**Think Piece Assignment #2: MONOGRAPHS (BOOKS)**

Below you will find excerpts from the conclusions of monographs that were written from slightly differing perspectives: *Prime-Time Feminism: Television Media Culture and the Women’s Movement since 1970* and *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media.*

In your Think Piece, please compare and contrast the different perspectives on the impact of television programing of the 1960s and 1970s and the representation of women. As you compare these two excerpts, describe how each author sees the way women were generally depicted in American television shows of this era. What messages were made available to viewers, especially girls and women? Were these images behind the times, reflective of the current culture, or pushing for change? Was television portrayal of women in this era good or bad for women? What was its impact on the awareness of feminism?

**Excerpt #1: Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television Media Culture and the Women’s Movement Since 1970*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.**

Americans are generally ambivalent about feminism because it represents significant changes in traditional ways of tinkling and acting. Television producers understand this point; they are unlikely to create programing that wholeheartedly endorses ideas that make many people I their audience uncomfortable. If the show makes you uncomfortable, you might turn it off, and then you would not see the commercials. Moreover, television producers work within the medium with established aesthetic conventions, narrative patterns, and expectations. Those constraints are important factors affecting the messages television sends about women and feminism.

Problems that are social in origin, like sexism, are packaged by television entertainment as solely personal difficulties to be solved by the characters in a half-hour episode. Television implicitly supports a view of the world that discounts the ways in which cultural norms and values affect people’s lives. The medium’s individualistic view of the world implied that most problems can be solved by hard work, good will, and a supportive family. Television programing does not deal well with complex social issues; it prefers the trials and tribulations of the individual. . . a study of television’s treatment of feminism is, to some degree, a study of mass-mediated cultural attitudes toward feminism. Analysis of some of television’s most powerful visions of liberated women is a journey through phases of popular consciousness over the past quarter century.

**Excerpt #2: Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media.* New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995.**

We must reject the notion that popular culture for girls and women didn’t matter, or that it consisted only of retrograde images. American women today are a bundle of contradictions because much of the media imagery we grew up with was itself filed with mixed messages about what women should and should not do, what women could and could not be. This was true in the 1960s, and it is true today. The media, of course, urged us to be pliant, cute, sexually available, thin, blonde, poreless, wrinkle-free, and deferential to men. But it is easy to forget that the media also suggested we could be rebellious, tough, enterprising, and shrewd. And much of what we watched was porous, allowing us to accept *and* rebel against what we saw and how it was presented. The jigsaw pieces of our inner selves have moved around in relations to the jigsaw imagery of the media, and it is the ongoing rearrangement of these shards on the public screens of America, and the private screens of our minds, that is the forgotten story of American culture over the past thirty-five years. The mass consumption of that culture, the ways in which the shards got reassembled, actually encouraged many of us to embrace feminism in some form. For throughout this process, we have found ourselves pinioned between two voices, on insisting we were equal, the other insisting we were subordinate. After a while the tension became unbearable, and millions of women found they were no longer willing to tolerate the gap between the promise of equality and the reality of inequality.