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**Before And After:
How The War on Terrorism Has Changed The News Agenda,
Network Television, June to October 2001**

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By whatever slogan, “America’s New War” or “America Fights Back,” the war on terrorism has caused a colossal shift in the news people see on network television, according to a new study of evening and morning newscasts before and after the crisis.

Celebrity and lifestyle coverage, which had come to dominate network morning news and become a major factor even on the signature evening newscasts, has given way to levels of traditional hard news not seen in decades, according to the study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism.

On the morning news, stories about government, the military, national affairs and international affairs, which had nearly disappeared, are up more than seven fold. Stories about celebrities and lifestyle, which had dominated these programs, have declined by three fold.

At night, the evening newscasts have returned to a news agenda that is closer to the 1970s than the 1990s.

Today, eight-in-ten evening news stories concern government, national or international affairs, up 67% from a few months ago. Celebrity and lifestyle stories, which made up roughly a quarter of nightly news stories this summer, have vanished almost entirely.

And viewership, at least for now, is up in contrast to years of general decline.

These are a few of the findings of a new study of how television has reacted to the events of September 11, by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, a research think tank affiliated with the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. The study, which was funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, examined the weeks of June 18-22 and 25-29 and October 15-19 and 22-26 on the three evening newscasts of ABC, NBC and CBS, and included an even more detailed study of their morning newscasts for the same four weeks as well.

Will the changes last? There are signs, however tentative, that the shift may be only temporary.

While the news has gotten more serious, almost all of the change is focused on the war, which suggests that the networks may have simply changed *subjects* rather than changed their *approach* to the news.

The morning shows, which had become in significant part instruments for selling things, are still using sizable amounts of their news time to peddle, though the products are now more connected to the news.

Consider, for instance, the segment on The Today Show about “Executivechute,” a parachute for people who might need to jump out of high buildings.

There are other signs, too, that the habits and norms TV producers learned over the last decade are well ingrained. Good Morning America last week did not miss the opportunity to make a news segment out of a preview of the Victoria’s Secret fashion show that would run on ABC during prime time, or of a profile of how supermodel Niki Taylor was recovering from a car accident—which also happened to be a segment on that evening’s “PrimeTime Thursday.”

The study, designed by the Project and executed by researchers at the Project and by media researcher Andrew Tyndall, also examined the nature and amount of selling and corporate synergy on the morning news programs.

The study found:

- Even including the time period after September 11, 32% of the morning newscasts, excluding commercial breaks and local news inserts, is devoted to selling products, to self-promotion or promoting their sponsors.
- Each network is more likely to promote their parent company’s products than they are products of any other single company.
- Only rarely, 11% percent of the time in June and less than half the time overall, was the parent company connection disclosed.

In part, the goal of the study is to provide a baseline to begin to test whether we have seen a move away from a “softer” news agenda that has begun to alarm some scholars and critics.

As far back as 1985, author Neil Postman warned about Americans, in his memorable phrase, “Amusing Ourselves to Death.” In the wake of the media fascination with such stories as Gary Condit, the question became not whether nothing in America was private anymore. Rather, the more pointed concern was whether anything was public anymore. What we once considered vital public issues had been so crowded out of our media discourse that they no longer received the kind of attention that allowed society to adequately comprehend or address them.

In a sense, if a society is defined by what it talks about, what did that say about the values of American society at the beginning of the 21st century? And if that has changed, what does that change imply about us now?

The New Face of Nightly News

The definition of news on the three evening newscasts has been transformed, from a diet that was more than a third lifestyle, celebrity and crime to something that has shifted back to levels of traditional hard news we have not seen in decades.

Topics on the Evening News		
	PERCENTAGE OF NEWSCAST	
<u>ALL NETWORKS</u>	<u>JUNE</u>	<u>OCT</u>
<i>Hard News</i>	45.5%	80.2%
<i>Celebrity News</i>	4.7	0
<i>Crime/ Law/ Courts</i>	11.7	3.5
<i>Business/ Economy</i>	14.1	4.5
<i>Science and Technology</i>	4.2	10.9
<i>Lifestyle Features</i>	19.7	1
<i>Total</i>	100	100

In June, lifestyle and feature stories made up 20% of the nightly newscasts. By late October, they had dropped to just one percent.

Celebrity news, which made up a full 5% of the nightly news time in June, had vanished completely.

Crime news, traditionally a staple of local news, had been growing on network news as well in recent years, despite a significant

drop in crime nationally. Now it has dropped on the networks, too. In June, crime made up 12% of the nightly news stories. By October it had fallen to 3%.

In its place there has been a return to the subjects that once made up the traditional definition of hard news on the networks—domestic affairs, government, military and international relations. These subjects, which made up less than half the time on nightly news in June (46%), by October made up 80%.

The rest, business and science news, decreased somewhat after September 11, from 18% to 16% of stories.

Are the low numbers for traditional hard news seen this June just a case of the summer doldrums? The evidence suggests not.

Earlier research by the Project, which examined the subject of news in various media outlets over a 20-year span, found that what the network nightly newscasts covered this summer was typical of their news agenda in recent years.¹

Evening News Topics Over Time			
<u>ALL NETWORKS</u>	<u>1977</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1997</u>
<i>Hard News</i>	67.3%	58.3%	41.3%
<i>Celebrity News</i>	2	3.3	7.7
<i>Crime/ Law/ Courts</i>	8	6.8	13
<i>Business/ Economy</i>	5.5	11.1	7.4
<i>Science and Technology</i>	3.5	4.5	5.8
<i>Lifestyle Features</i>	13.5	16.2	24.8
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100

¹ Changing Definitions of News: A Look at the Mainstream Press Over 20 Years, Project for Excellence in Journalism, March 6, 1998.

That earlier study found that traditional hard news made up less than half of what appeared on the nightly news by 1997, down from roughly 60% in 1987 and roughly 70% in 1977.

In effect, the networks have returned, at least for the moment, to a general menu of news that is closer to what we saw in the 1970s than anything seen in roughly a quarter century.

Some differences between the three networks, before and after September 11, are noticeable in the data.

The CBS Evening News with Dan Rather did the most traditional hard news before (53% during the period studied in June, compared with 44% for ABC and 39% for NBC). And CBS is doing the most hard news now (a striking 86%, compared with 76% for ABC, 79% for NBC).

The other differences between the networks are smaller.

ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings did the fewest stories on business and the economy in June (10%) and the most now (7%). Its competitors both did more on business in June (17% CBS and 16% NBC), and both dropped to doing hardly any in October (just two stories each during the two weeks studied).

NBC did slightly more science and technology stories in the 10 days studied in October (14), all of them about anthrax and bio-terrorism.

Morning News

The change in the news agenda is even more dramatic if one looks at what has become an increasingly important segment of network television, morning news.

In June of 2001, network morning news programs had become, in significant part, a way of selling things, often lifestyle products, books, movies, TV shows, cookbooks, products for the home and the like. Excluding commercials and inserts for local news, 33% of the news time on these programs was devoted to selling some product.

When the shows did news, the topics were decidedly soft. All told, celebrity and lifestyle stories made up nearly three-quarters of the morning show segments. Specifically, 25% of the stories were about celebrities. Nearly half (47%) were about lifestyle (fashion, health, sports, cooking, travel).

Just seven percent of the stories on the morning news shows were devoted to what one might call traditional hard news—again government, the military, domestic or foreign affairs.

Topics on the Morning Shows		
	PERCENTAGE OF NEWSCAST	
<u>ALL NETWORKS</u>	<u>JUNE</u>	<u>OCT</u>
<i>Hard News</i>	6.9%	58.1%
<i>Celebrity News</i>	25.3	12.2
<i>Crime/ Law/ Courts</i>	11.5	1.7
<i>Business/ Economy</i>	4.3	2.6
<i>Science and Technology</i>	5.1	13.5
<i>Lifestyle Features</i>	46.9	12
<i>Total</i>	100	100

That has undergone a profound shift after September 11. By late October, celebrity and lifestyle dropped from making up 72% of the stories on to 24%. Celebrity news fell by half (from 25% to 12%), lifestyle dropped even more (from 47% to just 12%).

Traditional hard news increased by more than seven-fold (from 7% to 58%).

News about science and technology nearly tripled, from 5% to 14%. This increase was due, almost entirely, to the morning shows exploring the science behind anthrax and other forms of possible bio-terrorism.

Even some of the news presenting techniques of the past came back. ABC's Good Morning America, for instance, turned to using the "whiparound," in which a team of correspondents from around the country and the world saved time by passing the story to each other, rather than throwing it back to the star anchor after each report to maximize the hosts' time on camera.

Morning Show Differences By Network

Even before September 11, there were measurable differences in the style of the three morning shows. NBC's Today Show did more celebrity stories (30% versus 19% for ABC, 27% for CBS). The ABC and CBS shows did more lifestyle (53% for CBS, 52% for ABC, 36% for NBC).

None did much hard news (8% ABC, 7% NBC, 6% CBS).

After September 11, differences between the shows, at least in the time period studied, became even more pronounced. ABC's Good Morning America emerges as the most serious of the three. It does more hard news (63%) and less celebrity and lifestyle (17%) than the other two. This may reflect, in part, the background of its anchors, Charlie Gibson and Diane Sawyer.

CBS, though a much more serious program than before, still has the softest mix. It does the least hard news (53%) and the most celebrity and lifestyle (30%).

NBC, as reflected in the October data, is in the middle, second in hard news (59%) and second in celebrity/lifestyle (25%).

A Permanent or Temporary Shift?

The questions that naturally follow are about the future: Do these changes in the news agenda represent some long-term transformation?

When the war subsides and the threat against America from terrorism is perceived to be less imminent, will the nightly news and the morning news return to a pre-September 11th definition of normalcy?

In short, does the data suggest that journalism has been transformed in some deep-seated way?

The answer, at this point, can be only speculative. But there are important pieces of evidence to consider.

One is that the news agenda has changed historically with changes in the socio-economic and political landscape. The 1920s, like the 1990s, were a time of push toward celebrity, gossip and softening of news. The term tabloid came into use. Press critics wrung their hands over the rise of rumor as news and the popularity of figures like columnist and radio host Walter Winchell. The era was defined by an economic boom, a turn inward after World War I, and the advent of new technology--radio.

In the 1930s, the news agenda was transformed by The Great Depression. People's concerns became more serious, and so did journalism.

This suggests that the degree to which today's changes in the news agenda stay with us will depend less on the journalists than on the extent to which the country has been transformed.

A second factor concerns the audience. The changed news agenda may be more long-term if it is attracting new viewers to the news. Here, so far, the evidence is positive, if premature.

All three evening newscasts have more viewers than a year ago in contrast to years of general decline. In the period between September 24 and November 11, ABC was up 15% over the year before, CBS up 9% and NBC 7%, according to data from Nielsen Media Research.

The morning shows are also up, though also modestly. The biggest winner appears to be the most serious of the three. ABC's Good Morning America is up 8% in total viewers in the latest four-week period over the same period a year ago, when the Florida election recount story dominated the news. In total numbers it still trails the Today Show but is closing the gap.²

Some cautions: The gains are smaller among younger viewers, and they have slipped somewhat in recent weeks.

² Nielsen Media Research morning news program ratings data, prepared by CBS Research

There are some positive signs. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, for instance, has found high approval ratings for the press' coverage of the terrorism crisis so far, but those numbers have shrunk somewhat over time. In the first 8 days after September 11, 89% of the public gave the press high marks for its coverage³, but that number slipped to 85% by October 4⁴ and to 74% by October 15.⁵

A third factor is economic. The war on terrorism has cost the networks, and all news gathering operations, significantly. Round-the-clock, ad-free coverage of the September 11 attacks and their aftermath cost the networks alone an estimated \$320 million in lost revenue.⁶ The total estimated cost rises to between \$950 million and \$1.1 billion when all broadcast, cable, and local television are considered.⁷

How will the networks choose to recoup that money? By trying to build and keep the potential new audience with more serious news? By trying to lure in more advertisers with product tie-ins and sponsored segments? By packing more ads into each broadcast? Or by cutting costs even further at their overtaxed news operations?

A fourth factor is the public. To a degree, journalists have indicated privately, their parent companies dare not complain about the high cost of coverage because doing so would appear unpatriotic. How long will this last? If the terrorism crisis is perceived to be a lingering one, it may be considered untenable to cut back too much, and even Wall Street may allow the networks to earn less profit from their news operations.

One thing in the data, however, suggests the change may be temporary. Much of the move toward hard news is focused around one subject, the war on terrorism, rather than some broader based shift toward hard news on a range of topics. In that sense, this is the same single focus we have seen from the press on such previous stories as O.J. Simpson, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, Gary Condit, and Princess Diana. If so, this may suggest the media culture has simply shifted its gaze momentarily to this story, rather than recalibrated more fundamentally how it approaches the news.

³ "American psyche reeling from terror attacks," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, September 19, 2001

⁴ "September 11 shock slow to recede - 42% still depressed," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, October 4, 2001

⁵ "Public remains steady in face of anthrax scare," Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, October 15, 2001

⁶ Seth Sutel, "Media companies' financial woes compounded by fallout from terrorist attacks," Associated Press, September 19, 2001

⁷ Greg Johnson, "Coverage cost nears \$1 billion," *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 2001

What The Morning Shows Had Become:

To understand the scope of the change in the morning news agenda, it is useful to understand what the network morning news programs had become.

By June 2001, the morning news shows devoted a significant proportion of their time to selling products. To put it perhaps a little bluntly, they had become, at least for a part of each broadcast, a kind of sophisticated infomercial.

Excluding commercials and local news inserts, these morning news programs dedicated 34% of their time—or roughly 26 minutes of program—to selling viewers something—a book, a movie, a kitchen or garden gadget,

	<u>June</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Average</u>
Total Airtime (minutes)	120	120	120
<i>Commercials</i>	35	35	35
<i>Local News</i>	9	9	9
<i>Products</i>	16	17	16.5
<i>Promotions</i>	10	5	7.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	70	66	68
<i>Remaining Time</i>	50	54	52

a website, other network programs or a segment later in the show.

Add in the 35 minutes of commercials per program, and more than half of

every two-hour show was spent selling viewers something.

If someone watched an hour of morning news, they would get just 25 minutes of non-product related network news, weather and other features.

Since September 11, the morning shows have certainly changed, some more than others. But it is less clear whether that change is in their nature or simply in the subject being covered.

The total number of stories selling some kind of product, for instance, stayed roughly the same from June to October (205 stories to 203 in the periods studied). But more of those products were related to the news.

In June, for instance, the shows were promoting such books as “Diana: Story of a Princess” (ABC), “Behind the Smile,” Marie Osmond’s story of post-partum depression (CBS), and “Hair! Mankind’s Historic Quest to End Baldness” (CBS).

In October, by contrast, the list of books promoted included “Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War” about lessons commandos learned in Somalia (CBS), and “Jihad: The Secret War in Afghanistan” about a British soldier’s year with the Afghan Mujahideen (NBC).

Some of the books may have been of more questionable value than others. GMA, for instance, featured “The Anti-Terror Checklist,” which its publisher describes as a “life-saving guidebook for individuals and families on how to prepare for...terrorism.” An Amazon customer, however, described the work as “obviously rushed to market...exploitive...I regret buying it.”

The Quasi-Infomercial

Within this culture of using the morning shows to sell, there are distinct differences between the different programs.

Good Morning America

Even though it tended more toward hard news, especially after September 11, and has benefited most from ratings gains, ABC’s Good Morning America still devotes a similar amount of time as its competitors to basically selling viewers something.

In June, GMA spent 24 minutes of each program on average selling. By October, that number had fallen slightly--to 22 minutes.

During the 10 days studied in June, the selling on GMA broke down this way: The show aired 35 product stories, promoted sponsors 21 times during news segments, and used time in the newscast (outside commercial breaks) to mention or promote the network, its website or upcoming stories 249 times.

In October, GMA remade itself in some subtle and in some other not so subtle ways.

It aired roughly the same number of product stories but the type of products shifted substantially. Music, TV, sports and Internet stories dropped by more than half (from 20 to eight). But GMA in October aired twice as many segments promoting movies--those interviews with the stars—after September 11, which is notable, in part, because it generally trails the competition in the amount of celebrity segments and stories.

Time spent using the newscast to promote upcoming segments in the show, ABC’s website or other ABC programs decreased from the June period to October by 60%--to now just 6 minutes per show.

Almost all of this decline, however, is attributable to the fact that GMA did not air any multi-day special features in October, such as a wedding series it aired in June, that were effectively a daily promotion for the show, and a segment that was in itself a tease to keep people watching.

The Today Show⁸

The Today Show is the ratings leader in the morning, the most apt to air celebrities (as the No. 1 show also the most likely to command the most popular celebrities). It also may be the show that has fared least well on this story in terms of ratings.

The show has changed noticeably since September 11, even in the level of selling that it does.

In June The Today Show devoted the greatest number of minutes of the three morning shows to selling products.

By October, that had fallen measurably.

In the ten days studied in June, The Today Show aired 49 product stories, mentioned or showed the logo of sponsors 18 times inside the newscast, and it aired 306 network promotions, website promotions or teases of upcoming stories inside the newscast (as opposed to during commercial breaks).

Together, these product stories, sponsor mentions, promotions and teases averaged 31 minutes per program, some 35% of its non-commercial time.

By late October, the amount of selling on The Today Show had dropped by 10 minutes per program, and made up 24% of the non-commercial time. It now was roughly even with GMA in terms of the amount of time peddling stuff.

The number of product stories dropped by 25%, from 49 product stories in the June period to 37 in October.

The number of music and movie segments, for instance, dropped by almost half, from 18 to 10. The number of segments about consumer or business products fell from 10 to 5.

And the products it did carry were more oriented to current events. One consumer product segment, for instance, was with an executive from Jet Blue Airlines, talking about how the company was reinforcing its cockpit doors.

The number of times that sponsors were mentioned inside the newscast (as opposed to during commercials) also decreased, from 18 mentions in June to eight in October. This, too, was mainly because it had aired one of those wedding series in June, in which a couple is seen preparing for their wedding all week, to be married on the air on Friday.

⁸ For the purposes of comparison, the study excluded the third hour of The Today Show airing in some markets, and examined the same 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. hours as it did for the other network morning shows.

Still, even in the period after September 11, the number of minutes devoted to selling still averaged 21 minutes per show, down significantly but still a considerable amount.

The Early Show

The CBS Early Show was the program that changed the least, when it came to promotion and selling product, after September 11.

In June, the show had the greatest number of product references but spent the least amount of time on those products.

In October, by changing little, it stood out for spending the most amount of its newscast selling something.

During the June period, The Early Show aired 42 product stories, mentioned sponsors inside the newscast 40 times, and aired 293 self-promotions, amounting to 22 minutes per program devoted to selling.

By October, the number of product references had fallen slightly but the time devoted to selling remained the same.

One reason for this is that over the ten days studied, it carried 11 separate segments promoting CBS network shows, six of them about "Survivor: Africa."

Corporate Synergy

The amount of time these shows devote to selling things raises a bigger question about corporate strategy and synergy: To what extent do the morning shows peddle products from their parent companies versus products from other companies?

Each of the networks is now owned by a conglomerate, and the list of properties in each corporation offers an array of possibilities for cross promotion that, as they got deep into the list, dazzled the researchers.

CBS is owned by Viacom, whose holdings range from MTV, Simon & Schuster book publishers, Paramount studios, to the UPN network and beyond. ABC is owned by Disney, whose holdings include Disney Studios, Miramax, 80% of ESPN, Talk magazine and much more. NBC, on the other hand, is owned by General Electric, a vast conglomerate that makes everything from light bulbs to jet engines.

	<u>ABC</u> N=71	<u>CBS</u> N=82	<u>NBC</u> N=86
<i>AOL/TIME WARNER</i>	4.2%	7.3%	8.1%
<i>DISNEY</i>	21.1	4.9	2.3
<i>VIACOM</i>	7	26.8	9.3
<i>NBC/GE</i>	1.4	0	11.6
<i>COMBINATION W/NO PARENT</i>	0	8.5	3.5
<i>OTHER</i>	66.2	52.4	65.1
<i>TOTAL</i>	100	100	100

The study found ownership makes a difference. While each program gave time to products from other companies, the network mornings shows did more stories about their own parent company's wares than they did about any other single company—especially their media competitors.

In the 20 days examined in June and October, Disney products were most likely to appear on ABC, Viacom products on CBS and GE products on NBC.

In fact, CBS was nearly twice as likely to carry Viacom products than ABC and NBC combined.

Of the 82 product stories aired on The Early Show, more than a quarter (27%) involved Viacom products.

These ranged from interviews with contestants on such CBS shows as “Big Brother” and “Survivor: Africa,” to performances by Dream, a group touring with the summer concert series sponsored by MTV, to interviews with the stars of Paramount movies.

On ABC's Good Morning America, somewhat fewer (21%) of its product stories were Disney owned, though still more than it aired about either GE or Viacom products or anyone else's.

Some might not expect General Electric to see The Today Show as an outlet for its products in the same way as a media conglomerate might. And the numbers are lower. Still, 12% of the 86 product stories on The Today Show were owned by either GE (in one case equipment for cancer treatment) or by NBC itself.

Disclosure

In the age of synergy, such cross promotion may not raise as many eyebrows as it would have some years ago.

Yet what is surprising by any measure is how rarely the parent relationship is disclosed.

When a celebrity appearing on the Early Show, for example, is starring in the latest movie produced by Paramount (owned by Viacom), does the reporter mention the relationship?

Back in June, across the board the answer was usually no.

Overall only 11% of stories about products connected to a parent company disclosed the corporate relationship.

Of the 10 CBS stories involving Viacom, for instance, only one

Synergy & Disclosure			
Did networks disclose when selling a parent company product?			
	<u>June</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Total</u>
	N=27	N=20	N=47
Disclosed	11%	80%	40%
Not Disclosed	89	20	60
Total	100	100	100

disclosed the relationship. The same was true at ABC: only one of 11 connections was disclosed. At NBC the ratio was one out of five.

For all the networks, the amount of disclosure increased dramatically in October to 80% of all parent-company related stories.

The reason was because many of the stories involved promoting the new fall lineup of each networks' entertainment programs, in which the disclosure is part of the promotion since you want the viewer to know which network to watch. All but one of these stories in October promoting a parent company product and disclosing the relationship were promoting a network program or special.

Even with this higher level of disclosure in October, in the end, across the 20 days of programs studied, still less than half (40%) of all stories about a corporate parent product disclosed the connection.

Promotions and Teases

One of the most noticeable features of the morning shows as you watch them critically is the steady stream of self-promotions, many of them short, but so many of them constant.

These self promotions can be as simple as a quick tease for an upcoming segment on the show, a plug within a story for the network's webpage, or a promotion for an upcoming segment on another network program.

In the June period, NBC averaged 31 self-promotions a day. CBS 29 and ABC 25.

At times, whole segments are a kind of promotion. GMA in June ran a portion of Diane Sawyer's interview with Nancy Reagan as a preview to the longer interview that would air on PrimeTime Thursday.

Other promotions are even more subtle examples of cross selling. On June 22, for instance, The Early Show featured six plugs for a Martha Stewart cooking segment. The segment was sponsored by the K-Mart retail chain, which carries Stewart's exclusive line of clothing and housewares. And during the segment, Stewart and CBS host Jane Clayson took care to also plug Stewart's "Pies and Tarts" cookbook. Stewart said it was her "favorite book," though it was unclear whether she meant her favorite among the books she had written or her favorite among all books ever written. CBS then referred viewers to CBS.com for more of Martha's

recipes. That, in the end, made the segment for Stewart, K-Mart and CBS a five-point cross promotion.

Researchers coded this segment as selling a book (though Viacom was not the publisher), and separately noted the reference to more recipes on the web site and each of the earlier teases for the segment.

Still other promotions are even more involved. In June, both GMA and Today aired weeklong series in which viewers chose a couple to be married on the show. Each program spent an entire week “preparing” for the big day—which would occur Friday—deciding on ring, dress, flowers, cake, pictures, etc. Many of these segments had products in them as well.

These features might be called meta-promotions. They sell wedding products, for one thing. They are plugged throughout the broadcast. They involve heavy use, also plugged, of the web interactivity. And the segments themselves are self-promotions for the most heavily plugged segment of all, the live TV wedding to come at the end of the week.

(ABC was first with this feature. Both NBC and CBS soon followed suit, but the CBS series fell outside of the time period studied.)

Most of the promos on the morning shows are brief, five-to-fifteen seconds. But they were so numerous, at least in June, the time adds up.

Good Morning America averaged 15 minutes of promotion time per show—a full 18% of the newscast.

The Today Show averaged 10 minutes of promotions per show. CBS averaged five minutes, largely because so many of its promotions were website mentions of no more than five seconds.

The amount of promotions dropped in October, but the disappearance of the clever wedding segments was the major reason.

Still, across the 20 shows studied, 13% of GMA’s newscast time, 8% of Today’s, and 6% of the Early Show’s, were taken up by promos.

Methodology

The study examined the three network evening news programs and three network morning shows were studied for two ten-day periods. The first was June 18th-22nd and 25th-29th, 2001, the second was October 15th – 19th and 22nd – 26th, 2001. The specific programs studied were ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, ABC’s Good Morning America, The CBS Early Show and NBC’s Today Show.

All broadcasts were monitored from videoed taped segments of the program.

Study of the Morning Shows

The portion of the study looking specifically at the morning shows, we examined the two-hour period of 7:00 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. ET. To remain consistent, we did not include the third hour of the Today Show which airs in some markets.

Coding process. Researchers worked with a detailed, standardized codebook. All stories were first coded for basic inventory variables—source, date and time in seconds.

Next, coders monitored two distinct elements of these shows, product stories and self-promotions outside of commercial time. They were defined as follows:

1. Product Stories: A product story was defined as a package or interview that had some kind of product attached. It could be a book, CD, kitchen tool, commercial website, movie or something else that could be bought or used to buy things. All products were fully coded as described below.

Once a product story was identified, coders then examined two other aspects of it:

Ownership: Who owns the product: Is it owned by the network's parent company? By another of the big three media conglomerates? By some other entity?

Disclosure: If the network's parent company did own the product, was that relationship disclosed to viewers? By disclosure we mean any mention through either audio or visual means.

2. Promotions: The second element coders examined were self-promotions. A promotion was defined as a non-commercial plug or teaser for something connected to that network. It could be a promotion for an upcoming segment on the show, a plug within a story for the network's web page or a promotion for an upcoming segment on another program on that network. Researchers noted the time and type of each promotion.

Both products and promotions were timed in seconds. In a few instances, a full story was both product oriented and a promotion for an upcoming segment. In these cases the story was coded for both and the time was divided evenly between the two.

In addition to this work, we considered the time devoted to local newsbreaks and commercials in the following manner:

Local Newsbreaks: Local newsbreaks are time that the network hands over to local affiliate stations to provide viewers local news and weather. We calculated the time each network devotes to local news by averaging three broadcasts for each network. Within each network the minutes had almost no variation day to day.

Commercial Time: As with local newsbreaks, commercial time was calculated by taking an average of three broadcasts for each network. Again, commercial time was very consistent within each network.

The Study of Topics—Morning and Evening

The topic breakdowns for both the evening news and the morning shows were based on data compiled by media researcher Andrew Tyndall for the Tyndall Report. For the Evening news programs, Tyndall monitors all news segments in which the reporting involves more than an anchor read. For the morning show, Tyndall monitors all packaged segments outside the local and national newsbreaks. The Project adapted Tyndall's research to the topic breakdowns it has used in earlier studies.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability measures the extent to which individual coders, operating independently of one another, reach the same coding decision. Tests were performed throughout the project. No systematic errors were found. When necessary, the coding supervisor reviewed decisions on content variables to be sure coders were in agreement.

Evening News Topics Network-by-Network breakdown

	ABC			CBS			NBC		
	June	October	Change	June	October	Change	June	October	Change
Hard News									
Government	3	5	2	5	4	-1	3	6	3
Military	5	16	11	3	22	19	4	20	16
Domestic Affairs	9	26	17	15	19	4	11	17	6
Domestic Affairs feature	1	2	1	1	3	2	1	1	0
Foreign affairs	14	4	-10	13	9	-4	9	8	-1
<i>Total</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>53</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	<i>44.4%</i>	<i>75.7%</i>		<i>52.9%</i>	<i>86.4%</i>		<i>39.4%</i>	<i>78.8%</i>	
Celebrity News									
Entertainment/celebs	5	0	-5	1	0	-1	3	0	-3
Celebrity crime/scandal	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	-1
<i>Total</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-5</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-4</i>
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	<i>6.9%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>		<i>1.4%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>		<i>5.6%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	
Crime/law/courts									
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>-6</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-9</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>-3</i>
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	<i>13.9%</i>	<i>5.7%</i>		<i>12.9%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>		<i>8.5%</i>	<i>4.5%</i>	
Business/economy									
<i>Total</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>-2</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>-10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>-9</i>
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	<i>9.7%</i>	<i>7.1%</i>		<i>17.1%</i>	<i>3.0%</i>		<i>15.5%</i>	<i>3.0%</i>	
Science and Technology									
Science	2	7	5	0	6	6	3	8	5
Technology	2	0	-2	1	0	-1	1	1	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	<i>5.6%</i>	<i>10.0%</i>		<i>1.4%</i>	<i>9.1%</i>		<i>5.6%</i>	<i>13.6%</i>	
Lifestyle Features									
Fashion/lifestyle	1	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Personal health	4	1	-3	1	1	0	6	0	-6
High arts/culture	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Religion	2	0	-2	1	0	-1	0	0	0
Sports	1	0	-1	1	0	-1	0	0	0
Weather/natural disaster	4	0	-4	3	0	-3	2	0	-2
Sci-Fi/supernatural	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	2	0	-2	1	0	-1	3	0	-3
Family/parenting	0	0	0	1	0	-1	0	0	0
Cooking/food	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Travel	0	0	0	1	0	-1	5	0	-5
Oddball news	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	-1
Consumer/product	0	0	0	1	0	-1	1	0	-1
<i>Total</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-13</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>-9</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>-18</i>
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	<i>19.4%</i>	<i>1.4%</i>		<i>14.3%</i>	<i>1.5%</i>		<i>25.4%</i>	<i>0.0%</i>	
Total	72	70	-2	70	66	-4	71	66	-5

Evening News Topics All Networks

	June	October	Change
Hard News			
Government	11	15	4
Military	12	58	46
Domestic Affairs	35	62	27
Domestic Affairs feature	3	6	3
Foreign affairs	36	21	-15
<i>Total</i>	97	162	65
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	45.5%	80.2%	
Celebrity News			
Entertainment/celebs	9	0	-9
Celebrity crime/scandal	1	0	-1
<i>Total</i>	10	0	-10
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	4.7%	0.0%	
Crime/law/courts			
	25	7	-18
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	11.7%	3.5%	
Business/economy			
	30	9	-21
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	14.1%	4.5%	
Science and Technology			
Science	5	21	16
Technology	4	1	-3
<i>Total</i>	9	22	13
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	4.2%	10.9%	
Lifestyle Features			
Fashion/lifestyle	1	0	-1
Personal health	11	2	-9
High arts/culture	0	0	0
Religion	3	0	-3
Sports	2	0	-2
Weather/natural disaster	9	0	-9
Sci-Fi/supernatural	0	0	0
Other	6	0	-6
Family/parenting	1	0	-1
Cooking/food	0	0	0
Travel	6	0	-6
Oddball news	1	0	-1
Consumer/product	2	0	-2
<i>Total</i>	42	2	-40
<i>Percentage of newscasts</i>	19.7%	1.0%	
Total	213	202	-11

How Good Morning America Uses Its Time

	<u>June</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Average</u>
Total Airtime (minutes)	120	120	120
<i>Commercials</i>	35	35	35
<i>Local News</i>	12	12	12
<i>Products</i>	9	16	12.5
<i>Promotions</i>	15	6	10.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	71	69	70
<i>Remaining Time</i>	49	51	50

How The Early Show Uses Its Time

	<u>June</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Average</u>
Total Airtime (minutes)	120	120	120
<i>Commercials</i>	38	38	38
<i>Local News</i>	8	8	8
<i>Products</i>	17	18	17.5
<i>Promotions</i>	5	4	4.5
<i>Subtotal</i>	68	68	68
<i>Remaining Time</i>	52	52	52

How the Today Show Uses Its Time

	<u>June</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Average</u>
Total Airtime (minutes)	120	120	120
<i>Commercials</i>	32	32	32
<i>Local News</i>	7	7	7
<i>Products</i>	21	27	19
<i>Promotions</i>	10	4	7
<i>Subtotal</i>	70	70	65
<i>Remaining Time</i>	50	50	55

Product promoted on ABC

(Total Stories)

	<u>JUNE</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>Total</u>
Books	3	4	7
<i>Music</i>	3	1	4
<i>Movie</i>	4	8	12
<i>TV</i>	7	4	11
<i>Sports</i>	6	3	9
<i>Internet/ Magazine/ Newspaper</i>	4	6	10
<i>Business/ Consumer</i>	6	7	13
<i>Other</i>	2	3	5
TOTAL	35	36	71

Product promoted on NBC

(Total Stories)

	<u>JUNE</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>Total</u>
Books	9	10	19
<i>Music</i>	8	3	11
<i>Movie</i>	10	7	17
<i>TV</i>	5	7	12
<i>Sports</i>	0	1	1
<i>Internet/ Magazine/ Newspaper</i>	4	4	8
<i>Business/ Consumer</i>	4	2	6
<i>Other</i>	9	3	12
TOTAL	49	37	86

Product promoted on CBS

(Total Stories)

	<u>JUNE</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>Total</u>
Books	12	7	19
<i>Music</i>	7	5	12
<i>Movie</i>	6	5	11
<i>TV</i>	5	9	14
<i>Sports</i>	0	1	1
<i>Internet/ Magazine/ Newspaper</i>	3	9	12
<i>Business/ Consumer</i>	5	2	7
<i>Other</i>	4	2	6
TOTAL	42	40	82

Synergy & Disclosure
Did networks disclose when selling a parent company product?

	ABC		CBS		NBC	
	<u>June</u> N=11	<u>Oct</u> N=5	<u>June</u> N=12	<u>Oct</u> N=10	<u>June</u> N=5	<u>Oct</u> N=5
<i>Relationship Disclosed</i>	9%	40%	8%	90%	20%	100%
<i>Relationship Not Disclosed</i>	91	60	92	10	80	0
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100