balance and impartiality in the
presentation of news and current affairs. This was interpreted by the BBC’s first and most influential Director-General, Lord Reith, to mean that the BBC should avoid all forms of political controversy. The result was 'impartiality on the side of the government.' Reithian attitudes persisted after his retirement in 1938 well into the post-World War II period. The then Director-General, Sir William Haley, believed that television was inappropriate as a medium for political discussion, debate or news presentation, and he forbade the use of pictures in television news. The BBC's first post-War news division head, Tahu Hole, equally insisted on an essentially passive approach to news gathering. Jonathan Dimbleby describes his regime in the following terms:

he imposed rules and restraints on the staff of the News Room which stifled talent and strangled enthusiasm. Under him the search for truth was destroyed by the demand for accuracy; the slogan 'if in doubt, leave out' was elevated to the status of a divine commandment. An obsession for political 'balance' made a mockery of proper journalism; investigation was impossible; 'scoops' were forbidden; the authority of the News Agencies was absolute; and no report by a BBC foreign correspondent could appear in a bulletin unless it had been first confirmed by at least two Agencies. (Dimbleby, 1975: 270).

The net result was a news program "so bland and timeless that a recording of Monday's newsreel would be repeated verbatim the following Wednesday" (Cockerell 1988:xiii). A second restriction during this period was the Fourteen-Day Rule. Initiated during World War II, this mandated that topics that would be discussed in Parliament during the next fourteen days, or which were in any Bill currently before either House, could not be discussed on the airwaves. Hundreds of potential topics of immediate topical relevance were thus embargoed and, since parliamentary business was ordinarily published only a week in advance, the list of excluded topics was potentially infinite. This was not a context favoring investigative, adversarial, or even meaningful current affairs interviewing. In his memoirs, Robin Day (1989:104) reprints a parody of "the deferential pat-ball interview of the pre-ITN days:"

IR: Sir, would you say that your visit to Timbuktu had been worthwhile?
IE: Oh yes, I would definitely say my visit had been worthwhile. Yes, certainly.
IR: Ah, good, well, could you say what topics you discussed, sir?
IE: No, I'm afraid I couldn't do that. These talks were of a highly confidential nature, you understand, and you wouldn't expect me to reveal anything that might prejudice our future relations.
IR: No, of course not, sir. Well, sir, you must be very tired after your talks and your journey - may I ask, sir, are you going to take it easy for a while now - a holiday, perhaps?

IE: Ah, if only one could. But you know a minister in Her Majesty's Government can never take it easy, never rest, not really, you know. They're waiting for me now.

IR: Well, thank you very much, sir.

Although this is parody, it is based in the real journalistic practices of the period. Chapter 6 (example 1) shows an interview with Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee in 1951 that certainly converges in spirit with it. This, then, was a period in which the news interview languished, and commentators are united in their characterization of the few interviews that did take place as benign and deferential, with interviewers functioning as 'respectful prompters' (Wedell 1968) who asked public figures 'soft soap' questions (Day 1961).

This state of affairs was ended, not by an autonomous evolution of the BBC's stance and policies, but rather as a direct result of the end of the BBC's television monopoly in 1955. The independent television companies that emerged began with an approach to news and current affairs broadcasting that aimed to be lively, investigative and entertaining, and they hired a new breed of interviewers to do it - including most notably the young Robin Day who, with his 'forbidding appearance and fierce approach' (Day 1989:80), rapidly became the dominant news interviewer of his time. Amid a rapidly growing television market (ownership of television sets multiplied sevenfold during the 1950s to seventy per cent of the British households), new battle lines were drawn in British news and public affairs programming. An early casualty of the new competitive atmosphere in news broadcasting was the Fourteen Day Rule, which was simply ignored without repercussion, and subsequently quietly abandoned by Parliament.

More significantly, news interviews became more adversarial, and the independent companies abandoned the BBC practice of submitting lists of questions in advance to ministers, who would then give rehearsed answers. 'Unscripted' interviews became the order of the day. In this context, the obligation of impartiality became interpreted more actively as enhancing, rather than restricting, the right to cross-question. As Day put it, "having been a shackle, impartiality became a sword" (Day 1989:181).

Perhaps the key interview during this period was Day's interview with then-Prime Minister Harold Macmillan which flatly departed from the previous deferential style with which senior politicians
had been treated. One newspaper described it as "the most vigorous cross-examination a Prime Minister has been subjected to in public." While the interview got mixed reviews in the press, it struck a chord with the viewing public and Macmillan himself found that surviving Day's more aggressive cross-questioning gave him enhanced credibility with the electorate. He was not the only Prime Minister to embrace the new style of news interview for these reasons. British Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan recalls that

"I often used to say to the BBC when they wanted me to have an interview, "could it be Robin Day?" He was my favorite interviewer. I liked his tough manner of questioning and although he could be a bit of a bully if his victim seemed to flinch, I hardly ever found he took unfair advantage. I rather like a rude TV interviewer - I am not saying that is why I asked for Robin - because the public sympathy would be on the side of the man being heckled rather than the man doing the heckling." (Cockerell 1988:232).

The truth of Callaghan's last remark was later demonstrated in the United States, with devastating consequences for Dan Rather, after Rather's famously aggressive interview with then-Vice President George Bush.

The changes initiated by the independent television companies were soon taken up by the BBC, which had lost audience share to its new rival. The motivation for these changes was simple for, as John Whale notes,

a news organization working on its own can swallow uninformative explanations of official or commercial blunders, and even the refusal to explain them at all, without any great discomfort....the moment there are rivals in the field it is afraid of appearing more gullible, less enterprising than them, lest its audience diminish (Whale, 1977:29)

During the early 1960s, under the visionary leadership of a new Director General Hugh Greene, the BBC took the lead in further dismantling the climate of deference in news and current affairs. And, by 1963, BBC interviewers were every bit as acerbic as their independent television rivals. A significant contribution to this process was made by the satirical news show That Was The Week That Was (TW3). Part of a wave of satire that swept Britain in the last days of a long-running, but politically exhausted, conservative administration, the show was developed by a team that had previously worked on the BBC's early evening news magazine show Tonight, and was fronted by David Frost among others. It discussed and analyzed the week's news and newsmakers in highly irreverent terms and pushed back the barriers of
acceptable comment on television. Sketches listed MPs who had not spoken in the House of Commons for ten or fifteen years, and exposures of incompetent and hypocritical government decisions. Although it only ran between 1962 and 1963, the show further raised the stakes for more conventional news shows including, increasingly, BBC Radio news shows such as The World at One (a forty minute show airing at 1:00 pm). As Ian Trethowan, later a Director General of the BBC, commented: "Although at times anarchic, and on occasion contemptibly unfair, TW3 swept through British broadcasting as a cleansing agent, scouring away the last of the bland and banal."xvi Among politicians, it had a mixed reaction. Robin Day, in a striking anecdote, recalls sitting with major Labour Party officials at the party's annual conference watching TW3:

'They revelled in the pillorying and abuse of the Tory government. This produced shrieks of delighted laughter...Those Labour politicians knew perfectly well that much of what they had applauded was a gross breach of the BBC's obligation to be impartial. Some of them could see the dangers for a Labour government... Dick Crossman MP, in one of his enjoyable moments of appalling frankness, said to me about That Was The Week That Was: 'Marvellous stuff! Marvellous! But of course the BBC won't be allowed to get away with it when Labour are in power.' (Day 1989:224-5)

While initially liberating, TW3 also contributed to a distrust of broadcasters that increasingly focused on the BBC during the subsequent Labour administration (1964-1970), headed by Harold Wilson.

Wilson distinguished between ITV, which he saw as playing by the rules, and an arrogant and unaccountable BBC. In 1967, he imported Lord Hill, the Chairman of the Independent Television Authority, to chair the BBC's Board of Governors. His aim was to bring the BBC into line, and to force its Director General, Hugh Greene, to resign (Cockerell 1988). He was only partially successful. The Director General served out his term until 1969, and in 1971 the BBC under Hill went on to broadcast a documentary - Yesterday's Men (1971)xvii - that dealt mercilessly with ex-Labour cabinet ministers and outraged Wilson, who was later re-elected as Prime Minister in 1974. The program had long term consequences for the BBC. Broadcaster David Dimbleby detected "a rather hideous softening" in television's approach to politicians after this broadcast,xviii and the Annan Commission on Broadcasting supported this general verdict. Angela Pope, the program's producer, observed that "I have had my
fingers burnt. I wouldn't try it and no one else should try it for a very long time. Nobody must do
Yesterday's Men again. You mustn't. Better be safe than imaginative."

The BBC responded to the political pressure which built up after Yesterday's Men by setting up a
complaints commission. Far from stemming the tide of criticism, however, this move, which was
subsequently emulated by the ITA, only served to reinforce the belief that the broadcasting authorities
were no longer capable of safeguarding the public interest. And, as a result, with a significant number of
politicians calling for overt Parliamentary control of broadcasting in order to rectify this situation, both
the BBC and ITV reacted by assuming a more cautious role. Writing of the BBC in 1975, Kumar noted
how:

Current BBC metaphors show a dramatic shift from those involving leading and directing, to
those involving far more neutral concepts: essentially, the BBC is seen as the 'register' of the
many different 'voices' in society, as the 'great stage' on which all the actors, great and small,
parade and say their piece (Kumar 1975: 246).

As the broadcasting organizations moved to pursue a policy of holding 'the middle ground' (ibid. 248), the
parameters of the permissible in British television and radio interviewing discernably narrowed.

Moreover, by the 1980s, British politicians had learned how to deal with news interviewers.
Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher employed American-style media advisors, who negotiated the format
of programs. She and her ministers avoided specific interviewers, and they and other politicians have
learned to influence the terms of interviews. As Jeremy Paxman, currently Britain's best known
interviewer, observed:

There are politicians who say 'If you ask me that question you will regret it. If you ask me that
question I will take it up with the DG (Director General). If you ask me that question I will walk
out. Now clearly it does concentrate the mind when you are on the air in twenty seconds and a
politician is saying that to you."

Prior to the 1987 General election campaign, Conservative politician Norman Tebbit set up a well
publicized 'bias-monitoring' unit at Conservative Party headquarters. While the extent of BBC anxiety
about this unit and other more covert forms of political pressure is unknown, the BBC did hold back a
major error committed by the Prime Minister in a live interview with David Dimbleby on the day before
the general election. Thatcher criticized her opponents as people who "just drivel and drool that they care", a phrase that was picked up by Dimbleby and for which she apologized on air. As Cockerell (1988:331) relates, videotape of this revealing interview segment was held back until it was too late for opposition comment:

Mrs. Thatcher, who had expected the BBC to make much more of the exchange, was delighted. It seemed that the browbeating of the past year had worked. The Prime Minister rewarded BBC News with the first long interview after the campaign: in previous elections this had been given to ITV. She came to the studios, ended the interview with "my pleasure" and stayed for lunch. (Cockerell 1988:331)

Her opponent, Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader, was not so fortunate. Kinnock had responded to a question by David Frost on a Sunday morning interview in a way that acknowledged that a non-nuclear Britain could be invaded by the Soviet Union. His remarks were extensively recycled through the airwaves and became a major object of conservative campaigning.

During the 1990s, friction between government and the broadcasters has mainly centered on the financing of broadcasting, which the Conservative administration under John Major sought to reform. Interviewers have remained highly robust in their approach to politicians, particularly during the waning years of the Conservative administration when they were able to exploit deep-seated differences among Conservative politicians over Europe. On BBCtv's Newsnight, Jeremy Paxman remains an absolutely formidable interrogator, and his aggression is matched on BBC Radio by John Humphrys and others. Survey research commissioned by the BBC shows that the British public actively approves of aggressive interviewing. Certainly British interviewing remains consistently more adversarial than its American counterpart.

At the present time, British television is undergoing a process of marketization in which the old certainties of the BBC/ITV duopoly are undergoing change. Satellite and cable, especially Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB, are beginning to cut into ratings and have intensified the competition between the older adversaries. News and current affairs have, as in the US, been victims of this ratings war, and have increasingly been shortened and shifted out of prime time. The longer Sunday shows remain sites of interviews that can be probing and intelligent but, as in the US, ratings tend to be low.
Nonetheless the overall tone of British news interview seems to have been decisively set by Robin Day's pioneering work, and British political life is undoubtedly the better for it.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have aimed to sketch the different institutional contexts that have shaped the broadcast news interview in America and Britain, and to sketch the general development of news interview programs in the two countries. Taken as a whole, the development of the news interview appears quite different in the two countries. In contrast to the Presidential press conference which, during the 1960s and 1970s, moved away from an older deferential style to become increasingly adversarial (Clayman and Heritage 2000), the American adversarial television news interview seems to have emerged more or less fully armed in *Meet the Press* and *Face the Nation* - programs which CBS's Fred Friendly once described as verbal fencing bouts "in which a wary but nimble politician spends the half hour trying to prevent his interrogators from getting him to put his foot in his mouth" (Friendly 1968:147). Indeed, it was not until the *MacNeil-Lehrer Report* that American viewers could tune into non-adversarial news interviews on a regular basis. Quite the reverse has been true in Britain, where the evolution has been closer to developments in the Presidential press conference - from deference to adversarialness, albeit with periods of retrenchment.

Notwithstanding these different trajectories of development, and continuing regulatory and cultural differences between interviews in the two countries, there are also remarkable similarities in the underlying structures and functions which give the modern interview the shape it has. In part, this is because all news interviews have to address fundamentally common tasks. Every news interview has to be opened and closed; there must be means for managing when, and for how long, the participants speak; at least in democratic countries interviewers must have means with which to show the simultaneous independence and non-partisanship of their questions; there must be means of highlighting and dealing with evasive answers and so on. These tasks, we argue, are handled through sets of systematic interactional practices that give common shape to the contemporary news interview in both Britain and America. These practices, as we will show, are overwhelmingly similar, though their distributions and
configurations vary from program to program and from context to context. In the following chapters, we aim to describe this underlying structure of the news interview - the fundamental and very general resources, practices and actions through which specific interviews and programs are assembled in all their particularity.

NOTES


iiMatheson 1933 (75-6), quoted in Scannell (1991:3).

iiiPoliticians on both sides of the Atlantic have recurrently drawn up 'friends and enemies lists' of interviewers and producers (Cockerell 1988, Friendly 1967, Fallows 1997).

ivThis trend towards adversarial reporting is documented in Patterson (1993) and Zaller (2000).


viCrawford Committee 1926.

viiLater termed the Independent Broadcasting Authority with the advent of commercial radio in 1972, and was further restructured in 1990 to become the Independent Television Commission.

viiiFranchise reallocations took place in 1968, 1982 and 1990. While most of the commercial companies retained their franchises, significant reallocations occurred at each of these points.


xPeter Henessey, quoted in Jones (1992:57-8). Similar views were expressed by Reuven Frank when he was head of NBC News: "Most people are dull. That is, they communicate ineptly. If they are dull, their description of interesting events will be dull." (Epstein 1973:157-8).

xiABC, the weakest of the three networks in terms of resources, did not expand its network news to thirty minutes until 1967.

xiiFor this reason the 'clearance' of particular network current affairs and news documentary programs can vary quite widely, according to the topic and the outlook of the affiliates involved - impacting their profitability to the networks and the preparedness of networks to address particular topics.

xiiiEpstein (1973:54).


xvGrace Wyndham Goldie (1977: 256-7) quotes the following from a 1963 interview with the new Conservative premier, Sir Alec Douglas Home. The interviewers were Robert McKenzie and Robin Day. The first question deals with the unaccountable process by which he was elevated to the leadership:

"Could I bring you to the question of how you got your job, which has been really controversial? The Times said today "Many Conservatives in high places are extremely angry and resentful at the way Lord Home got the leadership." Now do you yourself think it was a democratic process?"

This was a question every bit as challenging as those of "Meet the Press" quoted earlier.

xviCockerell 1988:86.

xviiThe title echoed an election slogan that Labour had used to describe the conservatives in the 1970 election campaign which Labour lost.


xixIbid.
