LYNN SPIGEL’S MAKE ROOM FOR TV: TELEVISION AND THE FAMILY IDEA IN POSTWAR AMERICA

Carlo Ginzburg notwithstanding, the “seemingly inconsequential trace” in cultural studies may be just that, trivial and unimportant, and consequently, a falsification of reality. Spigel, no doubt, speaks correctly when she affirms that “the reconstruction of viewing experiences . . . is an elusive project . . . we will never be able to present a complete historical account of subjective experiences like watching television” (187). Perhaps the more important question is: Who really cares?

On a less cynical note, Spigel’s work tries to project reality onto an artificial, make-believe world—the world of television, its originators, and its corporate sponsors. Spigel indeed objects to this monolithic caricature, as she states, “This book thus takes issue with the widespread assumption that television’s rise as a cultural form was brought about solely by big business and its promotional campaign” (7). But her reply—“instead, this fascination was rooted in modern American culture and its long-standing obsession with communication technologies”—is no more than begging the question. Who else but TV’s creators and its sponsors are responsible? Nowadays, the old question may be apropos: What influences what, television of American society? Such questions, though, imply a cumulative impact, not the immediate effect in the 1950s, and would be shaky ground on which to write a work that boldly

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claims to interpret gender roles, middle-class ideology, and modern technology of the post-WWII era.

Spigel further claims that she writes a “cultural history of American television” (1), but to do so she limits her study to a narrow choice of “popular sources.” There are many other “popular sources” that she omits. The “window” of her purview of post-WWII American culture consequently is very narrow. Spigel would have done better, in the reviewer’s opinion, to title her book: “Family TV Takes a Look at Itself, With Help from a Few of Its Friends, i.e., A Few Women’s Magazines.”
Conclusion: Post-War America. The post-World War II United States went through a period of unprecedented economic prosperity for many white Americans that coincided with black Americans' intensifying the struggle for civil rights and economic justice. Learning Objectives. Summarize the changes in U.S. society in the years following World War II. Key Takeaways. Key Points. Following World War II, the United States emerged as one of the two dominant superpowers, turning away from its traditional isolationism and toward increased international involvement. The United States became a global influence. The American family has been broadcasted worldwide on television for many decades. It is characterized as diverse and ever changing as we can see on Gilmore Girls, 7th Heaven, Full House, and The Fosters. Media has been illustrating many different types of families and how they are coping with their roles within the family; whether that is being a single parent, a partner in a traditional marriage, being in a homosexual relationship, or as a foster parent. In this paper I will analyze the gender roles of the American family that is represented on television and to what extent, if at all, TV and Postwar Gender/Family Norms. - family sitcoms are the most popular TV program - Women: consumers, wives, mothers - Men: providers, husbands, buffoons - Children: obedient, impressionable. Whose Community was on TV? - American families had 3.2 children on average (1946-1964) - Scientific Motherhood: EXPERTS know best - birth and parenting guided by principles of scientific management - Philip Wylie - Generation of Vipers (1942) - warned against smothering children; would lead to weak boys and "momism" - YOU are in control, not the child. Revolt Against Scientific Motherhood. - Dr. Benjamin Spock - Pocket Book of Baby & Child Care (1946).