THE EVOLUTION OF THE LIFETIME CABLE TELEVISION NETWORK: 1984 THROUGH 1994

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The Evolution of the Lifetime Cable Television Network: 1984 Through 1994

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my cousins, Róisín Margarita Fröhlich Foley, age 5, and Ciarán Stefan Fröhlich Foley, age 2. May they come to understand and celebrate the differences and the similarities of women and men.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the development and evolution of the Lifetime Cable Television Network from its inception in 1984 through 1994. Lifetime's choice in 1987 to target women as its primary audience, the programming decisions, and the effects of targeting women were addressed. Comparisons were made to other media aimed at women. A chronology of the Lifetime Cable Television Network was developed from broadcasting, cable television, and media trade publications, books, and interviews with Lifetime employees. Targeting women aged 18 to 49, Lifetime continuously reorganized its programming with varying combinations of original movies, series, specials, and talk shows, and several acquired off-network programs, films, and theatricals. Lifetime created self-promotional campaigns in an effort to reposition itself in the minds of viewers and advertisers as the cable television network exclusively for women. It was concluded that Lifetime's ratings and revenues were slowly increasing and their image evolving into the network not just about women, but for women.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Cable Television is a relatively young medium, as is the concept of aiming an entire television network at a single market segment. The Lifetime Cable Television Network was one of the first cable television networks to target women (Eastman, 1993). Its pioneering role suggests it is time to examine the development and evolution of Lifetime since its inception in 1984. To understand Lifetime's progress and place in mass media, it is important to examine why Lifetime chose to target women as its primary audience, the effects of that choice, and how Lifetime compares/contrasts to other media aimed at women.

The Role of Ratings in Delivering an Audience to Advertisers

Delivering an audience to advertisers is the single most important means of making a profit for a television or radio station (Carroll & Davis, 1993). Advertisers want to reach the largest possible audience while reaching the target audience for their product (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992). Since the rise of commercial sponsorship in radio, ratings have helped advertisers determine "how much their commercial dollars are worth in total listeners" (Matelski, 1988, p. 31). Ratings and demographics identify the audience of specific programs. From a ratings analysis the price of commercial time can be negotiated, and thus determine the financial success or failure of a broadcast facility. The A.C. Nielsen Company and Arbitron have been the most commonly used agencies for the measurement of television audiences.

According to Jamieson and Campbell (1992), advertisers determined that women aged 18 to 49 are the most desirable audience as they make the largest number of consumption decisions per household. Men are considered consumers of more durable goods like automobiles and recreational supplies. These claims are supported by and indicative of the research of media aimed at women throughout previous decades (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992).

Media Aimed at Women: Past and Present

According to Mattelart (1982), as early as the inception of radio in the 1920s, women were singled out as a favorite target for mass media messages. Sponsored by such soap products as Rinso or Oxydol, radio, and later television programs, were referred to as soap operas. In the 1940s, the "typical soap opera listener was married and part of a single-income household" and between the ages of 18 and 35 (Matelski, 1988, p. 37). Many listeners were from rural areas and lacked education beyond high school or even elementary school. In contrast to the 1940s, the soap opera viewers of the 1980s were more educated, career oriented, and diverse.

Magazines and movies had a great influence upon American culture in the early 1900s (Davidson & Lytle, 1986). Yet, by the 1950s they began to lose their audience to television (Davidson & Lytle, 1986). Although the television medium attempted mass appeal, according to historians, the medium had a profound effect on specifically shaping the image of women. According to Davidson and Lytle (1986) Betty Friedan, author of The Feminine Mystique, suggested the media stifled women's aspirations and shaped their attitudes. Friedan referred to the affects of media on women as the symbolic annihilation of women. While historians argued whether the media reflected society or manipulated it, advertisers were quick to admit they targeted the housewife. The television programming of the 1950s and 1960s may have affected women or even lead to the symbolic annihilation of women, yet it was not clear at whom the programs were aimed (Davidson & Lytle, 1986).

The 1970s marked the beginning of advertisers attempts to define target audiences (Jamieson & Campbell, 1992). Advertisers and broadcasters began to aim at large demographic groups versus a mass, undifferentiated audience (MacDonald, 1990). For example, the American

Broadcasting Company (ABC) aimed programs at a younger audience while the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) chose to target an older audience.

Several popular magazines have long been aimed at a female target audience and they seem to show clear differences from media aimed at other demographic groups (Miller, 1987). Miller reviewed the techniques used by popular magazines from July 1984 through January 1985 to attract and maintain an audience. The study found that men's and women's magazines differ in the level of intimacy, vocabulary, and syntax. Women's magazines tended to be more personal and homogeneous in topics. Authors referred to the reader as <u>you</u> and the syntax stressed doing, thinking, and feeling. Most notably, women's magazines played on female anxiety while men's magazines were more colloquial in style and metaphorical with frequent reference to power, sex, and war.

Tuchman, Daniels, and Benét (1978) studied the depiction of sex roles in the mass media and the effect of that portrayal on American women and girls. Like Miller (1987), they found that "women's magazines differentiate themselves from one another by specifying their intended readers, as well as the size of their mass media circulation" (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978, p. 19). Newspapers were components of a national medium and sought to appeal to the family unit as a whole. Fashion and society columns were created as women's news. Written mass media and advertisers considered women's needs and desires different from men's, yet the television industry failed to differentiate. The early 1980s introduced the expansion of cable thus creating new challenges for broadcast networks. The biggest challenge was the erosion of the broadcast television viewing audience. The increase in cable television viewers precipitated a decrease for broadcast television, threatening not only their ratings, but their revenues (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978).

The Evolution of Cable Television

Cable television was cited as the greatest reason prime-time broadcast television viewing declined from 91% of households watching broadcast networks in the 1976-1977 season, to 62% in the 1990-1991 season (Carroll & Davis, 1993). Other parts of the day received even lower percentages. Cable networks increasingly purchased off-network programming, thereby competing with the broadcast networks on which the programs originally ran. Carroll and Davis (1993) estimated that 92% of households in the United States would have access to cable television by the year 1998. The broadcast network audience eroded as viewers had less reason to differentiate between the major broadcast networks and the cable television service brought directly into their homes.

Cable subscribers were considered to be an attractive audience due to their demographic composition (Carroll & Davis, 1993). Cable subscribers were 40% more likely than non-subscribers to have college experience and 40% more likely to earn $40,000 or more per year. Cable's audience captured the attention of advertisers wanting to reach this targeted demographic group because of its disposable income. "The lowest economic and educational categories don't have cable, so the demographics just go up (Fabrikant, 1990, p. 45)."

While the major broadcasting networks, the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), and the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) used general-interest programming strategies, cable networks had begun to fragment and specialize. Cable networks were separated into the following categories: (1) Educationally Oriented Networks, such as The Discovery Channel; (2) Foreign-Language Networks, such as Galavsion; (3) Sports Networks, such as The Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN); (4) News and Information Networks, such as The Cable News Network (CNN); (5) Music Networks such, as Music Television (MTV); (6) Film and Variety Networks, such as Turner Network Television (TNT); (7) Special-Interest Networks, such as Lifetime; (8) Religious Networks, such as The Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN); and (9) Retail Shopping Networks, such as The Home Shopping Network (HSN) (Carroll & Davis, 1993).

The biggest challenges for cable networks were: (1) gaining credibility; and (2) the development of quality programming (Carroll & Davis, 1993). Viewers increasing acceptance of cable stations was, in part, attributed to ESPN and TNT as they began to carry professional sports games. CNN gained credibility for cable networks as a result of their intense coverage of the Persian Gulf war.

A Summary

Cable television aided in the definition of target audiences as cable subscribers were typically described as having more disposable income. When cable networks fragmented and specialized, they took part of the broadcast television viewing audience with them. Ironically, cable networks drew some of the audience away from broadcast networks by airing acquired off-network programs.

Delivering a female audience to advertisers is not a modern concept and has been practiced readily in the twentieth century. Countless numbers of radio programs, television shows, and magazines expressly targeted women in hopes of increasing ratings and advertising revenue. However, this practice was not acknowledged within the media industries until the 1970s as advertisers and broadcasters attempted to define target audiences. Past research rarely mentioned the terms <u>demographic</u>, <u>target</u>, or <u>audience</u> until the 1980s.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this research:

1. Barter: Instead of selling a program to a station, the supplier gives the program to the station in exchange for commercial time slots during the program or during other parts of the station's schedule.

2. Block programming: The strategy of scheduling similar programs in groups within a time period to encourage the audience to watch the entire block.

3. Cable television: A television signal delivery system in which signals are distributed to households through coaxial cable for a monthly subscription fee.

4. Daypart: A standard period of time used to identify periods of television viewing based on advertiser needs and audience habits. The basic dayparts in reference to Eastern Standard Time are 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., and 7 p.m. to midnight. Dayparts can be broken down into sections such as early fringe, prime-time access, prime time, and late fringe.

5. Demographic: The potential audience, identified by sex and age. The age and sex increments are generally broken down in the following demographic segments: children 2 to 6, children 7 to 11, teens 12 to 17, men 18 to 24, women 18 to 24, men 25 to 34, women 25 to 34, men 35 to 44, women 35 to 44, men 45 to 54, women 45 to 54, men 55 to 64, women 55 to 64, men 65 and over, women 65 and over. Demographic segments can be combined into another demographic, such as men and women aged 18 to 34.

6. Off-network programs: Programs available for television syndication after they have been aired on a network.

7. Original programs: Programs produced exclusively by and for a network, often referred to as in-house.

8. Prime time: The hours from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday in the Eastern and Pacific time zones.

9. Rating: The estimated percentage of all television households tuned to a specific station at a specified time. The total possible audience equals 100%.

10. Share: The percentage of households using television or persons using television tuned to a specific program or station in a specific market at a specified time.

10. Syndication: The practice of selling exclusive market rights to broadcast a program to stations.

Limitations

This study was limited to an examination of the Lifetime Cable Television Network. For this reason the analysis of results will be limited in the ability to make strong, longitudinal recommendations. Causal inferences may not be made due to the non-experimental nature of the design of this study. This study relied mainly on secondary sources. The Lifetime Television Network employees interviewed were guarded in their responses.

Research Procedures

This study aimed to explain the development and evolution of the Lifetime cable television network from its inception through 1994. Using mass media industry publications, periodicals, and personal interviews the following research questions were addressed: What is Lifetime? Why did Lifetime choose to target women as its primary audience? What actions has Lifetime taken to target women? What was the effect of Lifetime's choice to target women? How has Lifetime compared/contrasted to other media aimed at women?

Lifetime was rarely cited in industry publications and periodicals between 1984 and 1994. Broadcasting & Cable, formerly known as Broadcasting, and MEDIAWEEK published the majority of the articles reviewed for this study. The periodicals made reference to Lifetime as a cable channel and provided limited insight into Lifetime's executive management and programming decisions.

Lifetime's manager of original programming, Julie Perullo, her assistant, Gwyn Hulswit, and the executive assistant to the vice president of program development, Cindy Cohen, were interviewed. According to Perullo, Lifetime had never received a student request for research information. Perullo, Hulswit, and Cohen were accommodating and cooperative, answering as many questions as they were allowed by Lifetime's management. However, they were guarded in their responses especially concerning the areas of demographics and programming decisions. Because they were not employees of Lifetime since its inception, they were unable to confirm and unwilling to speculate on Lifetime's decision making history. All three employees were enthusiastic in their communication and spoke very positively about Lifetime's future and the current Television for Women campaign.

Peggy Allen, vice president of program development, agreed to answer research questions by mail. A preliminary draft of this study and a comprehensive list of questions were sent to Allen. Due to scheduling and time constraints, Allen chose to return the materials in their entirety without comments. However, Allen recommended I speak with Cohen in her absence.

Chapter 2

A Chronology of the Lifetime Cable Television Network

The Events of 1984

Lifetime was launched in February of 1984 when Viacom's Cable Health Network merged with Hearst/ABC's Daytime Network (Hammer, 1991). In November of 1984 the cable network's owners designated $20 million to overhaul 77% of Lifetime's programming in hopes of boosting their overall .4 rating ("Lifetime's grand sweep," 1984). An additional $5 million was set aside to establish Lifetime in the minds of the viewing public (Norris, 1984). At the time, Lifetime depended solely on revenue from ad sales and carrying professional health programs ("Lifetime's grand sweep," 1984). They did not acquire affiliate carrying-charge fees from the current figure of 21.1 million cable subscribers. Affiliate carriage fees, a portion of a cable subscriber's bill allotted for individual networks, would increase Lifetime's revenue potential. The new programming shifted Lifetime "away from heavy information emphasis and toward more entertaining and provocative series featuring celebrity hosts" ("Lifetime's grand sweep," 1984, p. 26). Contests, viewer polls, information access, and call-in programs were the key elements of a new talk television plan. Lifetime was aware of a strong demographic group of viewers who were mainly women aged 18 to 49 (Livingston, 1985).

Women were the daytime target audience from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Acquired programming focusing on money, health, leisure and lifestyle filled in the remainder of the day ("Lifetime's grand sweep," 1984). Thomas F. Burchill, Lifetime's chief executive officer and president, expressed his concern of attracting and keeping male viewers in the evening hours (Norris, 1984). "Men control the television dial after 4 p.m. or 5 p.m., and women give in to share time with husbands (p. 32)." Unsold ad slots plagued the network as 50% of the inventory was vacant from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

and 65% was unsold during late fringe, 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. ("Lifetime's grand sweep," 1984). Proctor & Gamble and General Foods were two of Lifetime's strongest advertisers ("Lifetime's grand sweep," 1984). In its first year Lifetime lost $20 million and was mistaken by some television viewers as a religious programming service (Hammer, 1991).

Summary of 1984

In its first year, Lifetime was launched without much notice by cable viewers. Lifetime's choice to significantly alter programming indicated they were ready to forge ahead regardless of the disappointing .4 rating. The network hoped to add male viewers to their largely female base. Revenue was a big obstacle to success as Lifetime did not charge affiliate carrying fees. The $20 million loss predicted more changes for Lifetime.

The Events of 1985

By July of 1985, Lifetime felt they were overstaffed in comparison to similar networks and reduced their staff from 175 to 160 ("Lifetime diagnosis," 1985). The reorganization featured a renewed emphasis on programming and the acquisition of "a 15-title movie package from Viacom that is targeted to women" (p. 78). The movies were to air in the late afternoon and late evening time periods and possibly work in conjunction with talk show specials when an issue-oriented movie such as The Burning Bed was aired. According to Ira Tumpowsky, senior vice president for cable television at Young and Rubicam, Lifetime was "still fighting to identify with an audience" ("Lifetime Diagnosis," 1985, p. 78). Burchill announced there would be new programming controlled by owners Viacom, Hearst, and ABC. Although he wouldn't elaborate, industry insiders speculated that Lifetime could become a pre-syndication window for originally produced materials, including series and mini-series ("More changes," 1985). Lifetime added Moviebreaks, a two hour vehicle for feature films, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and at 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.

to aid in increasing the average .4 rating for the first half of 1985 ("More changes," 1985).

More changes were in store by December when programming vice president Mary Alice Dwyer-Dobbin was replaced by Charles Gingold ("Today's man," 1985). The winner of eight Emmy awards in 1981 for his work with WABC-TV in New York, Gingold was comfortable with the concept of narrowcasting and intended to provide Lifetime with more modified and focussed programming. The talk television format was considered somewhat unsuccessful in that many live phone-in shows were cancelled (Livingston, 1985). Good Sex! with Dr. Ruth Westheimer was Lifetime's first hit and Dr. Westheimer was considered the first cable-bred celebrity. In an effort to broaden content and avoid alienating potential advertisers, the show was renamed The Dr. Ruth Show. Healthstyles with Regis Philbin was a successful carryover from the Cable Health Network and renamed Lifestyles. Both talk shows were bringing in a .7 rating. Hot Properties, hosted by Tovah Feldshuh and Fred Newman, was a variety talk show that was not as promising even after the hosts were replaced with comedian Richard Belzer (Livingston, 1985). The show was cancelled along with Fran Tarkenton's Smart Money and Stanley Siegel's controversial show America Talks Back. When Lifetime had attempted to replace Charlene Prickett's exercise show, It Figures, to make room for Smart Money, viewers protested in unprecedented numbers, thereby bolstering Lifetime's decision to make changes and reconsider its core audience.

Burchill insisted the changes weren't in format, but in market repositioning (Livingston, 1985). The tag lines TV that has America Talking and talk television were dropped in favor of today's woman and For cable television that attracts today's woman, there's nothing like a woman's Lifetime. Lifetime experienced a $16 million loss in 1985 and Burchill predicted 1986 would finally generate the first positive earnings report. Reaching 24 million homes on over 2,700 systems, Lifetime was ready to successfully institute an affiliate carriage fee system charging six cents per subscriber per month. General Electric, Black and Decker, Pillsbury, Scott Paper, L'eggs hosiery, Sharp appliances, Chic jeans, Nabisco, Kimberly-Clark, and Colgate signed on as new advertisers (Livingston, 1985).

Summary of 1985

Lifetime appeared to be in a perpetual state of reorganizatic ı. In addition to major staff changes, Lifetime rethought it's programming and reconsidered the value of the female viewers aged 18 to 49. The disappointing loss of $16 million was balanced with the promise of several new national advertisers. Rethinking the talk television format, Lifetime was about to embark on the mission of repositioning itself in the viewers minds as the channel for today's woman.

The Events of 1986 and 1987

Little was reported about Lifetime in 1986 yet they moved into the profit making margin by the end of that year (Zahradnik, 1987). In 1986 Lifetime purchased the exclusive United States cable rights to the British royal wedding of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson (Madlin, 1987). They were the only channel to rebroadcast the entire wedding in prime time and it produced a 10 share. By 1987 they were considered the number-one network in the concentration of women aged 18 to 49 with 60% of its viewers in pay-cable homes (Zahradnik, 1987). As Zahradnik noted, "unlike it's earlier ill-fated attempt to become a 'broadbased network,' Lifetime's newest programming efforts are aimed at the audience it has already won (p. 36)."

The average January rating for 1987 was up 75% from the previous year to .7 (Madlin, 1987). Burchill avoided the term narrowcasting, and stated "those cable networks that are targeted are the ripest for strong growth because advertisers are doing a lot more targeting than they used to. And we deliver a consistent, quality audience" (Madlin, 1987, p. 13).

Attitudes, hosted by Linda Dano and Nancy Glass, was a fashion and fitness variety show gaining viewing and advertising fans (Zahradnik, 1987). People in Crisis was slated to begin in July with Dr. Dan Kiley giving guidance to real people. Our Group, a weekly show with actors dramatizing group therapy sessions, was slated to air in July as well. Lifetime made a profit of $6.7 million in 1987 (Zahradnik, 1987).

Summary of 1986 and 1987

Lifetime appeared to drop from sight in the industry publications as it struggled to make a profit and gain viewers. As they made their way through their fourth year as Lifetime, they had become the top producer of a much desired female aged 18 to 49 audience. A focus on fashion, fitness, parenting, beauty, and some dramas and original movies, reflected Lifetime's choice to concentrate on their original audience.

The Events of 1988

In February of 1988, Lifetime became the first cable network to run a prime time show in pre-syndication while new episodes of the same show were still being aired on a broadcast network (Collins, 1988). The show, Cagney and Lacey, would run Monday through Friday on Lifetime while CBS aired the new episodes once a week. Broadcast industry insiders had mixed feelings about the development of pre-syndication. While some were concerned the move would add to the broadcast network-audience erosion figures, others felt it was a long way from earth-shattering (Collins, 1988).

Lifetime projected a 40% increase in ad revenues for 1988 and had solidified its position as the top cable network for reaching female viewers (Walley, 1988). Burchill stated:

> We view it as the right niche and the right segment to reach. Magazines and radio went from mass-market vehicles to segmentation. TV is going through the same transformation. We're at an age when cable is moving toward personalization. The bulk of what we do is

> demographically pure. We want to reach up-scale working women without diluting the audience. To me, the attractiveness we've provided advertisers in the advent of people meters is a predictable demographic profile. It's a safety net to advertisers (Walley, 1988, p. 22).

Lifetime was reaching more than 3,500 cable systems reaching more than 35 million households. New advertisers included Chevrolet, Beech-Nut Nutrition Corporation, International Playtex, Kitchenaid, and Nestle Foods Corporation.

Walley (1988) predicted the key to Lifetime's future success would be the expansion of their original products. Lifetime was constructing a television studio facility in Astoria, New York and expected it to be completed by September of 1988. Burchill claimed "the advantage of cable is you don't need to make a decision about a shows future in four to six weeks . . . Attitudes is for, by and stars two women. It's in its third year and growing" (Walley, 1988, p. 27). Burchill cited an interest in airing women's sports such as tennis, the Olympics, and basketball.

When NBC dropped The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd in September of 1988, Lifetime bought the show with plans to continue its production (Moss, 1988). "Our mission is to become the first channel choice for women. And Molly Dodd is the linchpin for our strategy in 1989" (Moss, 1988, p. 95) stated Burchill. According to Moss (1988), Cagney and Lacey and Lifetime's aggressive production of original programming had profits and ratings soaring.

Summary of 1988

Lifetime's ground breaking pre-syndication purchase of Cagney and Lacey caused the television industry to take a serious look at the cable competitor. Publicly and without hesitation, Burchill announced the intentions of Lifetime to continue to reach its female audience and to expressly target those viewers. The increase in national advertisers and the boost of original and acquired programming was indicative of Lifetime's image as a women's channel. While asserting themselves as the number one channel for women aged 18 to 49, Lifetime simultaneously increased in ratings and profits.

In April of 1988, Broadcasting, a weekly industry periodical, began publishing the quarterly cable ratings. As Table 1 indicates, the second and third quarters of 1988 saw an increase most notably in the prime time ratings while the full day ratings remained stable at .6.

Table 1

1988 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	.9	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.1
Households	313,000	419,000	502,000	425,000	415,000
Full Day					
Rating	.6	.6	.6	.6	.6
Households	199,000	232,000	247,000	243,000	230,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. ("Cable ratings rising," 1989; "Cable ratings: second quarter box," 1989; "Cable ratings up slightly," 1988; "Cable network numbers," 1989).

The Events of 1989

In June of 1989, Lifetime announced they would produce an additional 26 episodes of The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd ("New days," 1989). Lifetime's research indicated the show was drawing new viewers to the network as well as advertisers. By July, Lifetime struck a deal with 20th Century Fox Syndication to carry off-network reruns of NBC's L.A. Law ("Cable gets L.A.

Law," 1989). Starting in September of 1990, Lifetime would own the rights to air the reruns for five years ("Cable gets L.A. Law," 1989). Lifetime would not reveal the cost per episode and an industry insider estimated the price at $205,000 to $210,000 each. According to Pat Fili, senior vice president of programming and production, Lifetime acquired L.A. Law because "we think it's a quality show with strong female demographic performance" (p. 30). The series would replace Cagney and Lacey, another high profile off-network show, that would end its run in 1991.

New original programming was slated to begin production in Lifetime's Astoria Studios (Cable gets L.A. Law," 1989). August would bring What Every Baby Knows: The First Three Years, and in September Lifetime would air The Parent Survival Guide, and a special hosted by Jill Clayburgh called Ask Me Anything: How to Talk to Kids about Sex. In August of 1989, Lifetime announced the presentation of 15 original world premiere movies to begin airing in April of 1990 ("Lifetime to offer," 1989). Each of Lifetime's three parent companies, The Hearst Corporation, ABC Video Enterprises, and Viacom Incorporated, would produce and distribute five films. Fili noted the films would have female appeal and women would appear regularly in leading roles ("Lifetime to offer," 1989). Bristol-Myers quickly signed on as a major sponsor. Each film would premiere on Lifetime and appear four times during the premiere month. Fili claimed "our aggressive expansion in the original programming arena signals to our female viewership, cable operators and advertisers that Lifetime is a major player in television production. Made-for-Lifetime movies continue to fulfill Lifetime's blueprint of providing high-impact, high quality programming for women" ("Lifetime to offer," 1989, p. 29).

A diverse multi-media marketing campaign was underway, headed up by Marge Sandwick, senior vice president of marketing and communications (Burgi, 1989). The aim was at younger, more affluent women and focussed on Lifetime's image instead of its programming

(Burgi, 1989). Lifetime was ready to go beyond self and cable operator promotion and they spent an estimated ten cents of every revenue dollar, or an estimated $8 million, on the campaign (Burgi, 1989). According to Sandwick, Lifetime wasn't ready for such a campaign in 1986 because "All we had was a mishmosh of programs aimed somewhat at women, but there was no cohesive vision. We weren't sure about our reception out there. We feared people would either see us as The Feminism Channel or The Betty Crocker Channel" (Burgi, 1989, p. 66). The marketing drive, created in collaboration with Arnell/ Bickford Associates, was not directed at increasing ratings, but to aid in solving a lack of consumer awareness. At the time, The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd was considered the quintessential Lifetime show (Burgi, 1989). Advertising revenues had grown 100% since 1987. Lifetime boasted the highest number of upscale working-women viewers per viewing household in prime time. Explained Sandwick, "we feel we've established our niche, marketed to our business clients, and now we can tell the consumer" (Burgi, 1989, p. 67).

In October of 1989, Lifetime purchased 42 films from Orion Television Entertainment ("Lifetime buys," 1989). Twenty-three of the titles would appear on Lifetime before their syndication windows. Burchill admitted the price wasn't cheap and industry sources cited the cost at $1 million per film. Some of the pre-syndication titles included Bull Durham, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Mississippi Burning, Married to the Mob, and The Unbearable Lightness of Being. Burchill hoped the films along with the series L.A. Law and The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd, would allow Lifetime to "continue to chip away at broadcast television" ("Lifetime buys," 1989, p. 39).

The deal with Orion had the broadcast community concerned about losing more viewers and not getting a fair chance at purchasing the films before cable networks ("Syndie," 1989). Bob

King, Orion's president of domestic syndication, did not share those concerns and pointed out that several broadcast stations rejected the type of package Lifetime had purchased ("Syndie," 1989).

Summary of 1989

Lifetime was gaining confidence and credibility as it continued to produce the original programming of movies and the series The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd. For the first time, Lifetime was ready to target the consumer and bolster its image as the station for young, affluent women. The multi-media marketing campaign was focussed on prime time viewers and Lifetime avoided publicly identifying the daytime viewers. Meanwhile, the unidentified daytime audience was receiving the benefit of several original programs. The deal with Orion Television Entertainment attracted the industry's attention. Broadcast television appeared threatened by the cable industry's interest and purchase of films, syndicated or not.

Table 2

1989 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	.9	.9	1.2	.8	1.0
Households	395,000	400,000	523,000	375,000	423,000
Full Day					
Rating	.6	.6	.7	.5	.6
Households	264,000	266,000	312,000	250,000	273,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. ("Cable ratings rising," 1989; "Cable ratings: second quarter box," 1989; "Cable ratings rise in third," 1990; "Fourth quarter cable network," 1991).

A comparison of Table 1 to Table 2 shows little increase in viewing households from 1988 to 1989. The prime time ratings were down to 1.0 in 1989 from 1.1 in 1988, a 10% decrease, and the full day ratings for both years remained at .6.

The Events of 1990

For the first week of the fall season, 1990, Lifetime's prime time ratings increased from the August average of 1.3 to 1.9 ("Lifetime gets boost," 1990). L.A. Law was placed in the 8 p.m. time slot Monday through Friday and was averaging a 1.3, thereby increasing the time period viewership by 86%. The Canadian series, E.N.G., was scheduled at 7 p.m. and averaging .7. The Tracey Ullman Show and The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd filled the 11 p.m. to 12 p.m. time slot bringing in a .7 and a .4 rating respectively. Explaining the difference in ratings, Fili noted that "people are more familiar with acquired programming. It takes longer for them to find the original" ("Lifetime gets boost," 1990, p. 58). A morning talk show hosted by ex-CBS reporter, Jane Wallace, was taken off the schedule and Lifetime began working on a new format for the show.

Summary of 1990

Success appeared to come in small doses for Lifetime as in the 86% increase in viewers for the 8 p.m. time slot. With the few hits, there were several programming misses as Lifetime continued to redefine its programming and not its audience. A comparison of Table 2 and Table 3 indicates Lifetime's prime time ratings remained constant at 1.0 while the full day ratings remained at .6. Perhaps the stagnant ratings were a reflection of the programming woes, yet household viewership saw a 16% increase in prime time.

Table 3

1990 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	.9	.9	1.2	1.1	1.0
Households	417,000	434,000	597,000	565,000	503,000
Full Day					
Rating	.6	.5	.6	.6	.6
Households	267,000	261,000	300,000	308,000	284,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. ("CNN leads," 1991; "Cable networks post" 1990; "Cable ratings rise," 1990; "Fourth quarter cable network," 1991).

The Events of 1991

Sobel (1991) reported that Lifetime was one of several cable networks making gains in audience ratings and advertising revenues due to a substantial increase in women viewers. Burchill noted that Lifetime was steadily attracting more financial institutions, fast food companies, and automotive marketers to advertise on the network. According to Hammer (1991), by 1991, 70% of Lifetime's viewers were women. L.A. Law and Spenser for Hire were cited as performing well in the ratings with women making up at least 60% of the viewing population (Sobel, 1991). A 5.9 rating for Lifetime's original movie Sudie and Simpson prompted Burchill to increase the number of original movies for programming. Sudie and Simpson became the second highest rated cable television movie of all time. Other programming plans included cutting back rerun series because of the network's "ability and capacity to do its own productions" (Sobel, 1991, p. 44). Purchasing movie packages before they reached syndication was a continuing part of Burchill's programming strategy (Sobel, 1991).

By 1991 Fili had changed 60% of Lifetime's programming (Hammer, 1991). Fili kept Sundays full of medical programs such as Cardiology Update. Fili then hired a new producer for the talk-show Attitudes in order to tackle more serious issues. As a result, Attitudes' ratings increased 20% (Hammer, 1991).

As Burchill had suggested, Lifetime was able to acquire advertisers as sponsors of shows (Hammer, 1991). In exchange, the advertisers received back-end profits and commercial time. Lifetime focussed on ad spots that attracted women to watch programs with their male companions. At the same time, Lifetime was wary of diluting their female audience by playing up the male demographic. Rival cable networks predicted Lifetime would air more moderate action programs in order to attract a wider audience (Moshavi, 1991). Throughout 1990 and 1991, Fili produced 15 original made-for-Lifetime films (Hammer, 1991). The ratio of acquired programs to original programs was 50-50. Fili was quoted as saying, "It's important to us that women are not portrayed as victims, that they won't be saved by men in the end. But we don't program with a specific woman in mind. We really program to who is home at that time. You can't talk down to women. It's not what women need to know, it's what they want to know" (Hammer, 1991, p. 81).

Fili programmed the mornings for homemakers and mothers with exercise and baby-care programs that dealt with issues like coping with post-partum depression (Hammer, 1991). Counterprogramming the major network news hours, Fili used entertainment programs such as Supermarket Sweep to draw in viewers. Fili scheduled a combination of reruns and original programming to increase the ratings during prime time (Hammer, 1991).

On May 23, 1991, Buena Vista TV sold 200 reruns of Unsolved Mysteries to Lifetime

(Guider, 1991). The deal was estimated by inside sources to be between $125,000 to $150,000 per episode. Unsolved mysteries would become available to air in September of 1992 (Moshavi, 1991).

The 1991 first quarter prime-time ratings for Lifetime were at 1.2, or 629,000 households (see Table 4), and second quarter prime-time ratings were at 1.3, or 679,000 households, up from .8 and .9 for the same periods in 1990 (Moshavi, 1991). Three of Lifetime's original movies drew a 3.7 or better rating in the first half of 1991. The first night of original programming in July premiered Veronica Clare . Averaging a .8 rating, it was removed from the air after all nine original episodes were aired. Confessions of Crime and The Hidden Room averaged 1.1 and 1.0. Slated for the second half of the year were The Last Prostitute with Sonia Braga, Silent Motive with Patricia Wettig, and Wildflower directed by Diane Keaton. Meanwhile, Fili was working out deals with major broadcast networks ABC and CBS to air original Lifetime movies on their networks after their premiere on Lifetime (Moshavi, 1991).

By September 1991, Lifetime acquired the exclusive television rights to 39 of Orion Television Entertainment's top films ("Lifetime dances," 1991). "Thirteen of the films, including Mermaids, Dances With Wolves, Alice, and Silence of the Lambs, will appear on Lifetime prior to syndication" ("Lifetime dances," 1991, p. 38). The movies were to begin airing in October of 1993. Lifetime paid $25 million, and according to industry sources, "the deal could be the last of the film-package transactions in which a basic-cable network blows out the syndication window" (Dempsey, 1991, p. 31). Fili hand picked the Orion titles to fit the needs of the mostly female, aged 18 to 49 audience. Fili predicted sharing windows with broadcast television stations in the future as part of the overall film-package transactions.

In December of 1991, Lifetime bought the off-network rights to the 85 episode-series, thirtysomething from MGM Domestic Television Distribution ("MGM Domestic," 1991). The deal was made on an all-barter basis with MGM. The series was to begin airing in March of 1992.

Summary of 1991

As Table 4 indicates, Lifetime's ratings appeared consistent throughout 1991. Notably, the average prime time household viewership increased 22% as the ratings increased 20 %. Lifetime acquired a substantial amount of off-network programming such as Unsolved Mysteries. Original programming was considered successful in increasing ratings, and the acquisition of 39 films from Orion Television Entertainment was a bold cable network move. Lifetime was consistently collecting programming with long-term commitments.

Table 4

1991 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.2
Households	629,000	679,000	648,000	618,000	643,000
Full Day					
Rating	.7	.6	.6	.6	.6
Households	347,000	321,000	320,000	320,000	327,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. ("CNN leads," 1991; "Cable nets ratings," 1991; Brown, 1992, July 13, 1992; "Third-quarter cable," 1991; "Fourth-quarter cable," 1992).

The Events of 1992

Fili noted a change in the atmosphere at the National Association of Television Program

Executives (NATPE) convention in 1992 as syndicators attempted to distribute programs through broadcasting and cable networks. According to Moshavi (1992), just a year earlier, programmers like Fili were not high on the distributors list of most wanted clients. Fili was at NATPE looking to increase Lifetime's original programming (Moshavi, 1992). Supermarket Sweep and Shop 'Til You Drop filled the 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. time slots as original game show programming. China Beach took the 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. slot, but with only 85 episodes, Fili was hoping to expand the game show block to 8 p.m.

By June of 1992, off-network programming had found a niche in cable (Brown, 1992, June 29). Erica Gruen, senior vice president and associate director of television information and new media of the advertising firm Saatchi & Saatchi, stated the off-network program hours appealed to advertisers because the shows have already proven themselves and are therefore easy to promote (Brown, 1992, June 29). According to Gruen, they were also among the highest rated programs on basic cable. Mitchell Praver, Lifetime's vice president of programming acquisitions, noted the off-network programs attracted an upper-scale, loyal audience with it's line up of China Beach at 7 p.m., L.A. Law at 8 p.m., and thirtysomething at 11 p.m. Praver also predicted a healthy supply of off-network hour-long series would become available as programs like Northern Exposure, Law and Order, and Homefront moved into syndication. In August, Lifetime announced the October 5 debut of its third original half-hour game show, Born Lucky ("Games from," 1992). Hosted by Bob Goen, the show gave shopping mall visitors a chance to compete in a series of timed contests.

In 1992, Lifetime staged an election year public service campaign entitled Women and Politics: A Lifetime Challenge (Brown, 1992, September 14). Original short-form and long-form programming, collaborative efforts with women's magazines, and a national outreach of cable affiliates and women's groups served as the bulk of the campaign (Brown, 1992, September 14). Lifetime produced Majority Rule, an original movie about a female three star general running for president against a male incumbent. In a collaborative effort with the news division of ABC, Lifetime aired Seize the Power: A Lifetime Challenge to the Women of America on Tuesday, September 15, 1992 (Brown, 1992, September 14). The live two-hour election special looked at the status of women in politics and issues critical to women. According to David Glodt, executive producer of ABC's World News Saturday, World News Sunday, and This Week with David Brinkley, if the collaboration was successful he would consider future joint ventures with Lifetime. The special was shot before a live audience at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y. and included three remote locations by satellite hook-up. The three remote locations included the floor of the Texas House of Representatives in Austin, a company daycare center in Minneapolis, and a Los Angeles hotel with featured guests Penny Marshall, Mel Harris, and Maureen Reagan. Each location had a live audience and Lifetime viewers were invited to call in with their personal opinions. ABC News provided high profile political respondents Lynn Sherr and Cokie Roberts (Brown, 1992, September 14).

Quinn, Dempsey, and Pendleton (1992) reported the National Academy of Cable Programming gave Lifetime the rights to present the 14th Annual Cable Ace Awards to air on Sunday, January 17, 1993. Lifetime was chosen based on it's audience demographics and penetration. Produced by Dick Clark, the show was mostly watched by women aged 35 and over and took in a 1.1 rating and 1.8 share among cable households in 1992.

In November, Lifetime acquired the exclusive off-network cable rights to 12 made for television movies ("New pix," 1992). The deal was made with ACI, a consortium of eight producers in the United States. It was ACI's first sale to a basic cable network. November also brought discussions of MCA funneling Northern Exposure to cable and syndication at the same time (Dempsey, 1992). Northern Exposure would be run in strips on cable and on weekends through television stations. In lieu of cash, MCA wanted to use six minutes of each run to sell to national-barter advertisers (Dempsey, 1992). Lifetime wanted to sell the syndicated barter spots themselves and would put up a dollar guarantee in addition to MCA's license fee. The deal was not sealed.

Summary of 1992

Table 5

1992 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.0	1.1
Households	638,000	627,000	684,000	547,000	624,000
Full Day					
Rating	.7	.6	.6	.6	.6
Households	361,000	308,000	336,000	333,000	335,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. (Brown, 1992, April 13; Brown, 1992, July 13; Brown, 1992, October 12; "Fourth-quarter ratings," 1993).

With distributors at NATPE ready to cut deals with cable networks, Lifetime could increase its original programming with unprecedented ease. As Erica Gruen suggested, off-network programming was finding a niche and attracting a much desired audience. According to Cindy Cohen, Executive Assistant to the Vice President of Program Development, Women and

Politics: A Lifetime Challenge was considered a success and prompted the development of a similar campaign for the future (C. Cohen, personal communication, June 22, 1995). As Table 5 suggests, the full day ratings fluctuated from .6 to .7, and averaged 335,000 households. The prime time ratings in 1991 averaged 643,000 households, and decreased to the average of 624,000 households in 1992.

The Events of 1993

In January of 1993, Burchill bought 60-70% of Petry, Incorporated, the United States' third largest television station representation firm (Dupree, 1993). Burchill paid approximately $40 million to gain a majority stockholding position as president and chief executive officer of Petry. Burchill planned to leave Lifetime by the end of January (Huff, 1993). By March of 1993, Doug McCormick, group vice president of Hearst/ABC-Viacom Entertainment Services and executive vice president of Lifetime, was named president and chief operating officer ("Douglas Walter McCormick," 1993). Some board members favored Pat Fili for the position. While not directly involved in Lifetime's programming, McCormick "helped influence some of the network's signature shows, particularly its block of parenting programs" (Mandese, 1993, p. 34). McCormick planned to expand viewer awareness of Lifetime among 18 to 34 year olds.

March 1, 1993, marked the launching of The Jane Pratt Show, a daily talk show hosted by the editor of Sassy magazine (Mandese, 1993). McCormick focussed on expanding Lifetime Medical Television, the Sunday morning block of medical professional programming. McCormick claimed the expansion could lead to the creation of a new 24-hour medical cable network. In an effort to expand its public affairs programming, Lifetime began working on a one-hour women's news magazine and several specials addressing women's issues. An hour-long prime-time special aired on April 27, 1993 as Linda Ellerbee hosted Ms. Smith Goes to

Washington. The special profiled recently elected women on Capitol Hill throughout their first one hundred days in office (Mandese, 1993).

"Lifetime Television, with a new programming venture with Bristol-Myers and a third Procter and Gamble parenting show on the way, is at the forefront of co-producing shows with advertisers" (Moshavi, 1993, p. 42). While Lifetime had some oversight on the production, the advertisers essentially used their own ideas and their own producers. In development at the time was Amazing Love Stories, slated for prime-time and produced by Bristol-Myers. Previous to their latest venture with Bristol-Myers, the majority of Lifetime's advertiser-produced programming focussed on parenting and children. Lifetime benefitted from these deals as they cut the cost of original programming while making more money available for other programming. Proctor and Gamble produced Your Baby and Child with Penelope Leach and What Every Baby Knows, part of Lifetime's morning block. A third parenting program produced by Good Housekeeping magazine, Your Child 6 to 12 With Dr. Kyle Pruett, was slated to begin on July 1, 1993 (Moshavi, 1993; Dempsey, 1993). McCormick expressed interest in expanding advertiser-produced programming to series, movies, and dramas (Moshavi, 1993).

In May, Fili resigned from her position as senior vice president of programming and production and became president of ABC Daytime. According to Burgi (1993), the cable and advertising industries speculated that Fili and McCormick clashed over differences in programming strategy and philosophy. According to Dempsey (1993), "Fili-Krushel pushed hard to get the president's job, and sources say when the Lifetime board selected McCormick she became convinced that the network would not move in the direction she wanted - toward cutting-edge shows that deal directly with women's lives" (Dempsey, 1993, p. 26). The Jane Pratt Show was cancelled a week prior to Fili's departure (Burgi, 1993). An unnamed source stated that Fili was the only Lifetime executive in support of the show. Dempsey (1993) stated that insiders thought the show "got caught in the political crossfire between Fili-Krushel, who wanted to reach teens, and McCormick, who's looking to attract a broader demo before targeting smaller audience segments" (p. 27). Jennifer Young, senior vice president of marketing, Mitchell Praver, a programming executive, and others from the departments of programming, financing, and promotion, had also left Lifetime by the middle of May (Burgi, 1993).

Dempsey (1993) criticized Lifetime for having an all-male, nine-member board. Noting claims that Lifetime's schedule didn't address women's issues, Dempsey found that McCormick had plans for two new talk shows and a weekly magazine "devoted to women's concerns" (p. 25). Financially, the network was doing well with a 15% jump in ad revenues for 1993.

In July, Lifetime acquired the exclusive off-network rights to Sisters, an NBC series ("Lifetime achievement," 1993). The 53, hour-long episodes were to begin airing in January of 1994. The deal also included new episodes produced for broadcast television.

In a counter-programming strategy, Lifetime dropped Sunday's Lifetime Medical Television ("Lifetime net drops," 1993). According to McCormick, the network wanted to counterprogram the high number of Sunday sports events. Adding new programming was cost effective as Lifetime would still use it's Parenting program series, and rerun Lifetime original movies and news magazines. The programming change would begin in January and would increase the advertising value of the Sunday schedule.

Judy Girard was hired to replace Fili, and included in Girard's attempt to attract Sunday night viewers was Lifetime Magazine which aired at 10 p.m. eastern ("Lifetime net drops," 1993). The news magazine was produced by ABC News and replaced Obstetrician-Gynecology Update (Brown, 1993, August 23). Lifetime Magazine was hosted by Lisa McRee and focussed on women's issues. Weekly specials and Lifetime original movies would lead into the news magazine (Brown, 1993, August 23). Girard planned to push original programming with the help of Peggy Allen, recently named vice president of produced programming and production. A daily talk show, a documentary series, a weekly current affairs series, a year long public service and programming campaign, and informational and entertainment specials were planned to revamp Lifetime's programming (Brown, 1993, August 23).

In November of 1993, Lifetime signed on with United States Satellite Broadcasting ("Hubbard signs," 1993). Beginning in April of 1994, the direct-broadcast satellite service offered more than 150 channels to it's customers.

Summary of 1993

Table 6

1993 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	1.1	1.0	1.1	.9	1.0
Households	616,000	554,000	654,000	547,000	592,750
Full Day					
Rating	.7	.5	.5	.6	.6
Households	413,000	271,000	297,000	371,000	338,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. (Brown, 1993, April 5; Brown, 1993, July 19; "Third-quarter cable," 1993; and Brown, 1994, January 10).

Major changes in personnel marked the year 1993. With those changes came new plans for

Lifetime's programming, and a push for original programs. The contract with United States Satellite Broadcasting was a promising move to gain new viewers. The fourth-quarter prime time ratings dropped below 1.0 yet the full day ratings remained consistent with 1992. Table 6 demonstrates a decrease in the overall ratings yet, an increase in households watching television from the 1992 average of 334,000 to the 1993 average of 338,000 households.

The Events of 1994

According to Burgi (1994, January 3):

> For the first time in its 10-year existence, Lifetime acquired the world television premiere rights to The Ballad of Little Jo, distributed by Fine Line Features, a division of New Line Cinema. It's one of the first times any basic cable network has gotten a first crack at running theatrical product. More importantly though, the acquisition illustrates the aggressive programming push the network has taken in the last few months. (p. 3).

The Ballad of Little Jo was slated to air on September 1, 1994.

Other evidence of the programming push included Lifetime Magazine, which was followed by Sunday Live, a call-in talk show hosted by Marjorie Claprood. McCormick stated that he planned to spend $100 million per year on programming (Burgi, 1994, January 3). Fifty to $60 million was spent for programming in the second quarter of 1993 (Brown, 1994, February 21). In February, Lifetime acquired the rights to the 1970's cult-hit, Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman ("Lifetime television," 1994). On February 15, Lifetime unveiled four of five new original series: (1) Our Home, co-hosted by Marc Summers of Nickelodeon's Double Dare and ABC's The Home Show. The daily information and entertainment program offered practical advice on topics related to home improvement, fashion, family vacations, and family entertainment. Produced by Viacom, the show's debut was slated for June 6; (2) Two O'Clock Project, hosted by two mothers on a daily from 2-3 p.m., live, one-hour basis. The discussion format touched on issues of interest to women and featured call-ins, music, in-studio guests, and stunts; (3) Girls Night Out, an hour-long stand-up show featuring mostly female comediennes and a female celebrity guest host. The debut was slated for April 2; (4) The Marriage Counselor, a daily, half-hour dramatic series hosted by clinical psychologist Dr. Wendy LeDoux ("Lifetime television," 1994). The show, produced by Empire Television in Canada, debuted June 6 (Brown, 1994, February 21; "Lifetime originals,").

Brown (1994, February 21) stated that Lifetime was seeing a little audience growth with its new Sunday night programs, Lifetime Magazine and Claprood Live, formerly entitled Sunday Live. Lifetime lined up several Original Lifetime World Premiere Movies including; (1) And Then There Was One with Amy Madigan; (2) Lie Down with the Lions with Omar Sharif and Timothy Dalton; (3) Untamed Love with Cathy Lee Crosby; (4) A Friendly Suit with Melissa Gilbert and Marlee Matlin; and (5) Spenser: A Savage Place with Robert Urich. Lifetime secured early evening hours exclusivity when it acquired 162 episodes of Designing Women in March of 1994 ("Media Notes," 1994). April 9 brought the debut of Romance Theater, a block of movies featuring romantic library product such as To Be the Best, Tears in the Rain, Once Is Not Enough, and Souvenir. Also in production was Good Housekeeping, a weekly show hosted by Dana Fleming ("Home on Lifetime," 1994). Set to air on May 15 in the 11:30 a.m. time slot, various products for the home would be featured during a home shopping segment of the show. The first quarter ratings data published by the A.C. Nielsen Company (see Table 7) indicated that Lifetime was reaching close to 59 million households in the United States and was the eighth most watched cable network during prime time with an average of 576,000 households (Brown, 1994, April 4, "Cable ratings roundup").

By April 1, Viacom had sold it's one-third interest of Lifetime to The Hearst Corporation and Capital Cities/ABC Incorporated who, therefore, became 50/50 owners (Brown, 1994, April 4, "Ownership change"). The $317.6 million dollar cash deal did not spur any shifts in strategy at the women's cable network. Doug McCormick became president and chief executive officer of the network.

In July of 1994, Lifetime announced that Lifetime Magazine's final show would air September 28 ("Addenda," 1994). A new one-hour series, Barbara Walters: Interviews of a Lifetime, debuted September 14 (Brown, 1994, August 29). Each series featured two celebrity interviews from the ABC News library of Barbara Walters specials. Originally slated for Wednesdays at 8 p.m., it moved to Fridays in the same time slot on October 21. Lifetime also picked up Ooh La La, a weekly fashion magazine produced by Citytv of Toronto. The prime time magazine debuted September 10 at 10:30 p.m.

According to Burgi (1994, September 19), "Lifetime reached a ratings record in prime time in August (1994), averaging a 1.4 for the month. That's Lifetime's highest monthly prime number ever and 17 percent higher (from a rating of 1.2) than August, 1993" (p. 14).

In November of 1994, Lifetime legally trademarked the logo Television for Women (C. Cohen, personal communication, June 22, 1995). Along with the trademark, Lifetime launched an on air promotion geared toward women aged 18 to 49, and women's issues. Julie Perullo, manager of original programming, stated that Lifetime understood the importance of knowing its audience and demographics (personal communication, May 25, 1995). Perullo stressed the importance of programming not just about women, but for women. Cindy Cohen supplemented Perullo's enthusiasm with the fact that Lifetime received and responded to viewer calls and letters, and Lifetime was reaching approximately 61 million viewers by 1995 (personal communication, June 22, 1995). Cohen added that off-network and entertainment based programming had a very strong influence on the ratings. In addition, Lifetime began airing one original movie a month and believed they were a ratings success.

Summary of 1994

Lifetime made a substantial financial commitment to its programming in 1994 and continued to acquire off-network programming targeted to women. Original programming and movies were in constant production. Lifetime officials believed their programming was successful and the staff reflected such enthusiasm. Lifetime reached a prime time average of 664,000 households, an overall average of 377,000 households, and experienced a 10% increase in ratings from 1993.

Table 7

1994 Quarterly Cable Network Ratings for the Lifetime Cable Television Network

	First Quarter Ratings	Second Quarter Ratings	Third Quarter Ratings	Fourth Quarter Ratings	Yearly Average
Prime Time					
Rating	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.2	1.2
Households	576,000	620,000	771,000	690,000	664,000
Full Day					
Rating	.6	.6	.7	.7	.7
Households	362,000	350,000	404,000	392,000	377,000

Note. Lifetime's full day is Monday through Friday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. (Brown, 1994, April 4; Brown, 1994, July 11; Brown, 1994, October 10; Brown, 1995).

Chapter 3

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

Delivering an audience to advertisers is the single most important means of making a profit in the television industry. Mass media messages have been aimed at women as ea-ly as the inception of commercial radio. While the mass media industry utilized and capitalized on the differences between men and women, attempts to define target audiences were not made until the 1970s. In reference to research on mass media topics, the words demographic, target, and audience, were rarely used or discussed. By the 1980s, the broadcast television industry faced a decline in viewership as cable television networks steadily increased their credibility and viewer recognition through the development of quality programming. As the major broadcast networks focused on general-interest programming strategies, cable networks chose to specialize.

In February of 1984, Viacom's Cable Health Network merged with Hearst/ABC's Daytime Network to create the Lifetime Cable Television Network. To generate revenue for its little known network, Lifetime had to create a strong identity and increase its ratings. Lifetime did not acquire affiliate fees and depended solely on revenue from advertisement sales and advertiser sponsored medical programs. Their audience was mostly female, aged 18 to 49, and Lifetime chose a talk television format in hopes of increasing the overall .4 rating. The ratings did not increase and Lifetime lost $20 million the first year.

Lifetime acquired several movies in 1985 and planned to produce original programs in hopes of airing them on Lifetime as well as selling them to other networks. By December of 1985, the vice president of programming was replaced and it was determined that the talk television format was not successful. In order to reposition itself in the cable television market, Lifetime came up with two new tag lines, today's woman and For cable television that attracts today's woman, there's nothing like a woman's Lifetime. Lifetime instituted cable affiliate carriage fees and attracted several high profile advertisers. Despite the reorganization and the acknowledgement of the value of their female viewers, Lifetime lost $16 million in 1985.

Lifetime was rarely mentioned in the trade magazines throughout 1986 and 1987, although they started to show a profit in 1986. Lifetime's president and chief executive officer, Thomas Burchill, felt that Lifetime delivered a consistent, quality audience. That audience was the much desired female aged 18 to 49 and Lifetime continued to alter its programming to reach them while attracting advertisers. In 1988, Lifetime became the first cable network to run a prime time show in pre-syndication. Burchill stated that the bulk of Lifetime's programming was demographically pure and several new advertisers signed on. Original programming was increasing as were the ratings and profits. Pat Fili was hired as vice president of programming and production.

Lifetime acquired L.A. Law in 1989 and Fili announced the production of 15 original world premiere movies. Lifetime decided to bolster their image as the channel for younger, more affluent women. Close to ten cents of every revenue dollar were spent on the diverse multi-media marketing campaign. Lifetime purchased 42 films from Orion Television Entertainment, 23 of them were pre-syndication titles. The prime time ratings decreased slightly while the overall ratings remained at .6 for both 1989 and 1990.

By 1991, Fili's strategies appeared to work as Lifetime's prime-time ratings increased, averaging 1.1 to 1.2 in 1991. The NATPE convention of 1992 indicated a change in the climate of syndicated programming. Cable was finally considered a viable and respectable means of program distribution. Syndicated off-network programs became more available to Lifetime and Fili attempted to use a combination of those programs with original programs. The ratings appeared to stagnate.

The resignation of president Thomas Burchill in January of 1993 signaled a change for the network. Doug McCormick was appointed president and in May, Fili resigned. McCormick supported the expansion of medical programming on Sundays. He also supported advertiser-sponsored programs as they were inexpensive to produce. This move was considered risky by industry insiders as advertisers may take control of the creative process. McCormick hired Judy Girard to replace Fili, and shortly thereafter, Sunday's medical programming was dropped. Lifetime was able to recover from losing Fili, and August 1993 saw an average prime-time rating of 1.2.

In January of 1994, McCormick announced plans to spend $100 million a year on programming alone. Despite the cancellation of several original programs such as talk and information shows in recent times, Lifetime introduced four new original programs. Sunday night ratings were also up. Viacom's sale of its third of Hearst/ABC-Viacom Entertainment Services to its partners did not seem to interrupt Lifetime's programming strategies. August brought an average prime time rating of 1.4, reaching a record high. Lifetime admitted off-network and entertainment based programs had a very strong influence on the ratings. The trademarking of Television for Women signaled the commitment Lifetime was willing to make to its viewers, women aged 18 to 49.

Conclusions

This study sought to explain the development and evolution of the Lifetime Cable Television Network from its inception through 1994. The following paragraphs address the individual research questions.

What is Lifetime? Lifetime is the product of two merged cable television networks, Viacom's Cable Health Network and Hearst/ABC's Daytime Network. Since its inception in February of 1984, Lifetime has struggled to increase its revenues and ratings. Women aged 18 to 49 have been Lifetime's primary audience and in 1994 Lifetime trademarked the tag line Television for Women. According to Lifetime, they deliver the largest numbers of women to advertisers.

Why did Lifetime choose to target women as its primary audience? Lifetime recognized its appeal to a large base of women viewers in 1984, yet chose to aim for a more broad-based audience to increase ratings. When neither the ratings nor the revenues increased, Lifetime chose to focus on the female demographics and target women more exclusively. Revenues increased slowly and the ratings rose slightly between 1986 and 1994. Certain programs attracted higher ratings and Lifetime chose to capitalize on a combination of original and acquired programming to attract the larger numbers of viewers. Delivering a large female audience was attractive to several national advertisers and Lifetime felt they could find success with this niche.

What actions has Lifetime taken to target women? In 1985, Charles Gingold was hired as vice president of programming. Gingold attempted to bring focus to Lifetime's programming. The narrowcasting approach made way for a major market repositioning campaign. Throughout the late 1980s, Lifetime produced talk shows and original programs, and acquired several female oriented movies. Lifetime broke industry ground when they purchased the pre-syndication rights to Cagney and Lacey, and they chose to produce The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd after NBC dropped it.

In 1989, Lifetime's three parent companies, The Hearst Corporation, ABC Video Enterprises, and Viacom Incorporated, were ready to start production on 15 Lifetime original world premiere movies. With each company producing five, the films would have female appeal and place women in leading roles. Eventually, the Sunday morning medical programming was dropped in an effort to counterprogram sports. The acquisition of top films, several prior to their syndication, was common throughout the early 1990s. Programming executives made sure the films fit the needs of a mostly female aged 18 to 49 audience. Lifetime began the acquisition of several off-network programs that delivered female demographics such as thirtysomething and China Beach.

Another approach of Lifetime's to target women was the 1992 election year public service campaign entitled Women and Politics: A Lifetime Challenge. The year long campaign implied a serious commitment to women and women's issues. In 1994, Lifetime started to acquire theatrical product such as The Ballad of Little Jo. Lifetime consistently pushed the programming envelope in an effort to produce and acquire programming for women.

What was the effect of Lifetime's choice to target women? There are two effects to be discussed, the effect of Lifetime's image and the effect on the ratings. In 1984, research indicated that several television viewers thought Lifetime was a religious network. In 1989, Lifetime worried that the wrong programming mix would have them touted as The Feminism Channel or The Betty Crocker Channel. A diverse multi-media marketing campaign was designed to attract younger, more affluent viewers and to solve a lack of consumer awareness. In 1994, Lifetime trademarked their tag line Television for Women to demonstrate their commitment to programming not just about women, but for women. As a result of their image and programming efforts, Lifetime appears to be known as a cable television channel for women and women's issues.

While the ratings did not increase or decrease dramatically from 1987 through 1994, the slight increase in the 1994 ratings and viewing households made a strong impression at Lifetime.

The increase in viewing households indicated an overall increase in cable viewers. No matter how slight the increase in ratings, the increase was substantial. For example, an increase in prime time ratings from 1.0 in 1993 to 1.2 in 1994 was a 20% increase in viewers. For this cable television network specializing in targeting women, the increase and consistent ratings meant success and stability. However, without a demographic analysis, this study is unable to determine if women aged 18 to 49 make up the viewing audience. Lifetime touted itself as a demographically pure network, yet, the demographics remained unavailable to the public.

How does Lifetime compare/contrast to other media aimed at women? Historically, women have been the target of several mass media venues. From radio programs to movies to magazines, advertisers have understood the buying power of the American woman. It seems as though television, the most sophisticated and youngest medium, was reluctant to target such a specialized audience until the arrival of cable television networks. Lifetime, a merger of two cable networks, was created with a substantial female audience already intact. As one of the first and only networks to target women as its primary audience, Lifetime attempted numerous programming strategies and eventually approached their target audience much the same way as other media: Lifetime created programming not just <u>about</u> women, but <u>for</u> women. Magazines for men versus women differed in the level of intimacy, vocabulary, and syntax, and Lifetime adapted those strategies to television programming for women.

Women's magazines are not only different from magazines for men, women's magazines fragment and specialize within their own genre. <u>Working Woman</u> and <u>Good Housekeeping</u> do not share the same focus. <u>Vogue</u> and <u>Cosmopolitan</u>, while displaying the cutting edge of fashion, are not mirror images of each other. How does this approach to demographic segments compare to Lifetime's approach? Lifetime appears to aim at the broadest female demographics possible without diluting its audience. Using the ambiguous terms, affluent and upscale, Lifetime claims to deliver such women to advertisers. In an effort to attract and maintain the largest numbers of viewers possible, Lifetime seems to have caught on to the specialization technique by varying its programming from daytime, to prime time, to weekends. Lifetime delivers different products to different women at different times of the day. Yet, they attempt to create programming that appeals to the broadest demographics. Sometimes Lifetime presents programming equivalent to the pages of Cosmopolitan, Vogue, Working Woman, or Good Housekeeping, and at other times Lifetime's programming is a conglomeration of the pages of women's magazines.

In contrast to other media aimed at particular groups of women, Lifetime tries to include as many women as possible between the ages of 18 to 49. In 1985, Good Sex! was renamed The Dr. Ruth Show for two reasons: (1) to eliminate risk of alienating advertisers, and (2) to broaden the content of the show. Marge Sandwick, senior vice president of marketing and communications, spent $8 million in 1989 to solve what Lifetime called a lack of consumer awareness. Sandwick admitted Lifetime feared being seen as The Feminism Channel or The Betty Crocker Channel yet she did not substantiate the roots of those fears. Perhaps Lifetime felt a network with such a narrow focus would alienate both advertisers and viewers, thereby decreasing Lifetime's chances of increasing revenue and viewership. Where are the pressures of media stereotypes coming from; The network, the advertisers, or the viewers? It appears Lifetime, while serious about giving women what they want, is also serious about remaining broad in content.

Was it the push for broader content that moved Pat File to resign in 1993? Holding the programming reins from 1988 to 1993, Fili instituted the most change. Fili was the major force behind several of Lifetime's bold programming moves. Why was she not asked to replace president Burchill in 1993? When Fili became convinced the network would not move toward cutting-edge shows about women's lives, she resigned. Was Fili moving toward narrowing the target audience even further? Lifetime executives and board members were not ready to take such a risk in 1993. For now, Lifetime is able to present broad content programming aimed at women aged 18 to 49.

Recommendations

To truly understand the development and evolution of the Lifetime Cable Television Network, more in-depth research must be done. In addition to speaking with current employees, past employees should be interviewed. Efforts must be made to gain information from the primary sources of Lifetime's history; the actual persons involved in the decision making process from 1984 through 1994.

To evaluate the implications and effects of Lifetime's programming strategies, further review of the ratings of all dayparts should be undertaken. Such a review might include an in-depth study of the actual programs aired as compared to the cable network ratings. A comparison of Lifetime to other cable networks may aid in the evaluation and prediction of Lifetime's success. In addition, a demographic analysis would aid in the determination of successful programming strategies and ascertain if women aged 18 to 49 make up the majority of Lifetime's viewing audience.

Advertiser sponsorship of programming should be monitored and evaluated to determine if and how advertisers influence programming decisions. In essence, does Lifetime, a self-proclaimed demographically pure network, maintain integrity regardless of program sponsorship?

Additional research regarding women's roles in the media and the images presented by programming and advertising is recommended. This research may be valuable in determining what omen watch, what women want to watch, and how Lifetime fits into the mass media landscape.

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