

MEMORANDUM

TO: Amy Lippman and Christopher Keyser, Showrunners

FROM: Jackson Freed

DATE: April 3, 2021

RE: New Distribution Strategy for *Party of Five*

Party of Five, a family drama that originally aired in 1994 on Fox, was rebooted in January 2020 on Freeform about five Latino children who must live on their own after their parents are deported to Mexico. After a one-season, ten-episode run, the show was cancelled. That said, there is no reason that *Party of Five* should stay off the air and there is no need for it to find a new home. Instead, the program should be moved one hour later on the same night and co-produced by Freeform. An analysis on why the original distribution strategy didn't work, a proposal for a new strategy, and how that strategy will work can be found below.

Original Distribution Strategy

Freeform, which was previously ABC Family, targets teenagers and young adults (and as a byproduct, often their families). As a result, this catered to *Party of Five*'s same intended audience. In what appeared to initially be a safe bet, the program was aired on January 8, 2020 at 9pm as a lead-in to sophomore show and *The Fosters* spin-off *Good Trouble*. *The Fosters*, a Freeform staple, was on the air for 5 seasons from 2013 to 2018 and carried its audience over to *Good Trouble*. Due to these circumstances, placing *Party of Five* right before seemed like it would be effective.

Additionally, the 9pm time slot was relatively secure as it provided an opportunity to counterprogram against family comedies such as *Modern Family* and *Single Parents* as well as grittier dramas like *Criminal Minds* and *Chicago Fire*. To *Party of Five*'s disadvantage, it was also airing against similar freshman shows like The CW's *Nancy Drew* and Fox's *Almost Family* before it was replaced by reality-competition show *LEGO Masters*. While *Party of Five* was able to counterprogram in terms of genre and content, all of the shows aired at 9pm sought the teenager/young adult market which made it difficult to find its footing.

Competition between similarly marketed programs is not the only factor that set *Party of Five* up for failure, although it is directly related to the second major contributor: low ratings. Right off the bat, the back-to-back premiere episodes received Nielsen ratings of 0.21 and 0.16 respectively. While that -23.81% same-day demographic change may look concerning at first, it is important to remember that, as *Party of Five* is a reboot, there is a high chance that a portion of that percent decrease was of the demographic that originally watched the show back in the '90s. Some of those people may no longer be the target market for the remake and thus they would be expected to stop watching.

As the season progressed, these ratings rapidly dropped. After episode three remained at a 0.15, episode four dropped to a 0.09 and the ratings hovered between 0.08 and 0.11 from episode four through episode seven. These ratings dropped even further to a 0.06 at

episode eight and briefly increased to a 0.08 before dropping to an all-time season low of 0.05.

Although programs on Freeform have generally lower ratings, no show wants to go that low. This was even more troublesome for *Party of Five* because it was not produced by Freeform. While some of the other shows, like *Good Trouble*, have lower ratings, they remain on the air because they are either co-produced or produced entirely by Freeform which results in less of a financial hit for the channel. As *Party of Five* was entirely produced by Sony Pictures Television, there was no incentive for Freeform to keep it on television.

Proposed Distribution Strategy

Despite the scheduling and programming competition in January on Wednesday's at 9pm, *Party of Five* doesn't have to move far. The best solution to revive it is to keep it on Wednesdays on Freeform, move it to 10pm, and move *Good Trouble* to 9pm. This would benefit both shows because, while *Good Trouble* would be placed into a more competitive time slot, it carries more weight and can find success amidst the similarly marketed shows on other networks. *Party of Five* would benefit because there is less competition at 10pm and it could act as an effective lead-out for *Good Trouble* as it has a more stable and established audience.

Due to *Good Trouble*'s pre-existing fanbase, people are more likely to stay tuned to Freeform and watch *Party of Five* immediately after then they are to turn the TV on in time to watch it of their own volition. As they are of similar target demographics, it is very likely that fans would keep watching *Party of Five* after *Good Trouble*. Additionally, *Good Trouble* could capture some of the audiences that may usually watch shows like *Nancy Drew* at 9pm, increasing its viewership.

Furthermore, by leaving *Party of Five* on Freeform, the program has the advantage of streaming via Hulu. Freeform is owned by The Walt Disney Company, and Disney owns the majority stakes in Hulu. As a result, all subsidiary channels of Disney (that are not Disney branded) now get next-day premieres on Hulu. Because Freeform is a subsidiary channel of Disney, all of their shows get the same treatment. Thus, *Party of Five* would get double the premieres and have a higher chance of reaching their target demographic, while leaving it on traditional TV through Freeform. This provides the show with more opportunities to find its audience and establish itself as regularly scheduled programming.

Finally, co-producing season two with Freeform could increase long-term security for *Party of Five*. By involving Freeform more directly, it increases the stakes and provides the channel with access to more of the ad revenue from the show's sponsors. This would make it more likely for Freeform to keep *Party of Five* on the air despite having lower ratings because they would be more invested in the program and have an incentive to further support it.

Based on the analysis above on the flaws in the original distribution strategy and the benefits of the proposed distribution strategy, the direction to take *Party of Five* should

be clearer. By adjusting it's time to be the lead-out for *Good Trouble*, promoting through Hulu, and signing on Freeform as a co-production partner, *Party of Five* will air in a less competitive time slot and gain more access to viewers. If any questions, comments, or concerns arise, please contact jacksonfreed@email.arizona.edu.