

David W Fletcher, Fall 2002

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

LYNN SPIGEL'S *MAKE ROOM FOR TV:
TELEVISION AND THE FAMILY IDEA IN POSTWAR AMERICA*¹

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

¹Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

David W Fletcher, Fall 2002

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

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.”

post-war emphasis on domesticity. gender roles become more clear.Â rise of suburbs and the decay of cities. FDR creates the Home Owners Loan Corporation to help ppl with defaulted loans. -goal was to create a market for new homes and open jobs. Homes now run with mortgage and the GI bill allowed ppl to pay their initial deposits at a much lower cost. Bill Levitt. Came up with the concept that enabled mass production of homes. By following a common procedure, the assembly of homes becomes mechanized like an assembly line -similar parts, layouts, and construction procedure. television and domestic space. TV is advertised as a window to the world -such ads persu Make Room For TV combines a powerful analysis of growth of electronic culture with a nuanced social history of family life in post war America, Offering a provocative glimpse of the way television became the focal point of so many of America's hopes and fears and dreams. About the Author. Lynn Spigel is the Frances E. Willard Chair and Professor of Screen Cultures at Northwestern University. She is the author of Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs and Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America. No customer reviews. 5 star (0%). 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, Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America. By Lynn Spigel. Start your free 30 days.Â Make Room for TV combines a powerful analysis of the growth of electronic culture with a nuanced social history of family life in postwar America, offering a provocative glimpse of the way television became the mirror of so many of America's hopes and fears and dreams. Read More. Social Science. In America in the postwar period, popular television certainly reinforced the idea - and ideal - of the American, nuclear family. Television reinforced these ideas by regularly - often in situation comedy shoes - by presenting American families as consisting of a mother, father, and at least three children, in turn celebrating and inventing, in a sense, the "ideal" of the American family. The family, then, was presented as being a workable and healthy social unit that served to promote American values such as prosperity, strict gender norms, and the acceptance of American superiority over the