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Defining the "W" in WTN:

**A Feminist Case Study of
the Women's Television Network (1993 - 1996)**

by

Shirley Anne Off, B.A.,

A thesis submitted to

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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"Defining the 'W' in *WTN*:
A Feminist Case Study of the
Women's Television Network (1993 - 1996)"

submitted by Shirley Anne Off, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, School of Journalism and Communication

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Abstract

On January 1, 1995, Canada's first cable television service dedicated to women began broadcasting. This thesis investigates the shifting vision and practices of the *Women's Television Network (WTN)* -- from concept to implementation to re-definition (1993-1996). *WTN's* arrival on the Canadian broadcasting scene offered a rich case study for the examination of one vision of women's culture. *WTN* is examined in terms of the conditions and circumstances which permitted the licensing of a channel such as *WTN*; the underlying assumptions of *WTN's* programming and organizational strategies to cultivate the women's audience; and its attempt to create a unique women's television service within a commercial broadcasting industry. *WTN's* first three years of development were demarcated by a shift in the vision and strategy of the channel. The commercial television industry's economic imperatives played a significant role in *WTN's* shift from emphasizing women-centred television to privileging women-oriented television.

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My decision to attend graduate school was motivated by a desire to put my feminism to work in an exciting and challenging environment. I would like to thank my supervisor, Eileen Saunders, for creating such an environment, for inspiring me to challenge my own assumptions, and for her guidance and support during this entire process. Thank you to Michael Dorland whose early interest in my work encouraged me to carry on with this project.

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Finally, the words of Bonnie Raitt capture my sense of personal accomplishment - "It took me a long time to get here, but I'm right on time!"

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Introduction

On January 1, 1995 Canada's first specialty channel dedicated to women began broadcasting. The *Women's Television Network (WTN)*^{*} was one of ten new specialty channels licensed by the CRTC on June 7, 1994.

I was first introduced to *WTN* in December 1993 through a letter and promotional flyer sent by Lifestyle Television (*WTN*) to the feminist organization with which I was employed. The letter requested recipients to intervene in support of the channel by writing a letter to the CRTC. The channel's promotional flyer stated that *WTN* would:

...be dedicated to programming that provides women's voices, women's perspectives and women's point of view. It is television for women, by women, about women and their worlds.

In addition, *WTN*'s application for a licence stated that the channel would, in part, advance the objectives of the 1991 Broadcasting Act's equity clause. This request for support of *WTN* prompted me to pose a number of critical questions. First of all, how does *WTN* fit into the continuing history of the Commission's regulatory practices regarding gender issues? Also, with what mechanisms or strategies does *WTN* propose to meet the conditions of the Broadcasting Act? What are the underlying assumptions of *WTN*'s approach? In addition, given the history of commercial television's interest in the women's audience for their consumer appeal to advertisers, how does *WTN* propose to

^{*} The corporate name of *WTN* is Lifestyle Television Limited. Throughout the application and hearing process the channel was referred to as Lifestyle Television by the applicant, the CRTC and the press. However, the on-air name of the channel became the *Women's Television Network* in September of 1994 and *WTN* by October 1995. I will refer to the channel as *WTN* throughout this thesis. When it is necessary to distinguish between *WTN* and Lifestyle Television Limited, the difference will be acknowledged.

fulfil a "public" service mandate within the boundaries of a "private" service industry? Most importantly, what programming practices does *WTN* employ in order to attract the women's audience and what do these strategies tell us about *WTN*'s construction of the women's audience? It is the objective of this thesis to make sense of *WTN* in terms of the CRTC's regulatory practices concerning gender issues, and in terms of the television industry's strategies to cultivate the women's audience.

A number of things about *WTN* interested me, including its claim to simultaneously address the sex role stereotyping of, and job opportunities for, women in the broadcast media, in a manner consistent with its promise to operate "by, for and about women and their worlds." During the application process, *WTN* argued that if women wanted to see positive and equitable images of themselves and if they wanted programming that addressed their concerns and interests, they would have to author those images and create that programming *themselves*. *WTN*'s application proposed to extend the boundaries of the CRTC's commitment to addressing gender issues beyond questions of empirical content analysis of programming and employment data to encompass questions of authorship, organizational structure, and women's communication and television needs. However, *WTN* proposed to address these issues within the boundaries of a commercial, profit-oriented broadcasting service. In many ways, the channel presented itself as Canada's first women-centred cable television network and I was interested to see how, and if, a specialty cable channel with a such an emphasis could operate within the commercial broadcasting system.

During the application period, *WTN* presented itself as a commercial broadcast service with a public service mandate. *WTN*'s application proposed that the channel, because of its philosophy of hiring women in executive management positions and employing women as producers of programming, would better serve the "needs" and "interests" of the women's audience. It is the purpose of this study to investigate the strategies employed by *WTN* to address the women's television audience during the application process and during the channel's first two broadcast seasons. I hope to ascertain what interested parties exercised influence in determining the definition of *WTN* and, consequently, shaped the channel's definition of the women's television audience.

It is not the intent of this thesis to make a normative evaluation of *WTN* - to determine whether *WTN* is "good" or "bad" television for women. Instead, I work with an understanding of popular culture as "neither intrinsically 'progressive' nor 'reactionary', but highly contradictory" (Petro 1986:17). *WTN* provides an opportunity to demonstrate that the production of meaning through cultural texts is a complex and contradictory process. Christine Gledhill's understanding of meaning as a process of negotiation is central to my research (Gledhill 1988). Along with Gledhill's approach, I also employ Annette Kuhn's argument that meaning is not sealed at any one specific moment of a cultural text. Instead, Kuhn states that "the state of discursive formation is not constant, it can be apprehended only by means of inquiry into specific instances or conjunctures" (Kuhn 1987:347). The licensing and broadcasting of *WTN* provides an opportunity for an inquiry into one of these specific instances. Kuhn's framework and Gledhill's theoretical arguments guide my examination of the different interests and

players at work in *WTN*'s application for a license and in its programming, organizational, and publicity strategies during its application period and first two seasons of broadcasting.

The body of this thesis is divided into four chapters. In Chapter I, the literature review, I look at the research that informs my analysis of *WTN*. This literature review includes a discussion of the debates surrounding women's cultural production, feminist media theory regarding the negotiation of meaning, and feminist debates regarding the possibilities of working within the television industry. It also provides an overview of programming strategies employed by the television industry used to cultivate the women's audience. I conclude this chapter with a research plan.

Chapter II provides an examination of the context and history of the arrival of *WTN* on the Canadian broadcasting scene. I provide the reader with background on the emergence of *WTN*. The chapter is divided into two sections: the CRTC's attempts to monitor sex role stereotyping (1979-1991) and *WTN*'s application and licensing process (1993-1994). The first section attempts to identify the circumstances and conditions within the CRTC and the broadcast industry during the 1980s and early 1990s that permitted the development of a cable channel like *WTN*. The second section looks at the promises and goals articulated in *WTN*'s application for a broadcast license and provides details of the channel's proposed philosophy, practices and strategies. In order to demonstrate the sometimes contradictory ways the channel was viewed during this period, I include comments from *WTN* employees and spokespeople stated during the CRTC's public hearing process, during interviews with the press, and during personal

interviews conducted by myself.

Chapter III is an examination of the events leading up to and comprising *WTN*'s first season of broadcasting (June 1994 to August 1995). I suggest a way of understanding *WTN*'s programming, organizational and publicity strategies during this time period. I also include an analysis of the different challenges facing *WTN*'s efforts to program television for women in a commercial television industry. The first section, dealing with *WTN*'s pre-launch activities (June to December 1994), focuses on *WTN*'s initial organizational structure and its efforts to publicize the channel to viewers and to advertisers. The second section of the chapter deals explicitly with the channel's start-up broadcasting period (January to March 1995). This section attempts to identify the actual programming strategies *WTN* employed during the start-up period and how they compare to the channel's application proposal. This examination attempts to identify if, and where, *WTN* offered something new to female viewers or whether the channel was merely reproducing existing methods of attracting the women's audience. In the third section, I attempt to identify the different challenges - ratings and consumer responses, the press's reaction to *WTN*, and advertiser interest - facing *WTN* and influencing the channel's operating strategies. The final section of this chapter looks at *WTN*'s first shift in programming strategy (April to August 1995). In this section, I attempt to examine, understand and critique the changes made to *WTN*'s programming schedule.

My last chapter is an examination of *WTN*'s second season of broadcasting. This period includes *WTN*'s pre-second season launch activities (June to September 1995) and its first six months of the second season (October 1995 to April 1996). The chapter

primarily focuses on the programming strategies employed by *WTN* during the second season, the publicity approach used to promote the season, and the organizational changes made during this period. I have sought to demonstrate if, where and how *WTN* adjusted its programming strategies in an attempt to attract viewers. I explore what these changes tell us about *WTN*'s perception of the women's television audience and what interests are working to shape the direction of the channel.

I

Review of the Literature

This chapter will survey the scholarly work concerned with women and television and subjects related to questions of cultural production. The literature review is organized around four conceptual issues which are discreetly connected to questions of gender and culture. The first area of discussion relates to feminist theories of cultural production, specifically questions related to visions of women's culture. Connected to this discussion are the theoretical concepts associated with the cultural negotiation of gender and the production of meaning. Speaking directly to issues related to gender and television are theories and concepts connected to feminist critiques of the television production process and, finally, the development of industry practices to cultivate the women's television audience. It is the purpose of this chapter to survey the research and arguments which are relevant to this case study of *WTN*.

Cultural Production

I begin this literature review by looking at the scholarly debate concerning feminist critiques of women's cultural production. This debate deals, in part, with the differences between feminist and women-centred cultural production and related questions concerning authorship, production processes, and textual analysis. The work of Rosalind Coward (1980) and Michèle Barrett (1982) figures prominently here. Coward addresses the conflation of and confusion between women-centred and feminist cultural production and

Barrett expands upon Coward's discussion. Both argue that a feminist analysis of cultural production must move beyond a mere analysis of the text and the gender of the author; it should also pose questions related to the method of production and representation. While both Coward's and Barrett's discussions do not specifically relate to television and its relationship to women, this debate is germane to this thesis because it deals with definitions of women's cultural production.

The scholarly attention given to questions of cultural production is part of a larger paradigmatic shift in feminist studies. Over the past fifteen years there has been a shift from "deterministic explanations of women's oppression by, among other factors, mass media...to a focus on processes of symbolization and representation" or a "turn to 'culture'" (van Zoonen 1994:107). One of the key debates included in this "turn to 'culture'" concerns the efficacy and potential of women producing images for women. One of the first articles to explore the conflation of the terms "women-centred cultural production" and "feminist cultural production" is Rosalind Coward's "This Novel Changes Women's Lives: Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" (1980). In the article, originally published in *Feminist Review*, Coward offers a useful critical commentary on the role that the gender of an author plays in relation to the potential for a feminist reading of a text. Her purpose is to identify the key differences between women-centred cultural texts and feminist cultural texts.

Coward argues that feminist analyses of cultural texts must not assume that a text is "feminist" merely because the author is a woman. Coward is one of the first scholars to take feminist literary analysis beyond the text and to include questions related to

politics, production processes and generic conventions. Coward argues that it important to distinguish between feminist and women-centred cultural production "not in order to designate one text as progressive in a crude or moralistic way" but so that feminist critical scholars do not "leave unmasked *how* representations work" (Coward 1980:229). She states that a basis in women's common experience is not sufficient to determine the feminism of a text because:

Feminism can never be the product of the identity of women's experiences and interests -- there is no such unity. Feminism must always be the alignment of women in a political movement with particular political aims and objectives. It is a group unified by *political interests*, not its common experiences.

(1980:238)

In addition to the political interests of the author, an analysis of cultural texts produced by women for women, must also raise questions regarding the ideological practices of the producing institution; the audience to whom the product is being marketed; the patterns of consumption; and the practices that are internal to the text (1980:227). According to Coward, even cultural texts with a "surface" commitment to feminism should be "interrogated as to by what representations of sexuality, of maleness and femaleness, they achieve their version of reality" (1980:228).

Coward offers a useful definition of women-centred cultural production. Coward defines women-centred cultural production as being produced by women, read (viewed) by women, marketed to women and about women; however, "it is just not possible to say that women-centred [cultural texts] have any *necessary* relationship to feminism" (1980:230). Coward argues that women-centred cultural production often incorporates feminist themes; however, these themes are most often presented within the context of

personal histories. This practice is reminiscent of feminist consciousness-raising groups, but "it has been frequently recognized within feminism that consciousness-raising is never sufficient as a politics" (1980:237). While the issues raised within this context are useful and important to the work of feminists, to wage a fight on the common experience of "womankind" would ignore "class background, racial differences, and educational differences" (1980:238). Coward argues that "it is only if we raise such questions -- questions of institutions, politics of institutions, the representations produced and circulated within these institutions and the assessment of those representations -- that we can make a claim at all to a 'feminist reading'" (1980:238). In other words, authorship alone does not determine meaning; meaning is also produced at the level of the institution and through the conventions internal to the text.

Michèle Barrett, in "The Definition of Feminist Cultural Politics" (1982) takes issue with Coward's distinction between women-centred and feminist cultural production. Specifically, Barrett raises the concern that if women's experience is excluded from the definition of what constitutes feminist cultural production, we run the risk of excluding women from feminism. Barrett's critique of Coward's distinction ignores Coward's insistence that feminist analysis must look beyond *just* the gender of an author to also include an analysis of the institution and textual conventions. Still, Barrett makes an important point; she reminds us that women cannot be seen as a "disposable" category in a feminist critical analysis of cultural production. Barrett argues that whatever "the problems of basing feminism on the experience of women shared by women [are], far greater problems arise in attempting to completely divorce feminism (as a political

project) from women's experience" (1982:46-47). She goes on to clarify that while "an emphasis on women is not a sufficient condition to make a cultural production feminist, it must be a necessary one" (1982:58). Barrett does clarify that she is not proposing that all cultural production by women is feminist. Such an assumption would be naïve, according to Barrett. However, the gender of the author should factor into the equation.

She adds that the "feminism" of a "text" depends not only on the politics and gender of the author, but also on the method of production, the positioning and subjectivity of the viewer, and the context in which it is viewed.

Aside from offering us a more nuanced means by which to approach questions of women's cultural production, Barrett also builds upon Coward's argument that more than just the text and the gender of the author need be examined. Barrett argues that feminist critiques of cultural production by women must also consider the process of production -- collective, hierarchical, or dictatorial -- and whether it merely reproduces traditional oppressive modes of production. She also argues that it is not enough to merely gain recognition for women's cultural practices, work must be done to ensure that these works are not converted into novelties or co-opted by dominant institutions to satisfy their own self-interests. She adds that we must engage in questions which demand a "critical stance" toward traditional methods of evaluation rather than just reproducing them (1982:44-47)

Barrett introduces an additional key factor into the equation of evaluating women-centred vs. feminist cultural production -- the audience. Arguing that "the 'sexism' or 'feminism' of particular works of art or image is not self-evident, or in any unambiguous

way intrinsic to that work, but depends on how well we read it" she adds that:

knowledge of the sex of the author cannot be a reliable guide to the meaning of the text -- it cannot tell us what the intentions of the author might have been and in any case these do not necessarily give us the meaning of the text as different readers experience it. I am not disputing that an image or text carries with it a dominant, or preferred, reading and that the relationship between the consumer and the work is one in which meaning is constructed within a particular range of options... The text may ensure that we read it in terms of sexual politics, for instance, but it cannot legislate against the reader drawing inferences that are the reverse of those offered by the text.

(1982:42)

Barrett's assertion is important because it echoes the sentiments of many critical cultural theorists emphasizing the importance of recognizing the non-passivity of the viewer and attempts to move beyond mere textual analysis. In addition, it clarifies that a feminist author does not guarantee a feminist reading; there are many other variables that influence that reading.

Barrett's article suggests other levels of analysis are important for a feminist critique of popular culture. She reminds us that feminism must be about women. She argues that a feminist critique of women's cultural production must be willing to investigate beyond the text and critically examine the method of production and evaluation. Finally, she reminds us that, along with generic conventions, institutions, and creators, audiences play an active role in the production of meaning.

Both Coward and Barrett invite us to move beyond the mere text and look to other practices, conventions and interests that influence the cultural production process. They also warn us of the risks in valorizing women's experiences. As Lynn Segal (1987) states "there has always been the danger that in revaluing our notions of female and

appealing to the experiences of women, we are reinforcing the ideas of sexual polarity which feminism originally aimed to challenge" (1987:xii).

The Negotiation of Gender

Specifically in terms of media studies, the debate related to the analysis of cultural production centres around who or what has the most power in determining meaning -- the text, the industry, the context or the viewer. It is here that the work of Annette Kuhn (1987) and Christine Gledhill (1983) figures prominently. Kuhn and Gledhill both offer methods which help us to understand the relationships and negotiations which take place in the production of popular culture and help us to ascertain which participant in the process exercises the most influence.

In "Women's Genres: Melodrama, Soap Opera and Theory" (1987), Annette Kuhn divides scholarly work on women's genres of film and television into two categories: television studies which emphasize "context" and film studies which emphasize "texts." The "context" approach focuses on the social audience while the "text" approach focuses on the spectator.

According to Kuhn, the television studies (context) approach to women's genres assumes the existence of a viewer who is an already gendered subject. This area of scholarship focuses on the "social audience" and defines it as "[c]onstructed by social practices, both of cinema and TV and of social science, the social audience is a group of people who buy tickets at the box office, or who switch on their TV sets; people who can be surveyed, counted and categorized according to age, sex, and socio-economic

status" (1987:343).

The film studies (text) approach, by contrast, focuses on the "spectator." Social audiences become "spectators in the moment they engage in the processes and pleasures of meaning-making attendant on watching a film or television programme" (1987:343). According to Kuhn, this approach emphasizes the ability of the text to address its spectator as feminine or occupying a feminine (or masculine) subject position.

Kuhn argues, however, that we need an approach that accounts for both social audiences and spectators. Kuhn's model of analysis posits that:

Both spectators and social audiences may...be regarded as discursive constructs. Representations, contexts, audiences and spectators [may be] seen as a series of interconnected social discourses, certain discourses possessing greater constitutive authority at specific moments than others. Such a model permits a relative autonomy for the operations of texts, readings and contexts, and also allows for contradictions, oppositional readings and varying degrees of discursive authority.

(1987:347)

Kuhn adds that because "the state of discursive formation is not constant, it can be apprehended only by means of inquiry into specific instances or conjunctures" (1987:347). The model offered by Kuhn is one which allows us to identify different levels of a discursive formation. It not only allows us to analyze the authority of texts, but also the power of the industries that produce those texts and the power of viewers to actively engage in the making of meaning derived from those texts. Finally, this approach helps us to ascertain how the context of viewing and production shape audiences, viewing practices and representations. Kuhn's model helps us to address the historical and social specificity of the production of popular texts by accounting for the constant negotiation of the meaning of gender at specific sites of analysis. Most

importantly, Kuhn's approach forces us to account for the reasons why some definitions of femininity are socially and culturally dominant at certain points, while others are not.

In "Pleasurable Negotiations" (1988), Christine Gledhill's concept of "cultural negotiation" offers a means with which to incorporate the arguments made by Barrett and Coward and build upon the model proposed by Kuhn. Gledhill provides a theoretical framework that addresses the production of meaning in popular culture. According to Gledhill, the production of meaning is negotiated at three different levels of the cultural production process: the institution, the text and the audience. Texts do not intrinsically hold meaning; she argues that the production of meaning is a process and "is neither imposed, nor passively imbibed, but arises out of a struggle or negotiation between competing frames of reference, motivation and experience" (1988:68).

Gledhill argues that the negotiation that takes place at the level of the institution is a complex process. There are competing, and sometimes contradictory, interests within the institution itself. While economic imperatives may weigh heavily in the negotiation process, they do not constitute the only determinant of meaning. A critique of the struggle over meaning must also take into consideration the interests of the creative personnel. These interests include professional standards and technological limitations, aesthetic and generic codes of a given cultural text, and the concerns and priorities of creative personnel.

Negotiation also takes place at the level of the text. The cultural product itself becomes a "site of textual negotiation" as competing interests over convention and innovation come to bear upon the product (Gledhill 1988:69). Gledhill specifically refers

to television when she writes:

Contradictory pressures towards programming that is both recognizably familiar (that conforms to tradition, to formal or generic convention) and also innovative and realistic (offering a twist on, or modernizing, traditional genres) leads to complex technical, formal and ideological negotiations in mainstream media texts.

(1988:69-70)

Meanings must be understood not as "fixed entities," but as "products of textual intersections shaped by the range of economic, aesthetic and ideological factors that often operate unconsciously, are unpredictable and difficult to control" (1988:70).

Gledhill's third level of analysis is reception. She argues that the reading of a text in part arises out of "social and cultural constitution of readers" including class, gender, race, age and personal history. While this level of analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is still important to recognize that meaning is negotiated at this level and that readers of a text do not passively absorb the images and representations presented to them. More directly related to this thesis, is Gledhill's argument regarding the contradictory nature of capitalism in relation to the viewer. Because of its profit-making imperatives, capitalism "cannot ignore the potential market represented by groups emerging into a new self-identity" (1988:71). However, the cultural industry's response to these new identities often results in their commodification. For example, Gledhill states that "the media appropriate images and ideas circulating within the women's movement to supply a necessary aura of novelty and contemporaneity" (1988:71).

Gledhill's theoretical argument is useful because it illustrates how meaning is not pre-determined or sealed at any one moment of a cultural text. Gledhill's arguments are echoed by Annette Kuhn, who states that "meanings do not reside [only] in images. They

are circulated between representation, spectator and social formation" (1985:5). Julie D'Acci, in Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey (1994) applauds Gledhill's model because it allows us to track "how these many definitions interact, overlap, and clash within the individual sites as well as between and among them" (1994:3). Relying on Kuhn's and Gledhill's model, D'Acci is able to build the assumptions of her investigation. D'Acci's case study of *Cagney & Lacey* operates with the following assumptions:

...social power is produced and exercised in myriad and discrete instances; that power over meanings -- its many shifts and struggles -- may be analyzed and understood; that gender (like all aspects of the human subject) is not something acquired and settled once and for all at birth or shortly thereafter but is constantly in process, continually being shaped, enacted, and reconfigured; and that television (one of culture's most productive technologies for generating images and meanings of masculinity and femininity) is a major participant in shaping gender of its audiences.

(D'Acci 1994:3)

It is under these assumptions, and with the theoretical frameworks provided by Kuhn and Gledhill, that this case study of *WTN* is conducted. Meaning production is a complex process and an analysis of popular culture must actively consider the various levels and sites of negotiation which take place. *WTN* comprises a specific example of where history, television culture and constructions of the women's television audience intersect. As Patrice Petro states, "mass culture is neither intrinsically 'progressive' nor 'reactionary', but highly contradictory and historically variable in its form, its meanings and its effects" (Petro 1986:17).

Television as a Site of Intervention

The scholarly work in the area of feminist critiques of television that will be discussed in this section deal with the potential of the medium of television as a site of feminist intervention. Rosalind Coward (1987) laments that the debate about "whether or not there are women's interests to be served, and whether or not a specific women's programme would be the best way to serve such interests, forms a Protean monster which will not allow itself to be slain" (1987:96).

Feminist interest in using television as a medium to author and produce programming for women was initiated in response to the "degrading manner or total absence of women portrayed in the mainstream media" (Crafton Smith 1989:281). However, despite these efforts, many experienced practitioners and critics have considered television an "impenetrable citadel" (Baehr and Spindler Brown 1987:117) -- one which poses too many limitations and negative consequences for women. Therefore, most feminist research in this area emphasizes the limitations rather than the possibilities of the medium.

In "The History and Structure of Women's Alternative Media" (1992), Linda Steiner argues that working with television involves too many institutional conventions and controls that subsequently limit women's ability to "negotiate for themselves alternative visions, definitions, ways of being" (Steiner 1992:121). She explains that the broadcasting industry is "too dependent on large audiences to generate enormous amounts of advertising revenue...[too] bureaucratized and dependant on complex technology... [consequently limiting the] possibilities for a feminist television channel or station"

(Steiner 1992:135). Virginia Nightingale (1990) argues that possibilities for experimentation are limited by generic conventions and technological limitations (1990:35). Ella Taylor (1989) raises another critical point about the industry's reliance on ratings. Taylor argues that the television's industry's reliance on ratings for proof of a program's success discourages innovative programming. She claims that:

most producers acknowledge that their immediate audiences are not the viewers but the networks (who finance production), and, through them, the sponsors. This dependency on network approval, mediated by the bottom line of ratings....discourages risky innovation even among the small group with substantial "creative clout."

(Taylor 1989:59)

In her paper discussing the "women's programs" on Britain's Channel 4, Rosalind Coward (1987) echoes Taylor's comments. She states that, in television "there appears to be a deep commitment to the existing aesthetics of television and a distrust of more experimental forms, which are criticized as too disruptive for the average viewer" (Coward 1987:104). Coward also suggests that series made by all-women production teams which attempt to escape generic limitations "have all, in various ways, been allowed to fail and have been stored away in the channel's memory as 'interesting' experiments" (Coward 1987:100).

However, despite its limitations, television still attracts large audiences of women and the industry continues to devise strategies to continue attracting women audiences. Women are primarily viewed in terms of their role as consumers and while the commercial television industry has "historically" trivialized women's role in society, the mass media provides a point of entry to reach a large number of women. Michèle Barrett states that "we perhaps pay insufficient attention to the political gains that might

be made by a larger-scale challenge to the media...a small popular change is *relatively* just as significant as a large minority change. There may be at least just as much potential for change in a tv soap opera as in agit-prop theatre" (Barrett 1982:55).

It seems clear from this brief discussion of feminist critiques of television that there is an unsettled debate regarding the efficacy and appropriateness of women engaging with television to author their own images. Whether television is an impenetrable citadel or a safe harbour, it is certainly a medium and an institutional structure where women have the potential to create, produce, author and view images of themselves and their experiences. It is also an industry that desperately desires the women's audience for its purchasing power.

Controlling the Audience

The television industry has always employed strategies to attract the viewing audience. Specifically, since the late 1940s, it has employed strategies in order to attract the attention of the women's audience. As Spigel and Mann write, "Television has always had its eye on women" (1992:vii). The commercial television industry has primarily seen women in terms of their roles as primary caregivers and consumers of household products and thus, are appealing to advertisers. Television has developed into a domestic entertainment medium and, because of its placement in the home and its reliance on women as a consumer audience, it has become an important site for scholarly feminist inquiry. It has actively sought to categorize viewers into "masculine and feminine subjects" (the gendering of the audience) and, over the years, has developed more

sophisticated techniques of doing so. These techniques include the use of "gender-specific narrative forms" and scheduling practices to attract and categorize the viewing audience (Fiske 1987:179). Because of the television industry's focus on attracting the most lucrative women's audience, "its definitions of femininity works to exclude many women in the population. Historically, for example, women of colour and lesbians have not fit the mould of television's ideal feminine type, and thus, have been omitted from or marginalized in its representational system" (Spigel and Mann 1992:vii). The following discussion will survey the literature concerning the women's audience and the commercial television industry's traditional scheduling practices. In addition, the role that ratings have played in determining these practices, the characteristics and history of the use of specific women's television genres, and the development of women-oriented programming will be considered.

Scheduling Practices

Because television viewing is not an obligatory activity, the television industry employs strategies to ensure that people watch. Research concerning scheduling practices predominantly focuses on conventional network strategies as opposed to cable or pay-per-view scheduling practices. These strategies include what Ang (1991) calls "institutionally orchestrated activities" devised to reduce the risk that people may not watch. The industry uses television guides, celebrity interviews and their own programming to advertise products. The schedules have been developed to create a routinized structure to television, guaranteeing an audience for certain types of programming at certain times.

The industry has also developed counter-programming, block programming, story lead-ins, and programming a hammock, which are all used to ensure the maintenance of audience attention and combat the risk that people may not tune-in (Eastman et al. 1981).

Ang argues that, despite the industry's desire to devise schedules according to consumer demand (Head and Sterling 1982), schedules are actually devised on the basis of the industry's need to reduce the risk of losing audiences to other activities (Ang 1991:19). As James Lull (1990) concludes in his research on the social uses of television, the programming schedule is designed to maximize the number of viewers.

Network schedules have been developed to attract the largest audience groupings during specific periods. The most lucrative time-slot for broadcasters is the prime-time schedule (8:00 pm to 11:00 pm). However, since the arrival of television in the late 1940s, the daytime audience has been assumed to be primarily female, targeting the housewife, in particular. Elaine Rapping, in "Daytime Inquires" (1995) states that daytime or "women's time, has always been delegated to 'domestic matters'" (1995:378). The prime-time schedule's audience is considered a "broad" audience and is considered the "home of Official, Authoritative Truth as presented by experts and institutional power brokers" (1995:378). Rapping adds: "And so it goes in TV Land. Daytime equals women equals 'soft' news. Prime-time equals men and the 'hard' stuff" (1995:379). Consequently, different scheduling practices apply for different time periods. Richard Paterson (1980) states that the "schedule singles out the 'dominant' voice of the family at specific times in order to ensure the maximum audience" (Paterson 1980:80). While the traditional prime-time audience is conceived of as a "broad audience," the daytime

schedule "remains the housewife -- an ideal target for manufacturers of soap and other household products (1987:226). The daytime schedule has traditionally been a venue for soap operas, game shows, and magazine shows targeted at the women's audience based on the assumption that during the day women (housewives) control television choices. However, in the evening that assumption changes. Children's after-school programs come on late afternoon and the prime-time schedule gears up for an evening of "broad based" programming. The genres associated with this time period include situation comedies, dramatic serials and movies, and news and information programming. For the most part, the "dominant" voice in prime-time has been considered the male head of the household. However, since the 1970s, the television industry has come to see the women's audience in a new light.

There is very little feminist scholarship on the impact and strategies of the cable television industry. Some scholars, however, have expressed the hope that cable television will have "positive" effects on the network television industry. D'Acci (1994) comments that cable television programming is often more controversial and is "pushing the boundaries of representation" on television and thus, forces network television to do the same in order to keep and attract their audiences. Cantor and Cantor (1992) note that the "introduction of cable television has changed prime-time economics and production. In particular, the cable industry has contributed to the increased competition for programs [from independent producers] and the reduction of the networks' hold over production companies" (Cantor and Cantor 1992:61). In terms of advertisers, cable television grants them access to small, but demographically specific, audiences at less expensive rates

(1992:61). While these arguments are useful because they point to the potential effects of cable on network television, they do not incorporate an understanding of the effects of network television on cable television. For instance, cable channels and network stations compete, for the most part, for the same advertising dollar. In addition, network television has developed routinized viewing patterns and activities to which cable television, to some degree, must comply

In Hollywood in the Information Age (1994), Janet Wasko argues that the cable television industry represents "the commercially oriented, concentrated and integrated nature of an advanced capitalist media system" and "might be referred to as 'a franchise to make even more money' [than conventional broadcasters]" (Wasko 1994:71&112). According to Wasko, the programming format of cable television has developed in accordance with this profit-making imperative. Unlike conventional broadcasters, "cable systems initiate very little programming" and "[e]quipment costs are kept very low" (1994:83). Wasko writes that "a good deal of cable's programming is recycled from other sources" (1994:87). She makes the following observation about the cable television industry:

[E]ntertainment has been the primary emphasis and main attraction of the cable boom...While some cable channels offer news and information, a large percentage of cable programming is made up of films and television re-runs...cable channels still often serve as conduits for recycled entertainment programming.

(Wasko 1994:111)

Wasko adds that ownership of these cable services is usually located in the hands of large communications "conglomerates," thereby increasing the concentration of media ownership.

This discussion of the research related to television scheduling practices offers a number of considerations for this analysis. The first consideration is that scheduling practices have been one way that the television industry has attempted to categorize viewers into masculine and feminine viewers to serve their own commercial interests. The historical conventions of that strategy reveal that to us that the daytime schedule has been associated with the women's audience and specific program genres have been developed to attract that audience. The prime-time schedule, considered the most lucrative by broadcasters, has developed programming strategies which attempt to attract and keep a "broad" audience -- namely the family viewing audience.

Role of Ratings

Despite risk-reducing strategies, the television industry cannot eliminate the possibility that people may not tune-in. It is for this reason that market research and ratings have played such an important role in informing decisions about programming selections.

Ien Ang (1991) disputes the appropriateness and efficacy of the industry's empirical approach to audience research and ratings information. The television industry conceives of the audience as a "taxonomic collective" to be conquered and delivered to advertisers. Ang, working under the assumption that audiences are not homogeneous, exposes the weaknesses and limitations of the "institutional point of view." In the industry's "quest for the maximum audience," the institutional view renders the audience an objectifiable category to be sold to advertisers, thereby "silenc[ing] actual audiences...whose details elude and escape the formal structures set up by institutions"

(Ang 1991:2). Attempts by the industry to make the audience more predictable force viewers to adopt routinized, codified, and synchronized viewing practices (Ang 1991:19). The techniques used by the industry to gain the information needed to exert this control over the audience includes ratings information and market research techniques.

One of Ang's criticisms of ratings discourse is that this discourse uses the household as its basic unit of measurement, thereby ignoring the social conditions and social relations that influence viewing practices. The social conditions and relations of viewing have been examined by David Morley (1986) and Ann Gray (1989), who suggest that family members do not come to television viewing with the same amount of decision-making authority. For instance, in the family viewing situation, the woman is likely to defer to her spouse or children in the selection of television programming (Morley 1986). In addition, the remote control device is often in the control of the male head of the household (Gray 1989). This "family unit" approach to gathering information on audiences subsequently leads to generalizations which infer that the "dominant" television selection voice is one that represents the preferences of all family viewers.

Ang argues that the ratings discourse doubly objectifies the audience -- first as an "object of knowledge" and second as an "object of economic exchange." In other words, the information gathered about audiences using ratings presents the audience as a unitary category of objectifiable measurement that can, in turn, be sold to advertisers. According to Ang, this makes "audience measurement a clear instance of what Foucault has called a technology of power, in which the wish to exert control over people is

connected to and articulated in the institutional production of knowledge about them" (Ang 1991:57).

The television industry relies on demographic and psychographic audience research to compile the profile of the television viewing audience. Demographic research breaks down the audience according to age, sex, income, education, and region of residence, while psychographic research is a combination of demographic research and behavioural psychology. The latter attempts to "freeze" the viewing practices (and consumer practices) of audience members to "develop simple practical truths" (Ang 1991:64). Some scholars believe that much of what has worked in the past as instruments of audience control are no longer viable for many traditional broadcasters. Because of the rise of VCR home use, cable channels and pay per view television "viewers are no longer stuck with the fixed schedules of network programming" (1991:69). The network industry is faced with a new threat to their monopoly position and advertisers are searching for the best "bang for their buck," while questioning old methods at the same time. Yet, the conventions and interests of the commercial television industry are well-established, and as such, often result in the adoption of similar programming and scheduling strategies across the television spectrum. Despite their reliance on cable subscriber fees, cable channels still acquire some of their revenue from advertisers and are, therefore, still required to prove to their sponsors, and to the cable companies, that people are watching. Ratings remain a key accepted means of demonstrating this.

Television Genres for Women

John Fiske, in Television Culture (1987), offers a useful way of understanding the role that genre plays in the construction of the women's television audience. Fiske states that genre "is a cultural practice that attempts to structure some order into the wide range of texts and meanings that circulate for the convenience of both producers and audiences" (1987:109). According to Fiske, generic conventions are the "prime way of both understanding and constructing [the] triangular relationship between producer, text and audience" (1987:110). Genre conventions are socially and historically situated and "embody the crucial ideological concerns of the time in which they are popular" (1987:109).

In Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey (1994), Julie D'Acci discusses of how television genres work to construct gender-specific audiences. She provides a five-step account:

- they carve up the territory of TV into those programs involving male protagonists/stars and spheres of action and those involving females
- they target specific programs to men's audiences and specific ones to women's audience
- they initiate particular kinds of narrative structures that have gender-oriented implications
- they work to produce particular meanings about gender in their textual operations (which is not, of course, to imply that a TV viewer invariably or uncritically adopts these meanings)
- they work to constitute femininity and masculinity in their spectators

(D'Acci 1994:108)

Since the arrival of television in the late 1940s, television has developed genres which specifically address the women's audience. These women's genres include soap

operas/dramatic serials, made-for-TV movies, magazine information programs, and situation comedies.

As Fiske points out, "different programs are designed (usually successfully) to attract different audiences" and "texts [which comprise each program] seek to prefer certain meanings" (1987:179). This practice of gendering television programs can be traced to the early days of television, when one can find "a 'gender base' of television, with sports and news shows for men, cooking and fashion shows for women" (Mellencamp 1985:31). Televisions methods of gendering its audiences "have grown more sophisticated" and over the years we have seen the development of gender-specific narrative texts. With regards to the women's television audience, this means that certain genres of programs, such as soap operas, situation comedies and made-for-TV movies, have been developed to attract certain segments of the women's audience, while action dramas, news and sports have traditionally been used to attract the men's audience.

The relevance of this research rests on a familiarity with the genres conventionally used by the television industry to cultivate the women's audience, their shared and distinct characteristics, and their historical development. The television genres that will be discussed, below, include soap operas (daytime and prime-time), made-for-TV movies, situation comedies, and magazine information and news.

One of the most written about women's television genres is the soap opera. Because of its placement in the daytime schedule, its focus on "feminine" narrative structures, and its popularity among female viewers, many feminist scholars have attempted to understand how the genre works and how audiences interact with and

respond to soap operas (Modleski 1982 and 1983; Allen 1983; Brown 1987; Brunsdon 1981; Hobson 1982; Lopate 1977). Mary Ellen Brown (1987) develops the following list of the generic features of soap opera that, she argues, characterize it as a "feminine" genre:

- reliance on a serial form which resists narrative closure
- reliance on multiple characters and plots;
- use of time which parallels actual time and implies that action takes place whether we watch or not
- use of abrupt segmentation between parts
- emphasis on dialogue, problem solving, and intimate conversation
- inclusion of male characters who are sensitive men
- inclusion of female characters who are often progressive and otherwise powerful in the world outside the home
- focus on the home, or some other place which functions as a home, as the setting for the show

(Brown 1987:1-25)

While this list of characteristics is useful for this study because it helps us to understand the generic conventions of soap operas, it also shows how the research in this area assumes that audiences already come to the television viewing experience as gendered subjects. Soap operas, for the most part, are scheduled during the daytime schedule which has long been associated with, and targeted at, the female audience. Modleski (1982) argues that soap opera's narrative structure addresses the "ideal mother" and reflects attributes, such as tolerance and passivity, which have come to be associated with women, thereby recognizing "feminine" qualities as valuable. Yet, Brunsdon (1981) also argues that the soap opera's focus on interpersonal and family relationships addresses a "competent" female audience and feminine spectator.

Much of what constitutes the soap opera as a women's genre is based on its apparent legitimation of "things feminine." Mainstream media scholarship has derided

soap operas for their poor production quality and melodramatic plots. In addition, mass produced culture has long been associated with the "feminine." Andreas Huyssen argues that "mass culture is somehow associated with women while real authentic culture remains the prerogative of men" (1986:47). He adds that the "lure of mass culture, after all, has traditionally been described as the threat of losing oneself in dreams and delusions and of merely consuming rather than producing" (1986:55). For these reasons, many women's television genres, especially the soap opera, have been considered trivial. Much of the feminist scholarship on soap operas, and other women's popular culture, attempts to illustrate the value of the genre and the capabilities of its viewers (Radway 1984). In many cases, the attempt to accomplish this task reproduces the dominant ideology's conception of women's values rather than questioning what is at work in the program that produces and reproduces these values in the first place.

Another daytime women's genre is the magazine format program. This genre was developed in the 1940s and 1950s in an attempt to attract the women's audience using inexpensive programming. These early programs focused on "fashion, cookery, childcare" and were structured around the "pages of popular magazines" (Leman 1987:76). In "'Programmes for Women' in 1950s British Television" (1987), Joy Leman argues that broadcasters believed that because the women's magazine was so popular with female readers, that "they had discovered the right formula for the female [television] audience" (1987:76). Leman traces the original principles of the magazine format genre and argues that, because of the television industry's desire to attract the lucrative women's consumer market, programs based on the magazine format of the 1950s

reinforced "hegemonic definitions of the family, children and domestic labour, and of the desirable attributes and behaviour of men and women" (Leman 1987:76). These shows were grounded in a historical perception of women's interests which include "'practical' home-making, child re and female physical appearance" (1987:86). The programs evolved to include "articles" on cooking and shopping, fashion, entertainment news, leisure activities and some news items (1987:76). The preferred audience was still the middle-class housewife, meanwhile issues of class and the interests of women working outside the home were rarely addressed (1987:78).

Leman argues that some magazine format shows did appear outside the morning slot, but these were not explicitly directed at women viewers. Instead, they appeared on the weekend schedule and were "targeted at 'the family,' with a particular address to women" (1987:86). These programs included profiles of famous individuals, covered current affairs, and provided "family" consumer advice. Similarly, single topic programs took many of the issues, such as home decorating fashion, and consumer affairs, and expanded them into entire programs (1987:87).

Over the past forty years, the magazine format has continued to be a mainstay of the daytime schedule. The format for these programs in recent television programming varies little from the 1950s. They appear, most often, as part of the morning schedule (Eastman et al. 1981:191). Just like their 1950s counterparts, contemporary magazine format shows resemble "print publications with a series of articles or segments bound together within a common cover or framework. In television, the sense of continuity is provided by one or more central personalities in a common setting" (Eastman 1981:191).

The primary target audience for this type of program is "women [aged] 18 to 49" (1981:192). However, the most appealing audience to advertisers is women 18 to 35 who, because they are likely to be in their "early married years...are apt to try out all kinds of new products and make many major purchasing decisions on home furnishings and appliances" (1981:193).

With the magazine format and other daytime programs, the television industry has consistently targeted the home-maker viewer and her family. The rest of the daytime schedule has traditionally been filled with soap operas, games shows, talk shows and reruns of syndicated situation comedies (Eastman 1981:196). The primary goal of this programming is to produce inexpensive programming that appeals to middle-class housewives - an audience that, in turn, can be sold to advertisers.

While magazine format programs have been traditionally targeted at the women's audience, news programs have been directed at the men's audience. Unlike conventional women's genres, the news program is concerned with issues of the public sphere. Fiske (1987) states that news is considered to be a masculine, high status genre and the subject matter is situated in the public rather than private sphere (1987:281). Hartley (1982) outlines the following categories of news: politics, the economy, foreign affairs, domestic news, sports and entertainment. Domestic news can be further classified as "hard" and "soft" news. "Hard" news involves crime and conflict -- in other words, the public sphere. "Soft" news refers to "warm-hearted human interest stories" -- the private sphere. "Hard" news is presented at the beginning of the news program in an attempt to "bring the male of the household into the television audience" (1987:281). "Soft"

news items are usually located at the end of the news broadcast in order to "bring the female back into the audience" for the prime-time line-up (Fiske 1987:281).

Because news is "largely about the 'masculine' and aimed at the male audience" (Fiske 1989:284) there have been few attempts to develop "hard" news programs for women. Rosalind Coward (1987) argues that the rare attempts made in Britain to address the women's audience with current affairs programs have been experimental and short-lived. The bulk of feminist research related to news has centred on the under-representation of women in news production and news content (van Zoonen 1988). Empirical research has shown that women journalists dominate the "soft" or "feminine" sectors of the news while men dominate the "hard" sectors. One weakness of this type of research is that it operates under the assumption that an increase in women newsmakers would change the content of news to be more representative of women. Coward argues that this emphasis on employment strategies "play[s] along with the thinking that is already present among television executives, it confuses adequate coverage of women's issues with the number of women working in television" (Coward 1987:102). van Zoonen argues that this approach to "women and news" ignores the complexity of the "reality" and suggests that a feminist analysis of the news must move beyond empirical employment data collection and take into consideration professional ethics, social conditions of the media institutions and production processes.

Development of Women-Oriented Television

There is a general consensus among critical television theorists that the television industry is reluctant to change unless, of course there is a benefit to the industry. Television is a commercial industry, one that is currently dependent on advertisers and/or cable subscriber fees. In Inside Prime Time (1985), Todd Gitlin argues, in his exploration of the U.S. network prime-time industry, that media organizations do take some minority concerns into consideration (Gitlin 1985). However, he concedes that television is limited because its "assembly-line" process of production does not attract "innovators" (1985:295). It is also limited by its strict reliance on ratings and empirical research and the economic need to attract the largest audiences. Liesbet van Zoonen points out that as "a rule -- with the proverbial exception -- media organizations will hardly ever bend to social pressure from outside, unless it is in their own interest" (van Zoonen 1994:61). That interest is, of course, motivated by profit.

During the 1970s, a number of factors converged to influence the development of women-oriented programming. Rosalind Coward argues that, with the arrival of second wave feminism in the late 1960s, women's issues were redefined to include issues "like housing, childcare, health, [and] sexual and work experiences" in addition to traditional domestic issues (Coward 1987:97). Coward also argues that "the women's side of the story had been almost disregarded by the media. Perhaps more radically, [that] feminism has argued that these different experiences in fact give women a very different perspective on issues and that there just might be, after all, a women's view point" (1987:97). Because of the changing role of women in society, especially their

entry into the workforce and their increasing consumer power, the television industry began to look at the women's television audience in a different light. Specifically, it began to cultivate the women's audience with its prime-time programming.

Robert Goldman et al., in "Commodity Feminism" (1991), raise some concerns regarding the cooptation and commodification of feminism by the cultural industries. In their critical reading of women's magazine advertisements, the authors argue that, since the 1970s, feminist discourses have been coopted and depoliticized by the advertising and commercial culture industry which sells feminism as "a style" rather than as a political movement. This commercial use of feminism reduces it to "the status of mere signifier, so that it may be re-encoded...as a sequence of visual cliches and reified signifiers" (1991:336). This signification of feminism has resulted in a depoliticization whereby feminist "*social* goals [are transformed into] individual *life-styles*" (1991:336). The authors also observe that the culture industry uses images of femininity and feminism and, further, combine them with "purchasing power, household income, age and lifestyle characteristics" to ultimately "transform feminism into a manipulable set of semiotic-markers -- confidence and attitude -- which bear the meanings of individual freedom and independence associated with feminism" (1991:339, 348).

The Goldman et al. article is important because it addresses a number of concerns related to cooptation and depoliticization. The authors clarify and bring to light key issues as they relate to the conflict between commercial interests and feminist goals. However, despite the strength of the argument, the authors do not account for the fact that the inclusion of some feminist themes in mainstream media and cultural production

do indicate that, at least, certain aspects of feminist ideology have become popularized and are reaching larger audiences of women. This is not to suggest that the "feminisms" chosen by commercial producers somehow reflect the political motivations of the feminist movement -- Nor does it suggest that this cooptation of feminism has any direct emancipatory potential -- especially given that the feminism sold to audiences is one fraught with contradictions and presented in terms of individual characteristics. However, this "mainstreaming" of feminism does indicate that certain aspects of the feminist movement have entered into the public arena -- enough so that the culture industry is trying to find a way to respond to feminism while still protecting its own interests.

In Prime Time Families (1989) Ella Taylor discusses how and why television began to respond to emerging political identities and social concerns of women. Taylor states that because of television's placement in the home and its reliance on consumer advertising, network television has always been women-oriented. However, in "1970 the adoption of 'demographic' ratings strategies focused the attention of advertising and programming on urban women between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four as the top spending group, and this served to legitimize 'women's issues' as a relevant topic in television series" (Taylor 1989:85). Julie D'Acci explains that this subject matter refers to "serious social issues that have become identified, in television, as being specific to women; these include rape, wife battering, sexual harassment, abortion and breast cancer" (D'Acci 1994:243). Out of a need to attract this potentially more lucrative women's television audience, networks began to develop women-oriented prime-time

programming. Women-oriented programming refers to those programs which cover subject matters associated with contemporary "women's issues" but also include "others, such as male/female relationships, infidelity, child molestation, child pornography, teenage suicide, teenage and married spouse's homosexuality, family murders, sexually transmitted diseases, prostitution, and eating disorders" (D'Acci 1994:243). These programs are targeted at women, address "women's issues" and, for the most part, rely on already established television genres.

Yet, the television industry's turn to issue-driven women-oriented programming is fraught with contradictions. First, it must be remembered that the industry rarely responds to social or political pressure unless it is believed that it will serve its commercial interests. Julie D'Acci raises a number of concerns related to the television industry's turn towards women-oriented prime-time programming. She argues that the industry chooses women's issues based on their sensationalistic qualities and often presents women as victims or sexual objects. She also argues that presenting major social problems such as rape, women-battering, incest and sexual harassment as women's issues "'contains' them, consigns them to the domain of 'belonging to women,' and once again obscures the more general power-oriented, and structural characteristics" (1994:136). In other words, she draws attention to the genre's potential for ghettoizing and privatizing major social problems.

Building upon the melodramatic form, one of new genres developed out of the industry's need to attract the women's audience, was the made-for-TV movie. In The Movie of the Week: Private Stories -- Public Events (1992), Elaine Rapping attempts to

account for the contradictory nature of this genre. Rapping lists the following characteristics of the genre:

- displays a concern with irreconcilable contradictions faced by modern women
- presents narratives from female subject position
- negotiates the meaning of "woman" in tricky ways
- define women in term of traditional roles
- treat women's traditional roles with respect
- includes a subtext that challenges the dominant text and allows for divergent meanings
- contains an element of utopianism in their resolutions

(Rapping 1992:101)

Rapping also lists several different themes associated with the genre, which include: the heroine (as wife and mother) confronting crisis; the heroine as the sexually unconventional woman; the heroine in danger (threat from a male); and the infrequent, heroine as rebel (1992:102-114). Rapping states that all made-for-TV movies "begin and end with the family" and they "domesticate matters that are far more complex" in real life than they are portrayed to be on television (Rapping 1992:33 and 35). However, it must be acknowledged that they also deal with serious issues of the moment, assume a female gaze, and treat "women's issues with dignity and respect" (1992:83-84). Made-for-TV movies, like most women-oriented television programming, "serve progressive, albeit...limited and contradictory, ends as well" (1992:68). Elaine Rapping (1992) admits that the genre is full of contradictions; however, she argues it offers something unique to women viewers during the prime-time schedule. She states that made-for-TV movies offer women an opportunity to see women's values treated respectfully during prime-time.

Feminist media scholars D'Acci and Taylor, however, worry about the motivations of the television industry and the limitations of the genre. Taylor argues that while movies deal with "women's issues," they tend "to situate the problem and the resolution within the family, however troubled" (Taylor 1989:51). D'Acci suggests that made-for-TV movies are "exploitative programming" which have been a mainstay of prime-time television "especially for programs directed at women" (D'Acci 1994:134).

Another television response to the new working women's audience was the development of prime-time serials. Christine Geraghty, in Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps (1991), argues that, while this genre builds upon the conventions of its daytime counterpart, it "stretches the boundaries of the genre" (1991:6). This stretching is accomplished by "introducing stories which are different from the traditional soap opera, by giving more space and arguably more sympathy to male characters and by addressing issues of gender, race, and class in a more overt and dramatic way" (1991:6). These programs, just like daytime soap operas, validate "women's skill in the personal sphere and [also offer] a reworking of those values so that they operate, albeit sporadically, in the public sphere" (1991:195). However, women's values are presented as a universal "female condition" -- one which:

allows for reassurance, support, recognition of common problems to be experienced by the woman viewer and provides a challenge to an ideology, expressed on television and elsewhere, which accords women's work in the personal sphere lavish praise but no value. It is also clear, however, that soap's pleasures are based on highly contradictory notions of women's skills, their role in the family or community and the notion that they should look for fulfilment, albeit often unsuccessfully, in the personal sphere.

(Geraghty 1991:196).

She also acknowledges that, while these programs are intended for a predominantly female audience, their placement in the prime-time schedule results in a shift away from subject matter emphasizing "women's values" in an attempt to attract men to the screen. Also, the *perspective* of the program has shifted from the female gaze of the daytime soap opera, to the male gaze reminiscent of the 1940s film noir genre where *femmes fatales* derail the pursuits of male protagonists (1991:179). This shift, however, is not surprising given that broadcasters want to attract as broad an audience to the prime-time schedule as possible.

Another prime-time television genre that was revitalized in the beginning of the 1970s was the situation comedy. The situation comedy has been situated in the domain of the family and the private sphere. Ella Taylor (1989) states that the imagery of the sitcom genre "has always been fundamentally familiar" (1989:1). Television, in general, "has always spoken the language of the family, both in its themes and its forms, ...[However] it is the domestic comedy that provided the backbone of the prime-time entertainment form from the beginning continued through the 1970s" (Taylor 1989:1, 66).

Situation comedies from the 1940s featured women in working-class, sometimes ethnic, families; however women were primarily positioned in the private domestic space (Mellencamp 1986). In "Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker" (1992), Mary Beth Haralovich states that the 1950s and 1960s situation comedy located and naturalized women as suburban, middle-class housewives rendering invisible working class and ethnic representations on television. Lynn Spigel, in "Installing the Television

Set: Popular Discourses on Television and Domestic Space, 1948-1955" (1992) notes that situation comedies took the middle class family and family interior as its principle setting and that the genre has perpetuated this format. Despite the obvious limitations of the genre, the sitcom also affords its own contradictions. Robert Deming adds that sitcoms featured strong women, "but usually their strength was figured in stories organized around patriarchal and/or domestic norms...The family remained the chief conduit for social values" (Deming 1992:207).

Producers of situation comedies have attempted to respond to changing social factors in order to attract a changing viewer audience. In the 1970s, with the increase of women in the labour market, television introduced the new "working girl" sitcom which attempted to reflect *some* of the feminist-informed sensibilities of the time. The first, and most successful, of these sitcoms was *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Serafina Bathwick (1984) argues that the value of this sitcom was in its ability to provide space for women's culture, the women's sphere, and women's friendships on prime-time television. However, the working place family sitcom merely replaced the domestic sitcom format (Taylor 1989). Mary Richards, while a single career woman, "often played the traditional 'mother' role or else female support role, and this kind of female television character is a conventionalized 'type' which could be seen on many other sitcoms" (Deming 1992:208). Compared to the other "social issues" sitcoms of the 1970s (egs. *All In The Family* and *M*A*S*H**), *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* had "little of the hot debating, formalized political agendas, war, corrupt government, or industrial pollution that punctuated" exhibited in these other programs.

Situation comedies of the 1980s and 1990s have continued to feature women as the central protagonists. The practice of featuring women at the centre of the sitcom narrative dates back to the 1950s with *I Love Lucy*. Since then female actors have been able to present subversive and alternative images of women in a variety of situation comedies. Janet Lee (1995) argues that *Roseanne* is "women-centred" entertainment because the co-creator and scriptwriter is a woman, thus setting it "apart as a vehicle of resistance" (Lee 1995:471). Julie D'Acci states that *Roseanne* and *Murphy Brown* demonstrate "just how subversive and oppositional a woman actress/protagonist in a sitcom can actually be" (D'Acci 1994:238). What is not stated, but implied, is that subversive female characters on the prime-time schedule are confined to the format of the situation comedy. The sitcom, because of its reliance on humour, can present these images of women without appearing to take them too seriously. In the case of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, Taylor points out that contemporary "women's comedies" may present women in modern, often subversive roles, however this positioning "also carries an undertow of misogyny" (Taylor 1989:123). According to Taylor, Mary Richards is positioned simultaneously as "the heroine and the whipping girl" (Taylor 1989:123-124).

From this review of the research on the generic conventions of the situation comedy, we see that it is also a cultural product open to inconsistencies and contradictions. It is integral to this research that the generic conventions, and consequent limitations and possibilities, be considered when examining WTN's programming and scheduling choices.

Research Plan

This thesis is intended to be a case study of the shifting vision and practices of the *Women's Television Network (WTN)* during its first three years of development (1993 to 1996). It represents an attempt to identify the influences and restraints which helped to shape the channel by examining its organizational, publicity, and programming strategies. It is not my intent to determine whether *WTN* reflects an "ideal" form of women's television. It is, however, my intent to identify the various levels of influence and interested parties at work in defining the vision of *WTN*. I hope to shed some light on the possibilities and limitations of producing a vision of women's culture through the commercial television industry.

The study examines the first three years of *WTN*'s development and is divided into several sections: *WTN*'s application and licensing process (1993/94), the channel's pre-launch and first season of broadcasting (1994/95) and, finally, *WTN*'s second season of broadcasting (1995/96). My research is guided by Gledhill's theoretical argument that meaning production is a complex process arising out of struggles between competing interests at different "levels" of the production process. This case study is limited to an exploration of the negotiations at the level of the institution and the text. The negotiation over meaning which takes place at the level of the audience constitutes an area of study left for further research.

This study relies on a number of primary resource materials. In the examination of *WTN*'s application and licensing process (1993/94), I rely on the application package submitted by *WTN* to the CRTC. I attempt to identify the major themes concerning

WTN's vision of women's television. This thematic analysis is buttressed by information from the official transcripts from *WTN's* public hearing before the CRTC; informational interviews with key *WTN* representatives; and Canadian newspaper, trade industry and magazine accounts of the channel.

The examination of *WTN's* pre-launch, first season of broadcasting (1994/95) and second season of broadcasting (1995/96) relies on different materials. These include the channel's publicity materials, ratings information, Canadian newspaper, trade industry and magazine responses to the channel, and informational interviews with *WTN* representatives. The main sources of information pertaining to *WTN's* programming practices include programming schedules and videotapes of programming from March 11-18, 1995 and February 12 - March 24, 1996.

The arrival of *WTN* on the Canadian broadcasting scene offers a rich case study for the examination of one vision for the production of women's culture. A detailed study of the channel's development helps to reveal some of the elements of cultural struggle over the meanings of women's culture and the possibilities for its production through the commercial television industry.

Conclusion

This literature review has presented the key research, concepts and theoretical arguments which inform my examination of the *Women's Television Network (WTN)*. The work of Coward (1980) and Barrett (1982) informs my use of the women-centred approach. This approach to women's culture is defined as being produced by, read by, and marketed to

women and about women. In many ways, it is by, for, and about women. This vision of women's culture emphasizes women's shared experiences, interests and values which, according to this approach, are inextricably linked to women. This vision of women's culture is grounded in the tradition of consciousness-raising and focuses on personal histories and women's authorship. One of the limitations of this approach is that it does not critically address the diversity of women's experiences. Also, it often works to reinforce ideas of sexual division which feminism attempts to challenge.

The women-oriented approach, on the other hand, is grounded in a desire to attract women to a cultural product, a desire based on the audience's commercial appeal. The work of Goldman et al. (1991), Taylor (1989), D'Acci (1994), Rapping (1992), Geraghty (1991), and Spigel and Mann (1994) attempts to understand women-oriented cultural production. While both visions -- women-centred and women-oriented -- incorporate feminist themes, they do so for different reasons. Women-centred cultural production does so for the purpose of gaining recognition for values conventionally associated with women, for women's cultural production, and for women's "shared" experiences. The women-oriented approach responds to women's changing roles and contemporary "women's issues" in order to attract an audience that has commercial value. The process of incorporating the elements of emerging, yet often contradictory, identities within cultural industries is what Gledhill (1988) calls "the contradictory nature of capitalism." Women-oriented television programming specifically refers to programs, developed since the 1970s, that deal with contemporary "women's issues" but normally do so within the confines of conventional generic standards. The process is highly

contradictory due to the fact that these programs seek to address "women's issues" while, at the same time, contains them within the private sphere and/or women's domain. This case study situates the vision of women's culture articulated by *WTN* at the juncture between women-centred and women-oriented programming strategies.

The literature concerning feminist critiques of the mainstream media (Coward 1987; Steiner 1992; Nightingale 1990; Taylor 1989; and Barrett 1982) will help guide my examination of *WTN*'s organizational structure and the resulting practices. The audience theory of Ang (1991) assists my discussion of the role of ratings in the development of the vision of *WTN*. Finally, the research and theory on television practices to cultivate the women's audience (scheduling, women's genres) assists my examination of *WTN*'s programming strategies which attempt to attract viewers.

As stated earlier, *WTN* offers a unique opportunity to examine a specific example of the intersection between history, television culture, and the constructions of the women's television audience. It is the purpose of this case study to investigate and understand the process by which the vision of *WTN* developed from 1993 to 1996.

II

The Women's Television Network: Context and History

Introduction

This chapter will provide the reader with background on the emergence of the *Women's Television Network (WTN)* and will situate the channel both as a site of struggle over women's broadcasting needs and as a cultural product. The chapter examines two processes: the CRTC's attempts to monitor sex role stereotyping (1979-1991) and *WTN's* application and licensing process (1993-1994). In examining the events and conditions leading up to the licensing of *WTN*, I will begin with an investigation of the initiatives of the CRTC's Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping and follow with an analysis of the 1991 Broadcasting Act. Such an examination is key to understanding the context in which *WTN's* application was received. The general climate and conditions of the cable television industry will also be reviewed. The section on *WTN's* broadcast licence application and the ensuing hearing process, will also look at the promises and goals articulated in *WTN's* application documents and will provide details of the channel's proposed philosophy, practices and strategies. I will examine *WTN's* application for a broadcast license, the transcripts from the public hearing before the CRTC and accounts of *WTN* in the business and entertainment press. Generally, this chapter is an attempt to examine the political and industry conditions leading up to the licensing of *WTN*. It is also an attempt to situate *WTN* within the broader history of women's negotiations over gender issues with the CRTC. Finally, I hope that this discussion will provide a point

of comparison for examining *WTN*'s practices "as promised" versus "as delivered" in subsequent chapters.

The CRTC's Monitoring of Sex-Role Stereotyping (1979 - 1991)

The following discussion outlines the events and activities which constitute the CRTC's responses to women's broadcasting demands from the 1970s through to the 1990s. The purpose of this section is to establish the context and conditions leading up to the arrival of *WTN* on the Canadian broadcasting scene. A description and critique of the CRTC's Task Force on Sex-Role Stereotyping along with the implications of the 1991 Broadcasting Act will be presented.

A brief summary of the history and evolving practices of the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) will provide us with a context in which to consider the activities the Commission's Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping. Since its establishment in 1968, the CRTC has gone through a number of "managerial" modalities. Communications scholar Liora Salter (1986) describes three stages in the CRTC's history with respect to its approach toward regulation: "Proactive" (1968-1973/75), "Managerial" (1975-1981/83) and "Supervisory" (1982+). The "proactive" phase was characterized by a willingness to directly confront issues concerning the quality of programming content (specifically Canadian content), and a belief that regulation should be designed to establish rights and redistribute resources from the private to public sectors to ensure the public interest goals of the broadcasting system. The "managerial" phase developed in response to the CRTC's added

responsibility for telecommunications regulation in 1975. Salter argues that the complexity of the issues and the subsequent added administrative burden forced the CRTC to become more reactive and flexible. In terms of broadcasting regulation, the "managerial" phase was characterized by a shift in concern from programming content to concern for the relations and structures of the market, ownership, pricing and competition. Because of the introduction of new technologies, the CRTC resigned itself to the belief that it was becoming increasingly difficult to control all of the broadcasting industry participants. In fear of being labelled a censorship body, the CRTC began to avoid issues associated with the quality of programming. Finally, the "supervisory" phase began in 1982 with the addition of pay-television to the CRTC's roster of regulated broadcasters. At that point, the CRTC began to rely more on market forces to inform decisions concerning the existence of services rather than relying on the development of policies and regulations (Salter 1986:4-10).

The CRTC provides a unique public space in the Canadian democratic process. Since its inception, it has provided a mechanism by which the public can intervene in issues of broadcasting policy through the submission of written and, sometimes, oral presentations. Also, members of social groups 'representing' the public's concerns are appointed to positions on the various task forces struck by the CRTC. Since the 1928 Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, there has been a continued focus on defining "broadcasting on a basis of public service" (Raboy 1990:109).

One way that the public service mandate of broadcasting is expressed is through the public consultation process. This process, which was employed by the CRTC's 1979

Task Force on Sex-Role Stereotyping, was established in pursuant to a directive from the Minister of Communications to address sex role stereotyping in the Canadian broadcasting industry.

Concerns about the broadcasting industry's treatment of women were first raised by women's groups during the 1970s. In 1970 the Royal Commission on the Status of Women published the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women In Canada. One of the many areas of concern raised by women's groups during the Royal Commission's hearings (and later with public hearings before the CRTC) was the treatment of women by the Canadian broadcasting system. During this period, the women's movement, led by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), demanded that the federal government take action to ensure that "the broadcast industry promote egalitarian and progressive images of women" (Trimble 1992:134). There were three basic criticisms of the broadcasting industry: (1) the underrepresentation and stereotypical portrayal of women in programming content, (2) the underemployment of women in the broadcasting industry, and (3) the derisive treatment of the women's movement by the broadcasting industry (Trimble 1992:136). In 1979, the federal government published its report Towards Equality for Women which, in part, recommended that the Department of Communications undertake initiatives to improve the status of women in Canadian broadcasting. What women's groups framed as three issues were reduced to one; the sole focus of government initiatives became the monitoring and regulation of "sex role stereotyping" (Towards Equality for Women 1979:28).

Sex role stereotypes are defined as "rigid and over-simplified generalizations of masculinity and femininity based on the assumptions that males and females, by virtue of their sex, possess distinct psychological traits and characteristics" (Trimble 1992:135-136). The Minister of Communications was to direct the CRTC to establish national standards and guidelines for "the elimination of sex role stereotyping in the Canadian media" (Towards Equality for Women 1979:28). The Department of Communications was directed to identify "a group" to monitor Canadian broadcast programming and advertising for sexist content and to make the results available to the public. The monitoring group was to include "representatives from the public and private sectors of the communications industry, representatives from women's groups with demonstrated knowledge about sexism and the media, and also individuals with such expertise" (Trimble:28).¹ As the following discussion illustrates, the Department of Communications requested that the CRTC undertake both the development of guidelines on sex role stereotyping and the establishment of a body to monitor the problem in the broadcast media.

In 1979, on the heels of the report, Towards Equality for Women, Minister of Communications, Jeanne Sauvé, who was also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, requested that the CRTC establish a task force to take on both of these responsibilities. The CRTC responded by striking the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping -- a "watch dog" body set up to enact guidelines on sex role stereotyping in the broadcast media. The official Task Force mandate, defined by the Department of Communications, was to:

...delineate guidelines for a more positive (and realistic) portrayal of women in radio and television (in both programming and commercials), and to make policy recommendations for consideration by the Commission and the broadcasting industry. The task force could propose one of several mechanisms for the implementation of the guidelines it sets up: industry self-regulation, CRTC regulation, or government legislation. Which route will be most effective will be up to the task force to decide.
(CRTC, Images of Women 1982:1)

From the outset, the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping was faced with difficult challenges. During this period the Commission was going through significant changes. For the first time it was "facing the demand for licensing of pay television as well as coping with the rapidly expanding cable television industry" (Trimble:138). Meanwhile, the federal government was putting additional pressure on the CRTC to take on complex and controversial social issues such as sex role stereotyping. The CRTC was also feeling overwhelmed by its new responsibility for telecommunications (Johnston 1980:29). As a consequence, partly due to the expanded workload and pressure from the industry, the CRTC was moving further and further away from direct regulation and began assuming a more "supervisory" role instead (Salter 1986). In 1979, many CRTC commissioners and industry groups felt that the mandate of the Task Force was "antithetical" to the Commission's new approach to regulation.

Nevertheless, the CRTC "reluctantly complied" with Sauvé's request to set up the Task Force (Trimble:137). The Task Force's public and industry members were often so divided on key issues that it rendered the work of the Task Force difficult and lengthy. Public members advocated proactive CRTC regulation and supported measurable and enforceable guidelines developed with public input. By contrast, industry

members preferred voluntary industry self-regulation premised on guidelines developed by their respective industry associations. The differences in opinion escalated to such a point that members "finally stopped talking to one another and channelled their views through the Commission" and one member of the Task Force, the representative from the Institute of Canadian Advertising, resigned citing frustration with the internal conflict that had developed (Trimble:147). Despite the unharmonious working atmosphere and conflicting interests among its members, the Task Force continued to operate in this "conflict ridden relationship" (Trimble:147).

From the outset, the Task Force worked under the *modus operandi* that the issue to be dealt with was sex-role stereotyping and that no further research was needed to meet their mandate. Images of Women: Report of the Programming and Advertising in Canadian Television and Radio (1982), the final report of the Task Force outlined the group's framework for dealing with the issue:

First, as the problem of sex-role stereotyping has already been well defined and well documented, the Task Force therefore would not undertake its own research. Second, the Task Force considered the problem of sex role stereotyping to be one of inequality and injustice rather than one of "bad taste." Third, the Task Force would give consideration to both commercials and programming, in that order; and finally, while recognizing that other forms of stereotyping can and do exist, it would concentrate on the sex role stereotyping of women.

(Images of Women 1982:3)

Some public members initially requested that the Task Force address employment equity along with sex role stereotyping. However, it was clarified that employment policy regulation was beyond the mandate of the CRTC as outlined in the former Broadcasting Act.² The release of Images of Women in 1982, with its series of recommendations,

brought to an end to the Task Force's work. It did not mean, however, the end to the CRTC's management of sex-role stereotyping issues. As will be discussed below, the recommendations of the Task Force required that the CRTC and the industry continue to directly grapple with issues related to sex role stereotyping by setting up a two-year trial period for voluntary self-regulation (1982 to 1984). The after-math of this trial period continued into the 1990s.

Images of Women outlined a number of recommendations aimed at the CRTC, the CBC, the private broadcasting industry, the advertising industry, and other broadcasting industry players, including pay-TV and cable services. (Please see Appendix A for a full account of the recommendations.) The chief recommendation was that "broadcasters and advertisers be given the opportunity to demonstrate that self-regulation could achieve the results we were seeking" (Images of Women:xvii). However, because public members of the Task Force questioned the efficacy and motives behind voluntary industry self-regulation, a condition was placed on the self-regulation recommendation. After a two-year trial period, the CRTC was to review, assess and make public the results of the initiatives of the industry.

Despite its choice to opt for industry self-regulation, the Task Force actually had three enforcement mechanisms at its disposal: industry self-regulation, CRTC regulation and government legislation. After much dissention within the Task Force itself, it was decided that the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) and the Advertising Association Board (AAB) would develop their own guidelines on sex role stereotyping for the purposes of voluntary self-regulation. Task Force members' concerns over the

efficacy of voluntary self-regulation appeared to be warranted given that the CAB's first attempt at its own guidelines, which were in place from 1982-1990, reframed the gender issue once again. For the first time, *both* genders were specified as potentially adversely affected by sex role stereotyping.³

In 1986, two years after the end of the trial period, the CRTC published two reports: a progress report on self-regulation, Sex Role Stereotyping in the Broadcast Media: a Report on Industry Self-regulation; and an assessment report entitled Policy on Sex Role Stereotyping in the Broadcast Media. These final reports relied heavily on a number of studies conducted by Erin Research on behalf of the CRTC and the CBC.⁴ The progress report clearly showed that, after the two-year trial period, women were still under-represented and poorly portrayed by the media (Trimble:142). In response to this lack of improvement, the assessment report recommended attaching a condition of license establishing *mandatory* self-regulation.

Despite the unequivocal research findings and agreement among CRTC officials and the researchers, industry representatives argued that the analysis failed to measure where real progress had been made. The CAB argued that the progress report did not measure the industry's new "sensitization" to the issue or recognize the increases in the number of women hired in the industry since 1982 (Trimble:142).⁵ However, the CRTC argued that the industry's new awareness and sensitivity did not result in measurable progress and attempted to add some "teeth" to the regulatory mechanism. Adherence to the sex role stereotyping guidelines was made a condition of broadcast licences. While the new condition of licence did present the CRTC with the opportunity to apply

real pressure on the industry to comply with their own guidelines, the Commission's new found 'teeth' "are like ill-fitting dentures that sit in a glass of water because the user finds it more expedient to go without" (Trimble:142-143).

Because of the CRTC's more general move toward deregulation, and in response to a direct challenge to the condition of licence by the CAB, the imposition of the condition of licence remains a formal enforcement tool which has never actually been used to revoke or suspend broadcasting licences. It appears as if the CRTC, while committed "in theory" to the elimination of sex role stereotyping, found it difficult to pursue both its approach of deregulation and its initiative to monitor sex role stereotyping. In 1987, when renewing the CBC's and CTV's licences, the CRTC imposed the new condition of licence and has imposed it on all new and renewing cable broadcasters since then. However, "the evidence indicates that the Commission has not had the staff or the political will necessary to use the condition effectively" (Trimble:144). The CRTC can still exercise "gentler" methods to enforce compliance, such as demanding that broadcasters supply progress reports at renewal hearings; however, the Commission has chosen, so far, to forego making any such requirements mandatory (Trimble:144).

Despite the evidence to the contrary, the CRTC argues that the sex role stereotyping initiative was a success because monitoring was conducted, women's groups appeared satisfied, and voluntary guidelines as a condition of license were established. However, a subsequent progress report conducted by the CRTC in 1988 and published in 1990 provides "clear and concise" results: "the four year period of industry self-

regulation was 'characterized much more by stability than change.' The CRTC found that women [continue to be] under-represented in almost every area of Canadian broadcasting" (CRTC quoted in Trimble: 145).

The Task Force brought together representatives from the broadcasting and advertising industry, the women's movement, the CBC, the CRTC and the general public. However, this public consultation process has had, and continues to have, shortcomings. Raboy points out that, at every "critical juncture in broadcasting policy development, a quasi-autonomous body is struck by the government to make proposals" (Raboy:109). The body then consults the public, produces a report, and makes recommendations to the government. The government then takes these recommendations, puts them through its own public consultation process and subsequently develops "fuzzier and more ambiguous" sets of proposals (Raboy:109). The federal government's and the CRTC's institutional responses to women's broadcasting needs are no exception to this rule. In addition to Raboy's point, the public consultation model employed by the CRTC assumes that all individuals, representatives of social groups, and representatives from the industry come to the process with equal access to power and resources.

During the early 1980s, when the federal government began to address women's inequality in society, the CRTC was undergoing changes in its regulatory strategy. As the federal government attempted to address issues of employment equity, human rights, sexual discrimination, women's unpaid labour, and women's representation in the media, the CRTC was moving towards an operational model of deregulation and supervision rather than direct regulation and management.

At the end of the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping process, the CRTC was left with a proliferation of research on the stereotypical portrayal of women in the media and a few unsatisfactory progress reports on industry compliance with the guidelines. The focus of the Task Force was on monitoring and regulation; the monitoring had been completed, to some degree, successfully. However, regulation posed some serious problems. The inability of the Task Force members to work together illustrated the polemical nature of the various stakeholders' interests, the complexity of the issue, and the lack of political will on the part of the CRTC to arbitrate these conflicts. In 1990, more than ten years since the formal dialogue began, studies showed that no measurable changes had been made in the portrayal of women on television and radio.

The 1991 Broadcasting Act

At the same time that the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping was attempting to address its mandate from within the operations of the CRTC, a revised Broadcasting Act was being drafted. In 1991, the revised Broadcasting Act altered the CRTC's mandate to specifically include the pursuit of gender equality and, for the first time in its history, the mandate addressed employment opportunities as well as programming. The relevant clause [3(1)(d)(iii)] of the Act reads:

3. (1) It is hereby declared as the broadcasting policy for Canada that...
 - (d) the Canadian broadcasting system should...
 - (iii) through its **programming and the employment opportunities arising out of its operations**, serve the needs and interests, and reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women, and children, including equal rights, the

linguistic duality and multicultural and multiracial nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society...[emphasis added]

(Broadcasting Act 1991)

Trimble asserts that, under the revised Act, "the CRTC will be compelled to seek better results" (Trimble:148). Raboy argues that while the "real impact [of the Broadcasting Act] remains to be seen...it represents, on the one hand, a first symbolic victory for the oppressed, and on the other hand, an instrument that can be used to achieve further victories" (1990:115).

Given the CRTC's shift toward "hands off" regulation of the industry, the CRTC now had before them yet another complicated challenge: how to ensure that the broadcasting system "reflect the circumstances and aspirations, of Canadian men, women, and children" in programming *and* employment. *WTN* offered one solution to the CRTC's new dilemma.

Through our understanding of the debate over sex role stereotyping during the 1980s, we are able to better comprehend the conditions and context for the arrival of *WTN*. The debate over sex role stereotyping included: negotiations over the definition and breadth of the problem; selection of a mechanism with which to regulate the problem; conflict between feminists and broadcasting industry perspectives; a contradiction between the CRTC's move toward industry self-regulation and its new "equity" responsibilities; and evidence of the lack of CRTC political will to regulate the problem.

From the outset of the process, the CRTC was reluctant to deal with the issue of sex role stereotyping except in terms of monitoring. That reluctance seemed to influence

almost every CRTC order, decision and action (or inaction). Secondly, the issue was framed, almost from the beginning, as being driven by a single, measurable variable: sex role stereotyping in programming and advertising. Thirdly, as the responsibility for implementing the initiative was handed over to industry stakeholders, the issue was reframed to include other priorities, such as adding the "male" variable into the equation. Overall, the process was complicated, lengthy and divisive. However, with the amendments to the Broadcasting Act in 1992, the CRTC had even more of an impetus to seek better results -- federal legislation.

The Climate of the Canadian Cable Industry

A shift from seeing the media industry as a "broad"casting industry to seeing it as a "narrow"casting industry was established by the CRTC's licensing of six pay-television specialty services in 1987 and continued with the licensing of ten new specialty services, including *WTN*, in 1994. The other English-language specialty services licensed include *Bravo!*, *The Life Network*, *The Country Network*, *Showcase*, and *The Discovery Channel*.

The licensing of cable specialty services in Canada corresponded with the CRTC's new supervisory approach to regulation. With the licensing of pay-television services in 1987 (*TSN*, *YTV*, *MuchMusic*, *CBC Newsworld*, *The Weather Network* and *Vision TV*), the dominant CRTC rhetoric became that of niche marketing -- usurping the former emphasis on a broad-based public broadcasting appeal. Public service rhetoric was replaced with consumer/viewer freedom of choice.

Specialty cable, or narrowcast channels, have had a real impact on the Canadian broadcasting system and have proved lucrative to investors. It has been almost ten years since the first specialty services were launched and, according to *Marketing Magazine*, "all six specialties in English...enjoy widespread distribution" (Kirkwood, June 13, 1994:22). During these ten years, specialty channel viewing has increased 26 per cent during the day time schedule and 35 per cent during prime time (Kirkwood). However, because of the arrival and dominance of U.S. "super stations" and, in keeping with the CRTC's focus on "ensuring a strong Canadian presence" on Canadian airwaves, the CRTC has dedicated itself to defending Canadian broadcasting in the wake of the greater availability of American cable channels (Swain, *Infomedia*, June 1994). Since their arrival on the Canadian broadcasting system in 1991, U.S. channels such as *A&E*, *CNN* and *The Nashville Network* have been successful at attracting Canadian viewers (Swain). Hype in the press about the "death stars" and the "500 channel universe" has resulted in excitement among some (*Globe & Mail*, editorial, March 23, 1994) and concern at the CRTC (Spicer, June 7:B24). Despite the hype, CRTC Chair Keith Spicer stated in the *Globe & Mail* that this new television "universe" is "three to seven years" away (Spicer, March 23, 1994). According to Spicer, the CRTC hopes to use these three to seven years to establish Canada's own specialty cable industry in order to better compete with U.S. and international competitors. With this purpose in mind, the CRTC licensed six new English-language Canadian specialty cable services, two new French-language services, and two pay-per-view services in June of 1994.

WTN was one of those ten successful licensees. The 1993 cable licence application process was referred to by the *Financial Post* as "the great gold rush of 1993" and "specialty channel fever" (Siklos, July 8, 1993:12). CRTC Chair Keith Spicer wrote that the Commission's criteria consisted of public demand, diversity, Canadian content, quality, viability, and cost (Spicer, June 7, 1994:B24). So, "in what might be perceived as cultural imperialism, the CRTC has licensed 10 new specialty services and pay-TV services that will [ensure a Canadian presence]" (Swain, *Informedia*, June 1994). The context and history of *WTN*'s arrival on the Canadian broadcasting scene must take into consideration its placement within the larger cable industry. *WTN* is the first narrowcast cable channel of its kind in Canada which deliberately seeks to address women as the target audience. Similar channels have operated in Britain (*UKLiving*) since 1993 and the United States (*Lifetime Television*) since 1984.

WTN's Application and Licensing Process (1993 - 1994)

The idea for a woman's channel in the Canadian broadcasting system did not originate with *WTN*. Two other groups recommended the licensing of a women's channel prior to the CRTC's 1993 call for specialty cable applications. At the CRTC Structural Hearings in 1992, Toronto Women in Film and Television (TWIFT) recommended that the CRTC license a women's channel in order to provide much needed broadcasting industry job opportunities for women. TWIFT used its study, Changing Focus: The Future in Canadian Film and Television Industry, as the basis for its recommendation. The study focused on the lack of women's employment opportunities in the industry,

especially in production, creative, executive and technical areas. Barbara Barde was president of TWIFT at the time of the Structural Hearings. She later became *WTN*'s first Vice President of Programming and the Board representative for a group of women investors (the Barde Group) who own 8.42 per cent of the channel.⁶

In 1993, the Royal Commission on Violence Against Women recommended the piloting "a dedicated broadcast space for women through licensing" (Royal Commission on Violence Against Women, 1993). In September of that same year, *WTN* submitted an application for a broadcast licence and in February 1994, representatives of the proposed channel appeared at the Commission's public hearings. In addition, a second women's channel application was submitted by T'ellevision (Global Communications), however, they were not granted a licence. In the application itself, *WTN* claimed that, if it were awarded a licence to broadcast, the channel would:

...further the objectives of the [Broadcasting Act]...by introducing a service managed by and for women, [*WTN*] will contribute to the achievement of paragraph 3(1)(d)(iii) [the equity clause] of the Broadcasting Act...Our research clearly shows that Canadian women want and need something more and different than what the broadcasting system now offers. [*WTN*], by providing a service that specifically reflects and empowers Canadian women, will add a new dimension that will further this fundamental objective.

(Lifestyle Television, Book 1, Schedule 27, Part 8:54).

On June 7, 1994, *WTN* was granted a license to broadcast a women's channel on basic cable and extended basic cable services.⁷ *WTN*'s arrival on the Canadian broadcasting scene marks an important stage in the CRTC's ongoing discussion over gender issues. Barbara Barde articulated the role that the CRTC's history played in licensing the channel:

We got a license because, number one, we had a really good application. Number two...the CRTC, for a very long time, had talked about equity in broadcasting. And we also would change that dramatically over night. Almost all of the executives would be women...It was part and parcel of everything the CRTC had been saying...for almost 15 years.

(Interview with Barbara Barde, November 1995)

The following discussion will examine the bases on which *WTN* grounded its concept of its audience, its operating philosophy, its programming mandate and its organizational structure.

The Philosophy and Promises of *WTN*

In February 1994, Lifestyle Television (herein after *WTN*) appeared before the CRTC as part of the application and hearing process to obtain a broadcasting license. The *WTN* concept originated with Michael Ihnat and Ron Rhodes (Rhodes formerly of Selkirk Communications and *The Family Channel*) who "wanted to launch a broadcast service that addressed the critical concerns of parenting, family, health, nutrition, [and] elder care...When they examined who was responsible for making and implementing the decisions, they concluded that it was, by and large, women. The idea of a television channel for women was born" (Application, Part 2:10). The first investor in the *WTN* concept was publisher Martha Blackburn, and "though she would not identify herself as a feminist, she became interested in the idea of a women's television network" (Steed, December 11, 1994). However, Blackburn's unexpected death in 1992 at the age of 47 left Ihnat and Rhodes looking for new investors. In 1992, Moffat Communications of Winnipeg, headed by Randy Moffat, became the primary investor in the channel.

The current *WTN* ownership structure entails a consortium of private corporate interests. At the time of the application, the controlling investor was Moffat Communications (holding 65 per cent of shares) -- owners of CKY, the CTV-affiliate in Winnipeg and various other broadcast holdings. Other investors included Michael Ihnat and Ron Rhodes (10 and 12 per cent respectively) and a group of women investors lead by *WTN*'s first Vice President of Programming, Barbara Barde (8 per cent) and *WTN*'s first President and CEO, Linda Rankin (5 per cent).⁸

As discussed in the previous chapter, targeting the women's audience has been a standard practice of the television industry since the early days of commercial broadcasting. Women's roles as primary care-givers and primary consumers of household products underlie the desire to cultivate the women's audience. However, in Canada, there has never been a television channel or cable service dedicated to women. Throughout *WTN*'s application process, it was argued that past practices of attracting and serving the women's television audience have been unsatisfactory; *WTN* proposed that its philosophy and practices would better serve women television viewers.

The following discussion of *WTN*'s application, hearing and licensing process will identify the channel's proposed philosophy, practices and promises. Relying primarily on the hearing transcripts and a copy of the application, the discussion will be buttressed by quotations from key *WTN* representatives and the press. Once establishing the major themes in *WTN*'s operating philosophy, this examination will outline how *WTN* proposed to realize this vision through its programming, management, organizational structure, and revenue-generating strategies.

The "Women's Perspective"

The opening page of *WTN's Application for License, Supplemental Brief - Schedule 27* states that *WTN* "will be a broadcast service *for women, by women, about women and their world* [emphasis in original]" (Application, Part 1:4). The application further explains that:

[*WTN*] will be a celebration of the accomplishments of women, an information service presented from a women's perspective, and an entertainment service designed with women's needs in mind.

(Application, Part 1:4)

Three key themes in the discourse articulated throughout *WTN's* application are (1) women have a unique perspective of the world, (2) women should be able to author their own images, and (3) women are not satisfied with existing television programming. These three themes can be seen to provide the basis for *WTN's* philosophy.

WTN's application to the CRTC consists of a number of components. It is within the first eight sections (Part 1 through 8) that the application details the channel's vision of itself and its programming. The eight sections include: *Part 1 - Executive Summary; Part 2 - The Inspiration and Opportunity; Part 3 - The [WTN] Mission and Mandate; Part 4 - The Concept of the [WTN] Service; Part 5 - Who Will Provide the Service; Part 6 - Consumer and Advertiser Demand; Part 7 - Carriage by Cable and DTH and Conclusion; Part 8 - Why [WTN] Contributes to the Canadian Broadcasting System.*

WTN provided support for their approach with commissioned background studies, which not only attempted to provide academic and demographic support for *WTN* but also associated the channel's vision in connection to feminist-informed research. However, these feminist connections appear to "come in through the back door" of *WTN's*

application. In other words, explicit feminist principles are espoused by individuals or organizations *indirectly* associated with WTN. WTN relied upon the support of feminist research and feminist organizations; however, the channel was reluctant to call itself feminist.⁹ In an interview in the *Calgary Herald*, Linda Rankin clarified that the "[proposed] channel wouldn't have a feminist agenda, but would present women in all their diversity, including political diversity" (Mayes, January 15, 1994). Also, in a feature article in the business section of the *Toronto Star*, reporter Judy Steed wrote that "the F-word [meaning feminism] is not used at WTN" (Steed, December 11, 1995). WTN appeared to be strategically balancing feminist "special interests" against the "public interest." The application itself stated that it was going to be a "female oriented channel" that would be "pro-women not anti-men" (Application, Part 4:21).

In the application, WTN states that the results of two background studies figured prominently in determining the channel's philosophy. The first of these studies is *The Feminist Landscape* prepared by Joanna Rogers under the guidance of Dr. Abbyann Lynch, a feminist medical ethicist. The research of psychologist Carol Gilligan, specifically her book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), figured most prominently among the work cited by Joanna Rogers and the work that influenced WTN's philosophy in general. It is Gilligan's research which informs WTN's position that women, in general, have a unique voice and perspective. Founding partner Ron Rhodes told *The Toronto Star* that after reading "Gilligan's books about the different ways women learn, communicate and interact, an approach that informed the WTN philosophy...It was easy to become a feminist" (Steed,

December 11, 1994:B2). In the application, WTN stated:

That [Carol Gilligan's] research provided a distinct and challenging set of ideas about gender, the differences in values, learning patterns and experiential descriptions about the world between men and women.

(Application, Part 2:10)

In a Different Voice (1982) is primarily a philosophical discussion concerning the moral and psychological development of women. Gilligan relies on three psychological studies of her own along with a discussion of theories in developmental psychology on the differences between women and men. She argues that women's psychology is different from men's and that women have a unique and distinctive "voice." According to Gilligan, women develop an "ethics of care" while men, on the whole, develop an "ethics of justice." An ethics of care is characterized by interdependence; an ethics of justice, in contrast, is characterized by individualism and rights. Gilligan writes that while "an ethics of justice proceeds from the premise of equality -- that everyone should be treated the same -- an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence -- that no one should be hurt" (1982:174). In Gilligan's opinion, women's psychological make-up differs from men's in that women have a need for attachment, a fear of separation, and they exhibit a sense of responsibility for others' needs. Men's psychology, however, emphasizes individuation and justice focusing on equality and rights.

Gilligan states that these characteristics should not be generalized to all women and men, however, they still form the basic themes of her study and she consistently applies these concepts in general terms. According to Gilligan, the conventions of psychology, and of society in general, have been articulated using a masculine vocabulary and have come from a masculine perspective. Consequently, the voices of women and

their experiences have been silenced, thereby devaluing and de-legitimizing the important role women play in society and, consequently, cause women to feel undervalued and misunderstood. In addition, women's and men's different moral vocabularies lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding between women and men. In the final pages of the book she draws the following conclusions:

My research suggests that men and women may speak different languages that they assume are the same, using similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships. Because these languages share an overlapping moral vocabulary, they contain a propensity for systemic mistranslation, creating misunderstandings which impede communication and limit the potential for cooperation and care in relationships.

(Gilligan 1982:173)

She adds that:

Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of experience and interpretation.

(173)

Gilligan argues that there are, in fact, two modalities of experience and interpretation -- women's and men's.

WTN's reliance on Gilligan's concept of "women's different voice" and "different perspective" is evidenced throughout the application. These themes help to form the basis of *WTN's* organizational and programming philosophies. A common thread, based upon Gilligan's approach, and running throughout *WTN's* application, is that:

A "woman's perspective" is [defined by]:

- collaborating, team building, connecting;
- nurturing, mending, healing;
- empowering, supporting, problem-solving.

(Application, Part 3:16)

The application makes a number of direct references to Gilligan's work when accounting for the inspiration for the concept of the channel. In *Part 2 - The Inspiration and the Opportunity*, the applicant notes:

[Gilligan] demonstrated that women's moral development had been consistently misrepresented and devalued by male researchers and that women, in fact, did have a different and valuable voice to contribute to society. That research provided [us with] a distinct and challenging set of ideas about gender, the differences in values, learning patterns and experiential descriptions about the world between men and women.

(Part 2:10)

The application goes on to state that:

The results of the research persuaded the team that they needed to add gender difference issues (sex-role stereotyping, empowerment, and point of view) to the original agenda. It clarified the focus of what was missing on television - and that was "the voice of women."

(Part 2:11)

We can see the threads of this theme woven throughout the application. The concept of a unique woman's voice and experience, for example, is expressed in the following statements taken from the application [emphasis added]:

Women have a **unique perspective** of the world that both men and women are interested in understanding (Part 1:4).

[WTN] has created a programming service which **speaks to women in their own voice** (Part 4:25).

The *Signature Services* concentrate on context, **connectivity and inter-relationship** (Part 4:25).

[WTN's] research strongly noted...[that] women have a distinct perspective, a unique view of the world [and that] working women need prime-time television that talks to them" (Part 4:25).

The common theme in all these issues [program line-up, marketing and sales plan, advertising, organizational structure, make-up of board of directors and foundation] is a "woman's perspective" (Part 3:16).

It is the theme of a "woman's perspective" which runs throughout the *WTN* application.

The work of Carol Gilligan has been criticized by other feminist theorists for its underlying essentialism (Butler 1992; Cornell 1992; Mouffe 1992). To assume that women have a shared, unique perspective which is differentiated from men:

**...assumes a basic "truth" about women that patriarchal society has kept hidden. It assumes that there is a particular group - "women" - that can be separated from another group - "men" - in terms of an essence that precedes or is outside of culture and that ultimately has to have biological origins.
(Kaplan 1987:216)**

According to Cornell, Gilligan's approach "reinforces *conventional* stereotypes of the feminine as defined by the current gender structure, and potentially constrains women and men in the fashion of their individual lives as [sexual] beings" (Cornell, 1992:281). Joanna Rogers, the author of the *WTN* background study on Gilligan's research, does include a short critique of Gilligan's research, but this critique is not mentioned in the main body of *WTN's* application. Instead, *WTN* appears to adopt Gilligan's theories without question. Rogers warns about the dangers of the essentialist truism echoed throughout Gilligan's work. She notes that Gilligan's work has been criticized for ignoring the societal factors which contribute to the development of women's "unique perspective," and that it runs the risk of moving from "'this is the way things are' to 'this is the way things are naturally'" (Rogers, Schedule 27 - Appendix A, 1993:11).

As noted earlier, the *WTN* philosophy articulated in the application for licence also relied on another background paper, entitled *The Women's Channel Project - Propositions for "It Matters Who Makes It."* The paper was co-authored by Shari Graydon, Theresa Kiefer and Jackie Botterill under the supervision of Dr. Catherine Murray at the Mountain Media Lab in British Columbia. It is notable that Shari Graydon, one of the co-authors of the paper, is the current president of MediaWatch and assisted *WTN* at the CRTC hearings. In the application, *WTN* referred to the study as "research"; however, it is actually a review of some of the existing literature pertaining to women, communication and the media. According to *WTN's* application, the combination of this background paper and the work of Carol Gilligan clarified "the elusive definition of a woman's voice and a woman's perspective" (Application, Part 6:41). This literature review represents a collection of brief summaries of a number of diverse research results, general theories, anecdotal information, and professional opinions. In the forty-page paper, the authors review, summarize, assess and draw conclusions from seventy-five diverse sources ranging from market-oriented audience research and trade press articles to feminist ethnographic studies and textual analyses of television genres.

This background paper was used by *WTN* to argue that women constitute a distinct audience group, possessing unique and different communication behaviours and needs -- needs which are not being met by the existing television system. As will be illustrated, this paper proposes that these needs could be met if women were allowed to author their own images and if women were allowed to populate the decision-making

roles in the organization. The main purpose of the study was to make the case for a women's channel" (Appendix B:1).

The organizing theme of the study, similar to Gilligan's, is that women, in general, have "different communication needs, styles and preferences" from men (Appendix B:1). According to the authors, because their review of the literature supports the theory that women engage in different communication behaviours, they therefore have different needs based on these behaviours. Specifically, the authors rely on Deborah Tannen's "You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation" (1990) to support this assumption (Appendix, Preface:i). Tannen's thesis is that women and men experience social communication in different ways. Reminiscent of Gilligan's thesis, according to Tannen, women experience conversation as negotiations for closeness, confirmation and support and a struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation (Tannen 1990). According to *WTN*, these television needs of women are based on a number of research findings: 1) that women have different conversational behaviour from men; 2) that they watch more television than men but are less satisfied with their viewing; and 3) that women prefer different television genres, namely dramas, situation comedies, variety shows and soap operas. Women's television needs are also defined according to findings which argue that women use television differently from men. *WTN*'s application summarizes these findings as evidence:

The study was organized into ten major propositions the researchers believed were central to the case for a women's channel. They confirmed the dominant thinking in communication research today...that men and women have different communication needs, styles and preferences.

(Part 3:17)

These propositions include: that women differ in their general communication needs from men; that women respond to and watch television differently from men; that women are not satisfied with existing television; that the television industry has not suitably addressed the women's audience; that female creative control would better serve women's communication needs; and that a women's television channel would better address equity issues than existing broadcasters (Application, Appendix B:4-41).

The authors of the paper propose that women's communication needs could be met if women were allowed to author and have creative control over their own images. They argue that their research shows that "female creative control would better serve women's communication needs at this time" (Appendix B:28). This argument is two-fold. On one hand the authors use their sample of studies to suggest that media productions "created by women do tend to feature more female leads" (B:28) and that case studies of television shows which are popular with women are often created by women (with references to *Roseanne* and *Cagney and Lacey*). The authors cite research showing that one of the reasons why television does not meet women's needs "may come down to the fact that although women writers and creative directors have the vision to develop [women's programming], the predominantly male coterie of producers and executives still refuse to recognize that there is an audience for the material" (B:20). They also cite the anecdotal evidence that even though *Lifetime Television*, a women's cable channel in the U.S., "remains dominated by men, with a male CEO and an all-male board of directors, its *female orientation at other links* in the process of creative production is still cited as making it a more 'women friendly' place to work...than the

major networks [emphasis added]" (B:35). According to the authors, their research shows that images authored by women, and managerial and creative decisions made by women, can better meet women's unique communication needs. On the other hand, the authors also argue that featuring women's voices on television would have a pro-social benefit because "this benefit of hearing women speak on television accrues not only to women, but also to children and men as well" (B:24). Similar to Gilligan's argument that an understanding of women's moral voice would lead to better understanding between women and men, Graydon et al. argue that there is a pro-social value to showing female behaviour, rather than male, as the norm on television: "Men and women need to understand one another more fully, and nurturing behaviours characteristic of those responsible for child care (currently women), for instance, need to be shared by both sexes" (B:24). The authors refer to studies concerning sex-role stereotyping of boys and girls to support this proposition. In the application itself, *WTN* argues that "women have a unique perspective of the world that both men and women are interested in understanding" (Part 1:4). They add that "a women's channel with extensive creative control by women will add important diversity and wider social benefits to the broadcasting system" (Part 3:18).

The themes related to women's unique communication needs and women's creative and managerial control are echoed in *WTN's* application. *Part I - Executive Summary* states that "women believe that they must author their own images if they wish to change how they are portrayed on television" (Part 1:4). The application also proposes that the "service will largely be managed by women, and the great majority of

programming will be creatively programmed and produced by women" (6). In *Part 2 - The Inspiration and Opportunity*, WTN adamantly argues that to "ensure equal gender perspective, women must author their own images, for in the media, *IT MATTERS WHO MAKES IT* [emphasis in original]" (Part 2:12).

WTN argued that its channel would reflect a "woman's perspective" and that it would be "designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of Canadian women" (Part 3:16). WTN's understanding of the "woman's perspective" is informed, for the most part, by psychological and behavioural theories on what distinguishes women from men. This approach is illustrative of what Lana Rakow refers to as understanding gender as "a pre-given category that can account for measurable differences in women's and men's speech, interaction, and mass communication behaviour" (Rakow 1986:11). However, this approach to communication research assumes that the "relationship between biology and culture...[is] a simple layering of one on top of the other, resulting in cultural differences added on to already existing biological differences between two pre-given sexes" (1986:12). It is from this understanding of women's differences, specifically that women have a different "voice" and a different "perspective" that WTN constructs its audience on the basis of the "unique" and unsatisfied communication needs of women.

The underlying assumption informing WTN's philosophy -- that women constitute an ontologically pre-given gender category -- limits the range of options with which to address the concerns raised in the application. During the application phase, WTN's primary concern was that the television system was not meeting the unique needs of women and that they would rectify that situation: "[WTN] fills a gap in today's television

services, by providing a service that speaks to a large Canadian audience from a unique perspective" (Part 1:8). The parameters proposed by *WTN* to "fill this gap" included ensuring:

that women populate the organization in critical decision-making roles, that women write, direct and produce programs, that women fill the roles of host, interviewer, expert, and companion, and that women play lead roles as main protagonists in dramatic and documentary features.

(Part 3:16).

This approach to ensuring a women's perspective demonstrates that *WTN*'s emphasis on seeking reform of the broadcasting system is based on providing more and equal job opportunities for women, ensuring that women author their own images and that women's images fill the screen. Despite *WTN*'s limited understanding of the notion of gender, prior to its arrival on the Canadian broadcasting scene, the debate concerning women's broadcasting needs was limited to the issue of eliminating sex role stereotyping. The parameters within which to address gender issues and broadcasting were confined to monitoring and regulating the image portrayal of women on television and radio. In its application for a broadcasting licence, *WTN* extended the boundaries of how to address women's broadcasting needs. Rather than understanding the issue just in terms of image portrayal, they proposed that they could improve the television system for women by addressing authorship, programming content managerial control and, to a certain extent, ownership -- ensuring a "woman's perspective." The following discussion will examine how this philosophy was addressed in *WTN*'s proposed ownership, management, and programming practices.

The Organizational Structure

A number of strategies are proposed in *WTN's* application to ensure, or at least give the impression, that women would be making the decisions. One of the propositions, concerning the make-up of the board of directors, states that the board would reflect a "woman's perspective." *WTN's* application states that the board would consist of "a fixed number of 9 individuals" (Book III, Schedule A); however Schedule 3 of the same book names only eight directors. The application proposes that five out of eight of the directors would be women; however, there is no policy stating that a certain number of board members must be women. The women on the board would include Donna and Chris Moffat, representing the interests of Moffat Communications which owns 65 per cent of the channel; the President and CEO, who, at the time of the application was Linda Rankin who owned 5 per cent of the channel as part of her benefits package; Barbara Barde, who represents the Barde Group, a group of women investors who own 8 per cent of the shares; and Pat McKay, founder of *Vision TV* and the liaison from the Lifestyle Foundation. Pat McKay is the only proposed board member who did not have any direct or indirect shares in the channel (shareholders information based on Book III, Schedule 11:38). In addition, Moffat Communications would have the first option to buy any existing shares (Book III, Schedule 11:45).

Another interesting feature of the proposed board was the number of directors who came directly from the Moffat family and who, in essence, represent the corporate interests of Moffat Communications Ltd. Randy Moffat is president and CEO of Moffat Communications, Donna Moffat is his sister and Chris Moffat his daughter. Moffat

Communication's organizational authority is framed in terms of a family interest rather than a business interest. Their familial relationships are highlighted in both the application and the hearing transcripts.

Donna and Chris Moffat's membership on the board is framed in terms of their familial connections and by the fact that they are both women. Donna Moffat, was the proposed Chair of the Board. According to the application, her seat would ensure "a woman at the very top of the organization" (Part 5:31). Chris Moffat would represent the "point of view of both a younger woman as well as that of a student" (Part 5:31).

According to *WTN*, The Barde Group would ensure that "outstanding role models of women in film and television have invested in this undertaking" (Part 5:33). In an interview, Barbara Barde stated that she "thought it was important for women to own shares in the channel." (Barde interview, November 1995). She added that "part of the problem [with the Canadian broadcasting industry] is that there are very few women who have money invested in broadcasting and I also felt that it would really hurt our application if there were no female owners." In reality, women directly own only 13 per cent (Barde Group and Linda Rankin) of the channel yet represent 62.5 per cent of the female to male composition on the board of directors (Rankin, Barde, D. Moffat, C. Moffat, McKay).

In addition to a board which proposed to ensure a women's presence in number (5) if not percentage of actual ownership (13 per cent), *WTN* also promised a "firm commitment to the majority of senior management positions [being] occupied by women...and...will give preference to female producers and writers" (Atherton, January

14, 1994, D8). Rankin stated that "[i]f what we're showing on the screen is a women's point of view, women's issues...[then it] has to be women who have made the decisions about what gets on the screen...It has to be women who have made the images, who have done the writing, producing and directing" (Mayes, January 15, 1994:B14). *WTN* also promises that the channel "will provide a workplace which supports and develops women's creative, managerial, and executive abilities in the television and broadcasting industry. Corporate support structures and policies designed to enhance a woman's career while juggling home and community responsibilities are not only socially responsible but good business" (Part 3:19).

WTN also proposed to set up its own self-monitoring and mentoring body staffed by a "group of distinguished [Canadian] women" (Part 5:34). The Lifestyle Television Foundation, "unique to the Canadian broadcasting system," would be charged with the responsibility of monitoring program performance to ensure that *WTN* reflects the "diversity of women's perspectives" (Transcripts:2423). Pat McKay, Chair of the Lifestyle Foundation and Board of Directors Liaison, stated at the hearings: "We, clearly, are not part of the day-to-day managing of the channel, but we certainly see that we would be listened to and would be looked to for advice" (Transcripts:2423). The Foundation's primary responsibilities, as described in the application, appear to be managing the mentoring and apprenticeship programs.

In the application, *WTN* states that the goal of these yet-to-be devised programs would be to encourage "women to develop skills in all aspects of the business of television -- writers, producers, technicians and managers through scholarships, grants,

awards, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs" (Transcripts:2353). There are no specifics on these mentoring and apprenticeship programs; however, the application does outline some "'Example' Foundation Projects" (Appendix K:40). These examples, "intended to be illustrative, not complete or all-inclusive," include: Broadcast Professional and Technical Training focusing on training for women and minority groups with specific attention being given to First Nations candidates and the physically challenged" (Appendix K:40). The application states that this sample project would "encourage that such training opportunities be part of agreements with [WTI], service suppliers, particularly program suppliers" (Appendix K:40). Another project example is Broadcast Scholarships. These scholarships could "be awarded to anyone seeking advanced training in studies directly related to the broadcasting arts...The scholarships [could also] be granted to those doing studies that were related to women's issues, and outside the normal guidelines and/or the curriculum of the education faculty or institution" (Appendix K:40). The final project example is the Research Study Project. This potential funding of research would focus on findings that could "be incorporated into [WTN] Programming" or "be practically applied" to the areas of "government or social agencies" (K:40). The application states that "the [actual] details of the Foundation's activities will be presented for review to the CRTC at the time of license renewal" (K:39) in seven years time.

The application outlines three aspects to the Foundation's mandate. The chair of the Foundation would sit on both the Foundation Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors of WTN. WTN proposed two Foundation subcommittees: the Advisory Board

Subcommittee and the Foundation Board Subcommittee. The Advisory Board would be "responsible for community liaison and interpretation of community needs to the Lifestyle Board of Directors. It [would] evaluate the performance of Lifestyle Television and monitor community feedback and report to the Board of Directors. [It would also] establish programme policy and liaise with the community and Lifestyle Board of Directors" (Appendix K:4). The application proposes that the Foundation Board Subcommittee would "develop policy for the granting of Foundation funds, and communicate this information to the community. [Also, it would] develop a high Foundation profile in broadcasting community; be responsible for a budget to be determined by the Board of Directors of Lifestyle Television; and develop a reporting procedure to the Board of Directors of Foundation activities" (K:4-5).

In terms of money, *WTN* promised to commit 3 per cent of its revenues to the administration and operation of the Foundation. According to *WTN*'s revenue projections, this could amount to a projected \$4.7 million over 7 years. If revenue projections were met, this would mean \$3 million would go to apprenticeship and mentoring programs and \$1.7 million would go to Foundation members' honoraria and administrative costs during the first 7 years of the channel's license. It was proposed that the Foundation would have 12 members and, at all times, membership would reflect a minimum of 80 per cent women. Each trustee would serve a term of five years and could be reappointed for a second term. The chair of the Foundation and the two chairs of the subcommittees would receive \$1200 per Foundation meeting (plus expenses). Regular members of the Foundation would receive \$700 per meeting (plus expenses).

There would be a minimum of six and a maximum of ten meetings per year.

The application provides detailed résumés of each of the proposed Foundation members. The proposed members were chosen according to the criteria outlined in the application, which states that:

All those appointed to the [Foundation] Board shall be:

...persons with visibility and credibility in all or specific parts of the community served by [WTN]. They should be perceived by both those within and outside [WTN] as leaders in the community who generate public confidence.

(K:6)

It is outlined in the application that Foundation Board membership is also dependent on professional skills and knowledge. These skills include:

- (i) Persons with knowledge and expertise on the social, emotional, and physical needs of women.
- (ii) Persons with knowledge and experience in broadcasting.
- (iii) Persons with broad business experience including those in the profession such as law, accounting, finance, labour relations, government social agencies, and broadcasting.
- (iv) Persons with knowledge and experience in the public sector, particularly government. Ideally this should include persons with some knowledge of the C.R.T.C. and broadcasting policy issues.

(K:7)

Members of the Foundation include such "influential" Canadian women as:

- *Pat McKay*, founder of Vision TV (chair of Foundation Board)
- *Elizabeth Parr-Johnston*, Mount Saint Vincent University President and Vice Chancellor
- *June Callwood*, broadcaster, community activist and author
- *Isabel Rankin*, retired teacher, mother of Linda Rankin, and former Regina Confederation of University Women volunteer
- *Carol Geddes*, Aboriginal film maker and former Studio D producer
- *Eva Lee Kwok*, President of Amara International Investment Corporation
- *Dale Godsoe*, Mount Saint Vincent University Board of Governor's Chair and National President of the YWCA of/du Canada

- *Jean Pigott*, retired Chair of the National Capital Commission and former Member of Parliament
- *Jocelyn Côté-O'Hara*, President and CEO of Stentor Telecom Policy Incorporated
- *Dr. Abbyann Lynch*, Director, Bioethics Department, Hospital for Sick Children
- *Catherine Murray*, Associate Professor of Communication and Director, Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology, Simon Fraser University
- *Suzanne Chevigny*, Director of Employment Equity at the National Film Board of Canada.

(K:10-38)

Programming Promises

WTN promised that its programming would "resonate" with Canadian women and meet their diverse and unique viewing needs. The application itself, summarizes what *WTN* had identified as women's concerns regarding the existing television system. The application states that the television system did not meet the needs of women. Based on commissioned research studies and market research, *WTN* determined that the existing television industry was not a satisfactory source of information that was relevant to women. According to *WTN*, "relevant" women's information programming should cover "family, health, nutrition, stress and relaxation, community and society" (Part 1:8) along with "mentors and empowerment" (Part 3:18). *WTN* also argued that the existing television schedule does not meet the needs of working women; and that information programming for women is relegated to the day-time schedule and is not available to women who work outside the home. In addition, the existing television system "sensationalizes issues of critical concerns such as child abuse, violence, sex role stereotyping, harassment and family dysfunction" (Part 3:12). *WTN* added that its programming would portray women positively and be non-violent; it would not reflect

the trend in television which sees "a large percentage of existing film and television programming which stereotypes women...and glorifies violence" (Part 3:12). *WTN* promised to challenge these industry practices and meet the "needs" of the women's audience through its programming strategy.

In general terms, *WTN* promised that their programming would challenge sex role stereotyping, would not portray gratuitous violence, would ensure dramatic violence was viewed within a context of social reality, and would focus on issues of importance to women. Sex role stereotyping would be challenged by ensuring that programs "portray competent, intelligent and real women in a variety of roles" (Application, Part 3:19). A focus on women's issues was said to be guaranteed under *WTN*'s commitment to employing women at all levels of the production and decision making process.

WTN's programming practices are divided into three categories: (1) the programming schedule; (2) the programming content; (3) and production characteristics of the programming. The main themes running throughout each of these elements of programming are "access" and women's creative control. Access is defined in terms of access to the programming schedule, access to positive images of women, and access to relevant information. Creative control by women is purported to be secured by *WTN*'s emphasis on women: authoring their own images, creating programming from a women's perspective, and making the decisions about what goes on the air. This vision of women's television being focused on women's authorship and shared experience constitutes a women-centred approach to television production.

WTN promised that the programming schedule had been "thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of women working inside and outside the home and increase the exposure to Canadian programs by offering alternative viewing times throughout the day and week" (Transcripts:2348). *WTN* decided not to follow an eight-hour wheel programming schedule because they did not want to be locked into a rotation schedule. By not following a rotation wheel format, the channel could develop day-time, prime-time and late-night program schedules. Barbara Barde stated that "We made a very conscious decision not to actually have a wheel that just rotated" (Transcripts:2397). It was hoped that *WTN*'s schedule would meet the viewing needs of women with a variety of schedules and demands on their time.

WTN promised to repeat the programs the channel "is investing in and producing...[and] there will be a low repeat pattern on foreign acquisitions" (Transcripts:2397). The programs *WTN* planned to invest in and produce were described as the *Signature Services* in the application and will be described in more detail later in this thesis. *WTN*'s proposed schedule attempted to challenge the conventional industry practice of *only* broadcasting "women's programs" during the day. *WTN*'s research illustrated that 46 per cent of women agreed that "programming dealing with issues and topics that reflect women's needs and concerns are largely relegated by broadcasters to non-prime time periods" (Application: Appendix K). Consequently, *WTN* proposed to feature these types of programs during prime-time (6 pm to midnight).

2

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

Programming Content

WTN argued that their research informed program designers that women "want television to be more of an informational source than it is" (Application, Part 1:7). **WTN's** research showed that:

The magazine format appears the most attractive format to women. A strong combination of information, advice, education and entertainment supported by advertising which speaks to women in their own voice is a new kind of television.

(Part 4:24)

WTN cited other studies to argue that 64 per cent of low-income women (with household incomes less than \$30,000/year) used television as their central source for information and education (Part 4:24). Based on these results, **WTN** proposed to deliver 70 per cent informational programming and 30 per cent entertainment programming. **WTN** promised that its prime time schedule would provide "information that is entertaining and entertainment that carries a message" (Part 4:22). The core of **WTN's** informational programming is described as its *Signature Services*. This grouping of programs is described as exemplifying "the mission and values of **WTN**" and designed to present a women's perspective. **WTN** "designed nine program services which unto themselves create the identity of 'A Woman's Channel'" (Part 4:27). The principal characteristic of these nine programs is that they "have been designed, created, researched, filmed, and edited by women" and would "concentrate on context, connectivity and inter-relationship" (Part 4:27). The proposed programs included: *POV Women*, *The Creators*, *Call Us*, *Girl Talk*, *C 'n C - Connections in Context*, *The Women's Network*, *Tuning the Picture*, *Bird's Eye View*, and *A Different Voice*. The philosophy behind the design of the

Signature Service programs clearly demonstrates a women-centred approach to television production. The following descriptions, taken from Part 4 of *WTN's* application, summarize each of the programs:

POV Women (Point of View Women) - offers a woman's point of view on current events and news from around the world, across the country and in our own communities. *POV* will provide an analytical and contextual approach to news and offer suggestions for individual affirmative action in response to situations and events around us.

The Creators - the world of art and culture, Canadian women's own *Entertainment Tonight*, will be presented through women's eyes, an hour long exploration of the entire cultural scene, celebrating women's achievements in the arts, as creators, investors, managers and policy makers.

Call Us offers a much-needed resource to women who will have access to a panel of experts in the fields of Law, Health, Finance and Family Relationships. Audiences will be encouraged to pose questions for discussion among all panel members, enabling the inter-relationships of these areas to be fully explored, providing a more contextual approach to problem-solving.

Girl Talk addresses the needs of younger women and is targeted to appeal to girls between the ages of 12 and 16. This series provides a voice for young women to share their experiences, problems, dreams and aspirations. *Girl Talk* will maintain a sense of humour while providing a nurturing and supportive environment for girls to explore the important issues of the teen years.

C 'n C - Connections in Context addresses the expressed need of women for context by providing professional discussion and information wrapped-around each program. A host and two-member panel of experts will provide relevant context for program themes such as addiction, family breakdown or trauma, helping audience members who are experiencing similar problems to initiate positive action on their own behalf. The *Hot Topics* segment of *C 'n C* focuses on hard-edged topics in documentary form.

The Women's Network provides a vehicle for women's groups across the country to communicate with one another and their constituents, to share information, resources and understanding among themselves. Presented once a month, *The Women's Network* enables an exchange of ideas and an opportunity for collaboration and inter-connection as well as providing us with valuable feedback from [*WTN*] audiences.

Tuning the Picture - a weekly report on how television and other media measure up on issues such as sex role portrayal, violence, children's broadcasting, etc. A bilingual host will discuss images and perspectives presented in the popular media and outstanding examples of "empowering" programming and articles will be highlighted. Audience interaction will be encouraged.

Bird's Eye View offers a weekly comment and analysis on the political environment in the Nation's Capital, with particular emphasis on items, events and issues of importance to women and their families. The show will be presented in interview format, both in-studio and on location, and depending upon the particular topics addressed, may include a panel of guests where debate can take place.

A Different Voice provides an outlet for the stories of women of colour and Aboriginal women. Hosted by Premika Ratnam, this show will help Canadian[sic] understand themselves better.

(Part 4:27-28)

WTN proposed to spend \$5.7 million (or 43 per cent of anticipated first year revenue) on these independent productions. The channel's application claims that the "*Signature Services* are the first and foremost differentiating feature between [WTN's] program lineup and all other available television services" (Part 4:29). Together, these program services were to meet viewer expectations, reflect the diversity of experience of Canadian women, and address the desire of women for information and advice (Part 4:29). With these programs, WTN planned to "add something of value to the broadcasting system in Canada" (Part 4:30).

WTN's entertainment programming philosophy is informed by the channel's focus on a "women's perspective." The definition of a woman's program became a major focus of the CRTC's line of questioning during the hearing. Commissioner Gail Scott stated:

As I know you are aware, the Commission has had difficulty...trying to be specific [about women's programming], trying to put a fence around it, trying to define it in terms of things like principal protagonist. It has not been a successful experience for us. So your wisdom and your suggestions will be welcomed in terms of helping us to categorize what is not women's programming [emphasis in original].

(Transcripts:2366)

Linda Rankin defined women's programming according to three elements: content, perspective and presentation. By this she meant that the focus would be on issues of concern to women, that programs would be written and produced by women and that the programs would be presented by women with women as the protagonists, the experts, the reporters; (Transcripts:2365-2368). A woman's program, in her view, also has a female central protagonist, if there are two people driving the story, "that it is the male

and female together who drive the story" (Transcripts:2368). The *WTN* application committed itself to ensuring that 100 per cent of the channel's 30 and 60 minute dramatic or situation comedy programs would be driven by a female protagonist (or equally driven by the male and female) and that 60 per cent of over 60 minute programming would be driven by female protagonists. When asked during the hearing to further define what was meant by a "women's sit com," Rankin answered in terms of what a woman's sitcom was not:

We are always going to have sitcoms that appeal to women. We will never have *Married with Children* for example. That simply will not be a standard of comedy that we think is appropriate for a woman's channel where we are trying to create a better self-image, better role models and less sex role stereotyping. We have more than simply the notion of a female protagonist to deal with in all of our programming.

(Transcripts:2407-2408)

She goes on further to say "we are not looking for *Roseanne* and we are not looking for *Murphy Brown*; we are looking for sitcoms and one-hour dramas where women control their lives, where women are doing something fascinating, where women are at least as capable and competent as the men in their lives, and where the relationships are constructive, not destructive" (Transcripts:2413-2414). During the hearings, *WTN* representatives stressed the significance of featuring female protagonists. If the CRTC is "considering putting a box around the definition of what we do in prime time...We believe that the issue of chief protagonist is a very important one, and we would be prepared to have a condition of license that dealt with that" (Transcripts:2418).

Overall, the *WTN* application argues that its programming would have the pro-social value of aiding the CRTC in meeting its equity mandate as outlined in the

Broadcasting Act and providing a space for the positive portrayal of women. *WTN* "brings diversity to existing programming by presenting women's perspectives [and] providing alternative viewing choices not presently available on television" (Transcripts:2354). *WTN* concluded that because:

paragraph 3(1)(d)(i) of the Broadcasting Act [stipulates] programming should be "varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for men, *women* and children of all ages, interests and tastes." [*WTN*] will promote this objective by focusing on programming that is distinctive and under-represented on conventional television services [emphasis in original].

(Part 8:55)

WTN claimed their mission as one which would "amplify the voice of Canadian women on issues of importance in a creative, meaningful and timely manner" (Part 8:55).

During the application process, *WTN* presented itself as a program service that, unlike existing broadcasters, would satisfy women's broadcasting "needs" as *WTN* had defined them. *WTN* proposed a schedule which would be accessible to more women and would accommodate varying work and leisure schedules. It was also a schedule that would not relegate women's programming to day time schedule viewing. In terms of the content of the programming, it proposed to challenge sex role stereotyping in program content by providing positive images of women and role models for girls. It planned to make space for the voices of groups of women who are not usually seen on television (women of colour and Aboriginal women). Most importantly, the application claimed that the programming would be created and produced by women with women's needs in mind. It was promised that the majority of the channel's programming would have information or enlightenment value. What remains to be seen is how much of this plan

was implemented by *WTN* and, if changes were made to the programming content or schedule, what factors influenced those changes.

The Role of Advertisers and Cable Companies

The theme of access is echoed in *WTN*'s approach to advertisers and to cable carriers. In order to ensure that women from a variety of income levels would have access to the channel, *WTN* proposed a way to keep the channel affordable. Without becoming heavily reliant on advertisers, *WTN* proposed that it be carried on basic cable service which has the highest market penetration and the lowest-priced cable package. The channel's \$.35 per subscriber-monthly fee placed it well below TSN and CBC Newsworld (\$1.11 and \$.55 respectively). *WTN* argued, in order to respond to the research that showed that lower-educated and lower-income women place a much higher importance on programming with "information and educational value," that the channel should be carried on the basic subscription tier making it affordable to this segment of the audience. *WTN* also expressed a desire to be carried on the DTH system allowing the channel to reach women "who have no access to Cable, where their access to television is either through the satellite or from off-air broadcasters...women in the prairies, women in agriculture" (Transcripts:2378). However, the implementation of this satellite carriage was not planned until the fourth year of *WTN*'s business plan. In addition, *WTN* was seen as an English-only service, consequently, the channel's business plan accounted for minimal Quebec market penetration.

WTN promised that its advertising, like its programming, would provide women with relevant and new information. *WTN* argued that the advertising carried on the channel "will be an important part of the information presented, as it will speak to women and their concerns more directly" (Part 1:5), and that it would attract new advertisers to the television market. According to Rankin:

...our real target is to bring in those advertisers who support women's magazines so greatly and who have a keen interest in reaching a female audience with their products.

(Transcripts:2387)

Despite planning to have 8 minutes of advertising per hour (this compares to 12 minutes with conventional broadcasters), the bulk of *WTN*'s revenue was judged to come from cable subscriptions with advertising only accounting for 16 per cent of total revenues in the first year rising to 27 per cent in the seventh year. *WTN* argued it "will have a smaller percentage of revenues derived from advertising than most specialty services" (Part 8:52). Because some programming concepts are "hard edged," according to *WTN*, they will not be attractive to advertisers. Furthermore, *WTN*'s stated that its emphasis on informational programming during prime-time will deter advertisers who traditionally prefer entertainment programming. *WTN* believed that advertisers would not consider the channel's prime-time line-up as appealing as conventional broadcasters who feature more entertainment programming.

Unlike *WTN*'s programming strategy, very little in the license application is proposed in terms of an articulated advertising content philosophy. Their application cites possible media buying relationships with Proctor & Gamble, Kraft and General Motors who, according to *WTN*, traditionally advertise to women, but not usually through the

medium of television. *WTN* stated that "advertisers wanting to reach those who pay the bills and make most of the buying decisions have, to date, a better audience in magazines. [*WTN*] wants to change that. By providing television that resonates with women, both women and advertisers would be served" (Part 4:24). *WTN* also stated that because the channel's programming would "speak to women in their own voice," it would be "very attractive to advertisers...[but] without jeopardizing the mission, vision and values of the service" (Part 4:25-25). However, because *WTN* only had a loosely defined advertising policy, it was unclear whether advertising revenue shortcomings would affect the programming content or schedule.

Conclusion

In this chapter my purpose was two-fold. I attempted to examine and establish the conditions and context leading up to the arrival of *WTN* on the Canadian broadcasting scene. Secondly, I attempted to provide a discussion and analysis of *WTN*'s application and licensing process, identifying the common themes, issues and approaches addressed by *WTN* in its application.

The discussion of the CRTC's management of gender issues during the period from 1979 to 1991 was intended to familiarize the reader with some of the debates surrounding the CRTC's management of sex-role stereotyping issues during the 1980s and the implementation of the new Broadcasting Act. For more than ten years prior to the channel's licensing, the CRTC had been grappling with a way to deal with the "woman question" in a manner that could simultaneously accommodate the federal

government, alleviate the pressure from women's groups and the general public, and operate within the regulatory parameters the CRTC had developed. The activities of the CRTC's Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping framed the "woman question" in terms of sex role stereotypes, how to define them, how to measure them, and how to eliminate them. The CRTC's efforts resulted in a lot of monitoring, but very little elimination of the problem. With the passing of the revised Broadcasting Act in 1991, the CRTC was handed an even more complicated mandate in terms of gender equity. Now the CRTC was required to ensure equity in programming *and* employment opportunities. Employment equity was an issue the CRTC had been able to avoid from the outset of the Task Force. While these "social" issues continued to land in the lap of the CRTC, the Commission was continually moving towards a model of industry self-regulation. The broadcasting industry itself was expanding rapidly with the successful introduction of narrowcast channels who target specific audiences with their programming.

WTN entered the scene on the coat-tails of a decade of negotiations over women's broadcasting needs and shortly after the introduction of a gender equity clause into the Broadcasting Act. *WTN* entered riding the wave of increased deregulation and narrowcasting of the Canadian broadcasting industry. Feminist groups had been telling the CRTC for over a decade that the performance of the broadcasting industry was unsatisfactory. In addition, these groups were able to keep the gender issue on the table throughout revisions to the Broadcasting Act and even after the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping had "fulfilled" its mandate. *WTN* argued in its application and hearing process that this channel could meet the television needs of women in a way that the

CRTC or the existing broadcasting system had not. *WTN*'s founders and initial investors and executives presented the channel as a completely unique addition to the Canadian broadcasting system and argued it would "change the broadcasting system overnight." *WTN*'s audience, programming, organizational and ownership structure, cable access, and advertising were seen to be distinct from conventional broadcasters. The CRTC apparently concurred; *WTN* was granted a license and became the only new specialty cable service to be carried on basic cable service.

My examination of *WTN*'s proposals and promises attempted to describe how *WTN*'s constructed its audience, the audience's viewing needs, the means by which those needs were to be met, and the channel's role within the larger broadcasting system and society. Specifically, the women's audience was constructed around an understanding of women's values and needs which, according to *WTN*, had been ignored by the male-dominated television industry. *WTN* proposed to address these needs, not only for the benefit of women, but for the benefit of men and children, through a discourse of social value. Because of their proposed focus on hiring women, on featuring female-produced programs, and on programming content that portrays women in a positive light, *WTN* would not only help the CRTC to meet the objectives of the Broadcasting Act but it would add something of social value to the television system, in general. According to the application, *WTN* "must stand for something of value to society and to the women we want to attract" (Part 4:21). Most importantly, *WTN* presented a vision of women's television which privileged a women-centred approach. *WTN* emphasized the programs and organizational strategies that focused on women's authorship and creative control and

background studies that attempted to "prove" that women, in general, shared common communication and television experiences. The prevailing vision of *WTN*, at this time, was women-centred television.

The "delivery" of *WTN* on its promises and the challenges it faced during its first year on the air will be examined in the following two chapters. I will first consider *WTN*'s delivery of their promises by examining the programming strategies the channel implemented during its first season. I will investigate if, and where, the channel fell short of its own goals. The channel's organizational structure will be investigated in greater detail in an attempt to examine whether the channel's "populating" itself with women guarantees a "women's perspective." In addition, the marketing strategies used to attract and maintain advertisers and cable carriers will be examined in order to better understand some of the external pressures on the operations of the channel.

III

Shifting Position: WTN's First Season

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the events leading up to and including *WTN's* first season of broadcasting. This period includes pre-launch activities (June to December 1994) and the first season of broadcasting (January to August 1995). In order to identify how *WTN* constructed the women's television audience, this chapter will examine *WTN's* pre-launch publicity efforts and its programming strategies during its first season. It will also provide an account of *WTN's* ratings, television reviews, and industry commentaries. The pre-launch period commenced with the June 6, 1994 announcement by the CRTC that *WTN* was one of ten new specialty channels awarded broadcast licences.¹⁰ This period ends on December 31, 1994 -- the day before broadcasting commenced. *WTN's* pre-launch publicity efforts illustrate the channel's first post-license attempt to construct the channel's "brand" image and preferred audience. *WTN's* management and publicity efforts helped to clarify the channel's priorities and strategies. For the purposes of this discussion, *WTN's* first broadcasting season is divided into two time periods: the on-air start-up period (January to March, 1995) and the first re-evaluation period (April to August 1995). The re-evaluation period is demarcated by significant changes to *WTN's* programming and organizational strategies. These changes represent a refinement of the *WTN* image and indicate a significant shift in the channel's programming strategies.

The analysis of *WTN's* first broadcast season will identify and critique the programming strategies used to cultivate the women's audience. The analysis will

attempt to identify if, and where, *WTN* was offering something new to women viewers or whether it was merely reproducing existing methods of attracting the women's audience. In addition, the analysis will also consider the challenges that faced *WTN*'s efforts to program television for women in a commercial television industry.

It is important to recall that, prior to receiving a licence to broadcast, *WTN* focused its attention on satisfying the requirements of the CRTC. As the previous chapter illustrated, *WTN* had presented itself as a unique television service that would better meet the television needs of women and have a pro-social benefit. *WTN* argued that, because it was going to be a commercial television service staffed by women, featuring the work of female producers, and partially owned by women, women's programming interests would be guaranteed. In addition, the *WTN* concept relied heavily on the argument that women were dissatisfied with current television offerings and that the *WTN* cable service would address this dissatisfaction by providing a mix of information and entertainment programming (70 per cent information; 30 per cent entertainment). In addition to being presented as an information channel, *WTN* was also described as a privately-owned, commercial service designed to meet the needs of the women audience -- an audience, *WTN* argued, that had been historically neglected and ill-served. Among other things, the channel proposed to meet the needs of those women most reliant on television for their information needs -- low income women. In addition, *WTN*'s application argued that its very existence in the Canadian broadcasting system would assist the CRTC in meeting the gender equality provisions of the Broadcasting Act.

After successfully persuading the CRTC to grant a seven-year licence on June 6, 1994, *WTN* representatives turned their attention to attracting advertisers and cultivating viewers. On January 1, 1995, six months after the new licences were handed out, *WTN* and the other new specialty cable channels began broadcasting. With the January 1 broadcasting launch immanent, *WTN* was no longer merely a concept to be described to the CRTC, advertisers and potential viewers. *WTN* had become a concept that could be described to the public through its programming.

The Pre-Launch Period (June - December 1994)

Once the licence was awarded on June 6, 1994, the staff and board of directors of *WTN* had less than six months to prepare to go on the air. As Jacqueline Cook, *WTN*'s first and current Vice President of Marketing, noted in an interview:

We created a company in six months. I was employee number three and, at the beginning, we had nothing -- no paper clips, no office, nothing. We had to do work, hire a team and build a company all by January 1, 1995.

(Cook interview, February 19, 1996)

Employees had to be hired; programming bought and produced; broadcasting equipment purchased and set up; the start-up program schedule finalized; cable carrier contracts negotiated and advertising spots sold. It was a hectic 6 months and, according to Cook, *WTN*'s decision-makers "did some things in some ways in order to get on the air." Part of *WTN*'s start-up activities included assembling the channel's management team. By October 1994, the *WTN* executive team was in place.

As promised in the application, *WTN* populated itself with prominent and well-established professional women. *WTN*'s press materials included detailed biographies of the members of the team. Linda Rankin, *WTN*'s first President and CEO, was Bell Canada's first employment equity officer in 1981 and the former Vice President of Business Development at Telesat Canada. She was touted as "one of Canada's most capable communications executives" (press release, November 17, 1994). Barbara Barde, *WTN*'s first Vice President of Programming, was credited with "extensive television and film production experience...[whose] work included documentaries, 'Made for TV' movies and a number of television series" (press release). Barde was also the past president of Toronto Women in Film and Television (TWIFT) and recipient of MediaWatch's Dodi Robb Award recognizing the "achievements of women who have been catalysts for change in the communication field" (press release). Jacqueline Cook, the Vice President of Marketing, brought "to *WTN* more than nine years experience in broadcasting and telecommunications" and had been the Market Analysis Manager at Telesat Canada (press release). Finally, Carol Darling, *WTN*'s first and current Vice President of Engineering and Operations, "worked with Advanced Broadcasting Systems of Canada and is a well known engineer within the Canadian and international communication sector" (press release). Rankin and Cook both had lengthy careers in the telecommunications/satellite industry, Barde left a successful career as a television producer, and Darling distinguished herself in broadcasting technology management. The *WTN* management team was presented as a collection of established, knowledgeable and recognizable professional women at the top of their fields.

Prior to any concerted publicity efforts on *WTN*'s part, news of the CRTC's decision to license six new English-Language, two French-language and two pay-per-view specialty channels drew unsolicited attention to *WTN*. The announcement of the new licensees was front-page news across Canada. Generally, these press reports either provided brief information on the channels or engaged in criticisms of the CRTC's decision-making process.¹¹

Immediately after the CRTC's licensing announcement, *WTN* began its own publicity campaign which was unofficially launched with the publication of a free-lance article by Shari Graydon, national president of MediaWatch and a contributor to *WTN*'s CRTC application. The feature article initially ran in the *Calgary Herald* on June 13 and was picked up by the *Toronto Star* and *Marketing Magazine*. It ran under the headlines: "Balancing Act: Lifestyle Television [*WTN*] aims to correct gender and image distortions" (*Calgary Herald*: June 13, 1994); "New channel should offer a truer image of women" (*Toronto Star*: July 5, 1994); "Television's Gender Trap - One speciality channel isn't enough to redress the balance, but it could make a big difference" (*Marketing Magazine*: August 15, 1994). In the article, Graydon summarized the findings of *WTN*'s market surveys and background papers used in its licence application.¹² Continuing in the vein of *WTN*'s CRTC application, Graydon presented *WTN* as a channel that would improve the broadcasting system:

Most of us are not consciously aware of the extent to which women are under-represented - not to mention stereotypically portrayed - in mainstream television. But they are...[w]hich is why the CRTC's recent decision to grant a specialty TV licence to [*WTN*], a service designed for and produced by women, is something to celebrate...So let's hope that the recent decision to license [*WTN*] will provide the competitive incentive

that the industry needs. Maybe TV designed for and produced by women will inspire improvement across all the channels.

(Graydon, June 13, 1994)

The over-riding theme of the article is that *WTN's* female-populated management team promised greater potential for the programming of more equitable and realistic presentations of women. This female-dominated decision-making model would, according to Graydon, provide an alternative to the "male executives in TVland [who] have traditionally viewed women in the context of their relationships to children and men in their lives, and [whose] programming decisions have reflected that [perspective]" (Graydon). This free-lance piece is important because it attempted to place *WTN*, for the public, within the debate over sex-role stereotyping and employment equity.

Defining the "W" in *WTN*

Lifestyle Television was renamed the *Women's Television Network (WTN)* in October 1995 after focus groups were conducted in Halifax, Toronto and Calgary. According to Barbara Barde, Vice President of Programming at the time, women in the focus groups "said 'Tell us what you are.' *Lifestyle* was a very negative name...*Women's Television Network*...proved we were doing more than just lifestyle programming" (Barde interview, November 17, 1995).

Despite *WTN's* efforts to present a positive public image of itself using press releases, media interviews, and descriptive profiles of the channel, the pre-launch period was also accompanied by public antagonism against the channel, centred around the concept of a women's channel. Rankin and Barde appeared on radio talk shows across

the country (Barde interview) and received considerable criticism from some listeners.

Barde recounts that:

I sat through enough radio programs last year [July to September 1994] to hear the reaction of people from around the country, to hear the reaction of men, to the concept of a women's channel. People would say, "Why don't you have a men's channel?" You flippantly say they all are men's channels. But that's much too philosophical an argument to get into on a radio phone show. Or you say, what do you call *TSN*? That's too complicated. And then you finally say, no one applied [for a men's channel]. Because that ends the conversation. Because you don't want to carry on the discussion because it is a no-win conversation. All you do is get more phone calls from angry men.

(Barde interview)

In response to this type of antagonism, *WTN* spokeswomen began to disassociate themselves from any arguments which might be seen as feminist or separatist, and began to construct the image of the channel around the notion of inclusiveness and in response to an expressed market-demand. *WTN*'s press release of November 17, 1994 quoted Linda Rankin: "Women [in our focus groups] have...been very clear that their network should not exclude any viewers...*WTN* targets women, but in a very positive way" (press release, November 17, 1994). This approach is different from *WTN*'s earlier image based on responding to the specific needs of women. Throughout the application there was no explicit mention of feminism; however, there was some evidence that the channel was willing to work with and accept support from feminist organizations (for example, in its references to *Studio D* and letters of support from women's groups). However, once the launch campaign began, *WTN* representatives were careful to state that, despite being "by, for and about women," *WTN* was not a feminist channel nor did the inclusion of women mean the exclusion of men. Rankin emphasized that the channel's concept

was not informed by "radicals." Rankin stated that "[i]n our travels across the country there was overwhelming support for making something different happen. They were not from wild-eyed radicals. They were just from plain, ordinary women like me" (Weber, June 19, 1994). In an interview in November of 1995, Barde commented that *WTN*'s focus groups included "women of all political stripes, not women who are feminist by any stretch of the imagination, but all kinds of women" (Barde interview). In direct reference to the channel's programming, Jacqueline Cook stated:

We didn't ever say that we were going to be a political, ideologically driven station. What we did say, was that if you wanted to hear and see women and wanted to believe that women are competent in what they do -- whether what they do is finance, political analysis or just being entertaining and funny -- you would see them on *WTN*.

(Cook interview)

WTN's independent producer Eileen Hoeter stated that "[t]here's no male bashing involved [in *The Creators*]...it is a show that highlights women's achievements" (Marko, December 30, 1994). As *WTN* got closer to launch date, the station's publicity material and spokespeople increasingly described the channel in terms of its commercial and entertainment value, taking care to distance itself from explicit feminist values -- or what was perceived to be feminist. In early January Rankin described the "channel [as] neither radically feminist nor powder-puff fluff. It's simply market-driven" (*Calgary Herald*, January 8, 1995).

The pre-launch Media Buyers' Kit portrays the audience that *WTN* hoped to attract, the type of audience to which advertisers would want to have access. During the pre-launch period, *WTN*'s sales representatives used ratings projections and general demographics of the Canadian women's consumer market. *WTN* was presented as a

"highly targeted and cost efficient" means of advertising to women (*WTN Media Buyers Kit*, Fall 1994). Some of the statistics cited in *WTN's* pre-launch Media Buyers' kit include:

- In 1993, women represented 45% of the total work force.
- 64 per cent of all women with children under the age of 16 were employed in 1992 compared to only 49 per cent in 1981.
- The number of self-employed women has grown by nearly 256 per cent from 1971 to 1991.
- In 1993, women accounted for almost half (47.5 per cent) of all white-collar workers. That's an increase of 138 per cent since 1976. (Source: Stats Canada)
- In just 10 years, the number of women who have earned a university degree has increased by 38%. [time period not mentioned]
- The average age of a bride has increased from 22.6 years in 1970 to 26 years in 1990.
- The average age of a woman having her first child has increased from 24.3 years to 26.4 years.
- Women continue to do the greatest share of child-rearing chores. Even when employed, they perform an average of one-to-two more hours of housework per day than do their spouses. (Source: Stats Canada)
- Women account for 63 per cent of all principal grocery shoppers in Canada.

(Media Buyers Kit 1994)

In contrast to the licensing application where *WTN* emphasized women's values and unique communication needs, *WTN* emphasized this audience's consumer power in the Media Buyers' Kit. The upwardly mobile, career mother and wife became the privileged audience -- at least when it came to advertisers. However, this is not surprising given the conventions and interests of the advertising industry. The advertising and television industries have been chasing the lucrative upwardly mobile, career-oriented women's audience since the late 1970s. Advertisers understand these women to have both personal and household disposable incomes. Consequently, the television industry has been adapting its programming strategies to attract this lucrative

audience so that, in turn, the audience can be sold to advertisers.

Relying on the general statistics of the Media Buyers' Kit, *WTN* asserted that "if you want to reach the upwardly mobile woman or her career minded daughter, make an investment in *WTN*" (Media Buyers Kit 1994). According to *WTN*, today's most powerful consumer is:

...your mother, your sister, your daughter, your grandmother, your aunt, your niece, your colleague, your boss, your professor, your doctor, your dentist, your teacher, your legislator, your cop on your beat, your neighbour and your friend. She is the *WTN* viewer.

(Media Buyers Kit 1994)

In its Media Buyers' Kit, *WTN*'s typical viewer was described as being female, upwardly mobile, white-collar/self-employed, a university graduate, a mother, a wife, and a home-maker (at least part-time) and today's most powerful consumer. *WTN* privileged quite a different audience in its application to the CRTC. In its application, *WTN* stated that its market studies showed that low-income and less educated women relied the most on television as a source of information. *WTN* argued that the needs of these women had been ill-served by the broadcasting system and *WTN* would meet the needs of this important group of women; in the media buyers kit, this important group was not mentioned. *WTN* recognized that advertisers see women primarily in terms of their role as consumers, therefore they have little interest in low-income women or men, because these groups have little discretionary purchasing power.

Courting advertisers was a priority for *WTN*. The channel's long-term budget projections required that they earn 30 per cent of their annual revenue from advertising by the year 2002. The first year projection was based on an assumption that three to five

channels would be licensed. Based on this assumption, *WTN*'s application-budget estimated that 16 per cent of its revenue would come from advertising. This number was adjusted to 10 per cent once the channel went on the air.¹³ Emphasizing low-income female viewers to the CRTC illustrated *WTN*'s initial selling of itself as a public-service channel. Emphasizing the upwardly-mobile women's audience to advertisers, however, illustrated the channel's vision of itself as a commercial broadcast medium designed to attract a lucrative consumer group. These two visions are potentially at odds with one another. Given that the CRTC had already displayed its satisfaction with the *WTN* concept by granting it a licence, *WTN* was now attempting to attract advertisers with whom they needed to build an immediate and long-term relationship. The question was, how would these two divergent priorities play themselves out in the channel's programming and marketing strategies?

***WTN*'s Start-up Period (January - March 1995)**

In pre-launch publicity material, *WTN* proclaimed that it was going to be a unique broadcasting service that would attract women without relying on traditional methods.

Barde stated that:

[Our research shows that] television isn't serving the needs of women in the current configuration. Women watch more than daytime TV, [women are] more than cooking shows, gardening shows, fashion shows, talk shows and soap operas...One of the areas most neglected, that *WTN* has attempted to compensate for, is a lack of information programming [for women].

(Barde quoted in Matczuk, January 1995)

Barde implied that *WTN* would provide a distinct television service by providing

programming that was different from current offerings. Building on the programming strategy outlined for the CRTC, *WTN's* pre-launch communications and first three months of broadcasting placed considerable emphasis on the *Signature Services*. According to Rankin, the *Signature Services* were "the essence of what [*WTN*] is all about" (Weber, June 19, 1994). The importance placed on these newly produced services, however, began to decrease by April of 1995. In the following examination, I will look at the first 3 months of *WTN's* programming strategy. I will attempt to identify the genres and themes that typified *WTN's* programming and highlight where they experimented with programming genres and schedules. I will also look at the initial public reaction to *WTN* (ratings and media reviews) along with outlining some of the external pressures placed on the channel.

Of the nine *Signature Services* representing part of the information programming content that were proposed by *WTN* to the CRTC, six made it to air: *POV:Women*, *Girl Talk*, *Call Us*, *Open for Discussion* (formerly *C'n C Connections*), *Jane Taber's Ottawa* (formerly *Bird's Eye View*) and *The Creators*. These programs will be described in more detail later in the chapter. *Signature Service* programs that did not make it onto the schedule included: *The Women's Network*, *A Different Voice*, and *Tuning the Picture*. The programs that did not make it on-air were those that were most noticeably centred around feminist themes. These programs attempted, at least in conceptual design, to address women's political and social organizing, women of colour and aboriginal women's issues, and feminist criticisms of the mainstream media. *The Women's Network* was to provide Canadian women's groups with an opportunity to communicate with one

another about their activities and agendas. *A Different Voice* proposed to present documentaries created by women of colour and Aboriginal women. *Tuning the Picture*, a show produced in conjunction with MediaWatch, was supposed to be a weekly analysis of the media's portrayal of women. When asked why certain programs made it to air in January 1995 while others did not, Jacqueline Cook stated that they "had bitten off more than they could chew" and that the application was "just a concept" (Cook interview).

Despite the loss of three of the nine original *Signature Service* programs, WTN executives maintained that they had overextended themselves during the first three months of programming. Barde stated that:

I think we tried to be too ambitious in the beginning. I think we should have realized that just the process of launching the channel - getting on the air [was a big job]. We should have taken it much more slowly. When we launched, we had more independent production on the air than anyone else did...I would not have done quite so much...I would have started in April rather than January.

(Barde interview)

According to Barde and Cook, the quick start-up period meant that they had neither the required time nor the opportunity to foster relationships with the female production community (Barde and Cook interviews 1995 & 1996). Cook, for example, stated that there was not an experienced pool of female producers on which to rely for quality information programming (Cook interview).

Newspaper articles, however, painted a different picture of the situation, reporting that WTN was not paying competitive prices for independent productions. Eileen Hoeter, producer of the *Signature Service* program *The Creators*, stated in an interview that while

producing the show was a great professional opportunity, the "money is very little" (Hoeter quoted in Marko, December 30, 1994). A writer for the U.S. magazine, *The Independent*, wrote that "since the network is relatively new, the general price for acquisitions starts at about \$3,000 Canadian per hour" (Hildago April, 1995).¹⁴ Hildago also quoted *WTN* programming coordinator, Laura Michalysyn, as admitting that, once "revenues start coming in, our big mandate will be to increase the acquisition budget and pay higher licensing fees. So far we've had great response because we are so innovative," not because *WTN* paid well (Michalysyn quoted in Hildago, April 1995).

Why *WTN* did not have the funds to pay competitive prices for independent productions could be due, in part, to the fact that start-up budget was substantially lower than originally projected. While the actual numbers were not reported until July of 1995, the decrease in spending occurred during the start-up period. By June of 1995, the actual start-up budget had been cut by close to one million dollars and Moffat Communications' own bottom-line benefitted from the decrease in spending. The *Financial Post* reported that Moffat Communications Ltd.'s annual revenues were up from the previous year (Urlocker, July 5, 1995) and that revenues from *WTN* (of which Moffat Communications now owned 68.4 per cent) accounted for half of Moffat's \$12.3 million dollar jump in revenue. Revenue for *WTN* was reported to be \$6 million dollars during the first six months, slightly less than half of its \$13.7 million dollar annual target for the entire year. *WTN*'s revenues were reported to have handsomely contributed to returns on Moffat's shares in the company. The reason for *WTN*'s handsome revenue contribution was attributed to the fact that the start-up costs for the channel were down \$900,000 from the

original projection of \$4.6 million (Urlocker, July 20, 1995). *WTN's* shareholders collected a return on their investment; however, the reduction of *WTN's* launch budget by close to a million dollars resulted in only six of the original nine *Signature Services* making it to air, low independent production fees and an increase in the scheduling of syndicated re-runs of American and British sitcoms and dramas.

It appears that *WTN's* spending on programming was directly related to the level of advertising revenue. Subscriber fee revenue seemed to be used to reward shareholders and advertising revenue surpluses were designated for program development. With little or no advertising revenue during the first six months, there was little to spend on programming.

Characteristics of *WTN's* programming practices during the first 3 months of broadcast offers some insight into the channel's construction of its audience during this period. This account and analysis of *WTN's* programming practices is not meant to be a complete programming content analysis. Its purpose is to give the reader a sense of the themes expressed in *WTN's* information and entertainment programming, identify some of *WTN's* "experiments" with programming genres, and provide insight into the design and priorities of the programming schedule. This analysis intends to situate *WTN's* programming choices in relation to television practices used to cultivate the women's audience by other commercial broadcasters. Finally, it is meant to provide a point of comparison when looking at the programming changes and shifts in strategy employed by *WTN* after April 1995.

Based on the existing literature on television program genres and, in particular, women's television genres, I have grouped WTN's January to March 1995 programs according to the following categories: Health & Beauty, Sports & Leisure, Youth Programs, Domestic Advice Programs, News Analysis & Current Affairs, Talk Shows, Comedies (sitcoms and stand-up/sketch), Films, Prime-time Dramatic Serials, Soap Operas, and Documentaries/Biographies. I will continue to use these categories when discussing the new programs WTN introduced to its line-up during this and the subsequent season. The programs shown during the first three months of 1995 can be characterized as follows:¹⁵

Health & Beauty

- *Well Now!* - a half-hour fitness program featuring aerobics and including interviews with health-care professionals.
- *Everyday Workout* - a half-hour aerobics program.
- *Breakthrough* - a half-hour information program featuring segments on medical, technological and scientific advances.
- *Working Woman* - a half-hour American news and information program on women and work with segments on finance, health, beauty and fashion.
- *Time of Your Life* - a half-hour information/lifestyle program, hosted by former CTV television reporter, Jan Tennant, featuring interviews with women and men over fifty.
- *Writing on the Wall* - intended as a half-hour relaxation program featuring film footage with walls as the back drop, with the text of poetry on the screen and an animator reading the poetry.

Sports & Leisure

- *On Your Mark* - a half-hour sports/interview program featuring female athletes.
- *Natural Angler* - a half-hour fishing program, hosted by Debbie van Kiekebelt (Olympic champion).

Youth Programs

- *Girl Talk* - a half-hour information program, hosted, filmed and featuring teenage girls discussing issues and activities that interest them.

Domestic Advice Programs

- *Car Care* - a half-hour information program, hosted by Mary Bellows, about women and cars featuring interviews and buying and repair tips.
- *Minding My Own Business* - a half-hour information program that provides advice and information on running your own business.
- *InfoLogic* - a half-hour "how to" program providing lessons on how to use computer software.
- *39 Weeks and Counting* - a half-hour information program on pregnancy and parenting.
- *The Bubbie Break* - a half-hour information program concerning grandparenting issues.

News Analysis & Current Affairs

- *POV:Women* - described as WTN's flagship news analysis/current affairs program; this is a one-hour program. Hosted by three women (Sylvia Sweeney, formerly of *The Fifth Estate*; Helen Hutchinson, former host of *Canada A.M.*, and Jeanette Loakman), *POV:Women* provides discussion, interviews, features on current events with female experts and reporters and deals with gender related issues.
- *Landed: Welcome to Canada* - a half-hour information program, hosted by Sylvia Sweeney, profiling the experiences of several immigrant women exploring the impact of immigration on the family.
- *Speaking Our Minds* - a weekly one hour program of taped lectures and speeches by prominent women in Canada and the U.S. including Gloria Steinem, Camille Paglia, Betty Friedan, Catherine McKinnon, Glenda Simms and others.
- *Jane Taber's: Ottawa* - a half-hour information program featuring interviews and reports from Parliament Hill and hosted by former *Ottawa Citizen* columnist Jane Taber.
- *CNN & Co.* - a half-hour information program, produced by CNN (U.S.), featuring all female experts, and looking at news events in the United States.
- *The Creators* - a one-hour program on arts and culture information featuring women-in-the-arts with interviews and profiles.

Talk Shows

- *Call Us* - a one-hour live phone-in show with one host and 1-2 experts each day discussing a range of issues and answering callers' questions.
- *Eavesdropping* - a half-hour conversation program featuring a group of "everyday" women discussing personal and family issues. The set is a living-room.
- *Literati* - a half-hour interview program where authors Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou interview literary figures.

Comedies

1) Sitcoms

- *Birds of a Feather* - half-hour British family sitcom (re-run) about two sisters living together in East London while their husbands are in prison for a bank robbery.
- *Mother & Son* - half-hour Australian family sit-com about an adult son and his elderly mother.
- *Second Thoughts* - half-hour British family sitcom about two newly-weds and the woman's two teenage children from a former marriage.

2) Stand-up/Sketch Comedy

- *French & Saunders* - half-hour British sketch comedy show featuring two British female comedians.
- *Funny Girls*, *About Face*, *Girls on Top* and *Opening Night* - all half-hour programs featuring female comedians in stand-up routines or hosting their own programs.

Films

- *Through Her Eyes* - two-hour Friday night prime-time film slot featuring films by female directors accompanied by interviews or biographies.
- *Girl Movies* - two-hour Saturday prime-time film slot featuring films "made-for" women - romantic comedies, romantic dramas, family dramas.
- *World Film Festival* - two-hour Sunday night prime-time film slot featuring international films.
- *Shameless Shorts* - a selection of short films and videos created and produced by experienced and inexperienced Canadian and international directors.
- *Open for Discussion* - a two-hour prime-time program featuring made-for-TV movies/documentary. A discussion of the major issue raised in the plot is presented at the end of the program. The discussion features a WTN host along with experts to provide advice and context after the program. A 1-800 help line is available.

Soap Operas

- *Lady of the Rose* - a one-hour daytime soap opera from Venezuela (dubbed into English).

Prime-time Dramatic Serials

- *This Night is About Women* - a two-hour prime-time program slot featuring dramas or documentaries on women's lives and experiences.
- *International Showcase* - a one-hour dramatic serial program featuring British/Australian (international) dramatic serials such as *Rides*, a British series about a cab-company run by women, and *Stolen*, a drama centred around the relationship of a couple in an inter-racial marriage.
- *Classic Drama* - a one-hour dramatic serial program featuring programs such as *Fortunes of War* with Emma Thompson and Kenneth Brannagh.

Documentaries & Biographies

- *Hot Topics* - a one-hour prime-time documentary program featuring documentaries on social and political issues related to women.
- *A Change of View* - a half-hour prime-time documentary program featuring the work of novice and established Canadian female producers and directors.
- *Herstory* - a one-hour prime-time biography series on "famous and forgotten women."
- *Songbirds* - a one-hour Saturday prime-time program slot featuring performances and interviews with famous female singers including Joan Armatrading, Billie Holiday, and Jane Siberry.
- *storyweavers* - a half-hour program featuring Aboriginal women using music, dance, poetry, documentary and drama.

The most common characteristic among this collection of program offerings is that most of the information programs exclusively featured women as interviewers, experts and hosts and most of the entertainment programming centred around female producers and/or female actors/comedians. This common program characteristic is in keeping with the channel's approach to providing a women's perspective. The channel attempted to feature women's voices and women's perspectives through the privileging of female(s) as the focus of a biography or at the centre of a plot, female reporters conducting interviews, and female experts providing advice. This emphasis on having images of women in active roles, as actors, reporters and topics for discussion, is directly in-line with WTN's original programming philosophy and mandate.

During the first season, *WTN* broadcasted on two satellite feeds, both from 6:00 am to 2:00 am Eastern Standard Time and Pacific Standard Time.* While most cable channels feature 6, 8 or 12 hour rotation blocks, *WTN* chose to develop distinctive day-time, prime-time and late-night schedules without a specific rotation block. True to the application, *WTN* stated that the schedule would follow this format so that they could repeat the programs in which they had invested money and also allow women to access information programs at a variety of times during the day. Information programming dominated the Monday to Friday day-time schedule. During the first three months of the first season, all but 2 hours of the 6:00 am to 7:00 pm schedule were dedicated to information-type programs. Referred to as the "comic relief" program slot, *WTN* scheduled three 30 minute sitcoms at 9:30 am, 12:30 pm, 3:30 pm. The afternoon schedule was rounded out with a 30 minute soap opera (2:30-3:00 pm). The Saturday morning schedule (6:00 am - 12:00 noon) featured information programming and an afternoon of back-to-back sitcoms (12:00 noon - 5:00 pm). *Call Us*, *WTN*'s call-in talk show, ran Sunday to Thursday from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Most talk shows on the other networks ran on weekdays only. According to *WTN*, this scheduling practice was done to ensure that working women would have access to a call-in show.

During its first broadcast season, *WTN* remained true to the promise of a 70/30 per cent split of information and entertainment programming. However, information programming was relegated to the day-time schedule and the more "mass audience"

* All mentions of broadcast times in this chapter refer to both EST and PWT due to the two satellite feeds.

oriented entertainment programming was featured during the prime-time schedule. *WTN* did promise that the information programming would be available to the working women's segment of the audience in prime-time. However, the information programs that appeared on the evening schedule were placed in the 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm time slot. They were immediately followed by a single current affairs program, *POV:Women*; however, the remainder of the evening line-up consisted of entertainment programming. *WTN*'s application never specified where the information programming would be placed, just that it would fill 70 per cent of its schedule, which it does. Because prime-time television (6:00 pm-11:00 pm) attracts the largest number of viewers, it is the broadcasters most potentially lucrative period of programming.

At first glance, it appears that *WTN* relied on conventional women's programming genres to attract its viewers and, for the most part, it did. Program genres, such as talk shows, made-for-tv movies, dramatic serials, and soap operas, have all been used to cultivate the women's audience. However, there were some innovative uses of some of these genres. In some instances, programmers took a routinized and familiar program format and added something new. Take, for instance, *WTN*'s daily call-in talk show, *Call Us*. Rather than programming a "shock talk" talk show like *Sally*, *Geraldo*, or *Jenny Jones*, *WTN* chose to schedule a call-in show. *WTN* also made an effort to provide programming that commemorated important women's events and celebrations. For example, during the week of March 8, 1995, *WTN* celebrated International Women's Day with three special programs. *POV:Women* was pre-empted by *Women in Power*, a documentary on the high percentage of female politicians in Norway; *You've Come the*

Wrong Way, Maybe, a documentary about the challenges for women who "try to have it all"; and *Threads of Hope*, a documentary on the women of Chile who protested against Pinochet's dictatorship (WTN press release, February 10, 1995). WTN's other talk show, a half hour interview program, featured two well-known African-American authors, Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison, who interviewed authors and poets rather than the more conventional fare which tends to feature Hollywood actors and popular musicians.

Another example of WTN's innovation in programming is in its initial treatment of the Sports and Leisure category. There are few women's sports shows available in traditional broadcasting and those that do exist tend to deal with "feminine" sporting and leisure activities such as figure-skating, gardening, or travel shows. In contrast to this common practice, WTN's Sports and Leisure programming included a fishing show hosted by a woman and an interview program featuring female athletes from all areas of professional and amateur sports. Fishing and sports magazine shows have historically featured male hosts and sports figures and are targeted at a male audience. In addition, even though WTN included the traditional female programming category of Health and Beauty by scheduling exercise programs, this category did not contain any programs exclusively dealing with fashion such as CBC Newsworld's *Fashion File*. WTN's *Working Woman*, however, featured fashion segments for the professional woman. WTN's Domestic Advice programs attempted to take women beyond the realm of their domestic environment and address them not only as mothers and housewives but also as business people, workers and car owners. The channel's arts and entertainment news

program, *The Creators*, steered away from magazine-style entertainment reports on big-ticket movie and record releases and, instead, focused on Canadian women authors, producers, poets, and creators -- both the famous and the not-so-famous.

Despite *WTN*'s insistence that it was not a feminist channel, there are some instances where feminist themes appear as part of the programming content. There are specific instances where *WTN*'s prime-time schedule featured documentaries and information segments which were punctuated with some feminist themes -- not the typical entertainment fare found on prime-time. One of the most notable regular programs featured on *WTN*'s first season was its news and current affairs program, *POV:Women*. All of *WTN*'s pre-launch press material touted it as the "flagship" show. *WTN* described the show as its "one-hour news analysis/current affairs program focusing on national and international stories of interest and concern to Canadian women" (*WTN* Press Release, February 17, 1995). It was supposed to be the centrepiece of the *Signature Services* and represent *WTN*'s most valued ideals. Based on the premise that women's perspectives on current affairs were not being presented by mainstream news analysis programs and that women's information programs needed to include more than lifestyle shows, *POV:Women* was to present the world's news through women's eyes and provide insightful commentary from a woman's perspective. The three hosts, Sylvia Sweeney, Helen Hutchinson, and Jeanette Loakman, represented a cross-section of women of different races and ages. Sweeney (former Olympic athlete and Fifth Estate producer/journalist) and Hutchinson (long time Canadian broadcaster and former co-host of CTV's Canada AM) were also recognizable celebrity faces. The third host, Jeanette

Loakman, was a newcomer to the Canadian broadcasting scene.

POV:Women was scheduled every Monday to Thursday from 7:00-8:00 pm (repeated Tuesday to Friday at 7:30 am and 1:00 pm). During its first season, *POV:Women* served as WTN's prime-time lead-in program intended to attract viewers to their flagship show and to the prime-time line up. The program revolved around in-studio interviews, panel discussions, guest commentators, and mini-documentaries. It was designed to deliver information on "home, politics, business, science/medicine, law and the arts" (WTN Press Release, December 23, 1994). Some of the issues and stories featured from January to March 1995 included: the Norplant contraception controversy; women and smoking; gender wars; sex offenders; gun control; women and censorship; attacks on abortion doctors; female genital mutilation; women's travel books; hormone replacement therapy; women boxers; "zero tolerance" policies in schools; adoption; abuse of the disabled; and mental illness.

POV:Women received mixed reaction from the press. On one hand, the program was praised for presenting the news in a "way [that] women really talk to each other" (Foy, January 10, 1995). Another reporter wrote:

At its best, [WTN] has shows that women *and* men can enjoy...[such as] *POV:Women*...The show took a video camera and microphone to auto garages to ask the bosses why it was necessary to fill their walls with pictures of pin-up chicks. The segment was a delight to watch [emphasis in original].

(Blakey, January 29, 1995)

POV:Women was also described as "the only current affairs show in North America not hosted by at least one perky blonde" (Quill et al., March 1, 1995). The *Globe & Mail's* television critic Liam Lacey wrote that "[i]f you're trying to get a handle on

contemporary women's issues, you'd need watch *WTN's [POV:Women]...[it is] happening television [--] unpredictable, relevant to real life, and urgent, in a way those posturing Point-Counterpoint political shows really aren't*" (Lacey, March 10, 1995). On the other hand, the program was criticized for low production quality (Atherton, December 23, 1995) and some reviewers complained of too many talking heads. Executive producer Sue Stranks, stated that "viewers see women sitting in chairs and talking and they think that what they're talking about isn't important -- just because they see women...That's just one of the misperceptions we're fighting" (Stranks quoted in Zerbisias, March 28, 1995).

Despite its initial placement as *WTN's* flagship show and some very positive reviews, *POV:Women* did not attract a very large audience. Its ratings were very low with as little as 10,000 viewers per episode -- compared to 200,000 for popular *WTN* movie slots (Urlocker, June 24, 1995). *POV* was cancelled one month into the second season and replaced by *Take 3*, a lifestyle and entertainment magazine-format program. Cook explained the rationale behind cancelling the show:

For better ratings. We use ratings. Ratings are not just a yardstick for how attractive we are to advertisers but it [sic] is also our most immediate and measurable yardstick for what viewers think of us and how many of them there are...The numbers for *POV:Women* indicated that it was not attractive to a broad group of women. We simply could not play a show that drew such low numbers.

(Cook interview)

The content and format of *Take 3*, *POV:Women's* replacement, will be detailed in the next chapter concerning *WTN's* second season.

During the start-up period, *WTN's* schedule featured only one youth oriented program, however, it proved to be one of the channel's most successful shows. *Girl Talk* was an original *Signature Service* program and represented *WTN's* emphasis on mentoring and securing television spaces for young women's voices. This half-hour program attempted to do something new with the youth format. Rather than attracting the teenage girl audience with serial high school/college dramas (such as the U.S. networks' *Saved by the Bell*, *Beverly Hills 90210* or CanWest Global's *Madison*) or beauty and fashion magazine shows, *Girl Talk* put the cameras into the hands of teenage girls and featured their stories and opinions. Designed in a television-magazine format, this program addressed everything from body-piercing and body-surfing to AIDS and teenage-pregnancy. The program was hosted by three teenage girls of different racial backgrounds who introduced video segments sent in by "average" teenage girls. Hand-held video recording methods and in-house editing, gave it a "gritty" feel. According to Barbara Barde, *Girl Talk* is "about empowering teenage girls -- getting them behind the cameras" (Barde interview).

For the most part, *Girl Talk* received great reviews and received sufficient ratings to secure its continuation into the second season. While no specific ratings were supplied by *WTN* spokespeople, television critic Tony Atherton, recently noted that *Girl Talk* is one of *WTN's* most popular programs (December 23, 1995). During *WTN's* first season, television critics were quick to praise the show. One columnist wrote:

[*WTN*] seems to be the network which has come out of the box with the most original programming. Teenage girls should love *Girl Talk*. This half-hour is a fast-paced mixture of features on themselves, often starring ordinary teens...

(Burliuk, January 12, 1995)

One reporter for *Maclean's* reluctantly admitted that WTN's "cater[ing] to a feminist perspective [has resulted in] some good results: *Girl Talk*...is at times funny and risqué" (Chidley, February 6, 1995). Antonia Zerbisias, of the *Toronto Star*, wrote that "the gritty *Girl Talk*, looks at such teen issues as anorexia and virginity while most other TV makes girls feel inferior" (Zerbisias, March 1, 1995). In another article she added that "*Girl Talk* doesn't promote big hair or tiny skirts. It's about issues that affect teen girls" (March 28, 1995).

However, not all the critics found the program praiseworthy. One columnist for the ultra-conservative *British Columbia Report* wrote in his review "Gagging on Girl Talk: The Women's Television Network revels in lesbian-feminist fare" that "[p]erhaps the most questionable program...was *Girl Talk*, an after-school show in which teens speak their minds unencumbered by adult hosts" (Brunet, January 30, 1995).

During the first season, *Girl Talk* was shown on Monday nights from 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm and repeated on Saturday and Sunday mornings at 10:00 am and 10:30 am, respectively. By April of 1995, *Girl Talk* was part of the Thursday prime-time schedule which aired the original program at 8:30 pm and repeated it during the day on Friday afternoons at 5:30 pm. The program was continued into the 1995/96 season with very few noticeable changes in format or approach.

WTN's prime-time line-up illustrated that the channel relied heavily on syndicated U.S. and British shows. While many of the British and Australian entertainment programs (movies, dramatic serials and sitcoms) had not been previously aired in Canada, they had all enjoyed successful runs in their home countries and were picked-up

in syndication. U.S. acquisitions, such as made-for-tv movies and situation comedies, had been previously aired, either in their original or re-run form, before reaching *WTN*. It is important to point out that at the CRTC hearings, *WTN* had accepted a condition of license requiring that its foreign prime-time programming not to exceed 25 per cent U.S. programming (6:00 pm to 11:00 pm) (Transcripts:2431). This helps to explain the schedule's heavy reliance on British and Australian acquisitions.

In the first season, situation comedies were granted a secure space on the programming schedule. During the first 3 months of the season, situation comedies hailed from Britain and Australia (*Birds of a Feather*, *Mother and Son*, and *Second Thoughts*). While all of these sitcoms featured women as the central protagonists, this programming practice is not unconventional. Family sitcoms have long been used by television networks to attract the female audience. All three of these *WTN* sitcoms fell into the genre of family-based situation comedies that featured women primarily as mothers, sisters, and daughters and where all of the core cast members were caucasian. Since these programs were all in syndication, they had already established target audiences in their home-countries and were easily transplanted to Canadian women's audiences via *WTN*. They also helped to buttress the prime-time schedule with non-Canadian programs. Sitcoms were scheduled twice during the day-time schedule and in a regular prime-time spot every weekday evening.

WTN's reliance on international syndicated programs was also evident in the channel's dramatic and film presentations. Using genres such as the romantic comedy, the made-for-tv movie, the dramatic serial and the romantic drama, *WTN* used tried-and-

true methods of attracting the largest possible audience to their prime-time schedule. Dramatic serials or made-for-tv movies dominated at least two hours of three nights of prime-time programming (*This Night About Women*: Mondays, 9:00 - 11:00 pm; *Open for Discussion*: Tuesdays, 9:00 - 11:00 pm; *International Drama* and *Classic Drama*: Wednesdays, 9:00 - 11:00 pm).

However, merely looking at the superficial descriptions of these programs does not adequately reveal all of their distinguishing characteristics. A fitting example of WTN's attempt to take the "tried-and-true" and combine it with something new is *Open for Discussion*. While made-for-tv movies have successfully been used as a vehicle to attract the female viewer, some have been praised for dealing with serious social issues and for assuming a female gaze -- even if that gaze is limited by the confines of the commercial television industry (Rapping 1992:82-83). Relying on the traditional made-for-tv movie genre, WTN wrapped a panel discussion around the presentation of the movie. *Open for Discussion* sometimes included both a dramatic program and a complimentary documentary. Some of the topics covered in these films during WTN's first three months of the initial season include: *Cast the First Stone* about the stigma of rape; *The Last Right* and the documentary *On Request* both about euthanasia; *The Diary of Rita Patel* and *For Angela* on the topic of racism; and *A Gift for Kate* and the documentary *American Undercover: Multiple Personalities* which both address mental illness. In all instances, WTN provided a panel of experts, including, for instance, lawyers, health care professionals, crisis counsellors and survivors of abuse, to discuss the issues, give advice and debunk popular social myths and stereotypes.

Another noteworthy example of prime-time programming is *Hot Topics*, which showcased international documentaries dealing with controversial and contentious issues. Some of the documentaries aired during the first three months were: *Something Like a War*, a documentary that examined the history, implementation and failures of India's family planning program from the perspective of Indian women; *Boobs in Toyland*, a British tongue-in cheek look at BARBIE and the world she inhabits; *Prisoners of Wedlock*, a hard-hitting documentary from the U.S. profiling women who have endured abusive relationships; *Tears are Not Enough*, a documentary on twelve women living with breast cancer; *Leona's Sister Gerri*, a documentary on Gerri Santora, the woman who died from an illegal abortion and whose photo (taken by the coroner) became a symbol for a generation of pro-choice activists; and *Warrior Marks*, a documentary about female genital mutilation produced by African American author Alice Walker. *Hot Topics* was scheduled as a part of the prime-time Thursday night line-up (10:00 to 11:00 pm). *WTN* devoted a lot of attention to *Hot Topics* through a series of regular press releases to television critics and entertainment reporters announcing upcoming documentaries.¹⁶

Like *Hot Topics*, *This Night is About Women* also provided a unique space for programming aimed at the women's audience. This program slot featured documentaries and films focusing on women's experiences and relationships. Scheduled on Monday nights from 9:00 - 11:00 pm, each episode was organized around a specific theme. March 1995 featured the following themes and corresponding programs: a) Body Image: Dawn French in *Big Women* and *All In Vain*; b) Friendship: *Best Friends*, *Girl Friends*

and *Special Friends*; c) Family: *Mrs. Murakami - Family Album*, *Japanese Maple* and *Days of Walking*; and d) The Holocaust: *The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank* and *Married with a Star*.

WTN also relied on conventional women's genres in its prime-time line-up. Wednesday night saw the coupling of two dramatic serials in the 9:00 to 11:00 pm slot. International Showcase and Classic Drama were the titles of the program slots; however, the dramatic serials shown were mainly British mini-series or dramas like *Rides* -- about an all-women cab company and *Lillie and Stolen* -- both romantic dramas.

Finally, feature film presentations played a major part in WTN's schedule. There were three nights of movies (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) in the weekly schedule. Each film was organized around a different theme. Friday's slot, *Through Her Eyes*, featured films by female directors. *Girl Movies*, on Saturday, featured a variety of entertaining films often patronizingly referred to as "chick flicks;" i.e. romantic comedies, women-buddies films or films with family and personal relationships at the core of the plot. Sunday nights featured *World Film Festival* -- films from around the world. The April 1995 shift in programming saw the addition of *Leading Ladies* to the movie-night line-up. This category of movies bumped *World Film Festival* from a prime-time to a late-night Sunday time-slot. The significance of the introduction of *Leading Ladies* will be examined in the next section of this chapter. WTN's *Shameless Shorts* was intended to be a vehicle for short films (15 minutes or less). Featured on the late night schedule, *Shameless Shorts*, like *Through Her Eyes*, provided a space for films produced by women.

Reaction to *WTN* (January - July 1995)

A major factor in the performance success of *WTN* during its first three months of broadcasting, was the cable television consumer backlash that occurred in early 1995. The cable subscriber revolt, while not specifically directed at *WTN*, did affect the channel's public image. Consumers were angered over cable companies' negative option marketing plan which automatically gave all subscribers one free month of the new channels, after which subscribers were required to contact the cable companies directly to cancel the service or else be automatically billed. Due to the consumer revolt, cable companies extended the free period for another month, resulting in lost subscriber fees for both cable companies and the new specialty channels. In addition, unlike the first set of specialty channels, the cable subscriber acceptance rate of the new channels did not achieve the previous cable acceptance levels of 70 to 90 per cent. Some reports stated that the acceptance rate was as low as 55 per cent (Urlocker, June 24, 1995). In short, this translated into lower subscription revenues for some of the channels and for the cable companies.¹⁷

WTN was the only one of the new English-Language specialty channels to be granted a licence that allowed them to be carried on basic cable, the most common cable subscription package. Because of the condition of its license (contingent on negotiations with cable companies), *WTN* was able to negotiate access to the highest number of possible cable households. By January 1995, *WTN* had negotiated that it be carried on basic cable in 50 per cent of Canada's cable households and on the first tier in 33 per cent of households, on the second tier in 17 per cent. This access to viewers ostensibly

guaranteed *WTN* access to more cable-homes than any of the other new specialty cable services (the French-Language *RDI* is the only other new cable channel carried on basic). It also guaranteed them the highest level of subscriber fees. The CRTC also granted *WTN* a licence based on a \$.35/month subscription rate of which a portion goes to the cable carrier with a majority going to the channel (the precise breakdown is confidential information). Due to the channel's high penetration rate, *WTN* executives claimed that subscription revenues were not greatly affected by the cable consumer revolt. Yet, ironically, despite having the highest cable penetration rates of all the new specialty channels, *WTN* experienced the lowest audience ratings of all the cable channels (old and new). *WTN*'s subscription revenue might have been secure (or at least more secure than those of the other new specialty channels), however its advertising revenue was not.

The consumer revolt, according to *WTN* executives and the media, affected advertising revenue. Barbara Barde commented that *WTN* and the other new channels "just happened to be caught in [the consumer backlash]. [*WTN*'s] launch could have been done completely differently, marketed totally differently and it would have been a seamless launch and then it just all went amuck" (Barde interview). She added that "the advertisers got really scared when the whole cable revolt happened. 'Oh my god, let's stay away from this'[they said]." By the middle of January the *Calgary Herald* and the *Canadian Press* reported that "advertising sales are grim for [*WTN*]...killed by a consumer revolt" (Bentin, January 16, 1995). By the next day, however, Rankin, who was featured in the article, was claiming that she had been misinterpreted and the "reports of the death of [*WTN*]...are greatly exaggerated" (Enchin, January 17, 1995).

WTN's ratings showed that the channel was not meeting its target audience goals. While *WTN* reported an increase in ratings, the channel consistently rated the lowest of all the specialty channels. Based on an anticipated 70 to 90 per cent viewer acceptance rate (this was the rate of acceptance of the totality of Canada's original cable services in 1987), *WTN*'s application projected an estimated 1.0 per cent share of the 5.5 million cable subscribers (Lacey, January 5, 1995). Based on an estimated 90 per cent acceptance rate, *WTN*'s application predicted that approximately 50,000 viewers would tune into *WTN*. Jacqueline Cook clarified that *WTN*'s initial audience projection was based on the assumption that only three to five new channels would be licensed, not seven. Cook stated that *WTN* had revamped its audience share goals but provided no specifics (Cook interview). However, a newspaper article in the *Ottawa Citizen* reported that the new "specialty channels have attracted about 40 per cent fewer subscribers than expected" (Atherton, December 23, 1995).

A.C. Nielson's ratings of the new specialty channels during the first week of broadcast (January 2-8, 1995) were:

Table 1
Average-Minute Audiences for New Specialty Services
(January 2-8, 1995)
(audiences ages 2+)

Service	Audience Mon-Sun 7am - 1am (overall daily)	Audience Mon-Sun 6pm to 11pm (prime-time)
<i>The Discovery Channel</i>	43,000	76,700
<i>New Country Network</i>	25,700	24,000
<i>Bravo!</i>	24,300	40,700
<i>Showcase Television</i>	22,200	32,600
<i>Life Network</i>	18,100	25,300
<i>WTN</i>	11,200	20,000

(Marketing Magazine, January 30, 1995)

A report in the *Calgary Herald* stated that during the first week of programming *WTN* had attracted only 0.3 per cent of the viewing. The following table illustrates how the *Calgary Herald* broke down the audience share between original and new cable channels during the week of January 2 to 8, 1995. As the table below shows, *WTN*, with an audience share of 0.3 per cent, ranked last among all the specialty cable services:

Table 2
Percentage of Total Audience Share of
Original and New Cable Services
(January 2-8, 1995)

Service	Percentage of Total Audience Share (all programming periods)
Original Cable Services:	
<i>A&E</i>	3.7%
<i>TSN</i>	2.7%
<i>CBC Newsworld</i>	1.0%
New English-language Cable Services:	
<i>The Discovery Channel</i>	1.0%
<i>NCN</i>	0.6%
<i>Bravo!</i>	0.6%
<i>Showcase</i>	0.5%
<i>Life Network</i>	0.4%
<i>WTN</i>	0.3%

(Austen, January 21, 1995)

WTN's January to June average audience showed little change. In June of 1995, the *Financial Post* reported that *WTN* was still the least watched of the new specialty channels with an average audience (all time periods) of approximately 12,000 viewers compared to *Showcase*'s 25,000 and *Discovery*'s 33,000. Urlocker wrote that "On a bad night, Women's Television Network's flagship *POV:Women* current affairs show gets fewer than 10,000 viewers" compared to as much as 200,000 for movies. However, *all* of the new channels were attracting below-target audience numbers. According to the

article, *The Discovery Channel*, which was the top-rated channel in January, had lost approximately 11,000 viewers (average audience 33,000 compared to the initial 44,000) by June. Showcase was "the only station to show steady adult growth since the launch, rising to 25,000 from 19,000." The biggest problem area for all of the channels was day-time audience share. (Urlocker, June 24, 1995)

During the launch of the channels, *WTN* experienced two types of media attention. There were television critics' reviews of specific programs and there were the animated attacks on the merits of a "woman's only" channel. However, amidst the vocal criticism of the concept of a women's channel, *WTN* received several favourable reviews. The *Ottawa Citizen's* Tony Atherton, for example, gave the channel four stars (**** = "This could be habit-forming") (Atherton, January 2, 1995). Atherton added that "[a]lthough it teased more than it tickled the fancy...the Women's Television Network was still the single most promising entry" (Atherton). The headline for the *Globe & Mail* read, "Forget gender, Women's Network worth a look" (Lacey, January 5, 1995). After criticizing the channel for being targeted at women, Lacey added: "[h]aving got all this off my hairy, non-nurturing chest, I'd encourage men or women...to check out some of the new *WTN* shows, which have some things to say about people." A backhanded compliment, but a compliment nonetheless. One columnist wrote that *WTN* "is important for three good reasons: its recognizes the power of women as consumers; it affirms the progress women have made through the diversity and integrity of its broadcast images; and it proves there are enough capable working women out there to run their own television network" (Foy, January 8, 1995).

This positive reaction to the channel's concept, however, was limited; the majority of the press' reaction was unjustly hostile. *WTN* endured a type of media backlash which none of the other channels experienced and *WTN*'s efforts to present itself as a non-radical feminist cable channel seemed to fall on deaf ears. This is not to argue that an explicit feminist channel would deserve such antagonism, quite the contrary. However, *WTN* was the only channel that both the public and the media demanded justify its existence. Unlike the other channels, which were recognized as being organized around a programming concept only, *WTN* was perceived as a highly politicized programming concept. Barde commented that:

It got to a point last winter that I could not bear to look at the *Globe & Mail*...It got to the point where it became vicious about the concept of a women's channel. My thesis has always been that the reason why it was so vicious is because you are not threatening when you have no power and then you (women) all of a sudden have power. And then it was threatening.

(Barde interview)

It is beyond the scope of this research to provide a full discussion of media responses to *WTN*. However, it bears mentioning that media responses represent one of the external pressures placed on *WTN* during its first season. The negative press criticism rested on the argument that *WTN* was perceived to be an exclusive *women's* channel which was designed by, for and about women -- to the exclusion of men (although it is unclear how *WTN* could have denied men access to viewing the channel!).

Very little of this debate centred on whether *WTN* was good television. Instead, it focused on whether it silenced men, ghettoized women, or practised "negative sexism" and "reverse discrimination." One member of the news media expressed his hostility

towards the channel as early as June of 1994. The *Globe & Mail's* television critic John Haslett Cuff wrote in his column:

Last but not least is something called [*WTN*], a service aimed squarely at women and intended to address their concerns about the portrayal of women in TV and other issues...The service appears to represent a further refinement to the concept of a "speciality" channel and no doubt we can expect many lobby/interest groups to approach the CRTC at its next round of hearings saying, "We want our own channel, too."

(Haslett Cuff, June 7, 1994)

While the actual debate did not begin until mid-January, *WTN* was singled-out from all of the other new channels early on. Once on the air, the actual debate in the press began. One reporter referred to it as Canada's first "sex segregated" channel (Brunet, January 30, 1995). The debate about the very concept of a women's channel continued for months. *WTN* was referred to as "the most talked about and least watched" of the new channels (Chidley, February 6, 1995). Some journalists bemoaned the exclusion of men from the *WTN's* marketing plan: "*WTN* says it is meeting a market niche: *WTN* research shows that more than 84 per cent of women do not feel television is meeting their needs. It doesn't say how this compares to men" (Lacey, January 5, 1995). One male reviewer sarcastically wrote that "maybe the programs seemed boring because they're not aimed at a single white male audience; much more likely, though, is that they're simply boring" (Oswald, January 28, 1995). In addition, some criticisms were either sexist or homophobic in tone. An interview with *WTN's* Jane Taber revealed that the channel had been nick-named "The Ladies Network" and dubbed "dykes with mikes" (Blakey, October 14, 1995). Antonia Zerbisias, writing in defence of the channel, commented that some of her co-workers had referred to the channel as the "Tampon

Network" (Zerbisias, March 28, 1995). Other comments like "*WTN* revels in lesbian-feminist fare" (Brunet, January 30, 1995) used references to lesbianism as insults.

The most scathing commentary on *WTN* was printed in *British Columbia Report* (Brunet, January 30, 1995). The columnist wrote that it was "doubtful the average Canadian woman takes a passionate interest in [*WTN*'s programming of] lesbian poetry." One day of viewing (on January 16, 1995) by the columnist apparently proved that the daytime schedule was dominated by admiration for "drag queens," "homosexuals" and "man-boy sex." This along with "ode[s] to menstruation...bodily functions... and the insertion of a diaphragm" convinced Brunet that *WTN* was "banging the feminist drum."

Another side of the debate criticized *WTN* for ghettoizing women's television.

Judy Waytiuk wrote:

But there is a contradiction inherent in a TV network strictly by, for and about women, and it has to be examined, even at the risk of noting the emperor has no clothes, or being branded politically incorrect, or, worse, being accused of disloyalty to one's own sex. It's the same conflict embedded in the concept of the Indian reserve, the segregated school (either by race or by sex), and the idea of separate-but-equal anything. It's ghettoization.

(Waytiuk, January 13, 1995)

While Waytiuk raised valid concerns about the potential for ghettoization of women's culture in commercial television, she also criticized *WTN* for being a channel where men were told "to sit back, shut up, and listen up." Susan Ruttan wrote that "What does [*WTN*'s] name mean? That men can't watch it?" (January 30, 1995).

In an article in defense of the channel, a columnist for the *Toronto Star* wrote that "not a day goes by without some caller, letter writer or even colleague making a snarky remark [about *WTN*]. 'A women's channel, eh? Who needs that' they sneer. 'Hey, it's

the Tampon Network? they jeer. Most, but not all of the unenthused are men" (Zerbisias, March 28, 1995). While *WTN* may have received more newspaper column space than any of the other channels, Bob Blakey of the *Calgary Herald* questioned the merits of the criticism:

Here's where the "all publicity is good publicity" theory comes into question. Dumping on *WTN* is starting to sound like the Barney the Dinosaur jokes. Every time you pick up a newspaper or listen to the radio, somebody's complaining about *WTN*. I've knocked its talking-heads format, but also drawn attention to its better shows...If the *WTN* jokes get out of hand, advertisers might flee. The channel will then go down in flames and it will be another decade or more before anybody tries to target females with a specialty channel.

(Blakey, February 1, 1995)

Along with its launch being overshadowed by a consumer revolt, much of *WTN*'s media attention was extremely hostile in nature. The merits of the channel were being constantly called into question. *WTN*'s Linda Rankin retaliated through the press:

For anyone who asks "Why a women's channel?" we have one key response. In Canada, there's a market for it - that's why. Nobody, for example, applied for a men's channel. So this was clearly a market-driven decision. It's a response to what the market was saying...It's not a political decision to make you feel good about yourself.

(Rankin quoted in Portman, January 26, 1995)

WTN was also criticized on feminist grounds. Feminists took the channel to task for its reluctance to explicitly articulate feminist convictions. Naomi Klein, *Toronto Star* columnist and former editor of *THIS Magazine*, wrote:

If *WTN* is truly dedicated to covering the issues that women are talking about - from pornography to abortion to abuse - it had better be ready to use the words that offend a few advertisers and investors.

(Klein, December 24, 1994)

The public debate over *WTN*'s legitimacy was taken up from all sides of the political spectrum. It was, however, dominated by concerns that the channel represented a threat to masculine identity and privilege. By using sexist and homophobic insults, members of the press presented the channel as a threat to established social practices and social order.

Overall, *WTN* had a rocky start during its first three months of broadcasting. By the end of March, *WTN* had experienced poor ratings and was apparently selling advertising for as little as \$100 per 30 second spot, less than the average 30-second local radio ad.¹⁸ An article in the *Financial Post* reported that the channel's initial audiences were "more than 70% below target...[and that so] many programs had not delivered audiences that the station [was] giving away huge numbers of free ads" during the first of thirteen weeks of the service (Urlocker, July 20, 1995). The reporter did, however, add that *Showcase* and the *Life Network* had experienced similar problems. Despite the fact that all of the new channels experienced some difficulties, *WTN* appeared to have endured the worst.

WTN's First Shift in Programming Strategy (April - August 1995)

On March 1, 1995, *WTN* issued a press release entitled, "*WTN Announces the Return of Some Classy Ladies*" (*Canada NewsWire*, March 1, 1995). The press release outlined *WTN*'s plans to begin airing re-runs of the 1970s' sitcoms *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Rhoda* back-to-back on Friday nights (8:00 pm - 9:00 pm) with repeats on Saturday afternoons (2:00 pm). The 1980s American sitcom *Kate & Allie*, about two divorced women and

their children living together in New York City, had already been added to the March line-up. The arrival of *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Rhoda* to prime-time Friday nights, indicated a re-prioritizing of WTN's programming criteria. Cook stated that viewers had called the network requesting "that we lighten up, strike a balance between information and relaxation" (Cook quoted in McElgunn, March 13, 1995).

Mary Tyler Moore and *Rhoda* bumped back and shortened the *Through Her Eyes* documentary/movie slot featuring films directed by women. WTN also announced the return of the British sketch comedy show *French and Saunders* which had previously been aired in January and received good ratings. The final addition to the new April prime-time line up was *Leading Ladies* to be accompanied by the biography series *Herstory*. *Herstory* had originally been described as a means of highlighting "famous and forgotten women." WTN's packaging of *Herstory* with *Leading Ladies* shifted the initial focus of the biography series. When *Herstory* became a part of the Sunday night prime-time package, acting as a lead-in to the *Leading Ladies* film slot, it became a program that featured the "famous" women more than the "forgotten" ones. The famous women were those Hollywood female actors who were featured in the *Leading Ladies* film to follow. Since its re-scheduling, *Herstory/Leading Ladies* combined the films and biographies of Sid Charisse, Rita Hayworth, Judy Garland, and Kathryn Hepburn, to mention a few.

WTN had been criticized for having too many non-celebrity talking heads. This new line-up promised entertaining re-runs of sitcoms and old movies featuring some of America's most famous Hollywood stars. Television reporters signalled the channel's

shift of emphasis from information to entertainment programming. Tony Atherton, who had written in support of the channel, commented that "the plan [at WTN] is to inject some entertainment. And that means U.S. sitcoms -- which used to be pretty much an anathema to WTN's programmers" (Atherton, March 3, 1995). These changes proved to be indicative of what was to follow. A report in *Marketing Magazine* stated that WTN was "understood to be [developing] new shows to launch this fall [October 1995] on women's health, and 'personal style', which might include cosmetics, beauty, well-being and fashion" (McElgunn, July 1995).

March 1995 also saw the introduction of three new information programs, a Domestic Advice show and two Sports and Leisure programs. The new Domestic Advice program, *The Backyard BBQ*, a cooking show hosted by Cathy Bellows of *Car Care*, became part of the summer daytime schedule. The travel show, *On Top of the World*, along with *The Gardener's Journal*, were also added to the day-time schedule. The addition of these programs is illustrative of WTN's shift to information programming focusing on women's private and domestic spheres of activity rather than on their public sphere activity.

Another arrival to the daytime schedule line-up was *Metro Cafe - Entertainment for Generation X* -- a program directly targeted at young adults. *Metro Cafe* featured entertainment, fashion and popular culture news from Toronto, Vancouver, New York and Hollywood involving interviews with Canadian and international celebrities. Scheduled to follow *Girl Talk* on Saturdays at 7:30 pm, the show was repeated Tuesdays at 5:30 pm, as part of the after-school time-slot, and on Sundays at 1:30 pm. *Metro*

Cafe's arrival signalled *WTN's* heightened interest in the youth and young adult television audiences. However, rather than using "empowering" and unconventional programming like *Girl Talk*, they chose a conventional entertainment and popular culture information show to attract these viewers. A final arrival to the daily program line-up was *Stopwatch*, an historical information program.

Some of the programs which disappeared from the daytime schedule included: *storyweavers*, *Bubbie Break* and *39 Weeks and Counting*. Beyond cancelling a number of day-time programs, *WTN* seemed to be programming a larger variety of day-time half-hour information shows with a lower repeat pattern for each program. By April, the channel had filled its weekly morning schedule (6:00 am to 12:30 pm) with information and exercise programs. The weekday afternoon schedule featured various information programs, with a movie slot on Mondays (2:00 pm - 4:00 pm: *Leading Ladies* -- a re-broadcast of Sunday night's feature film) and repeats of *POV:Women* Tuesday through Fridays (1:00-2:00 pm).

WTN scheduled a series of its own re-runs during the summer of 1995 -- just a few months after their first broadcasts. July through to August schedules saw "The Best of *Hot Topics*," "The Best of *POV:Women*" and "The Best of *Jane Taber's Ottawa*." The summer schedule also saw the introduction of re-runs of "The Best of *Shirley*" -- CTV's cancelled, now syndicated talk-show (*WTN's* newsletter, *Get With the Programs!*, July-August, 1995).

WTN's spring and summer issues of its viewer newsletter, *Get with the Programs!*, emphasized the channel's prime-time entertainment line-up. The front and

back pages provided write-ups on *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Rhoda*, the romance and drama series *Love Hurts* and *Wish Me Luck*; and upcoming movies like Julia Robert's *Mystic Pizza*. Before April 1995, there was no viewer newsletter, but samples of WTN's press releases had highlighted upcoming *POV:Women*, *Hot Topics* and *Herstory* shows.

The spring changes in programming were followed by a summer "realignment of programming responsibilities" (*Canada NewsWire*, July 10, 1995). Barbara Barde left the position of Vice President of Programming, yet remained on the board of directors, to take over the responsibility of producing the new season's *Take 3*, as well as *Jane Taber's Ottawa*, *Girl Talk* and *Speaking Our Minds*. All of these shows are now produced by Barde's independent production company, *Upfront Entertainment*. When asked why she left the position of Vice President Programming, Barde stated that it was a personal decision based on a desire to return to Toronto (Barde interview). Sue Stranks, former executive producer of most of WTN's *Signature Services* (including the soon-to-be cancelled *POV:Women*) returned to the CBC. Susan Milican, WTN's director of Canadian Acquisitions, took over as interim Director of Programming and was named Vice President of Programming in February 1996.

The announcement of Barde's change of position was soon followed by media coverage of WTN's shift in programming style. Headlines read, "WTN's search for an audience," "WTN to alter image," and "Six new channels focus on stayin' alive" (Urlocker, July 20, 1995, *Strategy*, August 7, 1995; Lacey, July 15, 1995). The common theme in these news accounts was that the channel was responding to the market and planned to "lighten" and "soften" its image. The *Globe & Mail* reported that WTN

had "changed its program director, sent its flagship current-affairs show for a face lift and is pushing toward a lighter, brighter, more magazine-like format for the fall" (Lacey, July 15, 1995). According to Lacey, *WTN*'s new plans included aiming for a "more upbeat image to counteract negative perceptions of the service as too earnest" (Lacey). Cook maintained that the new programming "is still very true to what we always said we would deliver and what audiences say they find different and really enjoy" (Cook quoted in Atherton, March 3, 1995). The perceived fickleness of the market, rather than the economic imperatives of the channel, were used as the justification for the channel's change in strategy. Linda Rankin stated that we "either accommodate to a market that is radically different than it was when we got our licences, or we fold" (Rankin quoted in Lacey, July 15, 1995).

Another major *WTN* staff turnover was announced in August 1995. Linda Rankin resigned as president and CEO of *WTN* over "fundamental differences in management philosophy" according to Randy Moffat (quoted in Urlocker, August 17, 1995). Barbara Barde commented that Rankin had left for personal reasons, but added that she thought "Linda had a rough time in terms of her working relationship with the board...I think that she and Randy had not gotten along all that well. And they had very different styles of management. And I think that it just got to a point where she said, 'I don't need this shit.'" (Barde interview). Randy Moffat served as acting president until a replacement was hired in December of 1995. The new president, Elaine Ali, is a twenty year veteran of the CanWest Global System.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to illustrate some of the challenges and pressures influencing *WTN*'s programming and marketing strategies in its first season and how *WTN* responded to those pressures. *WTN*'s first point of departure from its original philosophy occurred during the pre-launch period. In an effort to avoid alienating any viewers or television critics, *WTN* carefully attempted to distance itself from any association with feminist ideologies. At the same time that *WTN* was attempting to establish its "non-feminist" image for the public, it was describing its preferred audience to its advertisers. This was an audience that would have substantial consumer power -- well educated, upwardly-mobile mothers, wives and professionals.

The discussion and analysis of *WTN*'s first season of programming attempted to reconstruct *WTN*'s early programming strategy and clarify the methods by which *WTN* was cultivating the audience. It seems evident that *WTN* attempted some programming experiments; however, in the end, it was ratings that determined the placement and longevity of those innovations on the program schedule. By the end of the first season, we witnessed a decisive shift away from talking about the *Signature Services* as the "essence" of *WTN* and a movement toward a channel that defined its image in terms of its entertainment programming. It appears that *WTN* was not certain what its brand image was; however, it definitely knew what it was not. It was not feminist, it was not aimed at small- or rowcast audiences, and it was not preoccupied with "heavy" issues.

WTN's start-up was racked with problems. Caught in the crossfire of a consumer backlash aimed at the cable companies and in competition with a larger than expected

roster of new specialty channels, *WTN* was vying for a smaller piece of the cable pie than it had originally anticipated. Also, it endured more than its fair share of hostility from the media. Partly, as a result of these setbacks, *WTN* could not seem to draw the audience share required to satisfy its advertisers or its shareholders. Soon the channel moved away from producing independent productions and channelled its dwindling programming budget toward syndicated re-runs of 15 year old sitcoms and old Hollywood movies. One newspaper article expressed a concern raised by a *WTN* viewer. The viewer stated that *WTN*'s "grab for ratings undermines *WTN*'s credibility. *WTN*'s raison d'être in my mind is to appeal to women not being served by conventional fare. When you have to resort to reruns of a 15-year-old comedy, you're not delivering what you promised" (Sheehy quoted in Urlocker, July 20, 1995). Day-time's information programming began to include more conventional shows focusing on women's domestic space and entertainment. Perhaps most importantly, due to poor ratings, *WTN*'s flagship show, *POV: Women* went out of production, into re-runs and was eventually cancelled entirely. As the next chapter will illustrate in more detail, *WTN* was searching for different ways of creating a brand image and new methods of attracting its audience.

IV

Adjusting Its Image: WTN's Second Season

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine *WTN*'s second broadcasting season. This period includes both the pre-launch activities for the second season (June to September 1995) and the first six months of the second season of broadcasting (October 1995 to April 1996). This chapter will primarily focus on the programming strategies employed by *WTN* during the 1995/96 season, the publicity approach employed to promote the new season, and the organizational changes made during this period. The objective of this chapter is to ascertain if, where and how *WTN* adjusted its programming strategies during its second season in its attempt to attract the women's television audience and what these changes tell us about *WTN*'s changing perception of its audience.

As the previous chapter discussed, *WTN*'s first season was fraught with difficulties. The first season's programming schedule, designed according to the initial concept of the channel, did not achieve *WTN*'s ratings and advertising revenue projections. Consequently, four months into the first season, *WTN* decided to explore new strategies for attracting the women's audience. Many of the changes made to programming, such as the addition of familiar situation comedies and dramas, became central to the 1995/96 season. This chapter will also explore *WTN*'s strategies employed during the second season to overcome the difficulties associated with low ratings and the conflict between the channel's public service and commercial broadcasting roles.

WTN's Organizational Changes

Some of the more significant changes to *WTN* involved changes at the management level. By the end of August 1995, both Linda Rankin, the founding president and Barbara Barde, the first Vice President of Programming, had resigned from their executive management positions. Of the original four-member executive team, Jacqueline Cook, Vice President of Marketing, and Carol Darling, Vice President of Operations, remained in their executive positions. Rankin and Barde, however, had been the first two *WTN* executives hired and of the four, only Rankin and Barde had been involved in the CRTC application process. Barde remains on the Board of Directors, but the position of Vice President of Programming was filled by Susan Millican, formerly *WTN*'s Director of Acquisitions.¹⁹ Aside from the departure of Rankin, the composition of the Board of Directors remains the same. Moffat Communications still owns 65 per cent of *WTN*; the rest of the shares are still owned by Michael Ihnat, Ron Rhodes, and the Barde Group. Randy Moffat acted as President until a permanent replacement, Elaine Ali, was hired in January 1996.

During Rankin's tenure at *WTN*, she and Randy Moffat experienced differences of opinion regarding "management philosophies." While Barbara Barde stated in her interview that "Randy is really hands-off," one cannot neglect the fact that Moffat Communications owns 68 per cent of the channel, it controls the majority of votes on the Board of Directors and, despite *WTN*'s earlier presentation of itself as a commercial broadcasting service with a public service philosophy, *WTN* is still a commercial enterprise.

According to the press, Rankin resigned, at least partly, because of the channel's change in direction. According to *WTN*, Rankin left over "irreconcilable management philosophy differences" (press release quoted in *Globe & Mail*, August 17, 1995). Reporters established a connection between *WTN*'s new approach to programming and Rankin's resignation. Entertainment reporter Brad Oswald wrote that while Moffat maintained that "the changes in *WTN*'s executive offices aren't a signal that the network is headed in a drastically different direction [the changes did include] the removal of several talk-oriented shows...and a shift in recent months toward lighter, more entertainment-oriented fare, such as re-runs of old sitcoms like *Rhoda*" (Oswald, August 18, 1995). A *Playback* article reported that it was *WTN*'s "move towards lighter, mass-market programming that is thought to have cost *WTN* its founding president" (Vale, September 11, 1995). Tony Atherton of the *Ottawa Citizen* wrote that the addition of programs "about fashion, lifestyles and home renovations, [were] precisely the kinds of 'stereotypical' women's programming that *WTN*'s first president, Linda Rankin, vowed would not be on the channel" (December 23, 1995). However, four days after Rankin's resignation, Randy Moffat called the changes to the upcoming season "significant but somewhat less than substantial" (Moffat quoted in *Marketing Magazine*, August 21, 1995). The following examination will present and discuss the changes made to *WTN*'s public image and programming strategy, changes that indicate a decisive shift away from the channel's original vision.

As we know, Linda Rankin resigned as President and CEO in August 1995. She had been a newcomer to the broadcasting industry, but brought to the channel extensive

knowledge of CRTC processes, demonstrated professional experience with employment equity implementation, and a vision of the channel as a commercial service which addressed both the public and private interests of women. She played a pivotal role in the CRTC application process and was the primary spokesperson for the channel during the application, pre-launch and first season of broadcasting. Prior to joining *WTN*, Linda Rankin's tenure at Telesat had provided her with invaluable knowledge of CRTC requirements. Jacqueline Cook commented that Rankin "brought her energy and her wisdom and her vision [of the channel]...[She,] Barbara, and the original investors...got us the licence" (Cook interview). However, by the end of the first season, *WTN* had already begun to distance itself from its original vision and was experiencing some "growing pains," as Randy Moffat described them (Moffat quoted in *Marketing Magazine*, August 21, 1995). Part of these "growing pains" included the loss of Rankin and the hiring of a new president who came equipped with a *new* kind of expertise -- the knowledge and experience to understand and meet the demands of the commercial television industry.

Elaine Ali joined *WTN* as President and CEO in January 1996, coming directly out of the Canadian television broadcasting industry. She has "been involved in several start-up companies, several start-up broadcasters, [and] she was the general manager of the first CanWest affiliate, which is CKND in Winnipeg" (Cook interview). Cook described Ali as a veteran-broadcaster with the "organizational" and "business" perspective needed to aid in the channel's "solidification" of itself as a company. Ali's arrival as president and CEO is part of *WTN*'s restructuring, repackaging, repositioning

and "revisioning." Like Moffat himself, Ali has years of private broadcasting experience. Rankin gave the channel credibility before the CRTC when the channel was presented as a commercial service with a public-interest and women-centred philosophy, while Ali joined the channel just as *WTN* was attempting to solidify its move towards being a commercial service with a market-oriented philosophy.

By the beginning of the second season, *WTN* also adjusted the way it approached hiring. During the application and pre-launch periods, *WTN* relied heavily on the work of Carol Gilligan to argue that the hiring of women in key decision-making roles would ensure that programming came from a "women's perspective." *WTN* spokespeople used strong rhetoric and an expressed commitment to employment equity provisions. However, the hiring practices of the channel were never made a condition of licence, nor did *WTN* present a gender-equity formula to guide its hiring practices. *WTN* spokespeople, however, did use strong rhetoric to express their philosophical commitment to providing television industry jobs for women. At the 1994 Women in Media Conference, for example, then Vice President of Programming, Barbara Barde stated that she would be willing to go to the Supreme Court of Canada to ensure that women be hired at the channel (Women In Media Conference, Halifax, 1994). The commitment to this philosophy resulted in a four-woman executive team. The board of directors remains dominated by women (5 out of 8); however women own only 13 per cent of the shares. Apart from the executive team, *WTN* directly employs women in employment areas which have traditionally been dominated by women and are often referred to as "pink ghetto" jobs such as administration, communications and marketing.²⁰

While *WTN* promised to spend \$9 million dollars on *independent* production during its 1995/96 season, the channel does very little of its own production. This results in most technical, production and creative positions being directly filled by independent production companies, not *WTN*. Also, as the last chapter illustrated, the independent producers hired by *WTN*, who are primarily women, have not been paid very well for their work. Despite these discrepancies, *WTN*'s original operating philosophy employed, at the very least, strong language with regard to providing employment opportunities for women in broadcasting.

Mid-way through the second season, *WTN* spokespeople no longer exhibited the same level of rhetorical commitment to employing women. In February 1996, Jacqueline Cook stated that having women in key decision-making roles "is important and it isn't important" (Cook interview). At the time of Cook's interview, *WTN*'s staff of 35 was entirely comprised of women; she described this as an accident rather than a priority:

We are not currently all women by design. It just happens to be that way right now. I have a feeling that people who apply at the channel self-select and they make an assumption. I think that it will be an example that we have been successful when they stop doing that.

(Cook interview)

Cook was also ambiguous when discussing how *WTN* approaches its original strategy of pro-actively hiring women. Cook stated that:

I think that it is important if we are telling women's stories in women's voices that not all of the people who are the gatekeepers for which voices get on the air *are not all not women* - if I can put it that way.

(Cook interview)

In other words, the original commitment to hiring women in executive and management roles has been replaced with one of ambivalence.

It is unclear at this point in time whether this change in rhetoric will result in an explicit change in hiring practices. However, what can be stated is that the strength of conviction articulated by *WTN* spokespeople during the application, pre-launch and start-up period is now missing. It has been replaced by a toned-down, less overtly feminist discourse, and a more elusive rhetoric which, although still coexistent with a large number of women on the screen and behind-the-scenes, does not convey a resolute commitment to the proactive hiring of women. During the 1995/96 season, *WTN* presents itself, both in its programming and its publicity, as a non-controversial television service designed for women but not to the exclusion of men. In connection with this new approach, the channel has shifted from its original and first season goal of explicitly prioritizing the hiring of women to ensure that programming is produced and programmed by women.

While the application outlines the proposed activities and members of the Lifestyle Foundation, the first and second season witnessed little activity from its board of trustees. It is important to remember that the activities of the Foundation are directly dependent on the amount of revenue being earned. When asked about the activities of the Foundation during the 1995/96 season, Jacqueline Cook responded that the members had met a few times since *WTN* received its licence and that, so far, members were "focused on developing, at the moment, internship programs for women and the media" (Cook interview); however, no specifics were yet available.

The Launch of the Second Season

During the second season's pre-launch activities, *WTN* employed a number of strategies in order to redefine the channel's image and to establish its "brand" image in the mind of viewers and advertisers. During the channel's first shift in programming in April 1995, we saw *WTN* publicity and programming move away from any emphasis on the *Signature Services* and move toward an emphasis on entertainment programming. We also witnessed a slight change in the content of *WTN*'s information programming. More of the new programs focused on domestic advice rather than public issues. The second season program line-up, however, indicates a further refinement and solidification of the presentation of *WTN* as 1) an entertainment channel 2) a "non-feminist" channel and 3) a mass-audience appeal channel. According to Cook, the adjustments made to the channel's concept are indicative of the "natural" evolution of a specialty cable service:

All you have to do is think of the early history of *MuchMusic*, *TSN*, *Discovery* [in Canada] or *BEN* [Black Entertainment Network] or *Lifetime* in the U.S. When you are breaking new ground, when you are not the second music service or second channel for women, but you are the first, you are just trying to figure out the genre...it takes a number of years for a new specialty service, one that is truly new, to truly define its brand, putting that brand on the air and for people to recognize it for what it is.
(Cook interview)

The re-evaluation of *WTN*'s programming concept results in a lighter, less controversial, and more entertainment oriented image which continues to privilege images of women on the screen, but moves away from a women-centred approach. The difference between the *WTN* of 1994/95 and the *WTN* of 1995/96 is that programming strategies are now addressing viewers as a target audience (which can be measured with ratings) as opposed to a social group. This is indicative of a shift from a women-centred

approach, emphasizing the social benefit of women's programming, to a women-oriented approach, emphasizing the appeal of the women's audience to advertisers. During the 1994/95 period, *WTN* argued that the programming strategy was a response to the public demands of women made during the 1970s and 1980s (Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping, 1991 Broadcasting Act) and as an expressed need identified in *WTN*'s own market research and background studies. The 1994/95 construction of the needs of the women's television audience was highly politicized and organized around concepts of employment equity, women's distinct communication needs, and women's need to have access to positive image portrayals and reflections of themselves.

During the second season, *WTN* no longer constructs women's television needs in reference to a politicized discourse. The women's television audience is viewed in terms of its size (ratings) and its viewing habits. According to *WTN*, in 1994/95 women demanded information programming that met their special needs; however, by 1995/96 female viewers were demanding more entertainment programming. Both of these conceptions of the audience were likely designed to meet the requirements of the appropriate gate-keeper(s) of the time. During the application process, the gate-keeper was the CRTC. By the end of the first season, the gate-keepers became the various participants in the commercial television industry -- *WTN*'s shareholders, advertisers and television critics. During its first season, *WTN*'s advertisers exerted their control over the channel by buying or not buying advertising space. Many television critics exerted their control over the channel by lambasting it in the press. Similarly, shareholders required a return on their investment. The following investigation of the 1995/96 season

will attempt to ascertain how *WTN* responds to these pressures during the second season.²¹

The second season pre-launch activities began during the summer of 1995. An article in the *Globe & Mail* reported that *WTN* was planning "a more upbeat image to counteract negative perceptions of the service as too earnest" (Lacey, July 15, 1995). An article in *Playback* reported that Susan Millican, the new Director of Programming, "readily admits *WTN* is shifting away from its too serious reputation. 'We're definitely lightening up.'" (Vale, September 11, 1995). Millican added that "steps need to be taken to increase the breadth of viewing audience" (Millican quoted in Vale). According to Cook, it was the viewers who demanded these changes. Cook noted that viewers told *WTN* to "'remember that we're also interested in our families and our health, and fashion and cooking, and we want to see that too'...I wouldn't say we threw out something, but rather the mix, the formula, the balance -- we're working on that." (Cook quoted in Atherton, December 23, 1995).

The *WTN* image conveyed to viewers through the channel's self-promotion demonstrates a further distancing of the channel from its feminist-informed, women's-centred philosophy. By feminist-informed, I refer to the fact that *WTN*'s initial application presented a "surface commitment" (Coward 1980) to feminist ideas and did attempt to incorporate some of them into the vision of the channel. The 1994 bold name-change from *Lifestyle Television* to the *Women's Television Network* fell out of favour. Jacqueline Cook, Vice President of Marketing, stated that it is important that the channel's on-air and publicity name do not explicitly refer to women. The channel is

now referred to by its call-letters -- *WTN* -- only because, according to Cook:

[Women] specifically told us [while] "it's okay to call it the Women's Network [when you are speaking to women], if you [always] call it that then our husbands won't let us watch and they won't watch it because they think you are trying to get at them. But if you call it *WTN*, you are not hiding...What you are is *WTN*." But *WTN* is soft and inclusive and it's subtle and it's not in your face. And that is what we want our channel to be.

(Cook interview)

WTN is clear that it did not want to alienate any viewers or advertisers. *WTN*'s new strategy of appealing to a "broad spectrum" of viewers means appealing to a general audience of women *and* men. By February of 1996, the channel was attracting 5 million viewers per week (*The Next Episode*, March 1996), with an audience share of 60 per cent women and 40 per cent men from all age groups (Cook interview).²² Cook maintained that attracting a broad audience was always a part of the *WTN* strategy. She stated that "demographically, we are not really a narrow service...We said we would not be an exclusionary service and we are not" (Cook interview). However, unlike the initial *WTN* programming strategy which set out to satisfy what *WTN* presented as the unique viewing needs of the Canadian women's audience, *WTN* now seems to consider addressing women explicitly as a potentially "exclusionary" practice.

The *WTN* name-change and the launch of the new season was accompanied by the hiring of a new advertising agency. *Strategy* reported that "[*WTN*], which started with the concept of providing programming for, by and about women, is repositioning itself with the help of newly hired ad agency Enterprise Advertising of Toronto. Part of the new strategy is to place more emphasis on the acronym *WTN*, rather than the full name of the station" (August 7, 1995). Cook explained the premise behind *WTN*'s new

promotional campaign:

I think our advertising [sums it up]. If she's fascinating, funny, intriguing, a ground breaker, if she's just down right interesting - she's on *WTN*. If you want wisdom and warmth of women, tune into the channel. But is this a channel only for women? No. Is this a channel against anyone else? No.

(Cook interview)

Along with altering the name of the channel, Jacqueline Cook explained that *WTN* is also refining its programming philosophy. Referring to the channel's initial focus on programming "by, for and about women," Cook stated that the "one thing that I think that we are broadening out on is that we are television 'by, for *or* about women.'" Cook added that:

I do, however, think that there are a lot of men who have a lot of interesting perspectives on women and what is interesting about women. As well, they have interesting perspectives on the things that women find interesting. Because...[this] is a channel that celebrates, in many ways, what women are about - but, as well, it is not a channel that states that one [gender] is better than the other.

(Cook interview)

The new *WTN* advertising campaign features the tag-line, "If she's famous/provocative/interesting/amazing/etc., she's on *WTN*." The campaign has been carried in television guides and as on-air self-promotion. The on-air and print ads feature headshots of *WTN*'s "famous" women which include Barbara Walters, Lauren Hutton, Sharon Stone, Jodi Foster, Emma Thompson, Vivien Leigh, and Pamela Wallin. *WTN* continues to feature female hosts and interviewers and women as central protagonists in entertainment programming. However, the majority of faces on the *WTN* screen are now famous women -- women who have already established their broadcasting and performance careers. Cook stated that "We had to come to grips with the fact that

viewers, men and women, want to hear women's voices...the problem is they don't want unrecognizable women" (Cook interview). An ad for the Australian dramatic serial *Fire* features a picture of a bare-chested, well-built man and reads, "If he's hot, he's on *WTN*." Through the association with these famous women [and a handsome man], *WTN* presents an image that is a combination of being upbeat, provocative, familiar and, most importantly to *WTN*, entertaining.

The launch of *WTN*'s second season in October 1995 was more than a launch of a new programming schedule, it was the launch of a new name, *WTN*, and a new image. By this time, the vision of the organization had shifted dramatically and *WTN* presented an image that was as noncontroversial as possible. While this new image was designed to attract more viewers to the channel's programming, it was the programming itself which intended to keep this "broad spectrum" of viewers watching. *WTN* was refining its perception of its audiences. *WTN*'s second season launch activities indicate that the channel views the women's audience in terms of its broad demographics and desirability as a target audience. This compares to its earlier vision of the women's audience as a collection of diverse individuals, but who, together, comprise a group with distinct needs as "viewers, consumers, and citizens" (Application, Appendix B:41). The following discussion will examine *WTN*'s second season programming strategy by looking at the changes to its entertainment and information programming content and adjustments to the channel's scheduling practices.

The 1995/96 Programming Strategy

In its second season, *WTN* presents a very different programming mix than that presented to the CRTC and to the public during the pre-launch and start-up period. For the purpose of this discussion, the second season's programming schedule will be referred to in the present tense. Unlike the previous year's pre-launch publicity which focused on the *Signature Services* and its information programming as the core of the *WTN* schedule, the "essence" of the channel can now be found in a variety of places:

Some of [*WTN*] is in *Mary Tyler Moore* - that funny, fun, perky, everybody likes her, nice to other people, kind of woman...Some of it is in *Rhoda* - that individualistic, able to take what life gives her, kind heart, tough exterior, competent, energetic kind of person. Some of it is in shows like *Girl Talk* where we watch that fragile group of people that society is beginning to look at and ask, "should we be worrying about teenage girls?..."Some of it is in shows like *Take 3* - in the mix of our hosts there...Some of it is in parenting shows like *Baby & Me*. Some of it is in *Car Care* -you can demystify something if someone would just take the time to explain. Some of it is in *Natural Angler* because who knew that more women fish than men. Some of it is in *Debbie Travis' Painted House* where many of us worry about our homes and want it [sic] to look nice but don't want to spend \$7000 on the Gucci sofa.

(Cook interview)

WTN's programming strategy for the 1995/96 season incorporates the basic tenets of *WTN*'s new image. The second season privileges more conventional women's television programming than that of the previous season. There is a marked increase in the number of celebrity faces and re-runs of familiar sitcoms, dramas and films. In addition, the channel's new information programming is remarkably similar to information programs broadcasted on other Canadian and U.S. networks. The following discussion will explore, in detail, these changes.

WTN's privileging of programs featuring celebrity faces, re-runs of successful women's programs from the 1970s and 1980s, and already familiar and popular genres of women's information programming, exemplifies what Todd Gitlin refers to as the commercial television industry's practice of "cultural recombination" (Gitlin, 1985). Because television networks are "trying to capitalize on and mobilize demonstrable tastes" they have conventionally relied on "low-risk ways of getting by (Gitlin:77). Gitlin explains that despite modern culture's fascination with the fashionable, "the inseparable economic and cultural pressures for novelty must coexist with a pressure toward constancy" (Gitlin:77). Cultural producers, television producers included, want to "generate novelty without risk" resulting in a "recombinant style, which collects the old in new packages and hopes for a magical synthesis" (Gitlin:78). As will be explained in more detail, the 1995/96 season's less "risky" programming appears as celebrity-hosted programs, domestic and consumer advice shows, entertainment "news" programs, re-runs of familiar sitcoms and dramatic serials, broadcasts of "golden era" Hollywood films, and interviews with famous women and men.

Changes to the 1995/96 programming "mix" include the cancellation of programs which played a central role in the licence application and during the 1995 start-up broadcast period. *POV:Women*, the first season's flagship show, has been cancelled and *Take 3*, a "lifestyle" program, has taken its place. *Eavesdropping*, a morning program featuring a group of "everyday" women talking about personal issues, has also been cancelled. *Eavesdropping* was premised on the assumption that women communicate differently than men and that women viewers need to see their mode of communication

reflected on television. *Through Her Eyes*, the Friday night film slot featuring films by and documentaries on women producers, and Monday night's *This Night is About Women*, both have been cancelled. By March 1996, another film slot, *World Film Festival* on Sunday nights, featuring films from around the world, has been cancelled as well. *Through Her Eyes* has been replaced with a one-hour dramatic serial and two celebrity interview programs. *World Film Festival* has been replaced with the *Sunday Night Sex Show*²³ (a WTN-produced call-in show) and *Jane Taber's Ottawa Songbirds*, the prime-time Saturday night slot featuring female singers has been cancelled and replaced with *Ice Time with Debbie Wilkes*, an hour-long program on figure skating. Half-hour information programs like *Breakthrough*, *Minding My Own Business*, *39 Weeks and Counting*, *InfoLogic*, and *Literati* have been cancelled (another parenting show, *Baby & Me*, has been added to the schedule). *Call Us*, originally the Sunday through Thursday call-in talk show, has been rescheduled to appear Monday through Friday at 4:00 pm with no weekend broadcasts. As of January, *POV:Women's* replacement *Take 3* has been bumped out of its 7:00 to 8:00 pm time slot by a selection of two thirty-minute information programs.

The cancelling and/or re-scheduling of the above-listed programs is significant because, although many of them, according to Jacqueline Cook, received low ratings during the previous season, many of these programs addressed WTN's original vision of women's programming -- a women-centred approach which emphasized women's modes of communication, women's interests, and were produced by women for women. The development of these programs was based, in part, on WTN's own market research which

concluded that women had unique communication needs which were not being met by existing television offerings. Many of the renewed and new programs on WTN's second season can be seen in similar format and content on other channels. During the previous season, *POV:Women* was to present the world's events and issues from a women's perspective. *This Night Is About Women* was to showcase dramas/documentaries concerning women's personal and political lives. *Eavesdropping* was designed to lend credibility to the voices of everyday women. *Call Us* was supposed to be scheduled in such a way so as to meet the varying schedules of women's lives. Prime-time programs like *Songbirds* and *Through Her Eyes* were supposed to feature the voices and perspectives of women producers and performers. *World Film Festival* was to showcase films about women and/or by women from around the world. All of these programs, however, have been cancelled.

Jacqueline Cook stated that the new programming "package" is designed to be more entertaining in order to attract a broader audience, and, as the following statement illustrates, to ease advertisers' concerns:

Part of it is because when you are starting something new, anything new, investors and advertisers attempt to avoid a thing called risk. And risk can be as simply as we don't know [what this is]. So, if you have a schedule of programming that no one knows, then it looks risky. We have a better *mix* of the familiar and the not familiar... Therefore, the thing that is most important is putting television on the air that people will want to watch, we understand that now (emphasis added).

(Cook interview)

During the 1995/96 season women continue to dominate the images portrayed on the television screen; however, the content of these programs has changed along with there being a decreased emphasis on women's authorship. We can see this in WTN's

programming of conventional information television programs for women: domestic-advice and lifestyle shows, re-runs of movies featuring female actors (but not a focus on female-directed films), and a refocussing on the private sphere with a shift of emphasis to programs and content featuring advice on individual coping strategies rather than on broader social remedies. The channel's privileging of conventional women's information programming not only contradicts *WTN*'s original philosophy to provide "alternatives" to conventional television fare, but it also symbolizes *WTN*'s move away from offering "risky" and innovative programs. *WTN* is employing the strategy that the television industry has practised for years -- offering viewers something they already recognize but wrapping it in a different package.

The 1995/96 season, unlike its predecessor, is broadcast as a single satellite feed from coast-to-coast. During the first season, this meant that viewers in British Columbia, despite the time difference, saw the same program at 8:00 pm Pacific Time as Ontario viewers saw at 8:00 pm Eastern Standard Time. In addition, during the 1994/95 season *WTN* was on a 20 hour schedule (6:00 am - 2:00 am) and went to black from 2:00 am to 6:00 am. The arrival of the 1995/96 season saw *WTN* switch to a single satellite feed and to a 24 hour programming schedule. This means that prime-time (7:00 - 11:00 pm) Eastern Standard Time (EST) is actually late afternoon/early evening (4:00 - 8:00 pm) Pacific Western Time (PWT). For the purposes of this chapter, I will be examining *WTN*'s current season's schedule using the Eastern Standard Time program schedule. (See Appendix B for a listing of *WTN*'s programs from the 1995/96 season).

It is important to understand some of the rotation programming strategies *WTN* employs during the second season. As we know, *WTN* is a specialty cable channel, and like most speciality cable channels it "rotates" programming. For most cable channels, this usually means a 6, 8 or 12 hour rotation block throughout the 24 hour broadcast schedule. As has already been discussed in the previous chapters, *WTN* does not employ a simple hour-based rotation block. However, this does not mean that *WTN* does not repeat programming.

During the second season, *WTN* takes three approaches to its rotation strategy. The first strategy involves a rotation of 30 minute information programs. For the most part, these programs comprise *WTN*'s co-productions and Canadian acquisitions. *WTN*'s weekly schedule features one weekly segment of each of its 30 minute information programs (such as *Metro Cafe*, *Girl Talk*, *Maclean's TV*, *Life Style*, *Resourceful Renovator*, *Time of Your Life*, etc.). During the entire week, a single segment of each one of these programs is "rotated" or repeated throughout the schedule. This strategy was used in the previous season as well. For example, one segment of the half-hour information program *Life Style* is re-broadcast 5 times during the week on different days and at staggered times. What has changed, however, is the package of "info" programs that appear on the prime-time schedule.

Another "rotation" strategy involves repeating a program two or more times on the same broadcast day. *WTN* reserves this type of rotation primarily for entertainment programming. For example, the same film or made-for-TV movie on Monday's *Open For Discussion* is scheduled at 8:30 - 11:00 pm and again at 12:30 am - 3:00 am. In

addition, all of *WTN*'s dramatic serials air during both the prime-time (9:00 - 10:00 pm) and late-night (1:00 - 2:00 am) schedules on their respective nights. This strategy is used for programs like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, which is the most common program on the schedule (14 times per week). Every weeknight a different episode of the show is scheduled at 8:00 - 8:30 pm. However, those episodes repeat every week night at 1:00 am (except Mondays) and again at 4:00 am.

In the original application, *WTN* proposed to "repeat the programs which they had invested money in," specifically, independent productions. We have already seen, in the previous chapter, how and why *WTN* moved away from the concept of *Signature Services*. However, the second season also shows a change in the rotation pattern of "info" programming, in general. During the second season, the rotation strategy features both the rotation of Canadian independently produced programs *and* foreign (U.S., British, and Australian) acquisitions. The foreign acquisitions comprise syndicated sitcoms, dramatic serials, celebrity interview shows, films, and made-for-tv movies. This new approach to repeating entertainment programs could possibly be the result of the new single-satellite transmission broadcast. By repeating entertainment programming on the Eastern Standard Time late-night schedule, *WTN* provides viewers in British Columbia (Pacific Western Time) with a prime-time offering of sitcoms, dramatic serials and films as well as creating two distinct prime-time entertainment schedules -- one in central Canada and one on the west coast -- during which *WTN* can sell prime-time advertising spots.

The following two tables provide breakdowns of *WTN's* Monday to Friday daytime (8:00 am - 7:00 pm EST) and Monday to Sunday prime-time (7:00 pm - 11:00 pm EST) schedules and compares the first and second seasons' hours of broadcast of specific genres. Like most conventional broadcasters, the previous season's most watched programs are the ones which continued into the second season. The 1995/96 scheduling formula continues to be 70 per cent information and 30 per cent entertainment; however, the prime-time schedule's configuration, or "mix" as Jacqueline Cook referred to it, is considerably different:

Table 3
Comparison Between Genres - March 1995 vs. April 1996
Monday to Friday Daytime (8:00 am - 7:00 pm)

Genre	First Season Daytime (March 1995)	Second Season Daytime (April 1996)	Difference
Talk Shows	13.0	17.5	+4.5 hours
News Analysis & Current Affairs	14.0	10.0	-4.0 hours
Health & Beauty	10.0	10.0	no change
Sitcoms	10.0	8.0	-2.0 hours
Domestic Advice	5.0	5.5	+0.5 hours
Sports & Leisure	2.0	3.0	+1.0 hours
Youth	1.0	1.0	no change

Table 4
Comparison Between Genres - March 1995 vs. April 1996
Monday to Sunday Prime-time (7:00 - 11:00 pm)

Genre	First Season Prime-time (March 1995)	Second Season Prime-time (April 1996)	Difference
Films/Made-for-TV Movies	9.0 hours	6.5 hours	-2.5 hours
Dramatic Serials	2.0 hours	5.0 hours	+3.0 hours
Sitcoms	2.0 hours	3.0 hours	+1.0 hours
Documentaries/Biographies	7.0 hours	3.5 hours	-3.5 hours
News Analysis & Current Affairs	6.0 hours	2.0 hours	-4.0 hours
Domestic Advice	N/A	1.5 hours	+1.5 hours
Sports & Leisure	.5 hours	1.0 hours	+0.5 hours
Health & Beauty	1.0 hours	4.5 hours	+3.5 hours
Youth	.5 hours	1.0 hours	+0.5 hours

A number of observations can be made about the changes to *WTN*'s programming mix as represented in Tables 3 and 4. As Table 3 illustrates, the most notable change to the daytime schedule is the 4.5 hour increase in talk show programming (13.0 vs. 17.5 hours). While Table 3 does not list the names of specific programs, all but one is a syndicated re-run or a U.S. production. Another significant change to the daytime schedule is the 4 hour decrease in Monday-Friday daytime news analysis and current

affairs programming. The main factor in this decrease is the change in production and broadcasting of *The Creators*. In the previous season, it was a daily one-hour program scheduled at 10:00 am; in the second season it is a half-hour weekly episode re-broadcast 3 times on the weekday schedule. Another notable shift is in the subject matter of domestic advice programs. While the number of broadcast hours has remained the approximately the same (5 vs. 5.5 hours), *Infologic* (a computer training show) and *Minding My Own Business* (a how-to program for women entrepreneurs) have been replaced with two home renovating programs (*Resourceful Renovator* and *Debbie Travis' Painted House*).

As Table 4 illustrates, a significant change to the prime-time schedule is the increase in prime-time dramatic serials by 3 hours per week. During the first season, this time slot featured a variety of genres of programs. For example, Mondays and Thursdays featured documentaries or biographies, Tuesdays featured made-for-tv movies or films; Wednesdays featured 2 one-hour dramatic serials; and Fridays offered a mix of films and biographies by or about women film makers. However, this approach to merging entertainment and information has been replaced with one privileging entertainment programming -- specifically, dramatic serials. WTN now features prime-time dramatic serials Tuesday through Thursday (9:00 to 10:00 pm) and Fridays (9:00 to 11:00 pm). These serials include British and Australian imports (*Tenko*, *Skirts*, *Class Act*, and *Rides*) and the 1980s U.S. serial, *Cagney and Lacey*. Mondays feature the made-for-TV movie/discussion slot, *Open for Discussion*. *Herstory* is still on the schedule; however, as noted in the previous chapter, its format has changed to

accommodate its pairing with *Leading Ladies* on Sunday nights. The only documentary slot during this time period is *Hot Topics* which is seen Thursdays at 10:00 pm.

The other significant change to the prime-time schedule, which will be discussed in greater detail later, is the arrival of two domestic advice programs, thereby the overall time given to this genre from zero to 1.5 hours. Both the *Resourceful Renovator* and *Debbie Travis' Painted House* are produced in conjunction with WTN and both are brand-new to the WTN 1995/96 season. One hails from Halifax and the other, from Montreal. These two programs have notable placement on the schedule with the weekly segment of the *Resourceful Renovator* broadcast seven times per week and the *Painted House*, eight. These two programs are both a part of the daytime and prime-time schedules. In fact, these programs, along with *Working Woman* and *Life Style*, are the only "info" programs scheduled to appear during the core period of prime-time viewing (8:30 - 11:00 time period). They are also featured during the weeknight late schedule. The arrival of these domestic advice programs is significant because it indicates WTN's shift to more conventional information programming for women. In addition, home decorating and home renovation programs are not "alternatives" to existing television fare and can be seen across the television spectrum.

A number of informational programs have been added to the prime-time schedule. However, they consist primarily of "lifestyle" programs or programs focusing on "soft" news rather than current affairs or news analysis. "Soft" news programs often focus on arts and entertainment information, health and beauty, fashion, and personality profiles and interviews. The previous season's 7:00 - 8:00 pm news analysis and current affairs

time-slot, *POV:Women*, was replaced with a variety of *WTN*'s information programs. In fact, as Table 3 illustrates, prime-time current affairs programming has decreased by 4 hours and been replaced by a number of magazine format shows. *WTN* still broadcasts *Metro Cafe*, an entertainment magazine program, which appears three times a week during this time-slot. A new addition, *Planet Fashion*, appears two times. The rest of the weekly 7:00 - 8:00 pm time-slot is filled with *Life Style*, *Time of Your Life*, *Maclean's TV*, *Resourceful Renovator*, *Working Woman*, *Change of View*, and *Girl Talk*. Only *Girl Talk*, *Maclean's TV*, and *Change of View* vary from the standard "lifestyle magazine" format featuring general interest stories, domestic and consumer advice, and/or popular trends information. *Girl Talk* features the voices of teenage girls; *Maclean's TV* is a review of the week's major news stories (as featured in *Maclean's Magazine*), and *Change of View* features half hour documentary or drama series. The 7:00 to 8:00 pm time-slot is considered the lead-in to the featured prime-time schedule and is used to attract an audience that will continue viewing subsequent programs. The rationale behind replacing *POV:Women* with, first *Take 3* and then with the above "info" programs was explained by Jacqueline Cook. She stated that "one of the things we had to decide, because we are a commercial service, is that, at least in prime-time, there would have to be *more* television that was attractive to a large group of viewers and not a group with a narrow focus" (Cook interview).

Another change to the mix which is representative of *WTN*'s new approach is the heightened focus on Health and Beauty programs. In the first season, this genre category was primarily filled with exercise and medical/health information programs. However,

the second season sees a blossoming of programs of a different kind and an overall increase of 3.5 hours of programming in prime-time. The schedule still features the exercise, relaxation and medical information, however, these subjects have been combined with beauty, fashion, diet and sex advice. The new programs include: *Life Style*, a half-hour of fashion, decorating, diet, travel and exercise information; *Planet Fashion*, thirty minutes of high-fashion runway shows and interviews with models and designers; and the *Sunday Night Sex Show*, a one-hour live call-in show hosted by sex educator Sue Johanson. *Life Style* and *Planet Fashion*-type programs can be seen all over the television spectrum and are formats which have been used to cultivate the women's audience for years. Sue Johanson's show is topical, frank and educational and is built around her earlier syndicated radio and community-cable television program, *Sex with Sue*. Both the *Sunday Night Sex Show* and *Life Style* are Canadian (the former is produced by WTN) and *Planet Fashion* is a British acquisition. These additions to the Health and Beauty category, creating a total weekly programming package of 14.5 hours, indicates that WTN seems to be shifting toward more tried-and-true, less innovative ways of attracting the women's audience. It also indicates that WTN's spending on new programming is going into conventional fare rather than revisiting the initial program concepts (*A Woman's Network* and *A Different Voice*) that never made it to air.

During the 1995/96 season, WTN still broadcasts special presentations commemorating important women's events; however, the content of this programming has been altered in accordance with the channel's emphasis on lighter television fare. In its first season, WTN celebrated International Women's Day by broadcasting three

special programs: *Women in Power*; *You've Come the Wrong Way, Maybe*; and *Threads of Hope*. This selection of programs (discussed in Chapter 3) illustrated WTN's commitment to programming controversial programs and dealing with contentious issues. In 1996, WTN again celebrated International Women's Day, this time with one program: *Funny Ladies*. This one hour program was described in the viewer newsletter:

Celebrate International Women's Day with *Funny Ladies*. Narrated by Jean Stapleton, *Funny Ladies*, features four of North America's most popular women cartoonists - Dale Massick, Cathy Guisewife, Nicole Hollander and Lynda Barry. These women are entertaining and driven just like their comic heroines "Cathy," "Sylvia," "Brenda Star" and "Maybonne" - Thursday March 7, 10pm ET.

(*The Next Episode*, March 1996)

There were no other commemorative programs featured that day or week. In comparison to the previous season, WTN not only paired down its celebration of International Women's Day by airing one, rather than three programs, but the channel also chose a program with little or no political or social commentary. Like the channel's *Herstory* (biographies of "famous and forgotten" women), WTN chose to celebrate International Women's Day with celebrity profiles.

Some of the first season's information programs did make it onto the second season's weekly line-up; however, most of them are organized around topics related to individual coping advice pertaining to home life, parenting, work or consumer affairs. WTN continues to provide health information with *Medicine File*. Also, programs like *Life Style* and *Take 3* regularly feature health, beauty, nutrition and exercise information. *Baby & Me* replaces *39 Weeks and Counting* in the category of parenting programs. Similarly, parenting information enters into the content of *Take 3* and *Life Style*. In

addition, the exercise show *Everyday Workout* continues to be a regular on the weekday morning schedule. *Time of Your Life*, the lifestyle program for retired or elderly persons, continued into the second season.

One genre of programming that WTN has developed during the second season is Sports & Leisure. This genre's placement on the daytime and prime-time scheduled increased by 1.5 hours and new programs were added. *The Natural Angler* and *Gardener's Journal* were both renewed and WTN has added *Women in Sports*, *Sportswoman*, and *Ice Time with Debbie Wilkes*. Sports programming is traditionally programmed during the weekend and used to attract the male audience. These programs, however, appear throughout the weekly schedule for a total of 5 hours of overall programming (3.5 on the weekend). *Ice Time* is the only program in this genre to appear exclusively on the weekend. Unlike its other sports and leisure program counterparts, *Ice Time* focuses on a "feminine" sport - figure skating - which has traditionally been used to cultivate the women's audience by most major networks.

WTN continues to broadcast some of its more innovative programs. What has changed, however, is the level of publicity attention given to these programs. *The Creators*, focusing on profiles of female artists and creators, remains on the schedule; however, it has been shortened from 60 to 30 minutes and no longer appears on the prime-time schedule. The documentary program, *Hot Topics*, continues in its Thursday 10:00 pm slot and is rebroadcast on the late-night schedule (2:00 am Thursdays, 5:00 am Saturdays). While *Speaking Our Minds* (the weekly program featuring lectures by renowned female academics, activists, public officials, and authors) made it onto the

second season line-up, it is no longer a part of the weekly daytime schedule. During the first season, it was a weekday feature in the 7:00 am and 1:00 pm time slots. In the second season it is only broadcast on Saturdays and Sundays at 5:00 pm. Yet, some of WTN's more innovative programming remains a part of the late-night schedule. Late night Wednesdays still includes *Shameless Shorts* - the venue for short independent films produced by women.

The current affairs program, *Jane Taber's Ottawa*, continues to be produced and broadcast in its Sunday late-night spot and re-broadcast twice during the daytime schedule. Despite its general focus on the activities on Parliament Hill, it has never been presented as "hard" news. For the most part, the episodes present congenial interviews with elected politicians -- a sort of "lifestyles of the elected and powerful." Bob Blakey of the *Calgary Herald* wrote that:

As viewers of *Jane Taber's Ottawa* already know, the 37-year-old doesn't aim for any kind of spin on her show, feminist or otherwise. She's simply out to tell interesting stories...She wants it to be informative and entertaining, not controversial.

(Blakey, October 14, 1995)

Taber herself stated that she tries "to mix the human, personal stuff with what [politicians'] jobs are. So much of it is [being] away from home, boarding and rooming with other MPs" (Taber quoted in Blakey). *Jane Taber's Ottawa* was originally conceived of as a program that would keep viewers up-to-date on what politicians in Ottawa were doing for women (Application); for the most part, it is a program focusing on the lifestyles of elected officials.

WTN's entertainment programming continues to build upon some of the time-slots already established during the first season or tested during the spring/summer restructuring. Saturday and Sunday nights still feature film presentations. The first season's Saturday's 9:00 pm slot for *Girl Movies* and Sunday's *Leading Ladies* still round out the weekend prime-time viewing. The situation comedy spot at 8:00 pm is still a part of the schedule, except, in the second season, it regularly features *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, rather than rotating different British sitcoms into the time-slot.

Of the total 168 hour weekly schedule, the two most common genres of programming are talk shows and situation comedies. Each of these genres individually accounts for total of 20.5 hours of programming each week. The format of the talk shows varies. The daytime schedule features two re-run talk shows. The first is *Shirley*, the CTV syndicated talk show, and the second is *Barbara Walters: Interviews of a Lifetime*. Until the middle of April 1996, the schedule also featured *Call Us* -- the channel's daily information show broadcast live from WTN's studios in Winnipeg; however, it has been replaced by re-broadcasts of *Take 3*. *Barbara Walters: Interviews of a Lifetime* follows the afternoon broadcast of *Shirley* and replaces the first season's collection of information and sitcom fare. The late-night schedule also features *Barbara Walters* and a nightly original late-night talk show, *Lauren Hutton And...*. The Walters- and Hutton-hosted programs, are indicative of WTN's shift in focus from "everyday women" as illustrated in talk shows like *Eavesdropping* and the news analysis program *POV:Women*, to privileging celebrities, male and female, being interviewed by celebrities.

The addition of *Shirley* indicates WTN's different approach to daytime viewing. The previous April schedule's "Info Power Hour" (*Get With the Programs!*, April-May 1995) was cancelled in the second season. The daily one-hour slot at 8:00 am included two of either *On Top of the World*, *Jane Taber's Ottawa*, *Natural Angler*, *On Your Mark*, *Minding Your Own Business*, *InfoLogic*, *Gardener's Journal*, *A Change of View*, *Breakthrough* or *Landed*. This time slot has been filled with *Shirley* which can now be seen twice daily -- once at 8:00 am and again at 1:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Sitcoms are in rotation throughout the Monday to Sunday daytime and late-night schedule. Situation comedies account for 12.5 hours of daytime programming, 3.0 hours of prime-time, and 5 hours of late-night programming for a total of 20.5 hours. *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* plays a significant role in the 1995/96 schedule. *Mary Tyler Moore*, along with *Rhoda* and *Kate & Allie* were pre-tested during the April 1995 re-jigging of programming. *Mary Tyler Moore* is now a centrepiece of the WTN schedule.

In fact, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* can be seen fourteen times a week appearing every weeknight at 8:00 pm and in rotation throughout the late-night and weekend schedule. Tony Atherton wrote that "if WTN has a flagship show these days, it's *Mary Tyler Moore*" (December 23, 1995). No other individual program is aired as often as *Mary Tyler Moore*. Its spin-off, *Rhoda*, has gone from being broadcast once a week to five times a week in both the prime-time and late-night schedules. It can be seen as part of the Friday night line-up of *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Rhoda* and *Cagney and Lacey*. *Kate & Allie* is one of six sitcoms to be rotated in and out of the day-time's 12:30 pm, 4:00 pm and 4:30 pm "comic relief" time slots. Other sitcoms which have been aired during

these three times this season include *Birds of a Feather*, *2.4 Children*, *Surgical Spirit* or the *Upper Hand*. *The Mary Tyler Moore*, along with *Leading Ladies/Herstory* Sunday night line-up, are drawing the channel's largest audiences during the second season (Cook interview).²⁴

The 1995/96 Advertising Strategy

While *WTN* spokespeople have never expressed a clear advertising philosophy, a number of proposals for advertising on the channel were made during the application process. In order to discuss the second season's advertising content it is important to understand *WTN*'s initial claims. During the application process, *WTN* promised that "advertising would be an important part of the information presented, as it will speak to women and their concerns much more directly [than advertising elsewhere on television]" (Part 1:5). *WTN* predicted this response from advertisers because "women have traditionally received a lot of their information from advertisers [and *WTN*] will be attractive to those advertisers who have had to rely on print media to reach their target audiences" (Part 1:8). Finally, *WTN* promised that they would "ensure that advertisers are attracted to prime-time programming without jeopardizing the mission, vision and values of *WTN*" (Part 4:26). To review the mission of *WTN* was stated to "amplify the voice of Canadian women on issues of importance" (Part 3:18). The vision was to be "by, for and about women and their worlds" (Part 1:1). Finally, the values included: presenting the world through women's eyes without being anti-men; recognizing that women represent a multitude of roles and opinions; reflection this "diversity and experience" will

be reflected in programming; and presenting contentious issues in an intelligent, respectful and meaningful way (Part 4:21-22). Finally, Appendix L of the application outlines the type of advertising *WTN* expected to attract. Specifically, "current non-television advertisers" and existing television advertisers that do not traditionally target the women's audience (eg. large financial institutions and automotive manufacturers). Finally, the letter of support from Optimedia, a media buyer agency, states that "the onus is on our advertisers and us, as their agency, to utilize this forum in a unique and compelling manner to provide greater information than currently exists in broadcast venues" (Application, Appendix L:letter from Optimedia).

It appears as if, at the outset, *WTN* believed that it would be able to attract new and different advertisers to the venue of television. However, it is important to remember that the targeting of the women's audience is a well-established convention in commercial television and advertising industries and it is unlikely that a cable channel with a small audience would be able to convince non-television advertisers to develop new ads. This would be a costly and risky venture and, as Jacqueline Cook pointed out, advertisers do not like "a thing called risk." *WTN* also seemed to conceptualize advertising as part of the overall information package the channel would be offering to viewers. *WTN*'s privileging of less risky programming in order to attract advertisers is indicative of the channel's response to the economic imperatives of the industry. In addition, the move away from risky programming leads *WTN* into the position of focusing attention on established women-oriented programming.

Despite *WTN*'s initial intentions, a sampling of commercials featured during *WTN*'s prime-time schedule reflect the same commercials as those that appear on other networks and cable channels. The ads include promotions for the following products: household products such as Crest, Ivory dish soap, Crisco, Mr. Clean, and an Easy-cook dumpling maker; feature films such as *Sense & Sensibility* and *Up Close and Personal*; magazines such as *Chatelaine*, *Log Home Magazine* and *National Geographic*; home schooling services: ICS Training Courses; personal grooming products for hair styling, the "bodyssage" and the "Ab machine"; beauty products such as Oil of Olay, Clairol hair colour, and Pert shampoo; feminine hygiene products such as Canesten and Light Day Panty Liners; Norwich Union Life Insurance; the Christian Children's Fund; Sprint Canada; and the video "Making Love" -- a video sex guide.

It is important to remember that *WTN*'s first season attracted small viewing audiences and resulted in lower-than-projected advertising revenue. This combination of low ratings and few advertising dollars resulted in a re-jigging of the programming priorities of the channel. At the end of the first season, *WTN* began to alter its mix of programming in order to attract larger audiences to which they could, in turn, sell to advertisers.

Despite *WTN*'s earlier commitment to providing women with much needed, but scarcely supplied, consumer information, once on the air, the channel was dependent on the existing, and well-established, array of consumer products already advertised to women. The consumer product industry has traditionally purchased television air-time targeted at women in order to sell household and feminine products. Commercial

television's dependence on advertisers for revenue has resulted in broadcasters developing programming strategies that attempt to create a positive consumer climate and to attract a women's audience with considerable consumer power. *WTN's* advertising, for the most part, does not provide an alternative to this long tradition of using women's programming to sell household and feminine products.

According to Jacqueline Cook, advertisers have responded well to the 1995/96 season line-up because the new programming "mix" provides them with a good selection of the familiar and the unfamiliar (Cook interview). Despite *WTN's* 60/40 audience split between women and men, Cook stated that 1995/96 advertisers are buying ad space according to the women's audience numbers (Cook interview). Cook stated that "one of the things we are most proud of is that we are not attracting advertisers from just a narrow sector but, in fact, from a very broad range of categories." Unlike the previous season, which was construed as "risky" and unfamiliar, the second season appears to alleviate advertisers' concerns.

Rather than using advertising to fulfil *WTN's* intent of providing women with much needed consumer information, during the second season, the channel relies on programming content. As the following discussion of some of *WTN* specific program content will show, many of *WTN's* programs provide consumer information and advice.

The adjustments made to *WTN's* programming strategy constitute a major shift away from presenting the channel as an information service designed explicitly with the needs of women in mind. Missing is *WTN's* earlier commitment to offering "alternative" viewing choices to women; this approach has been replaced with conventional scheduling

practices to attract the women's audience. *WTN*'s earlier women-centred focus on women's unique communication needs and an emphasis on women authoring their own images has been replaced by a women-oriented focus with an emphasis on the entertainment value of a program. The women-oriented programs in the second season line-up include: 1970s and 1980s situation comedies, dramatic serials, celebrity interviews, and made-for-TV movies. This new emphasis still privileges the programming of women's images, however, the accent on women's values and authorship has faded. As Jacqueline Cook stated, rather than being "by, for and about" women, *WTN* is now "by, for *or* about women." The channel's original emphasis on providing "enlightening" information programming has been replaced with an emphasis on "entertaining" and "light" information programming as illustrated by *WTN*'s acquisition and heavy rotation of *Metro Cafe*, *Life Style* and *Debbie Travis' Painted House*. The *WTN* signature can no longer be found in any specific collection of programs which resonate with the channel's philosophy. In fact, many of those original programs have been cancelled. Instead, the channel's image becomes scattered throughout an array of recycled sitcoms, domestic advice programs, and "soft" news programs. Most significant is *WTN*'s expressed emphasis on satisfying the interests of advertisers by scheduling a "familiar" programming mix, rather than privileging the needs of the audience. This dependence on the satisfaction of advertisers is also exhibited by *WTN*'s reliance on ratings as the primary measure of a program's success or failure.

The following discussion will detail more of the programming strategies implemented by *WTN* during this shift in focus from risky to conventional, unusual to familiar, and alternative to pre-existing viewing choices.

Programming Content: A Renewed Focus on the Private Sphere

Indicative of *WTN*'s shift towards "lighter" programming is its cancelling of *POV:Women* and the launch of its replacement, *Take 3*. Rather than attempting to develop an audience for a new type of television program aimed at women (current affairs and news analysis), *WTN* replaced *POV:Women* with a less "risky" programming endeavour, a "lifestyle" program called *Take 3*.

WTN describes *Take 3* in the following manner: "At home, work and play, *Take 3* is an exciting new lifestyle magazine that delivers hip columnists and *Ask the Experts* - Everyday living never looked so exciting" (*The Next Episode*, October 1995). The *Globe & Mail*'s Liam Lacey described the show as a "lighter, brighter, more magazine-like format" (Lacey, July 15, 1995) than its predecessor. Entertainment reporter Michael Urlocker wrote that the show's executive producer, Barbara Barde, stated that it "will focus less on news and more on useful information, for example, weddings or the 'cellulite controversy'" (Barde quoted in Urlocker, July 20, 1995). The direct-mail postcard mailed to *WTN*'s newsletter subscribers uses key-words like fitness, fashion, food, finance, pop culture, films, health, etiquette, sex, work, media, music and sports to signify the program. However, unlike its predecessor -- whose goal it was to portray the world's events from a woman's perspective -- *Take 3* lacks a thematic focus.

Carleton University journalism professor, journalist and *Take 3* columnist Lynne Van Luven, stated:

The *Take 3* format centres its attention on ensuring that women fill the majority of interviewing, expert and subject roles; however, the format for most of the first year seems to have lacked much of a cohesive theme. Therefore, there were times the show seemed to be doing generic "soft" news without any reference to an overall clearly articulated philosophy or set of goals.

(interview with Van Luven, March 15, 1996)

Take 3 sometimes deals with the same topics as *POV:Women* did, however the "mix" of topics is different. Rather than focusing on news events or analysis, *Take 3* is primarily a magazine information show which features short segments on a variety of topics. Like *POV:Women*, *Take 3* is hosted by three Canadian women. As of January 1996, the co-hosts included Kit Redmond, Jennifer Ratray and Helen Hutchinson. Kit Redmond is new to the *WTN*'s airwaves and Jennifer Ratray was one of *WTN*'s initial on-air companions.²⁵ Helen Hutchinson was one of the original co-hosts of *POV:Women*. The mix of hosts is still representative of women from different age groups; however, unlike *POV:Women*, all of the hosts are now caucasian. During the second 1995/96 season, the program is one hour in length and is broadcast three times daily at 10:00 am, 11:00 pm and 3:00 am (ET). *Take 3*'s format includes an opening interview with a woman "of note" who is most often an entertainer or an entrepreneur. This longer segment is followed by a variety of "columns" that cover topics ranging from health to pop culture and domestic advice to a discussion of social issues. The program often ends with a round-table discussion moderated by one of the hosts and features women experts on a number of different subjects.

Take 3's "talk" columns form the basis of the program's format. These columns are roughly 5 minutes in length and the columnists are primarily female free-lancers who conceptualize, write, produce and appear on-air. According to Lynne Van Luven, the most time-consuming aspect of the assignment is the filming which takes up to 3 hours for a 5 minute segment. In addition, an average of 6 hours is spent researching, writing and editing the script; yet these free-lancers receive as little as \$160 per column. However, Van Luven reiterates that her "major concern is not really the fee, although it is not rich, but the kind of ad-hoc process the production involved, the sense of not knowing what mandate I was to meet in creating the columns, and the resulting confusion" (Van Luven interview). *Take 3* is produced by Upfront Entertainment whose Executive Producer is Barbara Barde. While the content of the program features women as hosts, columnists, etc. and the program provides an opportunity for female free-lancers to gain broadcasting exposure, the contract fees are sub-standard for the industry.

In terms of being innovative, *Take 3*, pales in comparison to its predecessor. With the arrival of *Take 3*, the "risky" and unfamiliar genre of the women's news analysis show, *POV:Women* was gone. It appears that the primary objective of the program, true to the basic principles of *WTN*'s original philosophy, is to feature women on the screen - women hosts, women columnists and women on the street. (A few male columnists are featured, for example, on *PopCultureTalk* and *ManTalk*.)

Like the *WTN* schedule overall, there are instances where *Take 3* is somewhat innovative. For example, one of the short segments features home video commentaries from viewers expressing their personal opinions on such issues as childcare, same-sex

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adoption, and gender inequity in education. However, while the program deals with contemporary women's issues such as parenting, workplace harassment, sexuality, and health care options, it does so in terms of providing information about coping strategies at the individual level rather than providing analysis that generates options for social remedies to the problems. Social, economic and political issues are presented and discussed in relation to the individual and what the individual can do to cope with them. *Take 3* columns and features also provide consumer information and advice. ParentTalk, FashionTalk and SportsTalk not only discuss current trends and issues related to the columns, but often provide viewers with tips on clothing, children's products and exercise equipment purchases. With the arrival of *Take 3*, WTN has partly receded from its original promise to provide current affairs and analysis from a woman's perspective. Jacqueline Cook stated that "it's not that we don't want a Canadian produced information show on prime-time. It's that *POV:Women* could not be it" (Cook interview).

If WTN viewers want to see a current affairs analysis show, they have to watch *Maclean's TV*, hosted by Pamela Wallin, broadcast on Mondays at 6:30 pm and re-broadcast Tuesdays at 7:30 pm. Like *POV:Women*, it features a female host. Unlike *POV*, it features male experts. Wallin interviews *Maclean's Magazine* journalists and the content revolves around the most recent issue of *Maclean's* -- content of which WTN programmers have no control. Finally, *Maclean's TV* is not an alternative to what is on the other channels because it can also be seen on CBC's Newsworld.

Another interesting change is the development of a youth category. Fridays and Saturday nights (6:30-8:00 pm) sees the matching of WTN's Gemini-nominated and

"empowering" *Girl Talk* with *Metro Cafe* and *Planet Fashion*. *Metro Cafe* is an entertainment "news" program and *Planet Fashion* is a fashion industry "news" program.

During the start-up period, *WTN* only had one program specifically targeted at the youth market. The program *Girl Talk* was designed to "empower" teenage girls. By the fall of 1995, the *Girl Talk* format could be found on other networks. Louise Brown, writer for *Starweek Magazine* wrote that the rush to capture the "'aging' young audience is premised on the demographic fact that, as Baby Boomers' children approach adolescence, demand is growing for more complex, sophisticated shows for 'tweens'" (Brown, November 30, 1995). The 1995/96 broadcast season saw the CBC launch *From The Hip*, "a half-hour magazine show for teens...Frantic and loud, it's a brave bid to let teens talk to teens about teens" (Brown). Another addition to the broadcasting spectrum is *BuzZone* out of the CTV Montreal affiliate station. All of these programs feature teens interviewing teens on subjects important to teens. However, *Girl Talk* stands out as the only one of the three which features 3 female hosts.

During the second season, *Girl Talk* was scheduled along with *Metro Cafe* and *Planet Fashion* on Friday and Saturday nights (6:30 - 8:00 pm). *Metro Cafe*, introduced during the April 1995 rejigging of programming, is geared at the 18-24 year-old market and is co-produced by *WTN*. The mix of hosts is representative of racial diversity and features 3 female and one male co-host. The program content includes interviews with members of rock bands; Canadian and American movie and television celebrities; artists; young entrepreneurs; and models. Coined "Entertainment Tonight for Generation Xers," the program indirectly focuses on the entertainment industry's consumer by-products:

albums, clothes, movies, and games. Similar entertainment programs include MuchMusic/CityTV's *FAX*, CityTV's *The New Music*, and *Entertainment Tonight* from the United States. All of these programs feature interviews with entertainment industry celebrities and artists, clips from music videos and movies, and feature profiles on upcoming entertainment products. Like most "magazine" format shows, *Metro Cafe* is produced to look like a "news" program which attempts to keep its viewers up-to-date on the latest trends in music, movies, fashion and art.

Girl Talk is also scheduled with *Planet Fashion* -- a fashion industry news program. *Planet Fashion* is one of WTN's 1995/96 foreign acquisitions imported from Britain. On *Planet Fashion*, viewers get to watch interviews with fashion models and designers, watch excerpts from major international fashion shows, and find out about the latest clothing trends. Viewers can watch similar programs on CBC Newsworld (*Fashion File*), MuchMusic (*Ooh La La*), CNN (*Style*), The Life Network (*Simply Style*) and CityTV (*FT - Fashion Television*). On its own, *Planet Fashion* is a significant addition to the WTN line-up because it is the first fashion-only program to be featured on WTN. Yet, its scheduling seems to contradict WTN's original mandate of providing "alternatives" to existing television fare. As part of WTN's own "information" programming, it does not fulfil the mandate of being from a woman's perspective (the narrator is male), nor does it reflect the channel's stated concerns about "the female images portrayed on television" (Part 4:23). Its coupling with *Girl Talk*, which features casually dressed young women authoring their own images and focusing on a variety of aspects of teenage life (the good and the bad) appears to contradict *Girl Talk*'s attempts

at "empowering" teenage girls.

Another indication of WTN's movement away from informational programming is its treatment of *Speaking Our Minds* and *Hot Topics*. The content of these programs continues in the same vein as in the first season. During the 1995/96 season, *Speaking Our Minds* featured, to name a few, Jamaican-born author Olive Senior; a panel discussion from Massey College's Forum on the Future of Feminism; former NAC president, Judy Rebick; feminist author Margaret Atwood; and Ann Larken, author of High School Girls Speak Out on sexual harassment. *Hot Topics* documentaries included *Them That's Not* - a single mother's view of the welfare system; *Poland: Cause for Alarm* - abortion laws in Poland; *Russian Mail Order Brides* - stories of women and men in an American-Russian match-making service; and *Not Without My Veil: Amongst the Women of the Oman* - on the role of the veil in Arabic culture. However, unlike the start-up period, both of these programs have been marginalized by WTN's publicity efforts. By December 1995, television listings (which are provided by the channel) did not list the featured speakers on *Speaking Our Minds*. *Hot Topics* continues to be aired on Thursday nights at 10:00 pm, but it is only re-broadcast two other times -- both in late-night. In addition, neither *Speaking our Minds* nor *Hot Topics* are promoted to viewers in WTN's viewer newsletter or with the use of on-air self-promotion spots.

WTN's scheduling of domestic-advice programs is indicative of the channel's new-found reliance on conventional genres of women's programming and its re-focusing on "lighter" information programming. WTN's second season included four domestic advice programs: last season's *Gardener's Journal* and *Car Care* along with newcomers *Debbie*

Travis' Painted House and the *Resourceful Renovator*. All four of these programs appeared in rotation on the daytime schedule; however, the *Resourceful Renovator* and *Debbie Travis' Painted House* appear in prime-time and were tied with *Girl Talk* and *Metro Cafe* for the highest rotation of 30-minute "information" programs on the weekly schedule. Viewers can watch a single episode of the *Painted House* in eight different time slots each week, while the *Resourceful Renovator* is shown seven times a week.

The repeated broadcast of these two programs is indicative of WTN's movement away from its mandate to provide programming for women that is not being shown on other networks. During the 1995/96 season, the cable television subscriber who has access to at least the first tier of optional cable packages (70 per cent of cable subscribers) can view one of at least thirty home improvement programs (Bostelaar, February 24, 1996). Of WTN's specialty cable peers, the *Resourceful Renovator* and the *Painted House* compare in format and content to *Bob Vila's Home Again* on A&E; *Klutz Around the House*, *Martha Stewart's Living*, and *Let's Build* on the Life Network; *Hometime* and *This Old House* on PBS; *Furniture to Go* on The Learning Channel; and *Lynette Jennings Homeworks* on the Discovery Channel. There are two types of these domestic how-to programs: renovation/construction advice and decorating/domestic advice. WTN's *Resourceful Renovator* breaks the mould of the renovation advice program by featuring a female architect, rather than a male, as the host. However, the host relies heavily on male experts for advice and demonstrations. (This could, however, be more of a reflection of the hiring practices of the construction/renovation industry than it is of the program itself.) The *Painted House*, while trying to provide inexpensive

decorating advice, fits perfectly into the genre of domestic-advice programs. Like Debbie Travis' "nineteenth century predecessors," she teaches her viewers all about "things like furniture arranging and craft projects" (Jones, March 7, 1996). In terms of recent television practices, this format has been particularly successful for programs such as *Martha Stewart* and *Lynette Jennings*. Historically, domestic advice givers provide guidance and communicate the "idea that everything would be okay, if you could just get your home right" (Jones). This prioritization of domestic advice programs further illustrates WTN's increased reliance on traditional methods of attracting women viewers, its focus on consumer advice, and a further distancing of itself from its original mandate to offer alternatives to conventional television fare. It also illustrates WTN's programming strategy of attracting an audience of female viewers who own their own homes and have enough disposable income to redecorate and renovate.

Each of the programs discussed above help to demonstrate WTN's renewed focus on women's private lives and lighter programming fare. Not only is the channel scheduling programs which are reminiscent of other networks' offerings, but the content of WTN's programs privileges information that operates on the assumption that individuals need to develop personal coping strategies to deal with complex social, political and economic concerns. Operating with that assumption, the information provided through these programs, especially *Take 3*, lacks the politicized nature which was present in *POV:Women*. Programs that deal directly with social and political issues, like *Hot Topics* and *Speaking Our Minds*, have been relegated to obscure parts of the schedule or marginalized by promotional material privileging prime-time entertainment

television fare. In addition, *WTN*'s initial promise to provide women with "much needed" consumer information through advertising has been adjusted to, instead, feature consumer advice within actual programming content.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to examine *WTN*'s second season of broadcasting by focusing on the organizational changes, publicity efforts and programming strategies employed during the pre-launch and first six months of the 1995/96 season. In doing so, I hoped to illustrate some of the choices made by *WTN* in response to pressures and challenges of the first season. During the second season, *WTN* continues to employ strategies that further distance it from its original concepts, and any direct association with feminist ideologies. Just as the first season's changes indicated, *WTN* has begun to privilege a broad-based audience with substantial consumer power. However, unlike the previous season, *WTN* has branched out to ensure that the presentation of prime-time programming still attracts women, but without deterring men from watching.

The previous two chapters attempted to map out how *WTN* responded to the different gate-keepers -- first the CRTC and then advertisers and the press. During the second season, *WTN* appears to be responding mainly to industry and advertising pressures. *WTN*'s main concerns seem to rest in their ability to attract the largest and most broadly based audience as possible. *WTN* does attempt to experiment with some programming choices and scheduling; however, not to the same extent as in the previous season. By the end of the second season, the only "experimental" programs that have

remained are the ones with "acceptable" ratings. For the most part, the daytime and prime-time schedule are filled with familiar re-runs or independent productions that conform to conventional and well-established "women's" genres. The daytime schedule features exercise shows, talk shows, sitcom fillers, domestic advice programs, and celebrity interviews. It does not, however, feature soap operas. The prime-time schedule features re-runs of sitcoms from the 1970s and 1980s, British and American "women's" dramatic serials, and made-for-TV movies. The only prime-time slot for women-produced programs is *Hot Topics*, which, by the way, is being replaced for six weeks with *Double Take* in mid-April. *Double Take* (originally called *Tuning the Picture*) is one of the channel's original concept shows and is designed to address the media's portrayal of women. This scheduling practice is a further illustration of *WTN*'s reluctance to program too much unconventional programming.

WTN's second season appears to be part of a trend at the channel to privilege commercial imperatives. It appears that the channel's executives have decided that in response to the negative backlash and poor ratings, *WTN* should address viewers with as non-controversial and familiar an array of programming as possible. The channel attempts to do this while still maintaining its priority to feature women as protagonists, hosts, interviewers and experts. However, what is less prevalent in *WTN*'s programming philosophy is its commitment to images of women produced by women. The channel has moved away from being women-centred to being women-oriented.

During the application process and throughout most of the start-up period, *WTN* argued that women had distinct values and needs and that those qualities needed to be

accommodated and reflected by the channel's hiring practices, programming acquisition activities, and development of independent productions. Specifically, *WTN* argued that in order to satisfy the unique needs of the women's television audience, the channel would ensure that independent productions would be created by women script-writers and producers and that executive positions would be filled by women. The women-centred approach emphasized female authorship which would, according to *WTN*, add something to the existing television spectrum that was missing -- a woman's perspective.

However, during the second season *WTN*'s programming and publicity strategies and organizational philosophies indicate that things have changed. The focus has shifted from women-centred to women-oriented programming. There is an emphasis on conventional prime-time entertainment programming aimed at women and the commercial interests of the channel. As the literature review discussed, since the 1970s the television industry has been trying to capture the lucrative women's working audience by breathing some new life into familiar television genres. *WTN*'s second season relies on some of the more successful programs from the 1970s and 1980s. Women-oriented programming choices include the 1970s and 1980s "working girl" sitcoms like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Rhoda* and the 1980s hit *Cagney & Lacey*. Information programming has become less serious and focuses more on entertainment or leisure activities rather than women's public lives.

Many of the programs from the previous season which reflected the values *WTN* initially ascribed to women have been cancelled. In addition, many of the scheduling spaces for women-produced programs have been eliminated. There is also a decisive

shift away from featuring everyday women's voices to emphasizing the voices of well-established and celebrity women. *WTN*'s programming still reflects a dominance of women at the centre of dramatic or comedic plots, as experts and interviewers and as hosts. However, many of these programs are re-runs or syndicated programs that are in familiar and well-used formats, and have proven to be successful with the women's audience. Even the way that *WTN* representatives speak about the channel's mission and mandate has changed -- it now reflects an increased focus on commercial imperatives. *WTN*'s subtle name-change indicates the channel's concern about being considered an exclusive women's channel.

The previous chapter illustrated how *WTN* was uncertain in its first season about its brand image. However, during the second season, *WTN* is well on its way to refining that brand image. *WTN* has, so far, chosen to prioritize commercial needs over social or political ones. The channel never stated that it was a feminist channel, but it did make certain promises in relation to its programming. What has changed this season are the underlying principles influencing those choices. *WTN* is becoming an entertainment channel which features the faces of famous and well-established women broadcasters and actors. It is an information channel that relies on conventional women's genres of programming to attract viewers. It is a channel that no longer relies on its original mandate to explicitly create jobs for women. Most importantly, it is becoming a women-oriented rather than women-centred channel.

Conclusion

As I come to the end of this project, *WTN* has entered the final months of its second season of broadcasting and, according to Jacqueline Cook, Vice President of Marketing, the channel is continuing its process of defining the *WTN* brand image. Over the first sixteen months of broadcasting and during the previous year's application and licensing process, we have seen the channel experience a number of "growing pains" in its attempts to develop a brand image and a decisive programming strategy. I have attempted to use Gledhill's model of negotiation -- which posits that negotiations over meaning occur at different "levels" of the production process (as opposed to at any one particular site) -- to identify the interests at work in defining *WTN*'s image, its programming strategies and its audience.

At the beginning of this study, I accounted for the conditions leading up to the licensing of *WTN*. Specifically, what were the prevailing interests and trends at the level of the CRTC which allowed for the emergence of a cable channel dedicated to women? We saw that the Commission had moved away from direct regulatory techniques and towards a hands-off supervisory approach privileging industry over public interests. At the same time, however, the federal government had been pushing the CRTC to deal with complex social issues - especially gender issues. With the enactment of the 1991 Broadcasting Act, the CRTC's "social" mandate was broadened. Not only was the CRTC required to make an effort to ensure equity in programming -- consistent with the philosophy behind the creation of the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping -- but it was

also required to ensure equity in employment opportunities. In 1993, *WTN* proposed that by granting the channel a licence to broadcast, the CRTC would be on its way to meeting the new objectives of the 1991 Broadcasting Act.

From the outset, *WTN* distinguished itself from other conventional cable channels. Specifically, it positioned itself in a contradictory space acting as both a privately-owned commercial broadcaster designed to make a profit, and a public service channel dedicated to meeting the unsatisfied television needs of the women's audience. Plainly, the pursuit of public service and private interest cannot be completely compatible objectives. I have argued that the friction between these two, often contradictory, interests constitutes the principal level of negotiation over the definition of *WTN* during its first three years of development.

It is at the level of the application and licensing process that we witnessed the first series of *WTN* "choices." During the application process, the prevailing discourse used to construct the image of the channel was one of a privately-owned channel with a public service mandate designed to meet the unique needs of the women's television audience. *WTN* proposed that the channel's programming would be "by, for and about" women and that women's unique voices and perspectives would be ensured because *WTN* would hire female producers and executive staff. *WTN* proposed that the channel's programming would be different from conventional broadcasters due, in part, to the fact that *women* would be producing programming *for women*. Gone would be the traditional all-male board of directors, executives, and production teams. *WTN's* programming strategies would serve the unique and unsatisfied television needs of the women's audience because

women would produce, create, and/or star in the programs on the schedule. According to *WTN*, the way to tip the scales in favour of serving women's television needs was to develop a women-centred channel which featured programming produced/authored by women, featuring women as central commentators or actors, focusing on women's experiences and, in turn, marketing it to women. It is only during this initial period that *WTN* spokespeople appeared willing, albeit never whole-heartedly, to associate themselves with feminist ideas. While *WTN*'s initial operating philosophy addressed employment, authorship and representation issues, there was a notable absence of any critique of the conventions and constraints of the commercial television industry or, what Rosalind Coward calls, the "generic conventions" and "ideological practices" of the commercial television industry. *WTN*'s primary interest, at that early juncture in its development, was to satisfy the regulatory requirements of the CRTC.

During *WTN*'s pre-launch and start-up period, the channel had more to contend with than the approval of CRTC commissioners. Once granted a licence, *WTN* was pressured to respond to the demands of the commercial broadcasting industry. The general reception for all of the new cable channels was somewhat chilly as a result of the consumer backlash against negative option marketing used by most Canadian cable companies. From the outset, *WTN* was also the target of a number of hostile television critics whose disdain for the concept of a women's channel generated a backlash squarely aimed at *WTN*. Needless to say, this fell far short of the smooth start that *WTN* had hoped for. Consumers and critics were hostile, ratings were low, and advertisers were reluctant to invest money in the channel. During the period immediately following

WTN's licensing, and continuing through its first three months of broadcasting, we witnessed *WTN*'s first shift in priorities. *WTN* began to utilize language and images in its publicity materials that privileged the channel's commercial interests over its public service mandate.

The first point of departure during the pre-launch period occurred when *WTN* spokespeople were careful to disassociate themselves from anything feminist. Also, as *WTN* neared its launch-date and attempted to attract advertisers to its programming schedule, the channel's publicity materials began to privilege an audience of upwardly mobile, career-oriented mothers (the most lucrative consumer market), rather than the lower-income or minority women the channel had highlighted for the CRTC. Now that the CRTC had been convinced of the value of *WTN*, the channel needed to convince advertisers, cable companies and viewers. It was during this period that we began to see *WTN*'s strategic shift from focusing on the channel's pro-social value to focusing on its entertainment value. At this juncture of *WTN*'s development, the primary focus became meeting the economic interests of the channel.

Characteristic of most commercial broadcasters dependent on advertising revenue, *WTN* used ratings as the key indicator of a program's success or failure. By the end of the first three months of broadcasting, *WTN* instigated its first shift in programming strategy. It seems clear that the changes in *WTN*'s programming strategy were influenced by two gatekeepers of the commercial television industry - the press and advertisers. *WTN* had been criticized for being exclusionary, "too heavy" and featuring too many talking heads. The innovative programming strategies that *WTN* explored

during its start-up period could be continued only if they attracted the ratings to support them. The others were shelved as interesting experiments. The channel's "flagship" show, *POV:Women*, was put into re-runs and then cancelled entirely; now considered more of an experimental program rather than a cornerstone of *WTN*'s image. While *WTN*'s initial programming philosophy was to appeal to women not served by conventional television fare, the channel's new programming selections indicated a shift towards familiar re-runs and conventional women's formats.

By the beginning of *WTN*'s second season, not only has the channel shifted in its programming strategy, but the organizational structure itself has been re-vamped. Both *WTN*'s founding president and the vice-president of programming have left their executive positions and gone with them is the channel's expressed intent to initiate proactive hiring practices. Missing from *WTN*'s second season program line-up is an emphasis on innovative, unconventional programming. This type of programming has been either relegated to the late-night or weekend schedule, or cancelled entirely. In its place, *WTN* features a collection of syndicated 1970s and 1980s women-oriented sitcoms, dramatic serials, and made-for-TV movies. The primary focus of the programming strategy is creating a prime-time line-up with broad audience appeal. Consequently, *WTN*'s programming choices tend to privilege entertainment value over social value. The roster of prime-time information programs emphasizes conventional women's fare including domestic advice, lifestyle magazine format programs, and entertainment and fashion news. *WTN*'s current prime-time programming strategy is designed to ensure that it is "attractive to a large group of viewers and not a group with a narrow focus"

(Cook interview). The commercial imperatives of the channel appear to dominate the development of the channel's images and programming strategy.

This approach to programming illustrates many of the concerns raised by the feminist scholars I canvassed in my literature review. Specifically, *WTN* demonstrated a reluctance to schedule risky programming and a reliance on well-established generic conventions, existing television aesthetics and ratings. As Nightingale (1990), Taylor (1989) and Coward (1990) argue, these practices often limit the possibilities for experimental or innovative programming for women. In addition, Steiner's (1992) argument that television depends too much on large audiences to generate advertising revenue is also evidenced in this study. However, not all of *WTN*'s "experiments" have been abandoned. *Girl Talk* continues to put cameras into the hands of teenage girls and focuses on issues of importance to young women. *WTN* also continues to breathe new life into the made-for-TV movie format by using it as a forum for discussion of serious social issues. The dominant programming strategy, however, lends itself to conventional women-oriented entertainment programming that is intended to attract the broadest audience possible.

What the future holds for *WTN* is unknown, however, during its first three years of operation, from concept to implementation to re-definition, we can identify a trend. The strategies employed by *WTN* have attempted to meet the imperatives of the prevailing decision-making institutions. During the application process, *WTN* sought to meet the CRTC's priorities concerning sex role stereotyping and employment opportunities for women along with the Commission's emphasis on the public service

aspects of the Canadian broadcasting system. During the pre-launch and start-up period, *WTN* vacillated between a women-centred philosophy and a desire to attract advertisers and viewers -- between the fiscal and the feminist-informed imperatives of the channel. While *WTN*'s second season of broadcasting does not indicate the end to this ongoing negotiation over the parameters of the channel's philosophy, it is clear that the well-established economic imperatives of the television industry have begun to significantly modify the channel's mission to provide programming "by, for and about women." Women still dominate the images on the screen and new and original programs continue to be produced by women; however, what is missing from the channel's strategy is a commitment to offering women viewers unique television fare. Not only have the economic imperatives of the industry dominated the decision-making process, but so too have the generic conventions of women's television programming.

In less than six years, *WTN*'s licence to broadcast is up for renewal before the CRTC. At that time, *WTN*'s Lifestyle Foundation, which has been relatively inactive up until this time, will submit a report on its activities. *WTN* will, once again, be before the CRTC and required to prove that they have met the requirements of the regulatory body. Given that so far, *WTN*'s performance on sex-role stereotyping, non-violence in programming and pro-active hiring practice amply meet the low threshold standards of the CRTC on those matters, it is doubtful that *WTN* will be judged according to the elevated standards proposed by the channel in its application. However, as this study has demonstrated, *WTN* appears to be putting a higher premium on the economic goals of the channel. *WTN*'s own budget projections require them to earn 30 per cent of the

channel's annual revenue from advertising by the end of its seven year license. All indications have been that *WTN* will continue to make programming and organizational decisions in a manner that is conducive to the fiscal priorities of the channel. This pattern is reflected in Jacqueline Cook's response to the question, "What are the future goals for *WTN*?" Cook's language indicates that *WTN* will continue the trend of using ratings as the key evidence of the success or failure of a program, will remain reluctant to emphasize the "women" in *WTN* and, as highlighted in the quotation below, will continue scheduling programs with broad audience appeal:

Our goal is to...build on what has been successful, continue to help refine...what we mean by *WTN*. Have *people* refer to us as *WTN*. Make sure that *everybody* feels they are welcome to watch...To be a distinctive place on the cable dial that *people* regularly tune into. We know our reach numbers have risen...We are getting repeat *people* happening. We want to build on that. [emphasis added]

(Cook interview)

Endnotes

1. Public members were appointed by the Ministry of Communications and included the president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women; representatives from la Fédération des Femmes du Québec, PEI's and Vancouver's Status of Women; and the editor of "Homemaker" magazine. The industry was represented by the CBC's Coordinator for the Portrayal of Women in Programming Coordinator, four private broadcasting representatives and four advertising industry representatives.
2. A revised Broadcasting Act was passed in 1991. A discussion of its impact on the mandate of the CRTC as it relates to gender will follow.
3. The CAB and AAB guidelines have been revised a number of times since 1981. The final versions were in place by 1990.
4. For a list of these studies, please see the attached bibliography.
5. From the outset of the Task Force, it was beyond their mandate, and beyond the regulatory powers of the CRTC, to address or regulate employment policies of the broadcasting industry.
6. In August 1995 Barbara Barde resigned from her position as Vice-President Programming to head the newly formed *Up Front Entertainment* which provides WTN with the bulk of its independent productions including *Girl Talk*, *Jane Taber's Ottawa*, *Take 3* and *Speaking Our Minds*. Barde's departure will be discussed later on in this study. Barde still holds a seat on the Board of Directors.
7. WTN is carried both on basic and extended cable services. Carriage varies according to region and cable carrier. WTN has a 88 per cent basic cable penetration rate.
8. Linda Rankin, by virtue of her position as President and CEO, could acquire up to 5 per cent of the issued and outstanding Common shares in the capital stock of the Corporation over a 5-year period. Linda Rankin resigned her position and left WTN in August 1995 and is no longer employed by WTN and not sit the Board of Directors. The next president and CEO would receive the same option to acquire an interest in the channel.
9. A key "special relationship" is between WTN and *Studio D* of the National Film Board of Canada. WTN's application states that this relationship "allows *Studio D* to have increased access to television in women's homes ...[and that] *Studio*

D was set up as the first publicly funded feminist production unit of its kind in the world. From its inception, *Studio D*'s film making approach has been grounded in women's culture, politics and values...[WTN] is a key instrument whereby *Studio D* meets its priorities to portray women's perspectives and experiences that address differences of economic background, race, age, sexual orientation, religion and physical ability, in order to provide a mirror images of the many realities of women's lives." (Part 5:36).

10. For the purposes of this research, I will only be referring to the six English-Language speciality services which include The Discovery Channel, New Country Network (NCN), life network, Bravo!, Showcase and WTN.
11. Please see June 7, 1994: *Calgary Herald*, *Financial Post*, *Toronto Star*, *Vancouver Sun*, *Globe & Mail*, *Ottawa Citizen*; June 13, 1994: *Marketing Magazine*; and June 20, 1994: *Maclean's*.
12. Shari Graydon is one of the co-authors of WTN's background study "Propositions for a Women's Channel: It Matters Who Makes It". She was also a representative for WTN at the CRTC hearings. Her involvement with the application process and CRTC hearings was not disclosed in the article.
13. CTV and Global networks receive 100 per cent of revenue from advertising and CBC receives approximately 20 per cent. *Bravo!*'s first year revenue projections are based on the same percentage of advertising revenue as WTN. NCN's revenue is roughly 80 per cent. Because the first set of specialty channels licensed by the CRTC began broadcasting under different conditions, and because cable fee rates are proprietary information, it is extremely difficult and beyond the scope of this research to provide comparisons between the new and the old specialty services. (Blakey, June 24, 1995 and personal communication with Paul Attallah, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, February 23, 1996).
14. A typical WTN show is a two camera show produced with almost no editing and a simple set. A show like this, according to standard production costs, would cost approximately \$4000 to \$6000 per episode based on a 13 episode contract. (Personal conversation with Mark Gamble, Producer, *MDG Productions*, March 8, 1996.)
15. This categorization of WTN's programming is based on a series of weekly schedules from February 12 to March 24, 1995; listings of January's programming was taken from press materials; and from videotapes of a week of programming dating from March 5 to 11, 1995.

16. The press releases were entitled: "*Hot Topics* featured on *WTN*"; "*WTN Presents The Hilarious Canadian Premiere of Boobs in Toyland* on February 9, 1995."; "*WTN Presents the Canadian Premiere of Prisoners of Wedlock*"; "*WTN's Hot Topics* Airs the Canadian Premiere of *Tears are Not Enough* on Thursday, February 23 at 10:00 p.m. ET and PT."; "*WTN's Hot Topics Presents Warrior Marks*, Thursday March 16, 1995 at 10:00 p.m. and *Women Soldiers*, Thursday, March 30, 1995 at 10:00 p.m."; "*WTN's Hot Topics Presents Leona's Sister Gerri*, Thursday, March 2, 1995 at 10:00 p.m."; "*WTN's Hot Topics Presents The Right to Care*, Thursday, March 23, 1995 at 10:00 pm.
17. Based on personal communication with Paul Attallah, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, February 23, 1996.
18. Based on personal communication with Paul Attallah, School of Journalism and Communication, Carleton University, February 23, 1996.
19. When Barbara Barde left her executive position in July 1995, Susan Millican was appointed Director of Programming. It was not until February 1996 that Millican was promoted to Vice President of Programming.
20. For further information see TWIFT's publication Changing Focus: The Future for Women in Canadian Film and Television Industry (1991) which provides a detailed statistical analysis of women's employment opportunities in the television and film industries in Canada.
21. While not considered gatekeepers of the channel, *WTN* also received feed-back from viewers. By April 1995, *WTN* had established a 1-800 viewer feed-back number along with an e-mail address and a viewer liaison office. They also began publishing a viewer newsletter that people could subscribe to by contacting the channel's offices. It is beyond the scope of this research to explore the feed-back received by the channel; however, it is important to remember that, according to *WTN* spokespeople, this feed-back partially informed the channel's programming and image changes.
22. This compares to general viewing statistics which show that the average television audience is made up of 57 per cent women and 43 per cent men (*Ottawa Citizen*, March 7, 1996).
23. Sue Johanson hosts *The Sunday Night Sex Show*. This program, however, is not an original concept. Johanson has been hosting a similar radio call-in show and community television call-in show in the Metro Toronto area for the past 10 years.

24. During my interview with Jacqueline Cook, she was reluctant to provide me with exact ratings numbers. She did state that *Leading Ladies/Herstory* and *Mary Tyler Moore* were WTN's most popular programs. Tony Atherton, of the *Ottawa Citizen*, stated that he was unable to get ratings from WTN for his December 23, 1995 article (Personal conversation with Tony Atherton, television critic for the *Ottawa Citizen*, January 10, 1996).
25. The start-up period of the channel featured female companions for each of the programming slots: morning, afternoon, prime-time and late-night. Jennifer Ratray and Arvel Gray, both Winnipeg broadcasters, continued with WTN. Ratray was one of the co-hosts of *Take 3* and Gray was the host of *Call Us* and was WTN's on-air announcer.

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---. "WTN's *Hot Topics* Presents *Warrior Marks*, Thursday March 16, 1995 at 10:00 p.m. and *Women Soldiers*, Thursday, March 30, 1995 at 10:00 p.m." February 3, 1995.

---. "WTN's *Hot Topics* Presents Leona's Sister Gerri, Thursday, March 2, 1995 at 10:00 p.m." February 3, 1995.

---. "WTN's *POV:Women* Presents *Debris of War*, Monday, February 27, 1995 at 7:00 p.m. ET and PT." February 3, 1995.

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---. "WTN's *Hot Topics* Presents *The Right to Care*, Thursday, March 23, 1995 at 10:00 pm." February 10, 1995.

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Appendix A

Recommendations of the Task Force on Sex Role Stereotyping taken from Images of Women: Report of the Task Force on Sex role Stereotyping in the Broadcast Media

Recommendations to the CRTC:

- to undertake periodic monitoring of broadcast commercials and programming for sex role stereotyping
- to request and assess industry self-regulation interim reports
- to assess public complaints made to the Commission regarding sex role stereotyping
- that, at the end of the two year self-regulation trial period, the Commission publish the results of its findings and hold a public forum discussion the results
- to require all licensees to submit periodical progress reports on their initiatives to deal with sex role stereotyping
- to take initiatives to eliminate abusive comments or portrayals of either sex on radio and television
- to discourage the portrayal of gratuitous violence against women
- that Images of Women be made readily available to the public

Recommendations to the Federal Government:

- that it accept the principle that the Canadian radio and television programming reflect the interests of both sexes;
- set up and monitor a response system to accept complaints from the public regarding sex role stereotyping on radio and television and that records be publicized;
- to encourage the development of a methodology to measure progress made in the area of sex role stereotyping in broadcasting content;
- to compile and update regional and national directories of women experts for use by licensees;
- to address the under-representation of women on the CRTC and the CBC Board of Directors.

Recommendations to the CBC:

- to ensure that its programming staff be familiar with and adhere to the CBC's portrayal of women in programming policies;
- to conduct annual comparative studies of the portrayal of women in English- and French-language services and make these results available to the public;
- to ensure that future studies on women and employment take into consideration contract, as well as permanent, employees of the Corporation.

Under the Self-Regulatory Guidelines, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) agreed to undertake the following initiatives:

- to make amendments to the CAB's Code of Ethics to include a new clause on human rights, to call upon members to endorse and support initiatives of the advertising industry in dealing with sex role stereotyping, include a new clause addressing the issue of sex role stereotyping;
- that the CAB will recommend to ensure that inclusive language be used in programming;
- the CAB will develop an educational program addressing sex role stereotyping in the production of programming;
- to encourage radio and television members to develop program material specifically addressing sex role stereotyping;
- to embark on a public information program dealing with sex role stereotyping;
- to hold a workshop on sex role stereotyping at its next annual meeting;
- to establish a standing committee on sex role stereotyping accept and review public complaints.

Recommendations to the Advertising Industry:

- to encourage its members to participate in the implementation of the industry's proposals for self regulation and cooperate with the industry in making it effective;
- the two-year self-regulation period, to revisit and adjust industry codes where necessary

Other Participants in Broadcasting Industry who did not play a role on the Task Force (pay-TV, cable-television industry, educational broadcasting authorities):

- to recognize the public concerns over sex role stereotyping;
- to adapt Task Force's report where appropriate to suit their broadcast services;
- to exercise sensitivity to and awareness of sex role stereotyping when acquiring programming;
- to ensure adequate representation of women on and off the air.

To the Public:

- to make complaints regarding sex role stereotyping know to the appropriate bodies through the mechanisms set up to accept and address public input.

Appendix B

WTN's April 1996 Schedule Monday to Friday Daytime Schedule (8:00 am to 7:00 pm EST)

GENRE & NAME OF PROGRAM	HOURS/WEEK
Total hours of Monday to Friday Daytime Programming = 55 hours	
TALK SHOWS	17.5
Shirley	10.0
Barbara Walters	2.5
Call Us	5.0
SITCOMS	8.0
Surgical Spirit	5.0
2.4 Children	.5
The Upper Hand	2.5
NEWS ANALYSIS & CURRENT AFFAIRS	10.0
Take 3	5.0
Maclean's TV	1.0
Jane Taber's Ottawa	1.0
The Creators	1.5
Metro Cafe	1.5
DOMESTIC ADVICE	5.5
Resourceful Renovator	1.0
Debbie Travis' Painted House	1.5
Baby & Me	2.0
Car Care	1.0
SPORTS & LEISURE	3.0
Gardener's Journal	1.0
Natural Angler	1.5
Women in Sports	.5
HEALTH & BEAUTY	10.0
Yoga for Stress/Writing on the Wall	2.5
Everyday Workout	2.5
Medicine File	2.0
Life Style	1.5
Time of Your Life	1.5
YOUTH	1.0
Girl Talk	1.0

April 1996 Schedule
Saturday & Sunday Daytime Schedule
(8:00 am to 7:00 pm EST)

GENRE & NAME OF PROGRAM	HOURS/WEEK
Total Saturday & Sunday Daytime Hours = 22 hours	
SITCOMS	4.5
The Mary Tyler Moore Show	.5
Rhoda	1.0
Surgical Spirit	2.5
2.4 Children	.5
NEWS ANALYSIS & CURRENT AFFAIRS	4.0
Metro Cafe	.5
Speaking Our Minds	2.0
The Creators	.5
Take 3	1.0
DOMESTIC ADVICE	3.5
Baby & Me	1.0
Resourceful Renovator	1.0
Debbie Travis' Painted House	1.0
Car Care	.5
SPORTS & LEISURE	3.5
Women In Sport	.5
Sportswoman	1.0
Ice Time with Debbie Wilkes	1.0
Gardener's Journal	.5
Natural Angler	.5
HEALTH & BEAUTY	3.5
Medicine File	1.5
Life Style	2.0
Working Woman	.5
YOUTH	1.0
Girl Talk	1.0
FILMS/MADE-FOR-TV MOVIES	2.0
Girl Movies	2.0

April 1996 Schedule
Monday to Sunday Prime-time Schedule
(7:00 pm to 11:00 pm EST)

Genre & Name of Program	Hours/Week
Total Monday to Sunday Prime-time Viewing Hours = 28	
FILMS/MADE-FOR-TV MOVIES	6.5
Girl Movie	2.0
Leading Ladies	2.0
Open for Discussion	2.5
PRIME-TIME DRAMATIC SERIALS	5.0
Class Act	1.0
Tenko	1.0
Skirts	1.0
Cagney and Lacey	1.0
Rides	1.0
SITCOMS	3.0
The Mary Tyler Moore Show	2.5
Rhoda	.5
DOCUMENTARIES/BIOGRAPHIES	3.5
Change of View	.5
Herstory	2.0
Hot Topics	1.0
NEWS ANALYSIS & CURRENT AFFAIRS	2.0
Metro Cafe	1.5
Maclean's TV	.5
DOMESTIC ADVICE	1.5
Resourceful Renovator	1.0
Debbie Travis' Painted House	.5
SPORTS & LEISURE	1.0
Ice Time with Debbie Wilkes	1.0

GENRE & NAME OF PROGRAM	HOURS/WEEK
HEALTH & BEAUTY	4.5
Time of Your Life	.5
Working Woman	1.0
Planet Fashion	1.0
Life Style	1.0
Sunday Night Sex Show	1.0
YOUTH	1.0
Girl Talk	1.0

END

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FIN