Coming Of Age During The Sixties: A Narration Of Lives Through Music And Battle

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COMING OF AGE DURING THE SIXTIES:
A NARRATION OF LIVES THROUGH MUSIC AND BATTLE

by

Jennifer Lucia Oliveri

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

COMING OF AGE DURING THE SIXTIES:
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by

Jennifer Lucia Oliveri

Adviser: Professor Robert Singer

This thesis has been written based on my retrieved memory, as it concentrates on autobiographical memories and the lives of two politically opposing men from the American sixties. I discuss the effect of music and the war in Vietnam as it was experienced by these men—a moderately angry veteran and a hippie. I examine how their stories were “retold” to me, which in turn created new memories. This is a study in the memory of memories.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project first peaked my interest when I thought about the intersection between pop culture, politics, and first person recollections. I wondered how two men, both the same age and raised during the same time period, could have come out of the sixties holding such contrasting political and cultural viewpoints on separate ends of the social spectrum. By taking on this project, I recognize different connections between the politics of war and pop culture. This project has allowed me to think more deeply about how culture and society will be affected as our country continues to consider engaging in a military presence in other countries.

This project affects me personally, because Ted Emanuele has been part of my life for almost 25 years as a close family friend. I consider his daughter a sister to me; thus, I consider Ted a second father. He had always been extremely private and stern. As a man in his thirties and forties, he barely smiled, and he disciplined his family in a militant fashion. However, at 15 years old, I was unable to define his behavior. It was not until further examination of the Vietnam War and of Ted’s experiences there via this project that I have come to understand his actions. It is at this point that I would like to sincerely thank Ted for his continuous support with this project. Without his uncensored stories from the past sparking interest and resonating within my memory, this project would not exist.

A similar form of gratitude goes to Ken Krasniewski. Without Ken’s constant reminders of the sixties, blasting the Grateful Dead on cassette, and his stories in passing regarding flower children, men with long hair, and women hypothetically burning their bras, I would not have been compelled to investigate the cultural history of the Sixties. Because of Ken, I was able to uncover a correlation between two significant points in history that I might not have been
interested in if it was not for his humor and support. This thesis is about my memory project about the lives of others.

I am deeply thankful to my professor and thesis advisor, Dr. Robert Singer, for without whom I would not even be in graduate school. Dr. Singer does not realize the extent to which his encouraging words and constant motivation have played a major part in my return to school. He is the initial driving force behind completing my degree. I am sincerely grateful for his knowledge, patience, inspiration, and professional suggestions. He has offered unconditional support and guidance, and for that I cannot thank him enough.

Finally, because of the untiring support, guidance, and feedback from my family, friends, and colleagues, thank you.
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**Coming of Age during the Sixties:**

**A Narration of Lives through Battle and Music**

**Introduction**

The 1960s culture was an on-going event during an explosive era. Rebels with a cause fought to form invigorating and mystical sexual, cultural, and political movements that would disrupt the natural institution of America. The Sixties defines a counter-culture in social norms about politics, music, and drugs. This period became synonymous with innovative, radical, and subversive happenings and trends of the time. Like the live evening news broadcasts of the battles in Vietnam, much of the experiences of soldiers and free spirits alike coupled with popular music of this era had a dynamic role in engaging and infuriating the public. Each presented a message and promise of resistance to the war for both the soldier and resistor.

The Vietnam War introduced a number of civil rights issues different than those in any other major military conflict in the United States until that time. Problems ranged from questioning the legitimacy of the war, to the draft, and then to the political privileges of activists to protest the war and the government’s response to these protests. Political debates were ubiquitous, occurring in the news, on the streets, and at university campuses throughout the country. The effects of the Vietnam War were diverse. Failure to end the Vietnam War was a devastating setback to military officials. Though historians have offered conflicting theories regarding the ultimate cause of this battle, thousands of innocent men, women, and children perished. Blame for admission into this battle remains open, and continues to tarnish presidential figures.

In *A People’s History of the United States*, specifically his chapter “The Impossible Victory: Vietnam,” Howard Zinn explains how from 1964 to 1972, America, the richest and most influential country in the world made, “a maximum military effort, with everything short of
atomic bombs to defeat a nationalist revolutionary movement in a tiny, peasant country—and failed” (484). During this war, what transpired was the biggest antiwar crusade the country had ever encountered, and it was this movement that played an imperative role in ending the war. Zinn describes that by the time the end of the Vietnam war was reached, “7 million tons of bombs had been dropped . . . more than twice the total bombs dropped on Europe and Asia in World War II—almost one 500-pound bomb for every human being in Vietnam” (485).

Approximately 20 million bomb craters were formed in the country as well. In addition, deadly sprays were dropped by planes to terminate trees and any other type of growth. These sprays affected not only plant life, but human life as well, as Vietnamese mothers reported birth defects in their children because of this poisonous spray.

In addition, Zinn emphasizes how first-hand accounts of Vietnamese natives and Americans who fought in Vietnam highlight the horrors of this war and the anti-war movement. One veteran in particular who Zinn refers to is Ron Kovic, whose story was portrayed in the feature film *Born on the Fourth of July*. In Vietnam, at the age of nineteen, Kovic’s spine was crushed by shellfire. Furthermore, he was paralyzed from the waist down, and forced to live the rest of his young life in a wheelchair. When he returned to the United States, he witnessed the harsh treatment of wounded veterans in veterans' hospitals, and then became a part of the Vietnam Veterans against the War. Once when he demonstrated against the war, he faced jail time and ridicule. He details his experience as follows:

They help me back into the chair and take me to another part of the prison building to be booked.

"What's your name?" the officer behind the desk says.

"Ron Kovic," I say. "Occupation, Vietnam veteran against the war."
"What?" he says sarcastically, looking down at me.

I'm a Vietnam veteran against the war," I almost shout back.

“You should have died over there," he says. He turns to his assistant. "I'd like to take this guy and throw him off the roof." (Zinn 452)

Zinn suggests that political platforms were not the only arenas that shifted in the Sixties. Cultural change became radical, as writers began voicing their disgust with the war. Poet Robert Lowell denied an invitation to a White House event while writer Arthur Miller, also invited, sent a telegram to the White House stating, “When the guns boom, the arts die.” When famous singer Eartha Kitt spoke at a luncheon on the White House lawn, she stunned all those present by speaking out against the war. In Hollywood, local entertainers created a 60-foot Tower of Protest on Sunset Boulevard. At the National Book Award ceremonies in Manhattan, fifty writers and publishers stormed out when Vice-President Humphrey began to speak to represent their rage because of his role in the Vietnam War (Zinn 487). In addition, further resistance against the war found its way to the music scene, most notably in a three-day art and music festival known as Woodstock.

David E. James, in his article “Rock and Roll Representations of the Invasion of Vietnam,” illustrates the various contexts through which Vietnam has been portrayed, including art, film, music, and television. However, according to James, because no single medium has total control in either the involvement of Vietnam or depictions of it, they have been replaced by rock and roll, which will solve the awkwardness of Vietnam and make it possible for people to ‘want to hear about it’” (83). Thus, a connection is born between the surreal nature of both the soldier and the music lover equally transfixed by what they encounter. In the passage below, James illustrates his point further that “information [is] rock and roll, life itself”: 
Troops in Saigon are entertained by a Filipino . . . singing covers of recent American hits . . . a soldier who fears night patrol is nicknamed “Day Tripper” . . . AFVN Radio plays Otis Redding for “the Soul Brother in the Orderly Room; it was a war where a lot of people talked about Aretha’s “Satisfaction” the way other people speak of “Brahms’s Fourth” . . . when the journalists come back from R & R, they bring records, sounds as precious as water: Hendrix, the Airplane, Frank Zappa, and the Mothers . . . after the Sixties, rock starts falling like second lieutenants. (84 – 145)

The musical culture of the Sixties makes the political agenda bearable. This connection is vital in understanding how one, such as Woodstock, might not have emerged from the other, namely, the Vietnam War.

Similar to the consequences of the Vietnam War, the effects of Woodstock were enduring, as they were felt worldwide via innovative, cutting edge ideas. The belief that Woodstock has been an inspiration for future music, literature, and thought will never diminish: “Save the Earth, question authority, promote freedom and equality, peace and love, back to the garden, expansion of consciousness -- these are the values that all people can share – not just hippies” (Woodstock Museum). Hippies used cultural expression as a form of recognition. They viewed radical circles as a medium for cultural citizenship in ways that they were denied political enfranchisement. They reformulated aesthetics as protest. In the United States, during the 1960s and early 1970s, a profound and memorable ensemble of music was generated from the pandemonium present in the rice fields, jungles and war-torn cities of Vietnam. An American musical revolution was underway, and Woodstock, an art and musical festival, was held in the open fields of upstate New York in Bethel, New York on August 15 – 18, 1969.
Artists such as Country Joe and the Fish, Joan Baez, and The Grateful Dead contributed to the resisting of the American presence in the Vietnam War via their rallies for peace and love in their music. Country Joe McDonald, in his song “I Feel Like I’m Fixing to Die Rag,” sang the following:

Come on mothers throughout the land / Pack your boys off to Vietnam. Come on fathers, don’t hesitate / Send your sons off before it’s too late. You can be the first one on your block / to have your boy come home in a box.

Similar to countless others during the Sixties, used music as a form of cultural resistance against the war.

In the article “Visual Culture Education in the 1960s,” Graeme Chalmers reminds us that the 1960s are classified by music, film, political movements, and drug use. Chalmers explains that the Sixties was the age of youth, as children from the post-war baby boom grew into teenagers and young adults. The drive away from the conventional 1950s ultimately caused innovative ways of thinking; transformations took place in the American culture. Young people longed for change that would affect American values, education, lifestyles, entertainment, and laws. Chalmers reminds us of some of the major players of the 1960s, representing a changing American culture: the eclipse of Elvis Presley, the Beatles . . . Bob Dylan, psychedelic art . . . the Civil Rights Movement . . . the convergence of hippies, peace activists, the drug culture . . . [and] Woodstock” (7). What seems to symbolize the 1960s the most, however, is the dichotomy between the turmoil and bloodshed of the Vietnam War and the peace, love, and happiness found at Woodstock.

In “The Social Impact of War,” John Modell and Timothy Haggerty argue that wars and their consequences are a lasting part of personal and political environments. Wars ironically call
for the integrating and challenging of a tolerable perspective of the world. The authors assert, “the warrior’s image, his wounds, and the home he comes home to are a story that has been retold in Western culture . . . wars may end, but they continue to reverberate in the lives of those who fought them and within the soldiers’ societies (205-6). The effects of the Vietnam War continue to be felt by some today. Through music, film, and memories of personal accounts of the individuals who lived during the Sixties, the nation’s political and cultural turmoil continues to be seen.

For individuals longing to be part of an open minded culture, much can be learned from the past, particularly from the stories and backgrounds of individuals who witnessed the marriage between critical thought, war, and music as they came alive in the 1960s in the space that is my own memory. This project will explore the lives of two men, Ted Emanuele and Ken Krasniewski. I have relied on my memory of hearing about Ted’s and Ken’s experiences. I will evaluate snippets of their backgrounds, musical tastes, and political beliefs to ultimately highlight the political agenda of 1960s revolutionary music. Ted and Ken, both 63 years of age, lived in the same era of love, peace, war, and death. Their tales of war and music represent the 1960s. Though they exhibit contrasting perspectives and have encountered separate experiences, the solidarity of the 1960s ultimately unites these polar opposite men. My memories of their firsthand accounts help to unravel what the significance of the role of music and the boldness of the times truly was. It is the music that ultimately narrates the story and represents a decade that was divided politically yet joined by music. However, though they are grandfathers, homeowners, lovers of all things Harley Davidson, and were supporters of John McCain in the 2008 Presidential Election, they have arrived to these similar grounds via quite dissimilar paths. It is through my memories that I offer a glimpse of the diverse 1960s they each experienced.
Curiosity

My interest in the correlation between 1960s battle and music was sparked during my junior year in Brooklyn’s Saint Edmund’s High School. It was during the school’s annual trip to Washington, D.C. that the spirit of the Sixties came alive within me. During this trip, my best friend Colette wore the hat her father wore while he fought in Vietnam, a camouflaged, olive-green rimmed, floppy hat that tied by the neck, which made her emerald green eyes look as though they were on fire. This hat had seen destruction. It had survived through fleeting flashes of madness, provided momentary comfort, and protected the adolescent’s mind it covered. It was a sacred hat, for no one was allowed to even try it on. However, immediately, I recognized that it would be through this garment and the person who had worn it that would allow me access, a slight peek, into this era.

“The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier” was first. The clouds darkened, and the rain poured on us. All I could think of was Jim Morrison’s 1967 hit “The Unknown Soldier,” wishing I was listening to it through my fuzzy headphones. As I gazed at the final resting places of too many anonymous, dead heroes, Morrison’s hypnotizing howl played on repeat in my brain, “It’s all over for the Unknown Soldier / It’s all over for the Unknown Soldier.” Military drums, sergeants’ commands, and the echoing of firing squads worked in unison to capture the essence of war in Morrison’s song. While mesmerized by these public and mysterious tombs that lay before me, I developed a fierce curiosity that was new to me. The music in my head coupled with the images of these heroic American’s graves transported me to some other world, one I had never visited but knew I had to get to.
A Political Overview of the 1960s: The Marine

I’ve visited Ted numerous times throughout my childhood in his Brooklyn, New York home. Ted is a retired New York City police officer turned detective, working for over twenty years primarily in the Special Victims Unit for abused children. He is currently engaged with the New York Coast Guard. He also is the President of the Brooklyn Chapter of the Highlanders Motorcycle Club. Like most of us, Ted is an entirely complex individual. Though no one story exists that will portray who Ted truly is, there are, instead, memories which have weaved themselves into and out of this soldier’s world, creating the boy he once was, the man he is today, and the elder he will become. Where one story ends, another begins. His time in Vietnam is juxtaposed with his childhood experiences and his role as a husband and father. Ted could not have been one without the other, and if he had, the tales I remember him telling would be entirely different. For him, masculinity and patriotism went together in complex ways.

Ted cannot handle sloppiness. He often observes how I jot down notes to myself, sideways, and on random, ripped pieces of paper I have dug up deep within the abyss, my pocketbook. He stares at me jotting down notes, crooked, sideways, and at times upside down. He would sometimes wonder aloud, “Why aren’t you writing on the lines,” and I look at him and smile. Here is a perfect example of how Ted and I are unalike: He writes on the lines, and I do not. He even goes as far as marching into his cowboy/war/motorcycle-inspired office, just right of his kitchen, and within seconds produces a clean, fresh, never before used Aqua-colored Five Star notebook. I ask him if he has black, because aqua blue is not my favorite color. He snarls.
Getting There

As a teenager, Ted was part of a gang called the T-Birds (which, he has assured me, was uninspired by the film *Grease*). They fought Latinos and Blacks, he has often declared, ignoring the fact that he, too, was half Puerto Rican. Though I have overheard Ted describe himself as respectful, independent and home all the time, his gang “did cards,” stole cars, stabbed people (if they had to), smoked, ran around, hung out in junk yards, and beat people up. It was quite an era, he has often announced, and he commonly laughs to himself as he remembers his memories of wreaking havoc on anyone who told him not to go to do something. However, by the time the 1960s rolled around, young men did not argue with their fate the way Ted had done just years earlier, for the draft had taken away their freedom to choose; they were forced to fight a war that was not recognized until twenty years later. The exceptions to this rule were students in medical programs and men with disabilities. However, the government allowed the former to complete their studies before they, too, were sent off to war.

At the time, Ted was attending Pace University for accounting. In an effort to avoid being sent to a segment of the military he was not interested in, at nineteen years of age in 1966, he voluntarily joined the Marines. I have heard Ted say that there was always this “thing” with the Marines that drew him to them: “Straight-laced. Tough,” he’d argue. Enlisting in the military caused Ted almost no fear or anxiety because he had been searching for an escape from his childhood. During conversation over dozens of Sunday dinners, he frequently recounts the moment he enrolled. He went down to Coney Island by Nathan’s, where there used to be a booth for Army and Marine recruitment. He signed up in May, 1966 for two years of active duty. The
officer there reminded Ted where he would be sent, but Ted was already aware. However, instead of leaving straight away, he was able to stay home during the summer and go into boot camp in September, 1966. He took the summer off, purchased a boat, hung out with his friends, and broke up with his girlfriend Isabelle so he could be “free.”

**Politically Driven**

Because Ted was the only child in his family, he claims that he had everything he ever wanted. Though I know his parents and a small portion of his childhood, so I think to myself, “maybe not everything.” His parents constantly traveled; he was often left alone and at a young age forced to take care of the house. When he was not left alone at home, his parents had sometimes forgotten him at boarding school on weekends when other kids were going home to their families.

Joining the Marines was something Ted always wanted to do, though he would have preferred earning a Bachelor’s degree and entering the military as an officer. He often refers out loud to what he was thinking when he was 19 years old and ready to join the military. When Ted told his mother about the plans he made, she lied and told him it was a good idea; she thoroughly supported him, even though she hated the idea of him fighting in Vietnam. His father, on the other, handled Ted’s decision differently. Because Ted’s father had been paying his tuition at Pace - $45.00 a credit in 1966- he became angry about his impending departure, because he felt he wasted so much money on Ted’s education. Ted has often imitated his father’s response, hands raised and out of control: “Whatta you crazy!? Are you out of your mind? What about college? I just paid all this money!”
According to Ted, the guys he knew who were voluntarily joining the military and those who were being drafted accepted the idea of being forced to fight in a war about which they knew so little. The reaction was not negative, he had often mentioned. Going to the military after high school was simply what young men did, according to Ted. He saw hegemonic masculinity, state violence, and blind patriotism as synonymous. He signed on to go to war four months before he even got into the service. Young men Ted’s age might not have been able to define the term patriotism, according to him, but it was something they knew they had to protect. Escaping to Canada was a decision young men Ted’s age made to avoid being drafted, but for Ted, it never crossed his mind.

A Rite of Passage

For Ted, surviving Boot Camp as a Marine was a rite of passage. According to him, Boot Camp was, without question, a place that offered him the ability to prepare for the real world. There, he claims he was taught how to do everything right and perfect, including murder and desensitizing himself to violence for survival. I once overheard him refer to Boot Camp as “cake.” Ted enjoyed Boot Camp. Though he recalls memories of being choked, kicked, and pushed down a flight of stairs, he labels this time in his life as “fun.”

Because Ted was often left alone, unattended as a child, and given a list of chores to complete, Boot Camp was the perfect place for Ted. In Boot Camp he received similar lists, albeit with harsher consequences if not followed. Ted yearned for and sometimes looked forward to such militant discipline because it was something he had hoped for as a child. Ted could not wait to flee his home, even though similar severity and loneliness met him in the military. He exerted his energy into being the best, rather than focusing on any shortcomings he
experienced at home. In the military, rather than “beating up spics with sticks,” as he did at home, Ted was encouraged to take out his aggression in a controlled manner. Racialized violence was connected to the state-sanctioned violence for him. In Boot Camp, there was no free time. There was no liberty. Liberty was sit down, shine your boots, clean your rifle, and write a letter home.

**Headed to Vietnam**

Ted was based on the S.S. Duluth, with approximately 200 Marines on the ship, because the Navy used them for security. The Navy had their own detachment on the ship, but Marine helicopters also took the men in and out of the country. The Navy, Ted says, was like their taxi. They had two types of ships: Landing Trip Transport (LST), which was just for men, and Landing Ship Dock (LSD), on which the men had all of their personal carriers and where helicopters departed and landed on the beach. Ted refers to the ship as a small city. No one in Intelligence Ted’s unit, and shared stories of their time in combat. They spoke about everything except about what happened on the battlefield. To pass the time, they played cards, joked about
women, shared stories from home, and watched films such as *The Wizard of Oz*. They also engaged in physical training to keep them in shape. However, Ted would often joke that with all the “shit I had on,” he did not need physical training.

**In Country**

![Figure 2](image_url)

Ted’s team consisted of eight men. Their job was to go into the jungle, examine the enemy and his belongings, and return to their base with that information. They were choppered into and out of the jungle; everything was done with helicopters. Though being lowered into the fields was fairly safe, I have heard Ted mention, the most dangerous times were when they were being extracted. It usually happened at night, and they did not know what was around them. If the helicopters missed a grid, Ted and his men were stuck in country for another full day. He claims that even until today he can hear a helicopter from a mile away. Sometimes they remained in the jungle for two days and they were pulled out. Other times, however, they were in the bush for 10 or 20 days; it all depended on how much intelligence they gathered. Most
times Ted and the enemy would be less than ten feet from each other, and this experience, he often has mentioned, “was fucking crazy.”

Figure 3

Figure 4
A typical day in country would be for the men to take a head count and establish what the enemy was carrying. They did not make contact; in essence, they were never there. Ted lost quite a few friends, two of whom were teammates in his unit. Marty, a friend, was killed while on a water run by a sniper, and Ed, a man Ted had grown close to during their time together, was killed three feet from him on a misty morning when they were dug in. To this day, he does not know how they were spotted. As soon as the observation post told Ted and his unit that there was movement, they were up, and, because they slept with their rifles, they were instantly on alert with their weapons. The next noise they heard was one shot, fired at Ed. They tried to determine the location from which the bullet was fired, but they could not do it. They were immobilized, could not move, even if they tried. They remained in the same spot for at least an hour as they radioed for a chopper to their next port. They carried Ed’s bloody, lifeless body to the next pickup, and they left.

On patrol one day, the men were walking out of a semi-secure area when the enemy began shelling. They shelled right next to the men and the shelling was everywhere. The sounds of the shelling the men heard were coming from the North, so they knew it was the enemy. As the men scattered, Ted jumped into a crater that was created by one of the shells. Though he assumed bombs do not strike in the same place twice, he admits he was terrified.
Coming Home

The battle at Vietnam was never officially labeled a war. Soldiers who fought in Vietnam were not recognized until twenty years later in 1988, when a parade on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan was dedicated to them. By being in the military, Ted has earned a fair share of respect, yet everything the soldiers fought for was instantly stripped from them when they returned. On his returning flight to JFK Airport in New York, Ted met five other soldiers. It was clear to Ted that these six men had been in Vietnam sacrificing their lives, though they had known each other only by honor. They came from various segments of the military: the Army, Navy, and Marines. They eyed each other and nodded, the nod that translates a similar, shared pain. After they landed and got their sea bags, the climate in the airport grew ugly. Approximately 100 civilians glaringly looked the men up and down while they screamed that the soldiers were baby killers. If they had weapons, the scene might have become disastrous, I have overheard Ted warn; however, they banned together as a group, walked straight to get their belongings, and circled closer, automatically banning together. As
they gathered their belongings, the screams grew louder: “That baby killer!” kept coming out of the crowd. It was not a friendly reception. The men remained silent, because they knew better, and because if there were a response, it would have resulted in bloodshed.

**On Protestors**

![Figure 6](image)

The only time Ted was aware of protesters of the war was when he watched satellites from the ship. A news view televised the war. He enjoyed listening to the “other side”, because he still understood and believed people had a right to protest. Ted has never believed that anybody should have their inalienable rights taken away, because, according to him, they were
fighting so others can have the right to protest. What bothered Ted the most, however, was when people burned the American flag. Ted’s beliefs are pretty rigid concerning individuals protesting against America; he felt that since they had not been there, they should not try to reasonably argue against what they did not experience. As for those burning the American flag, Ted has called these people “fucking idiots.” Once, he stared into the eyes of an anti-war activist and asked if he ever killed anybody. He grabbed this man’s mouth, began to gently poke a wire in his neck, and threatened to watch him bleed to death. Though he asked this man if he ever killed anyone, he refused to wait for an answer. However, before he walked away, he reminded this man to remember what was done for him to stand there and protest. In this problematic case, he does not let people offer criticism without experience.
Life Lessons

Ted is convinced the experiences he gained in the military offer a level of maturity that cannot be gained anywhere else in the world. In his children, he constantly instilled the idea that the military turned boys into men, and any type of military direction made a better person out of
you. Through Ted, we see how closely his masculinity and patriotism are connected. The way he looks down his nose to talk to people and nods as they speak symbolizes the military arrogance he believes he has earned because of his time spent risking his life and taking others’ lives. Ted learned how to take and give orders, and because of that, he is able to recognize when someone has been in the service or not. “A real military guy,” I have heard him claim in passing, “would never eat at the table with his hat on.” A bit of a misogynist, Ted further believes that “even a girl” will take what she learns in the military with her through life and be a better mother. Oddly, Ted listed what he learned in the military as though they were synonymous with each other. He “learned how to kill, take care of personal hygiene, how to control my attitude, how to become a man, how to do a lot of things you’re gonna use down the road,” I have listed to him tell his son. And that, he always said, was the good that came out of it, if anything.

In Ted’s office, on a single wooden shelf, rests the sea bag he used during his time in Vietnam. On the bottom of this sea bag, he listed his name, serial number, and a log of some of the places he had been: “Okinawa, Vietnam, Bangkok, 1967 – 68.” He had drawn the symbol for man, and he had listed all of his operations in Vietnam. He never washed it. When anyone asks about it, he immediately and gently removes it from its shelf and demonstrates how it was carried. It was heavy, even though it was empty. To him, coming home with this bag was an accomplishment because he can now talk about it while many soldiers cannot. “It’s like holding up a trophy,” I have overheard him tell others. Though the horrors of Vietnam were some of the most traumatizing, nightmarish events he had ever encountered, throughout my teenage and adult life thus far, Ted reminds his daughter and me that, for him, his time in Vietnam was like “finishing school.”
Political Agenda of the Music, a la Ted

Though Ted’s musical knowledge is limited, he surprises me when he mentions Barry McGuire’s “Eve of Destruction.” Next to Ted’s sea bag in his office hangs a second shelf. On this sits a wooden framed black and white photograph of the back of a soldier’s helmet with the words “Eve of Destruction” written on it. This is not a photo of Ted’s actual helmet, but it is an exact replica. Some soldiers, according to Ted, scratched peace signs on their helmets, kept a tally of fellow soldiers killed, or jotted down lyrics, common quotations such as “Live and Let Die,” or names of loved ones back home.
On Ted’s helmet was the title of McGuire’s song. “Eve of Destruction” is a protest song about political issues of the 1960s. Most radio stations banned the song for its anti-government lyrics which also dealt with racism and injustice. McGuire sang the following:

The eastern world it tis explodin'/ Violence flarin', bullets loadin' / You're old enough to kill but not for votin' / Don't you understand, what I'm trying to say? /
And can’t you feel the fear that I'm feeling today? / If the button is pushed, there's no running away / There'll be no one to save with the world in a grave / Take a look around you, boy, it's bound to scare you, boy / But you tell me over and over and over again my friend / Ah, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.

Ted and I watch Internet footage of soldiers in action in Vietnam while the song plays. His pupils pierce the screen. His arms fall limp at his side. He is immobile. Silently he hums the words while his eyes fill with tears, but they do not leave his eyes. He will not allow them to.
They remain stagnant, as we do. I watch him watch the screen, and for one of the first times in
his life, he does not care that I witness his pain. I wonder to myself how he would have reacted
if, after he had fought in Vietnam, he then went to Woodstock. I ask him about this, but I receive
no response. I guess the answer lies in his silence.

Ted has often assured us that he was not into the “hippie music,” as he has called it,
because it was “too flowery . . . too passive.” I’ve heard him say, “I’m pro-military . . . I
wouldn’t go to a concert [but] if the Stones were playing, I’d go to a concert [because] that’s a
different kind of music.” Ted’s eyes light up when he mentions the Rolling Stones, even though
he knows little about the music of his generation. In fact, I pretended to know as little as he did
just to make him feel as though he was about to tell me something substantial. Ted did not think
The Rolling Stones were “flowery,” but I am certain he does not know about the band’s political
agendas. Ted often sings the Stones’ classic “Satisfaction,” and then under his breath he
grumbled that he, too, can’t get satisfaction. He has mentioned in passing, “You know. I
can’t get fucking happy. I can’t get no satisfaction.” The Rolling Stones were 1960s icons who began
identifying themselves as the world’s greatest rock and roll band and few people have disputed
this claim. Ted only knows the Stones because they have been popular in mainstream music for
over forty years. He gravitated towards what was popular in music rather than seeking
innovative or underground artists. Though part of mainstream America in the 1960s, The Stones
were publicized for their bad boy image. Their music started as an angrier, racier type of
Chicago blues, but eventually the Stones initiated rock’s style of detachment and wrote about sex
used as a form of power and other forbidden topics of this era. Mick Jagger wrote all the words
excluding the most famous line in the song, “Can’t get no satisfaction.” The lyrics focus on what
Jagger perceived as a dual sided America, the genuine and the fake. His song dealt with
someone looking for truth but not being able to find it. Listening to The Rolling Stones made Ted feel alive, he has mentioned. Ted gravitated to this particular song because he related to its theme. Also, he connects to The Stones’ bad boy image, given his own bad boy persona.

Although Ted’s musical repertoire was slim, I have overheard him explaining that the one song that offered the most significant story and represented a backlash to the Vietnam War is the 1969 anti-war protest song “War” by Edwin Starr. “War” was the biggest hit of Starr’s career, as it reinforced his reputation for opposing the war. Starr’s penetrating voice was transformed into an anthem for the antiwar undertaking and social breakthrough that will continue to resonate with future generations. Aside from “Satisfaction,” this is the only other song I have heard Ted hum. At a family gathering once, I stared at him bobbing his head and screaming Starr’s words, “War. Good. Good God, ya’ll. What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!” With his nostrils flaring and his body shaking subtly, he moves from side to side in sync with Starr’s voice hoping no one will notice him. But I notice him. I immediately recognize the value of this song for Ted, and I ponder the militant thoughts that must have been exploding in his mind like bombs on the front lines.
Defining Sixties Musical Culture: Historical Woodstock

Figure 12

The iconic musical experience was recorded in the 1970 documentary Woodstock: Three Days of Peace, Love, and Music, directed by Michael Wadleigh. It highlights both optimistic and adverse features from these three days, ranging from narcotic use by concertgoers and performers as well as nude fans slipping and sliding in the mud from the fall of the gates that were intended to enclose the festival’s grounds to the onset of the National Guard with medical supplies and food for festival attendees.

Within the first few several clips of the documentary, Wadleigh sets a subdued and welcoming tone. Jerry Garcia holds up a joint and announces: “Marijuana. It makes you behave.” Janis Joplin, with a lit cigarette in one hand and holding her head with the other, walks with a friend towards the stage. She is shocked by what she sees accumulating: “Look at all those people!” The MC announces that the concert is now free. Concert promoters assure the fans that their well-being and the music is worth more to them than money. The environment is friendly; it is empathetic to the ethos of drug experimentation the attendees encounter. The MC soothes the crowd, “A half an hour after we release anybody from our section, we turn them into
doctors and they care for people that were tripping like they were when they came in . . . It’s not poison. It’s bad acid. It’s manufactured poorly . . . So anybody thinks they’ve taken some poison, forget it. And if you feel like experimenting, only take a half. Okay? Thank you.” The welcoming environment is further displayed as an announcer randomly speaks into the microphone:

Wheat germ, Polly has your bag with your medicine. Please meet at the information booth as soon as you can. Helen Savage, please call your father at the Motel Glory in Woodridge. The warning that I’ve received, you may take it with however many grains of salt you wish, that the brown acid that has been circulating around us is not specifically too good. It is suggested that you stay away from that.

Figure 13
Shortly thereafter, Richie Havens comes on stage as the first act. The crowd is silent, pleasantly paralyzed from the electric energy Havens brings with him. Only his guitar and tapping foot are first heard. He wears an orange colored afghan, and he opens with a protest song:

Minstrel from Gault, A soldier came down from Diem Ben Phu / With silence in his eyes / He told of many an evening / When fire was the sky / He told of many a morning / When the bravest of men would cry / . . . / Many more would have to die / Many more would have to die.

The rasp and realness of Havens’ voice echoes into the microphone. The crowd is thunderous. Havens’ first song ends, sweat drips from the tip of his nose, and he talks to the audience, “One
hundred million songs are gonna be sung tonight. All of them are gonna sing about the same thing . . . and the people . . . are gonna read about you tomorrow.” The crowd explodes. “Yes,” he says as he tightens his guitar strings, smiles, and continues, “and how really groovy you were.” At the start of Havens’ act, he sits calmly moving swiftly into song. As he plays, the volume of his voice deepens; then sweat gathers on his forehead. As his act concludes, he stands and sways across the stage. His back is drenched. Havens is missioning through his own personal journey, tripping fiercely through his songs.

![Figure 15](image)

As drug use fueled the ambiance of the crowd, musicians such as Joe Cocker enhanced this euphoria. The intensity of Cocker’s electrifying voice encourages the crowd to “have a little help with my friends.” His sounds further move the crowd into a rhythmical trance. Jaws drop as acid drops. Wide eyes were mesmerized by the action on the stage. As artists claim the stage one after another, the crowd is further seduced by mind-altering drugs and harmonies. In addition, Santana and his band pull the crowd even deeper into this musical blanket of awe. As
Sly and The Family Stone belt out “Higher!” they manage to conduct an over-450,000 people sing along. With feet stomping, peace signs waving in the air, and a lyrical voltage pulsing through their souls, the crowd explodes, “Wanna take you higher! Higher!” Further down the lineup, Jimi Hendrix’s elating, God-like rendition of the National Anthem drives concertgoers closer into the arms of each other with each note he plays. The scene is legendary.

Figure 16
The political agenda of the festival is substantial, as consecutive performers denounce the war in Vietnam and reclaim freedom, peace, and unrestricted love. This political thread is woven throughout many acts. After Joan Baez, pregnant at the time, boasts of her husband’s David’s protests in jail, she explains that she is about to sing “an organizing song.” In reference to Baez’s husband David and his arrest two and a half weeks prior, she declares, “I was happy to find out that David . . . already had a very, very good hunger strike going with 42 Federal prisoners, none of whom were draft people.” Similar to Baez’s political agenda of her music, Crosby, Stills, and Nash compliment the crowd for surviving “three days, man.” As they move into their political song “Find the Cost of Freedom,” fans bellow along:

Daylight again, following me to bed / I think about a hundred years ago, how my fathers bled / I think I see a valley, covered with bones in blue / All the brave soldiers that cannot get older been askin' after you / Hear the past a callin', from
Ar- -megeddon's side / When everyone's talkin' and no one is listenin', how can we decide?

Shortly thereafter, Country Joe McDonald takes the stage and again, the crowd roars. His politically classic sounds vibrate through the audience. He arouses the crowd the most. They rise to their feet, transfixed on the performer, clap along, and chant, “One, two, three. What are we fighting for?”

Figure 18
Wadleigh’s documentary continues to be fundamental in showcasing the adolescent mindset of the time. Two hitchhikers are interviewed as representations of the teen population attending Woodstock:

Interviewer: “Are you two going together?”

Blonde haired boy: “No . . . yeah I like her. I love her. I enjoy her.”

Dark haired girl: “The way I look at it I’ve known Jerry for . . . four, five, six months now when he moved into, like, the family group that I already knew for quite a while, and in that time I got to know him real well and I learned to love him and um, like, we ball and everything, but . . . It’s really a pretty good thing because . . . I have plenty of freedom because we’re not going together and we’re not in love.”
I: “Do you communicate with your parents?”

G: “I can communicate with them on one level, and now I’ve been away from home for two years and at first it was very rough. Now, um, they’re beginning to mellow out about it . . . and it’s not so hard on them that I’m the way I am, but I really can’t communicate about anything that’s really important because they just could not understand it. My mother really lives in a lot of pain because she’s sure I’m gonna go to hell, and there’s nothing I can do to tell her that . . . it just doesn’t exist for me.”

B: “My father once asked me whether I was in a communist training camp or something . . . I could understand where he’s coming from . . . He’s an immigrant, so he came over here to better himself economically and socially . . . to make it better for me and he can’t understand why I didn’t play. He’s always saying ‘Why aren’t you playing the game? Here’s all this opportunity. Here are all these things which have so much value, but they only have value to him, and he can’t understand why they don’t have value to me. But then again, he does have wisdom enough to allow me to be who I am.”

The conversation between these hitchhikers and the interviewer is significant. It represents the common sexual and political rebellion in the 1960s. Moreover, their familial relationships symbolize the separation of generations that both Ted and Ken experienced.

Ironically juxtaposed near the end of the documentary and similar to the contrasting lives of Ted and Ken and the dichotomy between teenagers and their parents, are two conflicting views of adults expressed at the festival’s site. A janitor taking care of the port-o-potties claims
he is “proud” to clean the toilets “for the kids,” because he “has one in Vietnam and one here.” He smiles as he wipes down the areas concertgoers are utilizing. While many natives of Bethel chip in to help feed and clothe the audience, a sense of outrage still surrounds the festival. One man argues that the concert should have never happened. He says, “They’re all on pot! You got a fifteen year old girl laying in the field! It should have never happened!” However, when the interviewer asks him about whether it was okay for eighteen year old boys to die for their country in Vietnam, if that was right, or if it “should have never happened,” the angry man bellows that it is no comparison and he storms off. At the end of the festival, helicopters fly overhead. They drop flowers and dry clothing on the audience. Though the promoters of Woodstock label the festival a “financial disaster,” they smile as they speak:

What you have here is you have this culture and this generation away from the old culture and the older generation. You see how they function on their own without cops, without guns, without clubs, without hassle. Everybody pulls together and everybody helps each other . . . These people are communicating with each other. That rarely happens anymore.

No price could be put on the beauty of these three days.

A Cultural Overview of the 1960s: The Hippie

When I think about politics and music of the 1960s, I not only think about Ted’s time in Vietnam, but also, I am immediately reminded of my friend Laura’s father, Ken. He was known as the “hippie dad” in our neighborhood while growing up. Not only did he attend Woodstock, but he never misses a chance to discuss his experiences there. I met Ken about twenty years ago. Ken, a former draftsman who lives on Long Island, had been into the music scene long before
news of Woodstock rolled into his childhood home of Elmhurst, Queens. When Ken was 19 years old and making approximately $100.00 a week in a ship building company, he frequented the legendary musical establishment The Fillmore East, at which his friend Buddy worked. The Fillmore was owned by music promoter Bill Graham. It was located on Second Avenue near East 6th Street in Manhattan’s East Village. From 1968 – 1971, the venue introduced some of the industry’s major rock performances of all time. There, the groundbreaking world of song opened up for Ken; it was typical for him to catch two or three acts a night. Often no-name, local bands jammed with some of rock’s finest on the same bill. Ken’s eyes lit up as he recalled how Led Zeppelin opened for a low budget orchestra one night. He visited the Fillmore every weekend, paid $3.50, saw three acts, hung out in the upper balcony, and would deeply breathe in the air just to get high.

**Political Agenda of the Music, a la Ken**

Ken has always been reluctant to determine one specific band or genre of music he preferred most, because he insists he is a fan of all music. He struggles to force his memory to recall any precise meaning that a particular song or artist held for him. He admits that he would not give an honest answer if he tried to combine all of the deep, raw emotions that music has aroused within him. For Ken, all of the music of the Sixties held meaning. However, Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, The Eagles, and Eric Clapton seem to have made the biggest impression on him, as they are most prevalent on his playlists. The lyrics of the music of the Sixties were thought provoking; they offered a story. Similarly, McGuire’s song made people consider what they were being forced to do and question why they were fighting this war. Ken was against the war, but not against the soldiers; he realizes it was not their choice to go. Ken remembers how
soldiers who returned home from Vietnam were treated terribly, called baby killers, mocked, and spit at. He remembers it being “disgusting.” Ken wanted the soldiers to be treated with respect, even if he disagreed with the war.

Naturally, then, stark cultural contrasts weaved their way into the music arena. FM radio consisted of subversive music, and thus, the music was not preferred by society. In the Sixties, FM radio had a limited audience. On underground FM radio, every Friday night an entire side of an album would be played so people were able to hear the whole artist. It was raw music, and this was what appealed to Ken. The more rebellious crowd avoided “American Bandstand” at all costs. Instead, this crowd watched the television show “In Concert” on channel seven at 11:00 p.m. on Saturday nights to catch bands like The Allman Brothers and The Doobie Brothers. The music put forth ideals about embracing individuality, even among individuals of the same generation. There was camaraderie among the people with whom you associated.

**Not Your Mother’s Music**

Ken was too young to enjoy and fully understand the culture of the 1950s, such as the poodle skirts and Elvis, though he listened to, at 13 and 14 years old, to the Beatles and The Rolling Stones. He rebelled against his parents’ musical tastes. He remembers thinking that the musical culture of the 1960s was finally something different. According to Ken, you either liked the music or you did not like it. Because the older generation never understood the music of the Sixties, Ken and his peers were happy to claim it as their generation’s own. The older generation did not understand the musical revolution of the Sixties, just as their parents did not understand Jerry Lee Lewis or Elvis. The overall vibe regarding the Vietnam War in Ken’s Elmhurst, Queens neighborhood was generally uniform. Though most were inclined to protest the war,
Ken did not scorn Vietnam supporters. He believed it was their right to support the war, but the problem was that the feeling was not mutual. When referring to supporters of Vietnam, he has mentioned, “More power to you.” Ken insists he would not have gone to Vietnam if he did not want to. It was not that Ken did not love his country or feel the same sense of patriotism for it, but rather he felt being drafted into the war and fighting for something so few could identify was, as Ken believed, going too far. “It just wasn’t right,” I have heard him announce. Often, he would attempt to bring us there, his daughter and me back to the feeling of 1969. He would explain how he and his family watched the war on television while eating dinner. He would tell us that it was “scary shit, man!” The government was telling him he had to go, but he did not want to. Ken resented women because they were not being drafted, so they had an easier time in the Sixties because, Ken often mentioned, they did not have the possibility of going to war hanging over their heads. As frightened of and against the war as Ken was, however, he has claimed that he would not have escaped to Canada. He would not want to leave his family, but he was, to some extent, interested in what was happening overseas. Nevertheless, Ken’s aim was to enjoy himself thoroughly in case he got drafted, because the way they were dying in Vietnam “scared the hell” out of him. Clearly, Ken has often mentioned in passing, he lived by a “live now, for we die tomorrow” attitude.

Inspiration

At the same time Ted was voluntarily signing his life away to the Marines, conversely, Ken was gearing up to attend the most significant life changing event he would ever experience.
Music was Ken’s life, and given the intense lineup of performers coupled with the inexpensive admission fee, naturally Ken was determined to attend Woodstock. He and his friends thought, “Three days of music at the time. 20 or 23 dollars for a three day ticket? It was more the idea that we saw the list of all of these performers in three days! Here is this festival. We gotta go to this! How can we miss this?” They did not care who was on the bill. After reading about Woodstock in *Rolling Stone* magazine and convincing his parents he would make it home in one piece, on a humid Thursday afternoon, Ken and his friends Rita and Max drove to Bethel, New York in a 1968 green Plymouth Roadrunner and headed to the festival.

Figure 20
Ken describes the effect of the music in the 1960s as consciousness-raising and predominantly anti-war. Ken gravitated to the folks with long hair, rhythm and blues, the anti-war bandwagon, and rock and roll. Ken’s rite of passage was going to Woodstock. He came away from the festival with a different attitude towards life and a clearer understanding of his peers. Most concertgoers came away with a positive feeling and an overall respect for all people. Ken often wonders if one were to assemble over 450,000 people together today and they were drinking and drugging, how many people would fight? Aside from the one person who died that day because a tractor ran him over, Ken thinks back in awe, there was no trouble.

The concert was moved from Woodstock to Bethel at the last minute. Ken and his pals arrived on a Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. They searched for an open store for food. “We have nothing,” read most of the signs. Whatever few stores survived in this small, desolate town had
their doors locked and lights shut, igniting a feeling of alienation among its long haired visitors. However, as Ken recalls, by Saturday afternoon, the climate in the town changed. A large majority of the town’s people became sympathetic to the needs of the concertgoers. Business owners who charged $1.00 for water at first were giving bottled water away for free when they were leaving.

**First Experiences**

Based on Ken’s experiences at Woodstock, he asserts that everybody was doing drugs. He remembers people on acid having a bad trip, while others were “balling” in the fields. Ken brings himself back to those 1960s trips when he refers to terms such as “balling.” This is a term I was unfamiliar with until Ken’s daughter explained, simply, that it meant having sex. It was his first experience skinny dipping, too. Based on his experiences, Ken suggests that the drugs enhanced the musical experience because it took away one’s inhibitions, so one could just dance.

Ken is reluctant to reveal who his favorite acts were, but after some probing from his children in the past he surrenders: “Crosby, Stills, and Nash, and Mountain. The Who was great, but the biggest shocker was Sha Na Na.” When they walked out on stage wearing gold lamiae suits, the crowd’s mouths dropped, and once they started playing, a roar came up from the crowd. But no matter who was on stage, Ken emphasizes that the music of Woodstock represented his generation. It represented a strong political, social, and drug agenda. In addition, the music embodies social commentary. “Everybody must get stoned!” sang Bob Dylan. Though plenty of drug references existed, social issues made people aware of the war. They were at the forefront of most lyrics. The music offered information, and it helped people mature sooner than they do today. Although over 40 years have passed since Woodstock, Ken is still
stuck in the Sixties. He is drawn to his era’s music; furthermore, it keeps him young and brings him back to his youth. Ken claims that certain pieces of music always trip up something in his past, and then it is always a good time.

**Effects Experienced**

Woodstock not only impacted our nation in a profoundly universal way, but it also affected people on individual levels. Men and women who returned home from this peace and love fest seemed to be transformed forever. Festival goers left with a feeling of companionship, happiness, and a more positive outlook on their lives from that point forward. They remained in awe long after the concert’s end, nudging each other, “Can you believe those three days?!” Lots of post-festival exhaustion set in, and by then, many attendees have said, three days were enough.

Despite Ken’s feeling of utopia post-Woodstock and his belief that individuals were truly loving and good, his return to his job proved otherwise. When he returned to work on the following Monday morning after Woodstock, Ken’s boss asked if he had been “up there with all those drug addicts.” Later that week, Ken was fired. Similar to the young soldiers who were mocked by their fellow Americans and called “baby killers” after returning from Vietnam, many who attended Woodstock were scorned for their participation in the event. Ken regularly wore bell bottoms and had long, wispy brown hair, but when his uncle got him a job in 1972 after being fired from his job, post-Woodstock, he decided to cut his hair and start wearing button down, collared white shirts. He was a Democrat then, but a wife and two children paved his path toward supporting the Republican Party. Having a conventional life affects you, Ken has
claimed: “The fooling around and going to concerts stopped, because I needed money for the oil bill!” His personal changes highlight the political contradictions in his life at different moments.

Natural Born Opposites

The above photos exhibit a nation at extreme ends of a political and cultural spectrum during the same year. These photos not only signify the oppositional realities experienced at this time, but they symbolize the radical differences between Ted and Ken. Whereas Ted believed, “Fuck it. Kill everybody!” Ken longed for peace and harmony. Among Ted’s friends, seldom did they question the war. They participated fully in the drafting process. They kept their “mouths shut and did what they had to do,” I have overheard Ted claim. In Ken’s world,
however, he experienced little patriotism and more partying. He often spoke of lots of beer, having fun, and people smoking dope. It was quite an era, according to both men, where there were oppositional lifestyles. While Ted willingly enlisted in the Marines, Ken worried he would be drafted, and waited until the last minute to look into the military. Luckily for Ken, when he went to Fort Hamilton, he learned he had a minor physical abnormality that prevented him from going to Boot Camp. Ken recalls there being two extremes: a saddle shoe crowd and the hippies. By examining Ken’s yearbook from high school, the notion of contrasting individuals could not be clearer. On one page were smiling, neatly groomed men and women posing poignantly with their skis. However, on the other page, it looked like a gang fight had broken out.

Evaluating the differences between the 1960s Ted and Ken experienced seems at first to be a daunting task, but further examination of these men’s experiences reveal that though their journeys have been different, they have arrived at similar destinations. Through their experiences, Ted and Ken demonstrate the importance of lived reality as political testimony. It is through the rawness of their reflections that Ted’s experiences are more accepted in mainstream culture. Unlike Ted, Ken’s stories depict a more subversive side to the Sixties he encountered. Perhaps it is because of the negative response Ken experienced, he chose to cut his hair, abandon his psychedelic tee shirts, and join mainstream culture. After all, he craved some social acceptance. Although he has not completely abandoned his passion for the Dead, the Doors, or Crosby, Stills, and Nash, he has indeed joined forces with neoliberal America, and has “sold-out” in order to embrace the culture against which he once protested. Ted’s views, on the other hand, politically and culturally, have remained steady throughout the years because those were the views widely accepted by society.
**Fragmented Memory**

My memories of Ted’s and Ken’s experiences are fragmented. They are mere pieces of dialogue overheard throughout the years. Their tales reveal divergent tones in terms of recitation. An air of Ted’s Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) fills the room when he speaks. He talks in pieces and parts, commonly using his eyes and body language to make a point. This broken system of using words as meaning becomes draining for the recipient of Ted’s speech. He discusses ideas while he thinks about them, and his eyes widen and look away when he seems to be interrupting his own thoughts. He often leans his body into things, a table, the kitchen counter, or the person to whom he is speaking. There is a dual dance happening in his communication. His demand for attention can be discerned through his need to touch the person he is engaging with, even if in the slightest way. It seems as though he is looking for comfort as he pushes his solid body into inanimate objects. I believe the violence he encountered in Vietnam causes his fragmented thoughts and language. When he struggles with articulating his ideas into meaningful and comprehensive statements, he curses and raises his voice to mask his pain and uneasiness with his fleeting thoughts. Ted has been accustomed to the privileged platform on which he has lived, owing to his white male privilege. What he struggles with, however, is his lack of academic privilege, which Ken has evidenced by his use of language.

Ken’s ideas have been expressed in fragments similar to Ted’s, but the causes of Ken’s interrupted thoughts are different from Ted’s. It is important for Ken to clearly articulate his thoughts in well-planned out sentences, but in order to do that, he takes his time and mulls over every syllable before he speaks. He is methodical when choosing language that he feels can precisely capture the essence of what he is trying to say. As the recipient of his words, this
process is just as exhausting as it is with Ted. Ken not only has been accustomed to the same white male privilege Ted has been granted, but he also has earned privilege through education. It is because of the latter that he chooses his words so carefully, for he secretly believes the individuals with whom he is speaking will not entirely understand him.

I relate Ken’s fragmented thinking not only to believing his words are more important than someone else’s and therefore, must be perfectly articulated, but also to his experience with the counter-culture of the 1960s. Ken was used to lots of chanting, fists in the air, and signs that read his political beliefs during the political protests he frequented. He put a tremendous amount of time and effort into becoming an activist. It was crucial for him and his peers’ words to hold meaning and be clearly understood. Perhaps Ken has taken that with him presently, which has in turn caused his slow, fragmented speech.

Desensitized

A further analysis of the different 1960s Ted and Ken encountered can be determined through their views on violence. Ted has been desensitized to violence from an early age, and it is because of this desensitization that he willingly joined the Marines to “fuck people up,” as I have heard him claim. Ted had become numb to violence and pain from the time his mother beat him with a metal belt buckle because he did not clean his room. In addition, his father withheld food from him for a full day because Ted answered him back. He also was left alone for three full days by himself at the boarding school he attended because his parents were on vacation and forgot to pick him up. He was seven years old then, but this desensitization of violence continued to reveal itself. It took a psychological and physical toll on him.
Because of the PTSD caused by his neglectful childhood and the years he spent in Vietnam, coupled with the badge of militant honor he proudly wears, Ted’s trauma continued to show itself after he became a father. It was shown on the bruised face of his teenage daughter when she forgot to make her bed. It forced its way onto the whips of his gentle son’s back because he laughed at his sisters at the dinner table. Ted found little humor in jokes. It leaked into our teen years, as he punished his daughter for an entire week because she and I had lain, and not sat perfectly straight up, on the couches in the living room. It went on to show itself in the abusive words he told his daughter when he noticed her crying outside because her boyfriend was brutally murdered just two days prior at eighteen years old. Wagging his finger in her face, Ted warned, “Don’t bring your sadness in here. Leave that shit outside this house. You understand me?” She nodded. The PTSD caused from his time served in the Vietnam War has caused people to tiptoe around Ted. And at 63 years old, the numbness still shows itself when he cuts someone off mid-sentence or explains how he will “fucking kill” the next grandkid who makes a mess in his house.

In stark contrast to Ted, the idea of violence used in any arena sickens Ken. Ken uses terms like “peace and love for all” to convey his belief that violence under any circumstance should not be a choice. Ken had been raised in a strict religious family and taught to “Love Thy Neighbor,” opposite of Ted’s beliefs. His notion of accepting people for who they are and not for what they can give him affected his political beliefs and his objections against the Vietnam War. Ken used verbal communication in order to reduce conflict. He settled problems with words rather than with weapons. However, this was not always an accepted mode of behavior.
**False Consciousness**

Through my memories of Ted’s and Ken’s stories, a portion of 1960s history comes alive. Their voices are the agencies through which I am brought to the times. Their narrations bear witness to their periods in Vietnam and Woodstock. Their tales also communicate a feeling of false consciousness on both ends, though Ted experiences this earlier in his journey than Ken. Instead of Ted fighting against the ruling system as a backlash against his background as a Latino minority and his traumatic childhood experiences, he tries to gain societal recognition by fighting in Vietnam. It is through his military involvement that he wants people to see him as a human, even though he cannot recognize himself as one.

Unlike Ted, Ken has had a clear sense of self. At the same time Ted was subscribing to the ruling class, Ken was revolting against it. He was comfortable in his own skin. He embraced his free spirit, love of getting high, and obsession with music. When examining my memory of Ted’s and Ken’s experiences in Vietnam and at Woodstock, I wonder whose history they are each re-telling. In contrast to Ted, Ken resists the dominant ideology. He immerses himself into the subculture of music, sex, and drugs in the Sixties to escape Middle America’s mores. It was not until later in Ken’s life, long after his free loving, acid tripping days at Woodstock, that Ken gained a sense of false consciousness. Ken neglects his free spirited ways and calls for actions supporting civil rights. That was who Ken innately was, but he experiences a sense of false consciousness later in his life because he becomes more concerned with living the privileged life he was born into than resisting it.
Conclusion: Paths United

Of all the photos in Ted’s parents’ apartment, I remember the picture of the day before he left for Boot Camp the most vividly. He was a scrawny, dark haired punk who smirked as though he was ready to take on the world fists first. He returned with the same fists ranting in the air, but these fists now had the gun powder of AK-47s on them. They were used to being cracked, dry, and bleeding. When he returned, he was still slim in stature, but built in arrogance. Except for authorities in the military, Ted was resistant to authority in all other realms. He was unwilling to learn, unless it was within the military system, and he condemned anyone who was not in that system. Ted’s looks were stone cold. When he returned from Vietnam, he rarely smiled. Though he no longer fought recklessly in gangs on Brooklyn streets, he now stared down almost every individual he came into contact with. He analyzed them for potential threats and he never let his guard down. Unlike Ted, Ken welcomed the world in a peaceful manner eager to continue to learn from anyone he encountered. Before going to Woodstock, Ken was pleasant to be around and had many friends. When he returned, he felt as though he was floating through the streets, as he smiled at and happily engaged in conversation anyone who would listen.

Presently, Ted and Ken resemble each other more than they did 45 years ago. By listening to them joke with family members and speak of the latest political news today, one would hardly know the distinctly different roads they traveled during the same era. At the same time, they each bring to the present many pieces of their past. Ted continues to threaten people with violence, though on non-threatening level. He jokes about “getting his gun” so people will listen to him. Ken’s vernacular is still somewhat stuck in the 1960s. He says “right on” to
confirm something, and in almost every other sentence he inserts the adjective “groovy.” The political, historical, and cultural agenda of the 1960s has shaped who these men are. Because so much of the music’s political agenda was to inform, one could not escape the realities of the times, which is evident in the narrations of Ted and Ken. The effects music had on Ted and Ken are illustrated via their knowledge of their generation’s culture. It is through battle and music that these men, like countless others, have come of age.
Works Cited

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