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A NEW APPROACH TO AN OLD STORY:
HOW GENERATION Y VIEWS AND DISSEMINATES ECHOES OF VIETNAM FILMS AS SEEN IN VIDEOS CREATED BY TROOPS IN IRAQ

by

LINDSEY ANN HAGAN

Under the Direction of Kathryn Fuller-Seeley

ABSTRACT

This is an examination of how the fictional representation and re-creation of past wars is colliding with the personal video presentations of the Iraq War. It raises questions about how war and art are experienced in a new way and also how "instant history" is made available to the public. Personally recorded footage of the everyday experience of war has altered the way in which society views war and copes with its aftereffects because Generation Y has become a computer based generation. This is a reception study that will show how Generation Y has used the Baby Boomers' input about the Vietnam War as a basis for its perceptions of historiography and as both a positive and negative framework for its videography.

INDEX WORDS: Iraq, YouTube, video, Vietnam, War, Military.com, videography, Generation Y, Baby Boomers, film, "instant history," Ramadi

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In the College of Arts and Sciences

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Introduction

My Dad was an avid military historian and an expert on the Middle East. As I was growing up, I was constantly bombarded with images of Middle Eastern conflicts and endless dinner table discussions about past wars and conflicts. I can still remember the time that my Dad came to speak to my fifth grade class about the first Gulf War. Even though this war did not seem to touch us personally, and we were too young to understand the significance, he still captured everyone's attention. Consequently, because of my upbringing, it is no surprise that I have developed a fervent interest in military history and filmic recreation of this history.

In grade school, the war had no relevance in my life, but today my friends and peers in Generation Y are the troops that are being sent to Iraq. Last year, a good friend of mine who was deployed called me from Ramadi and suggested that I watch a video someone else had posted on YouTube. He felt that this would give me some indication of what the environment around him was like. This was my first exposure to what troops are posting on the internet for friends and family to see. The video was titled "Lazy Ramadi."[1] It is a humorous spoof that actually allows one to see the awful conditions in which the troops exist and what coping mechanisms they use to survive. It stars SSG Dobbs and SSG Wright who rap to each other about their situation in Ramadi while going about their daily tasks. The other layer of interest with this video is that it is a spoof on a Saturday Night Live skit called "Lazy Sunday." Doing a take-off of a TV sketch demonstrates the video creators' desire to enter into video conversation with

commercially produced idea. In essence, they are using already existing media as a basis for new media. Generation Y understands the world through existing media, and "Lazy Ramadi" is simply another extension of this postmodern mode of thought.

Perhaps, it was the grotesque humor and cynicism that the soldiers were using to describe Ramadi that piqued my interest. I thought to myself, how can a video be funny and extremely depressing at the same time? Furthermore, I immediately understood the implications that these videos will have on our future understandings of current history and how what the troops are creating will impact our concepts of war. How does one make sense of these videos? How and why is the military allowing soldiers to capture images of sometimes violent wartime engagements and then upload them on the internet? To understand how important these videos will be, I only had to think back to recordings of past conflicts like the Vietnam War. What was written was indelibly inscribed in print, television, photographs, broadcast and film. The fictional movies have perhaps had an even greater impact because they remain in cultural circulation longer than the evening news, thus reaching audiences even today. The film dramas set in Vietnam wove a narrative around some truth, some idealism, some animosity, some righteous indignation, some patriotism and much fictional creation. The filmmakers responded to the culture of their times and the social and political atmospheres that were prevalent. So, too, do the videographers of Generation Y now in Iraq. We have been influenced by the past and we shall influence the future. Our technology will be different, but in the overall, our messages will be similar. We, too, want to share our experiences, and we will be creating our history: these videographers are creating their videos in hopes of sharing their lives and being understood. We have learned many lessons from the Baby

Boomer generation and especially from the fictional films they have produced. In this perspective, it is interesting to look at the videos of Iraq created by the troops and note the similarities, ambiguities and any influences they have garnered from the Vietnam War films produced by their elders.

Although there has been a significant amount of research devoted to war films as well as to the social, cultural and political affects of war, most of the research tends to deal with fictional film and the official news media. In turn, it seems to disregard the relationship that exists between personal accounts of the everyday aspects of "war" and the affects of a society consuming "documentary" images of actual combat and the soldiers' experience. In recent months, there have been several articles that address the videos that soldiers are posting on websites. Amanda Rivkin in "Iraq War comes to you live on YouTube," speaks to the quality of these videos by arguing that the higher quality videos are used as propaganda whereas the more basic videos are made by the troops for themselves, their friends, family and other troops.[2] When American soldiers produce and make available to the public their personal videos of conflict and life in a war zone, they are creating what George Gerbner has termed "instant history." Because of technological advancements, as well as changes in communication and media representation, the experiences of the soldier in today's war is completely different from those of the soldiers who engaged in prior wars. Likewise, re-creation and reporting of these experiences is different. Soldiers, for the first time, can present their points of view without being censored by the military or filtered and edited by news broadcasting and entertainment media.

This study will be focused on the point of view of the fighting troops and their generational cohorts back home in the United States. This research study will explore the experiences and cultural attitudes of those involved in this war, not in the war itself, and to see how Generation Y soldiers have constructed its personal thoughts about war based on what it has learned of past wars. For the majority of Generation Y members, our historical markers are old fictional films as well as newer ones about war. The original films that came out about Vietnam directly after U.S. involvement was terminated in 1975, projected an anti-war sentiment; but by the 1990s, movies were re-creating a sense of the World War II image of a "good war" that offered meaningful reasons to fight. This dichotomy of the images of Vietnam in the 1970s and 1980s movies versus this resurgence of "good war" images in the movies of the 1990s has given Generation Y a mixed bag of messages.

Many members of Generation Y have parents who were involved in the Vietnam conflict. Although we may have grown up hearing stories about our fathers in combat or training, our mothers missing their boyfriends who were in Vietnam, or those protesting the war at rallies and doing their own thing as "free love" hippies, some parents speak more of the past than others, and few can fully communicate a sense of "life during wartime." Thus, most of our knowledge of the Vietnam era comes from popular culture sources, such as the movies. Our generation today learns about history through technology; it is very rare that we step into a library to learn about the past.[3] In an age in which we are "wired," it is important to note we are still influenced by the past. Videos of today contain some of the same filmic elements of the previous narrative films such as masculinity and bravado, and yet, the videographers today have emphasized qualities of

brotherhood and companionship that were true in Vietnam as well but were generally not included in the fictional films. It is clear that Generation Y's understanding of war has been influenced by the Baby Boomers and their perspective of the Vietnam era, and it will be interesting to learn how our troops' videos of today will affect generations to come.

My thesis examines how the fictional representation and re-creation of past wars is colliding with the personal video presentations of the Iraq War. It raises questions about how war and art are experienced in a new way and also how "instant history" is made available to the public. It also focuses on questions of masculinity, self-respect, and psychological results of war. I argue that personally recorded footage of the everyday experience of war will alter the way in which society views war and copes with its aftereffects. I conduct a reception study that will show how Generation Y has used the Baby Boomers' input about the Vietnam War as a basis for its perceptions of historiography and as both a positive and negative framework for its videography.

The thesis is divided into two main sections. The first part focuses on fictional representations of the Vietnam War and how Generation Y views them. I question what we have and can learn from the media involvement in that war. The second section addresses the personal videos that are being created during the Iraq War and how these videos are commenting about or borrowing from the narrative fictional Vietnam War films. I explore how these media changes are affecting personal and societal experiences, national culture, and how these videos are beginning to appear in mainstream media as well. Finally, I discuss the importance of these videos in future fictional films or television series that include subject matter and scenes about the Iraq War.

More specifically, I address the raw footage that is being personally recorded by those on the front lines and argue that it offers an alternative to mainstream media's perspective of war and specifically the ongoing war in Iraq. I illustrate how individual videos seek to help the people who produce them, and the viewers who consume them, make sense of the people involved in war rather than the act of war itself. This study establishes the importance of these videos and personal accounts in history. My study argues that "instant history" becomes an important byproduct of the video footage that is being produced. This study delves into the psychological issues of masculinity and self respect that war imposes on the troops. And finally, my study reveals that the nature of war representation has and will continue to change due to the increasing emergence of communication globalization.

For my study, I have grouped the videos that are being produced in and about the Iraq War and those involved into six general thematic categories: memorials, combat and everyday life in Iraq, peaceful social interaction during war, brotherhood, reaction and response to the Iraq War and dissension. These generalized groupings cover a range of emotions and situations from bloody to sad and sentimental. I analyze their content to demonstrate how these videos are transforming the soldiers' experience of combat and how that experience is understood at home. I show how one group of videos document history by capturing a battle, while another group deals with the psychological aspects of camaraderie and compassion, and others depict the heartache of personal loss. The practical implications of my study will aid future historians in understanding the relevance of this technological media explosion of expression, the understanding and acceptance of the individual soldier and warfare, and how this footage is being used in

other applications. The internet allows the individual to be isolated in order to tell his own story and at the same time to be part of an emerging global culture in which with one click of the mouse one can disperse information and stories to the four corners of the earth.

Ultimately, there is a question of whether these videos help lend understanding to the troops' experiences and will help those left at home understand what their loved ones have been through better than those involved in Vietnam. I chart the impact of the Baby Boomers on Generation Y and how their "historical art work" is influencing what we are creating today. It is important to ascertain the implication of these videos in the Hollywood fictionalization of the Iraq War in both television and film and to argue that, because of the recording of history in these videos, fictional representations of war and the news media representations of war will no longer be considered the only historical pieces of relevance in military media studies.

Hayden White says that all history is made up of stories, fictions we create out of facts. Consequently, each generation builds on the stories or the history of the previous generations.[4] The comparison of the experiences of Generation Y and the Baby Boomers in wartime culture has revealed various avenues for future research; such as, questions about how female soldiers might use videos to combine images of masculinity and the ideology of proper soldier identity into their experiences. Another pertinent topic for further research is national security and the effects these videos have on our security at home and abroad. This study has shed light on the national security implications that can arise from a lack of censorship and the communication globalization boom, but there are far greater consequences that can be delved into in continued research. The accessibility

of the internet and cyberspace, lack of censorship and lack of military filtering of images posted to websites pose definite problems in the arena of national security. Does the easy access to the internet help the enemy? What other deterrents are there for internet coverage of war?

Methods

This study will employ methodologies of critical analysis of film and video texts as well as cultural historical analysis in order to examine the impact that personally recorded accounts of soldiers' combat and everyday experiences in war as depicted on internet video sites have on the individuals producing the videos as well as those viewing them. By relying on historical analysis, I will have the opportunity to compare media artifacts from the Vietnam era to the current war in Iraq. In turn this will be a reception study of how Generation Y perceives the films about the Vietnam War made by baby boomers and how this perception has manifested itself in personal videos coming out of Iraq today. I will analyze the content and themes of the most critically acclaimed Vietnam films and Iraq videos, asking how history is made, produced and understood.

History itself is a misunderstood term. To the layman it would simply include facts about the past arranged in chronological format. Keith Jenkins, a scholar of postmodern historical theory, says history is first and foremost a literary narrative about the past: a literary composition of data into narrative in which the historian creates meaning for the past.[5] Jenkins further points out that history does not necessarily correspond with the reality of the past. History is always about power and is never innocent but always ideological.[6] He thus forces historians to question basic assumptions of history as an empirical method rather than an epistemological form of literature that

includes personal philosophies of life.[7] Based on Jenkins' assertions about history, historiography then refers to the writings of historians whereas the word "history" refers to the whole ensemble of the past.[8] Another history philosopher, Hayden White, was one the first scholars to relate history to storytelling. He defined history as the discourse around events rather than the original events which prompted the discourse.[9] White argues that histories are not only about events but also about the possible set of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure. These sets of relationships are not imminent in the events themselves, but rather they exist in the minds of the historians reflecting on them.[10]

George Gerbner, in an article on "instant history," uses a definition of historiography which states that as a communicative activity historiography relates the past to the present and the future.[11] He goes on to say that like any communicative activity it is dependent on the skill of the communicator, the means and modes of communication, and the events being communicated.[12] Gerbner asserts that in general when the means of communication change the access to and control over communication changes and consequently history also changes.[13] More specifically, Gerbner discusses a recent particular change that is focused and limited to brief periods of high intensity and yet is far reaching in its implications; this is what he refers to as "instant history."[14] "Instant history" involves the existent and emerging technologies available to the public as sources of entertainment and information. These include video cameras, the internet, television, satellite, computers, etc. Other scholars, like Anthony Cordesman feel that "instant history" is not a viable source of information and it should not be perceived as the truth.[15] Perhaps, he feels people put too much trust in the power of the image.

I will use these various interpretations to argue that the Iraq videos are in fact creating both history and "instant history." I will also argue that these videos are historical narratives projecting the power of reality. Unlike the narrative fictional portrayals of the Vietnam War that are representations or historical cognizance recreated on film, I will argue that Generation Y in their production of the Iraq videos are creating personal histories based on their personal perceptions of Vietnam films. It is not possible to reach an absolute all encompassing truth or understanding of war because it is open for individual interpretation and therefore individual creation of history; but, in the same respect, history is in fact a narrative constructed about the past. The uses of history and "instant history" as a means of research have both positive and negative implications. The negative implication to the historical approach is its narrative and conclusions are susceptible to constant reinterpretation and re-creation. History is a narrative that bears the prejudice and interpretive properties of the storyteller/historian. Perhaps the most positive aspect of using history as a methodology is that it will enable me to view the individual segments of the various videos as documented accounts of an action that actually took place even though it has been edited by the videographer/ historian of this particular narrative story.

It is important to introduce Generation Y and to note that history can be interpreted differently by different generations. What becomes an issue is the delineation of where one generation stops and another begins. Part of the problem with a generational divide, especially with Generation Y, is that no one can agree on exact birth years that are encompassed in the specific generations. Generations are named by looking backward, therefore who or what years Generation Y includes is still up for

debate. Both, Mark McCrindle and Dr. Earl R. Washburn suggest that Generation Y includes those born between 1982 and 2000.[16] According to these dates, I am technically a member of Generation X, but, as many do, I sit on the cusp. Washburn states that Generation X places more emphasis on "close friends and virtual families than on material success or traditional associations."[17] He describes Generation Y as a group that has grown up with instant messaging and telephone text messaging, much like Baby Boomers grew up with the telephone and Generation X grew up with the television.[18] McCrindle states that Generation X was the first to use personal computers, to be exposed to the AIDS epidemic, single parent families, the growth of multiculturalism and the downsizing of companies.[19] He compares Generation Y by saying that they are the age of the internet, cable television, globalization, environmentalism, and September 11. These descriptions cause a blurring of lines between generations. What creates the defining moment of a generation? What memories are the most important to each generation? I have chosen to write this paper from the viewpoint of Generation Y because their understanding of history and therefore their reactions to the present are what I am trying to measure. In my opinion, Generations should be framed by defining moments rather than birth years. For example, a child born in a post 9/11 world will never understand the splendid isolation and freedom that existed in the United States before. Likewise, a child born after the US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975 will never understand a world in which returning soldiers were always heroes. I have chosen to use my own age framework for Generation Y that roughly encompasses 1975 through about 1990. I feel that this is an appropriate parameter for my study because it includes the age of the youngest soldier fighting in Iraq.

Materials and Text

This study utilizes primary sources such as personal documentary style footage taken by soldiers on the front lines and at home that has been posted on the internet. I have divided these videos into the six general categories in order to show the differences and similarities of various videos that have been analyzed for this research project. These videos are categorized into general areas of: memorials, combat, everyday life in Iraq, peaceful social interaction during war, brotherhood, reaction and response to the Iraq War and dissension. The videos are drawn from internet video sites such as YouTube.com, Military.com, ebaumsworld.com, MySpace videos, ifilm War Zone and Google video; however my main research focuses on two sites in particular: youtube.com and military.com. I chose these sites because youtube.com is one of the most popular video sites on the internet and military.com is a site that caters specifically to the military. Furthermore, I selected these videos from specific areas of Iraq or units in Iraq that are in the most hostile areas. These sites allow people to post personal videos and commentary that are unfiltered and uncensored and available to all site visitors.

I compare and contrast these videos with popular fictional films that depict the Vietnam War. I will be looking at four popular Vietnam War films. Among these are *The Deer Hunter* (1978),[20] *Apocalypse Now* (1979), [21] *Platoon* (1986),[22] and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989).[23] I chose these films because of their popularity, recognition factor and wide cultural impact.

Literature Review

Vietnam War and Iraq War Comparisons

Individual soldiers as well as the public experience war in distant countries through various media formats. This experience has changed significantly over the years from the Vietnam War experience to the present day experience in Iraq. The literature on Vietnam will serve as background material to compare and contrast the differences in media presentation of the Iraq War and previous wars that have had US involvement. The questions that are relevant for research are those that involve Generation Y's perception of history and the fictional films that become the representations of Vietnam and how this transforms into what troops are presenting today.

Are the soldiers' experiences in Iraq different than in prior wars because of their constant integration or connection with the U.S., home and the rest of the world via the cyber world of the internet? Is this technology of video, internet and blogging helpful in curing or curbing the isolation that the soldier may experience because of the constant instantaneous integration in cyberspace?

Films that were made in the Vietnam era depicting war or military engagements are often different from those made during the pre-Vietnam era. There is a great deal of literature that deals with whether or not film themes were altered in the post-Vietnam era and how. Jenefer P. Shute, in her article "Framing Vietnam, Films on the Vietnam War," found that films did indeed change in the post-Vietnam era.[24] The transformations were about the depiction of the military and U.S. role in Vietnam and how that depiction has evolved by examining films from the late 1980s onward. For example, war films dealing with WWI and WWII made prior to films about the Vietnam War followed a pattern that

seemed to depict the romanticized version of war thus making it more of a sub genre itself. Vietnam films especially tended to borrow aspects used in other genres such as the Western in which the hero/main protagonist is depicted as "a loner" content to save the day and ride off into the sunset.[25] Perhaps, this is because the Western has a clear-cut exhibition of the good versus the bad. As Vietnam War films have developed, it seems there has been less chance of romanticization. Horror is shown on both sides of the conflict and is committed by both sides in the conflict. Karen Krizanovich viewed Vietnam as America's version of the Holocaust and the consequence of that thinking spurred filmmakers in the 1980s to start making films depicting evil and wrongdoing on both sides of the conflict.[26] Simon Rose examined specific films such as Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987)[27] in order to demonstrate the departure from the usual war film. The typical war film fostered ideas of heroism, glory, and pursuit of the American dream. It also included love stories and love triangles depicting two soldiers fighting for one woman.[28] The films that were considered a departure from the typical war film did not follow specific patterns and oftentimes they relied on grotesque humor in order to depict the overt masculinity of the military. They relied on masculine sensibilities, sex, drugs and rock n'roll. I will return to the importance of masculinity later in a section that questions the psychological affects of self respect as well as the role of masculinity in the war experience.

The postmodern view of the Vietnam War films analyzed their frequent depiction of the departure from American mythology and the pursuit of the American dream. These films embraced a harsh reality in which camaraderie with fellow Americans was no longer a focal point.[29] The use of cinematic representations of war and the role of

Vietnam in society shows the beginning of the divisive nature of war in our society. The conflict in Vietnam left an indelible mark on American culture, society, politics, and economy. Vietnam occurred during the shift from modernism to a postmodern society. The modern America was an assembly line Fordist-based construct, whereas postwar America found itself in a technologically-advanced computer based consumerist society.[30] More emphasis was being placed on the individual rather than success achieved by a group. The economy began to collapse as a result of the American loss in Vietnam and the government also began to collapse, leaving United States citizens to distrust the government and to rely on globalism and consumerism as a way of life. Mark Taylor examines how the Vietnam War has been interpreted historically through the use of literature and film. History cannot fully explain a postmodern War, thus forcing scholars and laymen to rely on other sources to bring understanding of the war to society. Resulting from these alternative forms of understanding, the societal effects of wars are the products of writers of fiction in literature or film. The study of the history, literature and film that pertains to the Vietnam War helps society understand the war better because each story is told differently and can cater to different understandings of the conflict.[31]

There has been a substantial amount of literature that examines this phenomenon by mapping out history as a timeline of the conflicts in Indochina and by examining the different elements that make up the literature and other fictional portrayals of Vietnam such as the heroes, battles, villains, and veterans.[32] Although this literature does shed light on how we can look at war today, it still does not really outline how the actual reporting, recording and viewing of fighting has changed. The critical and thematic analyses of the films that depict the Vietnam War have been a major source of

understanding that tumultuous era. Jeremy Devine conducted a content analysis on Vietnam films and he used that analysis to explain past events rather than pave a way for how we should think of using these tools in future wars.[33] Scholars have categorized Vietnam films in essentially the same sub genres as World War II films. They have used themes such as combat, POWs, home front melodramas, and stories of returning veterans. The huge difference would be that prior war films described wars as "good war." But, the Vietnam films did not attempt to follow the ideas of presenting notions such as getting into the understanding of why we engage in conflict but rather they began to deal with deep-seated social conflicts such as racism, Orientalism[34] and irreconcilable cultural differences. Consequently, Hollywood's representation of the Vietnam War basically became a portrait of a nation not at war with a foreign enemy but rather at war with itself.[35]

Fictional films affect how people perceive war. They tend to shape what people think about the past and the cultural conflicts surrounding war and create history through a fictional narrative. In particular, media coverage seems to change and progress with each war that the United States is engaged in. For example, in World War I, films were made to show the glory of being a soldier and fighting for our country, in particular films such as King Vidor's *The Big Parade* (1925)[36] and William Wellman's *Wings* (1927).[37] Films about World War II such as *Desperate Journey*(1942)[38] starring Ronald Reagan and Errol Flynn and *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1950)[39] starring John Wayne also captured our imaginations because they promoted the "we can do anything" attitude. These were stories of returning heroes and the glory involved in fighting. The patriotism within these films was a key element to their success. They were presented in a manner that

encouraged audience viewing even in a post-war setting when many families had lost loved ones to disease as well as war. They were positive propaganda films. The fear that the United States faced after World War II was the realization that we had lost our splendid isolation and the American dream that the United States could remain uninvolved. These thoughts were replaced with the idea that we must be involved globally: we became the reluctant heroes. The Vietnam War brought a much harsher reality and fear to the United States. For the first time, we were no longer the returning heroes; and we failed in a mission that many questioned in the first place. The realization that not only did we not live in splendid isolation but we were also not omnipotent created a cultural and political schism that was irreparable. Due to technological advancements within film and the lack of censorship of the post-classical film period, there became an inherent difference between World War I, World War II, and Vietnam War films. All of these changes happened in the predominantly celluloid film and news era that spanned a time period through the end of Vietnam. Although, the Korean War and the Vietnam War were the first wars to be televised and brought into our homes, these images still had the censorship that is implicit in network productions. Even though these were considered live broadcasts, there was still a delay that allowed footage to be censored and cut.

There is a great deal of literature that concerns the degree to which depiction of war in films changed in the post-Vietnam era and what exactly those changes were. The changes concerned the depiction of the military and the U.S. role in Vietnam and how those interpretations have varied. This can be studied by examining films from the late 1980s onward.[40] America's obsession with the Vietnam War still persists today;

however, those most fascinated by the war are filmmakers. Over four hundred Vietnam War films have been made, while only three were actually made during the conflict and of those only one, *The Green Berets* (1968),[41] became popular.[42]

Questions about the impact of media on war have become particularly relevant since the Vietnam War. As the means of communication have become more sophisticated, so have the uses of the material presented. The Gulf War made real-time coverage of war both possible and problematic. Within the last fifteen years, war coverage has evolved to include the internet. Even though the internet has offered a more global form of communication, the problems it creates have intensified[43]

Other forms of visual media are the documentary film/videos that are coming out of Iraq. Bruce Newman talks about "*The War Tapes*,"[44] a collaborative film from a team that includes director Deborah Scranton, producer Robert May and producer/editor Steve James. This is a documentary that is done with the help of soldiers who shot footage of the war.[45] They would videotape all day and then send the footage via instant message back to the directors of the film.[46] The participants and producers wanted to include all political views and the soldiers hoped that it will challenge everyone's preconceived notions of Iraq, the war, and all other implications of our involvement.[47]

Because many feel that mainstream journalism is the voice of power, scholarly research has revealed that people are turning away from the conventional sources of news and information and looking to the internet for new sources of knowledge and intelligence.[48] Instances such as the Abu Ghraib scandal of how we treated prisoners in Iraq have caused many to turn away from traditional news coverage that has often sided with the American government. In other examples, especially in the United States,

several senior broadcasters have confessed that if they had challenged and exposed the lies about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction instead of siding with the government and amplifying and justifying them, the Iraqi invasion may not have taken place.[49] As opposed to what has been whitewashed on the television, the information that has appeared on the internet has been much more brutal, heinous, and accurate. According to Anthony Harwood, seeing Nick Berg forced to identify himself on video before his barbaric execution, which was also filmed, makes the use of video by Al Qaeda unconscionable.[50]

Psychological questions of masculinity and self-respect

How has digital media and the internet changed the coping mechanisms for the soldiers involved in the Iraq War? How was the self-image of defeat projected in the media coverage of Vietnam? What are the inherent differences in the attitudes toward Vietnam and Iraq and do the videos that are coming out and about troops in Iraq help change self-image and cope with the hardships of war? Does the question of masculinity and masculine challenges and expectations cause significant psychological pressure to the participants of war?

Literature about fictional Vietnam War films such as *Coming Home, the Deer Hunter*, and *Apocalypse Now* offer a psychologically negative perspective of the Vietnam War by depicting its effects on several individuals and their relationships. Melvin Small deals with the films that documented the anti-Vietnam War movement and the disenfranchisement of returning soldiers.[51] Frank Tomasulo discusses in depth the ambivalence of films such as Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*.[52] Robert Torry discusses the fact that scholars have focused on the concepts of masculine identity in the

Post-Vietnam period. These concepts encompass the idea of the innocence and purity of American youth within American ideology before the corruption and loss in Vietnam. Torry goes on to reveal that several films of the Vietnam era take on a therapeutic approach. They represent an indirect approach to the contemporary trauma of American outrage and impotence in our position in Vietnam. In particular the producers of these films are using them therapeutically to reveal their tone and mood about war and film in the post classical Hollywood era.[53] Mark Lacy also defined the ideas of moral anxiety about war within films of the Vietnam Era. The idea that we as Westerners like films that deal with our nobility and authority and only with movies of the postmodern era and particularly about Vietnam did we allow ourselves to indulge in our own bad conscience and yet the films gave us moral security because we were seen as overall noble, responsible, and good.[54]

One of the dichotomies seen in the Iraq videos is the role that masculinity plays in the conflict between the fighting-conquering-hero-soldier image, and that of the humane caring individual who might not be considered as manly or heroic. In understanding the relationship of people and the State, it is interesting to reference the Reagan era when he offered himself up as the image of the "hard body" leader. Susan Jeffords proffers the equation as being the reformulation of the relationship between the people in the nation in terms of militarism, patriotism, individualism, family values, and religious beliefs as a re-articulation of both the individual and the nation in terms of masculine identities in such a way that actions by either are seen as impinging on and determining the other.[55] The concept of masculinity as an influential propellant in American political history reveres leaders who are decisive, tough, aggressive, strong and domineering.[56]

Did the available research answer the questions that I wanted to pose?

How have the fictional representations that Baby Boomer filmmakers created affected the way in which Generation Y perceives history and therefore their own place in that history? Consequently, how has Generation Y interpreted its own place in the Iraq War, and how has it recorded its experiences? Has personally recorded footage posted on the internet created "instant history", "instant art," and served as a forum for a coping method for psychological issues of masculinity and self respect? Furthermore, have these videos helped make sense of the people involved in war rather than the act of war itself?

The literature that I reviewed seemed to answer questions about news media and fictional film coverage. There was also literature about soldiers' blogs but, at least up to this time, there have been only a few newspaper, magazine and television specials about internet sites such as youtube.com and military.com. Even though there has been an abundance of official news media, it seems to disregard the relationship between personal accounts of the everyday aspects of war and the effects of a society consuming personal images of soldiers during wartime. Personal images from the Iraq War are being brought home in real time via cyberspace and the video camera, whereas in previous wars the form of communication was more mediated.

In the past personal communication from soldiers in combat came in the form of letters written home. These letters were addressed to and shared among family and friends but usually arrived after great delays and having been censored. In essence, there really was no way for an individual to communicate his own images and thoughts of war publicly unless perhaps they were published in a newspaper or magazine, and this was not the norm.

The literature has revealed that there has not yet been a great deal of information written about the personal footage that soldiers are taking of their everyday life in Iraq. Most of the literature that is available about what is appearing on the World Wide Web depicts the recruitment of Al Qaeda, propaganda by larger organizations, on all sides of the war, and general news coverage of the day to day conflict. The soldiers in Iraq have changed the way we are looking at and will continue to look at war. With personal video documentation, we can see personal bias as opposed to a political or corporate bias view of life on the front lines as well as at home. Many soldiers have found this to be a coping mechanism not only to remember their experiences but also to help explain those experiences and the aftereffects at home.

Notes

[1] LovePotionN9. "Lazy Ramadi," August 22, 2006. < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG-0OvrcLU0>

[2] Amanda Rivkin, "Iraq war comes to you live on YouTube" Columbia News Service. 2/27/2007. <http://jscms.jrn.columbia.edu/cns/2007-02-27/rivkin-iraqwarrealitytv>

[3] For more reading on Generation Y and how it is influenced as well as how it is influencing refer to the following articles: Stephanie Armour, "Generation Y: They've arrived at work with a new attitude." Jeff Dickey and Jack Sullivan, "Generational Shift in Media Habits: Advertisers must embrace change in order to draw new audiences." Jonathan Duffy, "Generation Y's chance to shine?" Egcanty, "Looking to the future: Technology and Innovation in the New Year." Anna Greenberg, "OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era." Roger M. Ingbretsen, "The Why (Y) Generation Is Here! Excellent News Item." Sharon Jayson, "Generation Y gets involved," and "Generation Y's goal? Wealth and fame." Mark McCrindle, "Understanding Generation Y." Earl R. Washburn, MD, "Are You Ready for Generation X?" Camille Dodero, Gen (X+Y) + WTC=?" Gettysburg, "A Simple Address to the Baby Boomer's from a Generation Y Guy." Michael Kryzanek, "Anxieties define Generation Y." Joanna L. Krotz, "Tough customers: how to reach Gen Y.

[4] Hayden White, "Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism." (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

[5] Keith Jenkins, Re-Thinking History, (London: Routledge Classics, 1991) xii.

[6] Jenkins.

[7] Jenkins, xii- xiii.

[8] Hayden White.

[9] Frank P. Tomasulo, "i'll see it when i believe it," Vivian Sobchak, ed. The Persistance of History: Cinema, T.V., and the Modern Event. 1996: 69

[10] Hayden White.

[11] Ernst Briesach, "Historiography," in International Encyclopedia of Communications, Vol. 2 (Oxford UP, 1989) 280.

[12] George Gerbner, "Instant History – Image History: Lessons of the Persian Gulf War," Velvet Light Trap, 31 (1993): 3.

[13] George Gerbner. 3.

[14] George Gerbner. 3.

[15] Anthony Cordesman, The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics and Military Lessons, (Praeger Publishers, 2003).

[16] Earl R. Washburn, MD, "Are You Ready for GenerationX?" The Physician Executive, Jan-Feb 2000. 54.

Mark McCrindle, Understanding Generation Y, "The Australian Leadership Foundation, 1.

[17] Washburn, 53.

[18] Washburn, 54.

[19] McCrindle, 2.

[20] The Deer Hunter, dir Michael Cimino, Universal Studios, 1978

[21] Apocalypse Now, dir Francis Ford Coppola, Paramount, 1979.

[22] Platoon, dir Oliver Stone, Orion Pictures Corporation, 1986.

[23] Born on the Fourth of July, dir, Oliver Stone, Universal Studios, 1989

[24] Jenefer P. Shute, "Framing Vietnam. Films on the Vietnam War," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars 21. 2-4 (1989): 144.

[25] Jenefer Shute. 144-154

[26] Simon Rose, "Hollywood's War Wound; Film-Makers Can't Forget 'Nam Horrors," SCREEN CHAT, The Mirror. (MGN LTD; 2004 Gale Group)

Sept . 5, 1996: 5.

[27] Full Metal Jacket, dir Stanley Kubrick, Warner Brothers, 1987.

[28] Simon Rose, 5.

[29] Janet C Moore, "For Fighting and for Fun: Kubricks's Complicitous Critique in Full Metal Jacket," Velvet Light Trap. (1993): 39.

[30] Frank Trentmann, "Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption," Journal of Contemporary History, 39 3 (2004): 387.

[31] Mark Taylor, The Vietnam War in History, Literature and Film, (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2003) 1-10.

[32] Mark Taylor, 1-10.

[33] Jeremy M. Devine, Vietnam at 24 Frames a Second. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999) 1-27.

[34] Orientalism as defined by Edward Said is the creation of an intellectual tradition in which a scholar studies the Orient and believes it to be the "other." The "other" is the Orient making it strange and mysterious while the Occident is civilized and obvious. (Said). Edward W. Said, Orientalism, (New York: Vintage, 1979).

[35] Thomas Schatz, forward, Vietnam at 24 Frames a Second by Jeremy M. Devine (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999) vii-ix.

[36] The Big Parade, dir King Vidor, MGM, 1925.

[37] Wings, dir William Wellman, Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, 1927.

[38] Desperate Journey, dir Raoul Walsh, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1942.

[39] Sands of Iwo Jima, dir Allen Dwan, Republic Pictures, 1950.

[40] Jenefer P. Schute, 144.

[41] The Green Berets, dir Warner Bros-Seven Arts, 1968.

[42] Jeremy M. Devine.

[43] Philip Seib in his article "Politics of the Fourth Estate," (Harvard International Review 22 3) has stated that critics have questioned whether American Policy should be driven by scenes that are accessible to cameras and make the most impact onscreen. He continues to say that in debates about foreign policy, televised images become a central part of the problems discussed, and therefore create media driven reality. Since the Gulf War technology has made real time coverage of combat feasible, the ethical issues that arise for news agencies become important. They include security concerns, the impact on families at home who see their loved ones captured or killed, and for the soldiers themselves who may return home to see their plight reenacted over and over again. Jacqueline E. Sharkey in "The Television War: Unparalleled Access and Breakthroughs in Technology Produced Riveting Live Coverage of the War in Iraq. But How Complete a Picture Did T.V. Deliver?" (American Journalism Review 25 4. (May 2003): 18+.) noted that American journalism entered a new era with the live coverage of the war in Iraq. Although, they were attempting to give live honest reports, television limited what

viewers saw on the front lines by sanitizing the coverage. She goes on to state that television could give us the evidence of what took place, but the reality is that, for the most part, we did not hear the shrieks and groans of people suffering nor did we share in the fears when the soldiers heard bombs going off close to them. Since the Vietnam War, scholars have debated the question of whether graphic pictures of casualties in war should be televised. For the troops in Iraq, this is a non issue because they are able to record what they choose with no restrictions and then upload it to video sites for any and all to see.

Literature on war documentaries for film and television covers another aspect of war coverage as opposed to real-time news coverage. Peter Taylor in "Web of Terror," (The Mail on Sunday. (July 24, 2005): 30) addresses a BBC documentary that shows how terrorist groups are using the web for recruitment. As a documentary filmmaker, Peter Taylor, discusses the terrorists' increased usage of the internet for recruitment and propaganda purposes and points out that there are many terrorist factions and their propaganda is not necessarily united. He discovered that the Jihad world in cyberspace is limitless, unregulated, uncensored, and gruesome. He argues that the internet is a deadly weapon in a group like Al Qaeda's hands. Videos of jihad training camps, suicide attacks, and events such as beheading carried out by al-Zarqawi can be found all over the world wide web and that these images are influencing young impressionable men who want to give their lives for the Jihad.

[44] The War Tapes, dir Deborah Scranton, SenArt Films, 2006.

[45] Bruce Newman, "War in the Raw: U.S. Soldiers in Iraq Wield Cameras to Show Realities Transcending Political Differences," Mercury News (July 11, 2006).

[46] Bruce Newman.

[47] Bruce Newman.

[48] John Pilger, "If You Want to Know the Truth About Iraq, Join the Millions Who Have Given Up on the Silences of the Mainstream Media," New Statesman 134 4768 (November 28, 2005): 24.

[49] John Pilger, 24.

[50] Anthony Harwood, "Barbaric; Killers Put Video of U.S. Worker's Death on Internet," The Mirror (May 12, 2004): 2.

[51] Melvin Small, Covering Dissent: The Media and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994) 1.

[52] Frank P. Tomasulo, "the Politics of Ambivalence: *Apocalypse Now* as pro-war and anit-war Film." From Hanoi to Hollywood. (Rutgers, 1990)

[53] Robert Torry, "Therapeutic Narrative: The Wild Bunch, Jaws, and Vietnam," Velvet Light Trap 31 (1993): 27-38.

[54] Mark J. Lacy, "War, cinema, and Moral Anxiety," Alternatives: Global, Local, Political 28 5 (2003) 611+.

[55] Susan Jeffords, Hard Bodies Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004) 13-14.

[56] Jeffords, 11

Chapter One

"Gooooooooood, Morning Vietnam! Hey, this is not a test! This is rock n' roll! Time to rock it from the Delta to the D.M.Z!"[1] The loud crazed voice of Robin Williams, as radio deejay Adrian Cronauer, booms through the microphone and broadcasts across radio waves bringing life to an otherwise lethargic Armed Forces Radio Network. Barry Levinson released *Good Morning Vietnam* in 1988. Focusing on the music and pop culture of 1965, he told a story about one man shrouded in humor and determined to fight the system. Levinson is just one of the Baby Boomer filmmakers who recreated aspects of the Vietnam War in the form of narrative fictional film.

This chapter examines how the Baby Boomer creators of fictional Vietnam films were shaped by the time period in which they lived as well as the artistic and social influences that surrounded them, and how Generation Y has perceived these filmic historical contributions. It will use the analytical insights of postmodernist media critics. In order to understand films made by Baby Boomers about the Vietnam War, I will also explore films made about previous wars in which there was U.S. involvement.

Theoretical Discussion:
Postmodernism and our understanding of history

In order to look at Vietnam films as historical artifacts, we must situate them within the postmodern era and look at what influenced the Baby Boomer filmmakers of

the 1970s-1990s who were trying to affect others with their work. These films have become the products and history of postmodernity and later generations have grown up interpreting them within a postmodern framework and ideology. Not only have we viewed these postmodern products, but we, Generation Y, have also emulated them in our current mode of production: videos. The subject matter within the Vietnam films can be characterized as simulacra of the 1960s.[2]

Simulacrum, a concept proffered by Jean Baudrillard in the 1970s, is sometimes defined as "an image of an image: not a copy of an original, or a fake, but a free floating sign produced by endlessly self-generating systems."[3] In other words, the mass historical cognizance of Vietnam is what has been recreated on film. This interpretation of history emerges from the Baby Boomers' postmodern artistic world. These visual narrative interpretations have created a history that has greatly affected the beliefs of Generation Y. Generation Y has created meaning from these artifacts by viewing them through a postmodern lens.

The Vietnam War, first presented to Americans in their own living rooms with television news coverage, evoked new feelings for the Baby Boomers about the essence of war. For this generation, prior war engagement was gleaned either from written media, press, newsreels, school history lessons, or narrative fictional films. World War II films and press coverage tended to be positive and morale-boosting in their presentation of the war as a "good war," and now for the first time, this Baby Boomer generation witnessed an American loss of confidence and morale. Their reactions to this change in attitude forced them to present their views in negative portrayals of Vietnam: anti-war marches, leftist films that depicted anti-war sentiment and dour depictions of the war in

Vietnam and of those fighting it. Commercially-produced, mainstream Hollywood films can be analyzed as cultural indicator of American society's zeitgeist: popular films can act as teachers informing us about the past, present and even warning or commenting on the future. Vietnam War films were a postmodern expression and they helped to create a representation that has been interpreted as history by Generation Y.

Films that depict historic events conjure a constructed interpretation of history. Not only are films examined and looked upon as contributions to education in history and culture, but they also contribute to a pedagogical education of those who consume the images. In viewing and studying films that depict the Vietnam War, one is exposed to the different ways in which the war was perceived. Keith Jenkins proffers the concept that films construct history into a narrative and this narrative can in turn impact the way in which one knows and relates to history and historical events.[4] Frederic Jameson, in Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, argues that we as a society have endured an historical lesson that culture has become material, and that with postmodernity, we are now in a position to understand that it has always been materialistic in its structures and functions. He further suggests that postmodernists use the word medium or media to describe this cultural awakening and this medium or media encompasses three different signals: artistic mode, a specific technology organized around a specific technological apparatus, and a signal of social institution. Jameson postulates that these three elements do not simply define the word medium, rather they are included in order to construct or complete a definition.[5] In essence, he is arguing that culture today is medium much like McLuhan's "medium is the message." Therefore, in postmodernity we must realize that culture, no matter in what form it arrives, is always

media or a medium.[6] Jameson argues that film "remain[s] an essentially modernist formulation, locked in a set of cultural values and categories which are in full postmodernism demonstrably antiquated and 'historical.'"[7] Jameson argues that film is increasingly dependent on forms, technology, material and themes. He says that video is the most likely candidate for cultural hegemony. Even though it is newer, does this mean that video is teaching film or more likely that the videographers are seeing through postmodern lenses? As we review the Iraq videos, we will see a pattern that reflects these videos as more indicative of a postmodern culture and how that culture views the essentially postmodern Vietnam films. What does this ultimately mean for war videos and films? Is this the inverted sense that Baudrillard was referring to when he spoke about logical order and its reproduction: images that do not just intersect with the real, but they precede it, anticipate it, absorb it, and produce it?[8]

Jameson argues that "released from all conventional constraints, experimental video allows us to witness the full range of possibilities and potentialities of the medium in a way which illuminates its various more restricted uses, the latter being subsets and special cases of the former."[9] Framing this concept in a postmodern environment, does this then mean that videos' uses are unlimited even though the soldiers shooting the Iraq videos are following film aesthetics? Is Jameson also saying that videos have more ability to be truthful or at least encompass more possibilities to depict something based on the nature of their technology? Jameson states that the video camera is the machine that can be seen as both the object and the subject, alike and indifferently.[10] This is because the videographers are dissolved along with the spectators: they are invisible.[11] In his discussion and analysis, Jameson is discussing experimental video art which can

readily be applied to the war videos because in many ways they too are experimental pieces of art.

There are many inherent differences between narrative films and real-time videos. In movies, the narrative is structured so that the passing of time is done with filmic devices such as a clock in the background; real-time is not part of this narrative. The idea that codes are part of film viewing has always been indelibly marked in our thinking and conceptualization of movies. Classical Hollywood Cinema Fordist type production had certain filmic narrative tendencies that the masses knew were part of the movie. With the inception of live action videos, especially videos of battle in which the layman filmmaker doesn't spend a significant amount of time editing, the images are in real time. Jameson argues that because of the presence of the technology or video camera as the machine, we are still allowed to escape real consciousness that this is reality in real time. The device almost allows us to fictionalize the images on the other end of the lens. This is the same effect that the soldier has when looking through the lens: he is distancing himself from the actual event, the camera is a coping mechanism. It aids in removing the reality. And yet, this real-time filming can have a diametrically opposite effect in that these horrific images of war are captured on lasting video, and therefore can be experienced repeatedly, bringing that reality constantly into focus and not allowing for escapism. Since they were filmed years after the conflict and were depictions or recreations of what happened, the Vietnam films were much less accurate about what really happened. Consequently, will we, Generation Y, ever really see the truth in Vietnam?

Art is truth: it is a manifestation and expression of someone's truth. Can we then assume that video is also truth because it is an instant art and an instant history?

Postmodernism allows for differences and similarities. Generation Y's postmodernist approach encourages the production of videos in Iraq because they offer immediate gratification. Jameson suggests "that video is unique-and in that sense historically privileged or symptomatic-because it is the only art or medium in which this ultimate seam between space and time is the very locus of the form, and also because its machinery uniquely dominates and depersonalizes subject and object alike, transforming the former into a quasi-material registering apparatus for the machine time of the latter and of the video image or 'total flow.'"[12] Generation Y has learned from narrative films which are historical representations and in their postmodern approach, they are creating videos to document and own experiences and their personal art and creations of history. Because postmodernism is an artistic and stylistic eclecticism that encourages or ushers in a dissemination of information and images across national boundaries, it is the perfect environment for video discourse and display and the creation of history via cyberspace.[13]

Pop culture begins to mix with high culture and other forms of culture in postmodernity; therefore films like *Apocalypse Now* (1979)[14] emphasize pop cultural traits. They are signified by using scenes like the Playboy bunny show and the different music that is played for the soldiers in Vietnam. One example of this is a scene on Captain Willard's boat when a young boy is shot to death while he is listening to 1960's music. In postmodernity there are no clear cut boundaries in music, art, film, or literature. Nostalgia and retro are characteristic features of postmodern styles and this can be seen in the newer films about Vietnam- older styles are revisited in newer contexts like film, television, clothing, and hairstyles. History is represented through nostalgic images of pop culture and fantasies of the past. In this regard, history becomes a style.

Culture begins to lose its ability or capacity to retain its own past.[15] Postmodernity thus encourages us to live in the present, and this constantly changing present then steps on tradition. Jameson says that the information function of the media helps us forget and to act as agents and mechanisms of our historical amnesia.[16]

Film is only one historical resource depicting the Vietnam era. It is also necessary to explain the roles of news media, fictional presentations, available technologies and the personal and societal experiences that were recorded during that period, as well as the effects these images have had on the Baby Boomer generation who grew up with Vietnam in their living rooms. Due to technological advancements in filmmaking and the decline of censorship in the post-classical film period, there became an inherent difference between the way war was displayed in Vietnam media versus earlier depictions of World War I, World War II, and Korea. During the Vietnam War, television brought the fighting into our homes even though the broadcasts were delayed, censored, and cut. The evening news on TV was also shown only once and reruns are not as available as the films are. Technology was advancing although it was still limited, in that it could not be instantaneously delivered the way it can today with the emergence of satellites and cyberspace.

Rex Miller, in an article written for The Futurist, quoted Marshall McLuhan's famous statement that declared "'the medium is the message'. Watching a war on television is very different from reading about that war in a newspaper."[17] Although printed media continues to play an important role in communication, it lost its dominance in the early 1950s with the onset of television. The Baby Boomer generation grew up watching television and therefore they were exposed to the images of Vietnam on the

nightly news. Consequently, they were also responsible for the Vietnam films that have since been created as a reaction to what they were exposed to on television and in general. Therefore, it is important to look back at this medium and see how it gave rise to the images that were projected on the movie screen that now influence the thinking of an entire generation today. Television had the ability to show the world to itself.[18] Hundreds of millions of people sitting at home in their own living rooms could see far off places and world leaders easier than they could often see their neighbors next door. Television broke down the barriers that separated the rich from the poor, the white from the black, and, within the limitations of Cold War ideology, one nation from another. With these walls crumbling, the American people could get an idea about the horrors of the Vietnam War, and for the first time see that their government could not explain away its failures.[19] Where print had created and stimulated reflected thinking, broadcast elevated desire and emotion and encouraged reflexive thinking; that is to say, television demanded only our attention and reaction and required no analytical thinking, historical perspective or connection to other events.[20] Trans-coding news media coverage of the Vietnam War was a kaleidoscope product of postmodernity in that the created representation was a public relation's gesture meant for mass consumption. This did not encourage people to inquire further about the Vietnam War, and its history was never really discussed in mainstream media.[21]

In many respects, television images leave information open to various interpretations and meanings that encourage us to keep our options open and "go with the flow."[22] The age of television has taken the human's ability to learn back to earlier ages that experienced learning as what could be directly observed. Pundits expected that

people in the television age would have a better grasp on reality in the political, commercial and relevant current events arena than those of the past.[23] The reality was that researchers were disappointed when they found low statistics especially in the area of understanding politics that concern Americans. According to their reports, what has been presented in television news has not made great contributions to added knowledge for the majority of television viewers because the visuals seem to contain too little information to produce substantial informational gains.[24]

Fictional narrative representations of the Vietnam War were first produced during the conflict but have continued to be an affective and important source for fictional films ever since. Perhaps this can be attributed to the public's need for entertainment in a disillusioned post-Vietnam era: a period in which the American Dream was lost, and we, as a society, realized we could no longer enjoy splendid isolation or the simple plot lines that Classical Hollywood provided. Fictional representations of the Vietnam War evolved throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Each of these decades ushered in new societal demands and these demands are present within each film. By the 1990s, America had involved itself in another war and was employing military and visual technology that made the Vietnam era look obsolete.

Vietnam was a fracturing moment both for the soldiers who fought there and for citizens left at home. The shell shock that was experienced was one of self-doubt and incomprehensible failure. The difference between the experiences of the aftermath of WWII and Vietnam created the differences that were felt in society as a whole as well as in commerce and the arts. The end of the Vietnam War embodied the confusion that was felt by those caught in limbo between the modern and the postmodern, Freudian and post-

Freudian, capitalism and late capitalism, heroism and failure, and newly emerging ideological dichotomies.

To understand the media feedback that we are seeing today, it is important to recognize that we are using a postmodern approach to track the changes and progress in capitalism and technology, and to understand the affect of the fictional narratives depicting the Vietnam War as well as other types of media expression about the Vietnam period.[25] Films of the 1970s such as *Apocalypse Now* and *Deer Hunter*[26] were introduced within a period of diametrically opposed films and filmmakers. Filmmakers of both the left and right had the ability to speak out; they were no longer dependent on the Classical Hollywood studios. Independent filmmaking was booming and these directors were able to take full advantage. They had the artistic freedom to depict the tumultuous feelings of society, their own opinions, and the interpretations and visions of the Vietnam War.

The 1980s ushered in even more artistic freedom. With the time elapsed since the actual conflict, the ease of revisiting war issues became increasingly popular. By the 1980s, the Reaganesque ideology of masculinity was influencing society and became relevant in the war films. The Vietnam War films made in the 1980s included *Full Metal Jacket*[27], *Born of the Fourth of July*[28] and *Platoon.*[29] Although these films were about the Vietnam conflict, they were greatly influenced by the decades in which they were made because of that generation's recreation of the past. Of equal or even greater importance, these films are also being interpreted today by Generation Y who are learning history within a postmodern cultural dominant framework. In the next section, I will demonstrate how these films' histories will ultimately manifest themselves in the works created today by the soldiers who are taking videos in Iraq and posting them on sites such as YouTube.

Discussion of:
Fictional Narrative War Films Prior to Vietnam

In the popular films of World War I, the filmmakers tried to present the prevailing mood of the times and help mold the public perception about war. Most of these films were produced in the era shortly after the end of World War I. The filmmakers chose to focus on the folly, waste, and suffering of the war. Both *Wings* (1927)[30] and *The Big Parade* (1925)[31] are war films that include, among other things, the study of male relations, love, patriotism, and the gruesome realism of World War I rather than showing only the patriotic and romanticized aspects of the war. Hollywood spectacularly replicated the horrors of the battles in the skies and the trenches to give visual accounting to this war. Patriotism in these films becomes a very interesting issue. King Vidor, in *The Big Parade,* propelled the film through the eyes of the common man; he showed that there were very few redeeming qualities in battle. By showing the grubby trench warfare and the boredom as opposed to the laurels of war, he dispelled any sentiments about the glory of war. He felt there was a "mixed-up sentiment" about the Great War and that normally people who go to war usually do so without question; but, this war was different in that it begged the question about why we have war.[32] And for the first time, but certainly not the last, Americans questioned why we would be entering this, or any, war. The gruesome realities of war are depicted in both *The Big Parade* and *Wings.* William Wellman's *Wings* uses another interesting technique to illustrate battle scenes when it employs the use of actual footage taken during World War I. This footage that he discovered includes two American planes in a dogfight with their enemies. Even though he included actual footage in his film, Wellman chose to embellish the patriotism that

accompanies war and he also dealt with the psychological unrest of the returning veterans. Both filmmakers made films that had military merit because veterans made or collaborated on them. Wellman's and Vidor's films were some of the first full length narrative fictional war films, and, the content of their films help create the framework for what war films are today.

Allen Dwan's *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1950),[33] starring John Wayne, was a dramatization of the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II. It was sanctioned by the United States Marine Corps and represents one of the better propaganda films about WWII: filled with American ideals and values. It promoted notions of masculine conquering heroes. This is a typical John Wayne propaganda war film with all the trappings of loyalty and success. It is even accompanied by the Marine Hymn. It is upbeat and speaks of American success and power, and paints American troops in a very positive light. It leaves the viewer with a strong sense of pride and patriotism. Another WWII film of popularity was *Desperate Journey* (1942)[34] starring Ronald Reagan and Errol Flynn. Even though this film took place in Europe and dealt with British pilots being shot down over Germany, Errol Flynn was a global superstar. Because WWII was a global war, the film lent American audiences understanding of WWII through film.

There were few films made about the Korean War. This can be attributed to the fact that at the time, and even today, we were unclear about what we were doing there. The Vietnam War films, made after that war, allowed for much of that same retrospection. With Korea there were no clear cut losers or winners and there was less soldier sacrifice than in Vietnam, therefore it would have been difficult to make a war film out of this misunderstood war. The films that depict World War I and World War II

provided the loose structure for the later war films. They run the gamut from those that questioned war, to those that glorified war. The Baby Boomer filmmakers emerged during the New Hollywood Renaissance of the 1970s that encouraged uniqueness and expression. These filmmakers created a new type of war film that questioned all that had come before.

Discussion of:
Fictional Narrative Vietnam War Films

By examining two movies that were released in the 1970s after the end of the war, this chapter will demonstrate that through the film industry's confidence in its unalienable right to freedom of speech and expression, it was not afraid to express both pro and con feelings about our involvement in Vietnam and the long term effects that the involvement left on the persons who participated as well as those left at home. The societal polarization of the United States started early on with the arrival of increased American troops in Vietnam. The media coverage exposed a new element of terror to the American public by bringing the front lines to living rooms across the U.S. In previous wars, media coverage had been positive propaganda to encourage heroics and patriotism. This war had a new face, one of the ugly and less than heroic realities that had started with the actual experiences of the military in the Korean War, our first real exposure to modern day war. The Korean War was not televised for TV news programs so it did not have the same impact Vietnam had on people around the world.

Because the Vietnam War was polarizing within society, understanding it as a war and understanding its damage wrecked on the American populace presented serious quandaries for historians. Certain factors were clearer if described through fictional

presentation based on factual and historical data. The medium of film has been used to help the masses understand the personal and psychological conflicts that arose from this contentious war.

Historically, it is helpful to understand some of the factors of the Vietnam War and caused Americans to feel like we, as a nation, were a failure in this war.[35] The psychological effects of guerilla warfare, as well as America's participation in this foreign war on foreign soil of dubious valve to the average American, and the ultimate failure to win the war brought soldiers home in an altered and unfamiliar state. Their prior impressions of a hero status when returning from a war were shattered by the reality of their homecoming receptions. Compounding the problems for returning soldiers, the political environment to which they returned continued to create disenfranchisement. All of these factors made Vietnam War stories easier to fictionalize; and therefore some of the most vivid memories that the generations to follow have of Vietnam are the recreations in the movies that have been made. For the most part the films about Vietnam were showing the moods of disenfranchised, disenchanted and morally defeated soldiers as well as those on the home front. By comparison, even though the videographers of the Iraq footage have constructed their videos and recreations of war alluding to the films of the post-Vietnam era, they changed some of the themes and have employed the sense of machismo and patriotism.

Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) delves into psychological aspects and repercussions of war and the effect that it has on soldiers. He uses an abundance of scenes that depict the killing of American soldiers including the journey Captain Willard makes to slay a rogue soldier. The opening of the movie is a series of

dissolves: Captain Willard's face, a fan in his room, and alcohol bottles underneath scenes from the front lines in Vietnam. To emphasize the ambiguity in his life and his inability to reintegrate into his previous world, he states that after his first tour in Vietnam he returned home and he had changed; he wanted to be back in Vietnam but when he was in Vietnam he wanted to be at home. He no longer fit into the real world. The historical implication is that soldiers whose attitudes resemble those of Captain Willard and those who can turn off their emotions are the ones that survive and the soldiers who let their emotions overtake them never make it home. A parallel can be drawn from this for the soldiers' videos in Iraq in that there is a difference in the type of videos that are produced that corresponds with the amount of time a soldier has spent in Iraq. This aspect that is relevant to time spent in Iraq will be discussed in length in the next chapter.

Themes of isolation and emptiness surround all of these people, but in reality, naiveté is the true killer in war. Coppola incorporates a concept of racism against the "other" in the film that pits Americans against the "gooks" as opposed to racism within the ranks of black versus whites. Much like the polarization that occurred in society, there is a polarization in the film between the characters; and again, this concept reveals itself in the Iraq videos posted on sites such as YouTube in that they allow for feedback from uninvolved viewers. For media emphasis on the horrific realities of war, Coppola uses the same music to narrate that has been used in the popular films of the horror genre. He employs the "pump-up" music of Ride of the Valkyries when the air cavalry goes into battle and all of the music in the movie contributes to the moods and settings. Coppola tries to depict the truthfulness of war: the horror, death, destruction, emotional toll and even beauty of war. He shows sentiments of camaraderie and he displays the quest for

downtime in scenes where the soldiers are surfing, playing guitars, dancing, smoking and watching the Playboy Bunny show. The elements of the film make it anti-military, anti-authority and anti-war. When doing a retrospective on the Vietnam War, the mass media that was so much a part of it, the anti-war sentiment and the troops involved there and at home, it becomes clear that the films represent important sentiments that were held by all, and whether they were pro-war, anti-war, pro-American or anti-American, all created a sense of divisiveness for the country and a feeling of alienation for most of the troops who participated.

Another tool used in the film to give commentary on the war in general, as well as leaving an historical message, was insinuating that it was a war of lies and mistruths. An example of this was the scene that mentioned that Kurtz wanted his son to understand what Kurtz stood for, believed, and thought. This was morally important to Kurtz because he did not like lies. The real life My Lai Massacre and the government's attempt to conceal that Charlie Company had killed innocent old men, women and children[36] could be the impetus for adding this part to the film showing that people like Kurtz did some things for honor, truth and integrity and not all soldiers were blood thirsty and savage; also, by including the idea that he wants his son to understand the truth, there is wonderful symbolism that our government as a parent, by hiding the My Lai debacle, is lying to its children, the people of the United States. A more direct example within the film that alludes to the My Lai Massacre is when Willard's boat commander insists on a random inspection of a boat operated by innocent unarmed Vietnamese civilians. The soldiers begin to shoot the civilians when they reach for something thought to be a weapon but is in actuality a puppy. The puppy is the ultimate example of innocence.

When reviewing the Iraq videos, I will demonstrate the rural antiquity of Iraqi society juxtaposed with the technological mayhem of war and the incongruity of these elements coexisting.

Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978) can in many ways be deemed as a cry for American intervention in the monotonous American way of life. The 1970s brought with it the end of the Vietnam War, the increased move toward globalization and consumerism, and the emergence of a postmodern mode of experience. Cimino's film serves as a critique of American mythology and the breaking down of the traditional "American Dream" within a postmodern world. Prior to the Vietnam War, there had been a 20th century consensus of the "American Destiny," and subsequent to our defeat in Vietnam, we seemed to challenge all of these existing ideologies. Cimino attempts to critique the conversion of the American way of life and economy throughout the film by using the characters and the film itself as a metaphor for this change. This transition was a shift from a modern Fordist economy to a postmodern, post-Fordist economy. The shift to a postmodern society emphasizes consumption over production.

In *The Deer Hunter*, the myth of the American Dream becomes the defining force and thread that ties the film together. For Cimino, the film is basically a form of critiquing the American Dream which has become outdated and outmoded for the postmodern American populace during and after the Vietnam War and is being replaced by a consumer and entrepreneurial society. Cimino uses his film to show fear about the antiquity of the old system of the Fordist assembly driven economy and its subsequent replacement by the diverse individual consumerist society. Some of the key metaphors

that are created in *The Deer Hunter* are centered on Russian roulette and the combination of spectacle, consumerism and capitalism.

In the film, the first scenes at the steel mill establish a brotherhood that revolves around the assembly line work ethic. And in these opening scenes, Nick's character is that of a carefree patriotic American who subconsciously understands that he cannot exist long term without his American values. *The Deer Hunter* is ultimately a film about brotherhood, love, camaraderie and masculinity. The three friends are initially excited to go to Vietnam because they believe in the American Dream their country promises them. They are children of immigrant parents who attend the Greek Orthodox Church in the small town of Clairton, Pennsylvania. The upbringing of these friends is important: they have a bond of patriotism, and first and second Generation love and honor for their country. Religion, brotherhood and loss of innocence are the predominant background themes in this film. The final roulette scene symbolizes a homoerotic brotherhood between Mike and Nick.

Fragmentation is another important element that is used very effectively in the structure of the film. Cimino separates the three acts in his film by the sound of helicopter rotor blades, metaphorically fragmenting the characters' experience. Cimino shows the progression of a changing world by showing the psychological and physical changes that his characters must endure. The friends venture to Vietnam together and all experience losses of different degrees and variations. The friends in *The Deer Hunter* continuously play pranks on one another when they are at home and pre-Vietnam which illustrates the strength of their bond. The first roulette scene evokes the Army motto of never leaving a man behind and the bond of ultimate brotherhood. This is one of the

poignant threads that is again seen in the Iraq videos which emphasize these feelings because the soldiers are careful to take pictures of fallen men being cared for and brought in by their fellow soldiers. In the film, the scene of Nick in a hospital is the American people's first vision of a yard filled with flag draped coffins being shipped home. This rather uncomfortable image of flag draped coffins is used quite often in the soldiers' Iraq videos but is never actually shown on network news. The other major element that is presented in this film is that not only are enemy soldiers shown getting killed but American soldiers are shown likewise.

The final two films of interest in this postmodern study are both by Oliver Stone and are seemingly self-reflexive. He takes a stance that is both pro-military and anti-war and his postmodern approach allows the viewer to see all aspects of the people involved in war combined with facets of the war itself. His films create the images that Generation Y has come to accept as the history of Vietnam. However, for Stone, *Platoon* (1986) was his reality of Vietnam. Journalist Marc Cooper notes that Stone recounted that *Platoon* was based loosely on his own experiences in Vietnam.[37]

Platoon is a cyclical experience which is a theme that recurs in Vietnam films and even in some of the Iraq War videos. One of the major tenets of postmodern art is repetition. *Platoon* explores themes such as anti-camaraderie, questions of masculinity, and psychological madness. Stone's film depicts mass confusion and chaos in a postmodern world as well as a nostalgic look at the Vietnam War's history. The chaos and confusion can be seen from the onset as soon as the main character, played by Charlie Sheen, steps off of the plane and onto the bloodied soil of Vietnam. This chaos, confusion and anger is signified by the attitude of other soldiers who look at him with

knowing glances and tainted hearts and know that he is an "innocent." The fog makes everything look hazy and even more confusing and unclear. The noise of the helicopter rotor blades and the line of body bags depict the surreal feeling that Sheen's character must have been feeling. It is a melting pot of sights and sounds. The film details the social movements of the late 1960s by alluding to racial segregation and discrimination even in some sense through the hierarchy of jobs within the platoon. *Platoon* follows the story of this young soldier who joined the Army to fulfill his patriotic duty but before long he is disillusioned and psychologically damaged. He sees no reason for this war which fits into postmodernity as a postmodern war because postmodernity as a movement or cultural period does not seek to find meaning in anything. In postmodernity the individual's opinion creates the individual's truth. The film closes with Sheen saying to himself "I think now, looking back, we did not fight the enemy, we fought ourselves." The film in its cyclical nature closes with the last images of Sheen's character leaving the bloodied soil of Vietnam, the sounds of rotor blades, the same opening credit music, dust, fog and dead bodies. He says to himself again, "the war is over for me now but it will always be there for the rest of my days." Sheen also comments that it is up to the survivors to rebuild and tell their story in order to teach future generations. Stone is doing just that as a veteran making the film. It is his version of the history and now it is Generation Y's much like the Iraq videos will be for future generations to come.

There are a few particulars from this film that have been emulated in the Iraq War videos. The opening credits show young recruits getting off the planes to music similar to Iraq memorial music which can be considered a foreshadowing of death. Many of the shots in the film depict soldiers going through daily activities, sitting around camp eating

K-rations, quiet downtime as well as "humping the bush." Another diversion that is portrayed in this film is messing around with each other in the barracks under the influence of drugs and harassing the new guys: joking, dancing and singing. Pop culture music is also a prevalent theme in *Platoon.* In *Platoon,* the issues of brotherhood are completely skewed. Sergeants Elias and Barnes have a mutual dislike for one another. This hatred among fellow non-commissioned officers is not evident in the real time Iraq videos. However, commentary left by others in the military on some of the videos can be compared to the masculinity discussion about Barnes in the barracks.

Oliver Stone's other film about Vietnam, *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), depicts an all-American innocent high school graduate who is very patriotic. He has burning desire to go and fight for his country. He sees the veterans from wars past in the annual Fourth of July parade, and because he is a true believer of the American Dream he feels he must serve his country. He even returns home as a true believer in his cause until the reality that Vietnam was wrong accosts him. In the firefight scenes in the film there is total chaos, confusion, noise and mayhem. Ron, the main character, is caught up in this chaos and accidentally shoots one of his fellow soldiers and the soldier dies from "friendly fire." As a coping method for dealing with the death he caused, it is conceivable that he convinced himself when he first returned home that what they were doing in Vietnam had value. Stone includes a plethora of injured soldiers on gurneys throughout the film, and the ultimate fate for Ron is that he is put into a wheelchair for the rest of his life. The film depicts the beauty of America but also the cruelty of how it treated returning soldiers, especially dissenters. It showed sentiments of how badly the

people at home treated the returning soldiers, and how misunderstood the soldiers felt. For them, there was a disenfranchisement that only fellow soldiers understood.

Was it characteristic of the Baby Boomers to shove things under the rug? In the beginning, they questioned the meaning of the Vietnam Conflict and history, but as late capitalism emerged, they stopped assigning meaning and only relied on the capitalist elements of Hollywood. We as a generation are beginning to see the faults of postmodernism and the Baby Boomers; and even though a technological emergence has caused us to feel fragmented yet unified and globally connected, we (Generation Y) are now questioning. So what movement or period are we now in? This question is better left unanswered or perhaps it is too soon to answer it as we often do not assign meaning or names to movements until they are over.

As Generation Y, we have grownup during postmodernism and even our way of looking at history through films is a symptom of postmodernity. Consequently, by situating its ideas in the basis or the interpretation of the Vietnam War films, Generation Y has produced elements of postmodernity within art and film that can be evidenced in the Iraq videos that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

[1] Good Morning Vietnam, dir,Barry Levinson, Touchstone Pictures, 1988.

[2] Ira Chernus, "Fredric Jameson's Interpretation of Postmodernism, Part 2."(Colorado Religious Studies: Colorado.edu) 1. http://www.colorado.edu/ReligiousStudies/chernus/2400/jamesonPostmodernism.htm

[3] Glenn Ward, "Teach Yourself Postmodernism." (Blacklick, Ohio: McGraw-Hill, 1997) 220.

[4] Keith Jenkins, Re-Thinking History, (London: Routledge Classics, 1991) xii

[5] Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. (Durham: Duke University Press. 2003) 67.

[6] Fredric Jameson, 68.

[7] Fredric Jameson, 69.

[8] Glen Ward, 71.

[9] Fredric Jameson, 71.

[10] Frederic Jameson, 73.

[11] Frederic Jameson, 74.

[12] Frederic Jameson, 76.

[13] Georgetown.edu, "The Postmodern, Postmodernism, Postmodernity: Approaches to Po-Mo." 4. <http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/pomo.html>

[14] Apocalypse Now, dir Francis Ford Coppola, Paramount, 1979.

[15] Georgetown.edu, 4.

[16] Georgetown.edu, 4.

[17] Rex Miller, "The Digital Dynamic: How communications media shape our world." The Futurist 39, 3: May-June 2005.31.

http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?action=print&docId=5009357072

[18] There are several other interesting articles written about television broadcasting and wars. For further reading you can access the internet for the following articles: "Television and Vietnam," sandiego.edu. "Nixon and Vietnamization," sandiego.edu. "Living Room Wars: Vietnam vs. 'Desert Storm,'" Daniel C. Hallin. "Vietnam War: A Look at American News Coverage and Wars," Amy Rozanski. "Vietnam on Television," The Museum of Broadcast Communications.

[19] Rex Miller

[20] Rex Miller

[21] Ira Chernus, 7.

[22] Rex Miller

[23] Doris A, Graber. "Seeing is Remembering: how visuals contribute to learning from television news." Journal of Communication. 40,3: 1990. 134.

[24] Doris A. Graber

[25] For more reading on postmodernism you can refer to: Glen Ward, Postmodernism. Jean Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Jim Collins, Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism. Stanley J. Grenz, A Primer on Postmodernism. Fredric Jameson, Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. or "'The Postmodern,' 'Postmodernism,' 'Postmodernity': Approaches to Po-Mo," Georgetown.edu.

[26] The Deer Hunter, dir Michael Cimino, Universal Studios, 1978

.

[27] Full Metal Jacket, dir Stanley Kubrick, Warner Brothers, 1987.

[28] Born on the Fourth of July, dir, Oliver Stone, Universal Studios, 1989.

[29] Platoon, dir Oliver Stone, Orion Pictures Corporation, 1986.

[30] Wings, dir William Wellman, Paramount Famous Lasky Corporation, 1927.

[31] The Big Parade, dir King Vidor, MGM, 1925.

[32] Laurence H. Suid. Guts and Glory…Great American War Movies. (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978) 16.

[33] Sands of Iwo Jima, dir Allen Dwan, Republic Pictures, 1950.

[34] Desperate Journey, dir Raoul Walsh, Warner Brothers Pictures, 1942.

[35] For more information about the Vietnam War and 1960s culture refer to any of the following: Philip Caputo, A Rumor of War .,Peter Cowie, The Apocalypse Now Book.,Ann Charters, The Portable Sixties Reader. Lizabeth Cohen, A Consumers' Republic. Jeremy M. Devine, Vietnam at 24 Frames a Second. Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud editors, From Hanoi to Hollywood. Wesley R. Fishel, Vietnam: Anatomy of a Conflict. Stanley Karnow, Vietnam A History. Neil Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie, John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam. Mark Taylor, The Vietnam War in History, Literature and Film. Spencer C. Tucker, Vietnam. Robin Wood, Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan…And Beyond.

[36] "The My Lai Massacre" online source:
< http://www.dreamscape.com/morgana/mylai.htm. 12/8/2005.1>

[37] Marc Cooper, "Oliver Stone-d," Sunday May 29, 2005.
<http://marccooper.typepad.com/marccooper/2005/05/oliver_stoned.html>

Chapter Two

With the noise of choppers and the beat of a nice baseline, the novice rapper, Matt Wright, says, "Lazy Ramadi, wake up to a thunderous boom. Call up Dobbs just to see how he's doing." Okay, so maybe this isn't exactly the same as *Good Morning Vietnam* but the humor can be compared. Matt Wright and Josh Dobbs are famously known among YouTube and military.com war video connoisseurs as the soldiers who were the creators of several hilarious videos that landed them as guests on "The Late Show with David Letterman." Their very popular Iraq video, "Lazy Ramadi," was followed by a remake of the Ramadi Iraq version of the 1980s television hit Magnum P.I. Matt Wright and Josh Dobbs became overnight internet video sensations with their witty "Iraqi" versions of popular skits and television shows. They have been featured on various internet websites as well as Military television channels that serve as media outlets for soldiers' personal videos from Iraq. The troops have found new ways to communicate their beliefs, fears, compassions and even their boredom in this war. In turn, these videos have presented new and interesting venues where the public can view the troops and all the manifestations of the effects of the Iraq War.

Contemporary media overload has driven people to pursue other means of informative news in order to attempt to glean the unedited, un-glossed "truth.[1] The question that has caused much interest about today's media exposure is whether websites like YouTube are a reaction to contemporary television media overload that engulfs the average American. This sensory overload can be seen on commercial television news

shows like CNN, FOX News and others that provide a constant 24/7 sensationalized image of war. In their regular news shows, these networks show gunfire and bombing, and they have the latitude to put their own spin on the images. Without network censoring, soldiers have even more latitude with their personal videos, and they are able to illustrate other sides of war that cannot be captured by a journalist. They can depict the private moments that allow for introspection, and the human frailties of their perceived enemies as well as those of their own comrades. For Generation Y, a group who feels it is necessary to have rapid access to unfiltered information of all types, YouTube, military.com, and other sites have become alternative news networks. These free channels of information offer thousands of clips that are becoming popular for Generation Y news junkies as well as political and security analysts of the Iraq arena. The quality of the clips range from grainy pictures and shaky camerawork with only the voices of the agitated and frightened soldiers, to ones that have been edited to "pump-up" music, all the way to the more refined and better produced propaganda videos which are frequently set to an Arabic language soundtrack.[2] Some of the most revealing clips seen on these websites are never seen on television because the American media is censoring itself and is conservative in its approach. Even though commercial television networks have shown footage from YouTube on their broadcasts, thus far they have chosen to not use footage that emphasizes dismembered bodies of U.S. soldiers or insurgents engaged in combat in Iraq.[3]

News media has evolved in stages from print to film newsreels to television broadcasts to personal videos as seen on the internet. The different phases of coverage began with newsreels in WWI and WWII. During Vietnam, for the first time, news

coverage was in 16mm film form that was televised. Even though the images of Vietnam were brought into the nation's living rooms, they were not yet shot and viewed in real time. The military operation known as Desert Storm was the first major global media crisis orchestration that made "instant history."[4] Even though footage of war scenes was shown on television in live video feed in real-time, the Persian Gulf War included unprecedented restrictions on the media imposed by the military and the government.[5] These restrictions were placed, in part, on the media because the governing body felt that the American loss in Vietnam was in many ways due to television coverage that turned public opinion against the war. In truth, television had no intentions of showing the horrors of the war in Vietnam, not because of military restrictions, but rather because it did not want to alienate its paying advertisers and an audience who would be aghast at the horrors of a war that was so politically polarizing.[6] Media coverage of the Iraq War has taken on a less tentative face toward showing the actual combat and involvement of our soldiers.[7] With Vietnam, the networks were afraid to show anything that might be deemed unpopular. Today, because the networks can package and sell our deeper national feeling of patriotism, our involvement based on an accelerated need to fight the war on terror and the moral or ideological imperative to "right the world's wrongs," the networks can cater to the consumer who is willing to watch the live unfolding of these events.

A major difference between the news media articulation and personal video imagery is that news media tries to help the public make sense of war[8] whereas, individual videos try to help the people who produce them, and the viewers who consume them, make sense of the people involved in war rather than the act of war itself. The

soldier can be perceived differently within the range of videos being produced about the Iraq War. On many levels, these videos serve as a reaction to mass media and distancing representations of the conflict. They raise an awareness that people are rebelling against the monotonous spectacle of images of war that are sensationalized for television news programs and are reported with little or no emotion. By creating personal videos and posting them on the internet, even if it is not their intent, the creators are more likely to appeal to a younger audience who are part of the computer generation. Unlike the youth of the Vietnam era who were glued to the television, the Generation Y youths of today are the computer generation. Therefore, computer exposure offers the opportunity for youth to pay more attention to war and politics via the internet. The downside to this video exposure is the superficial image and videogame context that might be conveyed: the soldier's job may appear "cool" because he shoots guns, blow things up, and gets paid to have downtime to play with a video camera and participate in pranks with friends. Although a study of the tangible effects these videos have on people's choice to join the military is an interesting tangent, the focus here will be on the ways troops express themselves in self-made videos and what those expressions mean in terms of the soldiers' construction of masculine ideology, connectivity and identity as well the videos' existence as art and instant history.

Certain tendencies that contribute to how we view films and videos in a postmodern society have impact on the contrast and comparisons of the films of Vietnam with the videos of Iraq. In postmodernism, we tend to see things in fragments and for Generation Y that has often led to the connection of disjointed thoughts. The videographers who have made the Iraq videos have presented the material in flashes of

views that do not require a lot of attention when being viewed. The videos are often amateurish in their development and they follow an MTV type of format. Generally they are edited to music and this is something that would not be found in a more professional filmmaker's production. Generation Y is generally rather impatient because of all the technological advancements it has been afforded and therefore we live in a world that is made up of flashes of visions and sound bites of information. These videos are neither inverted as Baudrillard had alluded to nor are they nostalgic views of history, yet, they use many of the same film elements. Noting these characteristics of the videos allows us to analyze similar elements and make certain generalizations about Generation Y's postmodern reaction to the Vietnam War films as well as their own reasons and thoughts behind the creation of their videos.

One excellent example of these videos is an entry on YouTube titled "I get blown up."[9] This was contributed by a former sergeant in the U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Battalion 5th Marines Weapons Company named Steven Helton.[10] In an interview, he explained that the clip was taken by a fellow marine in March 2005 and it showed soldiers driving through the abandoned streets of downtown Ramadi when an explosion rocks their armored vehicle. The viewer hears the soldiers coughing, cursing and checking with each other to make sure no one is hurt and then one of them realizes and says "Holy ____, I got that on tape!"[11] Clearly, the clip was unintentional but when Helton saw it, he decided he wanted to post it to show his friends and family the real everyday experiences of soldiers in Iraq because he felt this type of video gave a better representation of what goes on daily in Iraq than the news coverage on television.[12] This short clip showed the danger, the fear, and the camaraderie of making sure the other men with you are alive and

well; and it showed that during operations, even though one might be taking a video, there is no "playtime" when participating in active maneuvers. Helton was quoted as saying, "I think the footage posted by service members is as real as they get," and he believes that it would behoove all military personal, as a reality check, to see some of this type of footage before being deployed.[13] As for applied uses for security and strategic personal, he thinks seeing footage captured by the insurgents offers significant insight into their tactics.[14]

For the independent thinkers of Generation Y, these videos open a new avenue of exploration in which they can share in others' innermost thoughts and fears and they can assess for themselves the contributions these thoughts bring to their own lives. Although unintentionally created, the footage in this video is similar to war scenes in fictionalized Vietnam War films in that the chaos and confusion that accompanies attacks or ambushes is prevalent. This condition shows some of the same innocence displayed by Charlie Sheen's character in *Platoon* when he first arrives in Vietnam. This video gives a sense of guerilla warfare in an urban setting in the same manner that the Vietnam films show guerilla warfare in the open fields of the Vietnam countryside. The camaraderie and self-preservation exhibited in this video are an interesting contrast to the anti-camaraderie sentiment in *Platoon.*

The concept of masculinity as an influential propellant in American political history reveres leaders who are decisive, tough, aggressive, strong and domineering.[15] In the 1980s, Reagan was a major proponent of this masculine strength that purported to express internal, personal, and family oriented values. He embodied the overlapping of the "sensitive family man" and the tough "hard bodied" man and created a political

position that on one side had a strong militaristic foreign policy and on the other side a domestic regime of an economy and a set of social values dependent on a central father figure.[16] Reagan did this to help create a "unified national body."[17] His objective in creating this masculine mantra was twofold: to combat what he called the soft attitude of the Carter years, and to establish a strong positive national identity for the United States.[18] George W. Bush's administration can be paralleled to the masculine assertion that manifested itself in the Reagan era. Because of the terrorist and political developments since George W. Bush has taken office, he too has adopted a similar masculine framework for governing the United States in the arena of foreign policy. It is likely that one of the reasons he has taken this approach is an attempt to show that America, even though it has been attacked on its own soil, is not in a weakened state. He also traded on the national idealism that Richard Nixon had described as although sometime naïve, misguided or overzealous, always at the center of our foreign policy.[19] He has used this idealism, as Nixon suggested, as a catalyst to sustain our commitment to the great moral causes of this 21st century.[20] In this era of Generation Y, the "generation of individuals," there has been a strong conservative push that influenced films of the 1990s to incorporate the reconstruction of family values to reinforce a continued belief in militarism, in which external interventions are being justified to the extent that they can revive the American family ideology and economy.[21] This masculine display that plays into the ideals of patriotism and idealistic ideologies has been further exploited after 9/11 in a patriotic outcry against anyone and everyone who is perceived as our foe. The Baby Boomers retaliated against war and made overt protests against seemingly unnecessary intervention in the affairs of other nations; the leadership of today, however, has

attempted to marshal support for the spread of democracy in the name of national pride and patriotism.

A masculine cultural ideology accompanies members of the armed forces regardless of their sex. This image is created to represent heroism and show that America's forces are seen as the proud protectors of freedom and deliverers of democracy. The media repeatedly projects the image of masculinity, of military might and emotionless strength. Only occasionally is it willing to broadcast footage of the peaceful social interactions that are, nevertheless, just as gripping: soldiers handing out toys and candy to local children as well as befriending willing Iraqis and their families. The news media only periodically portrays these latter scenarios when it deems it necessary to pay fealty to the political slant of the day. Consequently, many Americans do not get to see the softer, funnier side of the soldiers who are deployed. The nightly news reflects the number of casualties: American, coalition forces, and Iraqis. Because of these harsh realities and disturbing numbers, viewers are left with a distant detached and fragmented feeling about the war. For the audience member who is not politically savvy or does not have a personal connection, there is little likelihood that he or she will pay attention to the war as anything other than a spectacle.

Conversely, some of the personal videos demonstrate soldiers attempting to bring peace to a nation rather than fighting. The videos indicate that these troops are attempting to help quiet the unrest that exists in a war torn country. One of the most interesting types of videos to come out of Iraq is the one that falls into the category of peaceful social interaction. In these videos, humanity overrides the masculine bravado that war can demand. In these videos, the discernable line that would cause alienation

between Iraqis and Americans does not apparently exist. This is particularly visible in the relationship between soldiers and children. Perhaps the young soldiers who have been forced to give up their innocence to don a uniform and fight for their country are trying to protect those same rights for the children of the embattled country of Iraq as well as resurrecting their own innocence by remembering the comforts and needs of family and friends.

One excellent example of this type of video was posted on YouTube and is titled simply "Video Iraq War: The Soldiers."[22] It was submitted by Chris Acevedo and within nine months has been hit more than 80,000 times. It is edited to the music *Threat Signals A New Beginning*. In the description trailer Chris writes that he is not into "the slow music crap" and if that is what the viewer is expecting that he/she should pick another video. He feels that type of editing is too depressing and the situations are already depressing enough in their reality. What he does hope his video accomplishes is that the viewer can see that "some good is being done over there" and that the video gives insight into "a before and after effect as in fighting followed by results."[23] Where the Vietnam films were created after the fact and allowed for the director's retrospective analysis, this video is a product of the present filled with hopes for the future because of what is being done now. The Vietnam films didn't paint a positive picture of what we were doing there and it appears that this Generation Y soldier would like his legacy in Iraq to be a more positive one.

The video is a montage of stills and moving footage and starts with shots of soldiers. He shows soldiers performing various duties of engagement in war. They are moving down deserted streets and breaking down doors to check out houses. They are

exchanging gunfire; they are arming their rifles and military vehicles and taking prisoners into custody with their arms behind their heads in several of the scenes. Then the scenes change and the viewer sees soldiers entering populated areas where their arrival is being cheered. They are stopping to hold babies, show the children their rifles, and one soldier is even pictured tying a child's shoelace. The soldiers and the inhabitants of the occupied areas are smiling. In still another picture, soldiers are engaged in meetings with Iraqi men who appear to be leaders of governing bodies. The overall theme is one of encouragement and welcome, and one picture shows an elderly woman holding a sign of thanks. In yet another shot, a young girl is waving an American flag and the video ends. For the creator of this video, it seems apparent that if a greater good is accomplished by the work he is doing, then his efforts are not in vain no matter what the cost.

There are many similar messages and lessons in the videos that are categorized here as "attempting to bring peace to the country" and those that honor or memorialize soldiers. On Military.com, in a video entitled "IED Damage,"[24] the soldier shows the results of his vehicle after it was hit with an IED (Improvised Explosive Device), and he discusses what it felt like to be involved. His explanation is calm, and in the background, a song about faith and brotherhood begins to play. He intones that he is very thankful for God and he is joyful that everyone survived. The video ends with stills of the streets filled with IED holes and soldiers playing with Iraqi children juxtaposed with stats on military IED-induced deaths. The mixed message of life, death, and hope speaks volumes about his relationship to God, his job, and his value of life and liberty. In the overall content and theme, this video displays brotherhood, faith and humanity exemplified by the interaction with Iraqi children and their families.

Another video on military.com was posted by a sibling of a soldier and it is entitled "2/5 Ramadi Marines."[25] It is a combination of still shots and video. The slideshow contains photos of brotherhood among the troops and American military pride that is offset by stills of the city of Ramadi and its desolate destructed look. Included in the montage are photos of soldiers playing with Iraqi children. The visual diorama includes videos of soldiers shooting and blowing up buildings. It also includes pictures of soldiers at chow, out on patrol, at meetings together and sharing time in the barracks: it paints a picture of the violent nature of their work and peaceful camaraderie of brotherhood. As seems to be the general case in most of these videos, the more violent scenes are edited to "pump up" music. For sentimental and heartfelt effect the end of the video shows a list of the Marines killed in Ramadi. Again in this video, the mixed images give the viewer the feeling that the soldier is doing his job by fighting, but he is connected by the human element of brotherhood with his fellow troops and he is vulnerable enough to show caring and compassion for the Iraqis who are suffering in this war and the Americans who have died for this cause. These videos with the "pump-up" music and the machismo seem to be closely related to the fictional Vietnam films. The themes of masculinity and bravado even mixed with a more human element are visible in films such as *Apocalypse Now*.

Another video that deals with the concerns and consciousness of the Generation Y troops is "Iraq Video 'Why.'"[26] It was produced by a Captain Tuttle in Kuwait on 9/11/2003. It has been edited to the music *When the Children Cry* by White Lion and the pictures and videos included in the clip are from the members of the 293 Infantry. The clip is part of "Operation Enduring Freedom: Operation Iraqi Freedom" and was made by

WTC Video, CNN and has been posted on YouTube. As with many of the videos that deal with the non-testosterone generated raw emotions of the soldiers, this video mixes stills with video footage in a montage of scenes that first show a series of children: some with happy smiling faces and others with the scars of living in a war ravaged country. The stills of the children are followed by news footage of one of the planes going through the Twin Towers on 9/11 and it fades to rubble in Iraq. The remainder of the clip shows more children and adults who are pleased to see the U.S. troops. Throughout the clip, the fade-ins and fade-outs are segmented by a heart shape. The poignant part about this video is the music that it is edited to. The song speaks about the fact that when the children cry, they should be told that we tried, and that the perfect world would include no more presidents and all the wars would end and that there would be one united world under God. With the music used in this video, there is a similar feeling of futility that is felt in the Vietnam films and yet there is an optimism that is not seen in the Vietnam films because the final outcome here is yet unknown and Vietnam is history. For the creator of this video, the fate of this war is still in God's hands and the videographer's creation will become the history that future generations will learn.

Another video that follows the same general pattern of a montage of stills and live footage that includes pictures of children juxtaposed with footage of war is titled "Bring Me to Life"[27] which is actually the title of a song by Evanescence used as the background music for the video. This particular soundtrack has the sound of "pump-up" music and has been chosen in many of the videos, particularly those done by enlisted men. This video was created by PFC Al Garcia and was taped in and about Ramadi. It starts with video scenes through night goggles and then segues into pictures of children.

The next images are of firefights and bombings and these include sounds of bombing and shooting with the music still in the background. The montage of night scenes interspersed with pictures of children and daily patrols through deserted streets makeup the essence of this video until the end when the videographer pays tribute to five of his fallen comrades. This video again includes the important elements of values, camaraderie and the desire to have people understand what they are living through and the importance of that for them on a daily basis. This type of video shares many similarities with the Vietnam films: the use of "pump-up" music, the themes of masculinity, brotherhood and camaraderie, connectivity and identity.

One other video that falls into this category is called "3/6 Marine-What a Wonderful World"[28] and it was submitted to YouTube by a 20 year old named Joey, whose production name was Savage Production, 2006. Again the interesting part of this video is that it is edited to the Louis Armstrong song *What a Wonderful World*. One line of the song says that the world isn't so bad but rather it is what we are doing to it and that love would solve the problems. This part of the song accompanies video scenes of children and soldiers smiling. As the music changes to the line: I see trees of green…, the scenes of blowing things up, firefights, checking empty houses, frisking civilians and scenes of rubble and destruction accompany the music. The irony and juxtaposition of the bucolic music and the urban havoc make this video powerful in its message.

These types of videos are showing a resurgence of the American Dream for Generation Y but, as previously stated, that dream has broadened its dimensions. Generation Y, although thinking more globally than its predecessors, has a strong sense of family, religion, equality and humanity; and as a community, they want to share the

freedoms that they understand as their God given rights.[29] Where movies such as Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* delve into the psychological aspects and repercussions of war and the effect it has on soldiers, the videographers of Generation Y are dealing with their own feelings about their situations and often distancing themselves by seeing reality through the camera lens. They are taking care of themselves and their comrades and they are concerned with their own daily life and survival, and yet they are looking toward the larger picture: a resolution to the war and peace especially for the generations to come.

The combat presentations incorporate action that is generally recorded via video out in sector. The combat videos seem to be taken by the younger soldiers who are newer to the "in-country" experience because the older more experienced soldiers seem to be more interested in finding a peaceful humanistic approach to the problems that are facing the soldiers in Iraq. These videos are usually done in a fragmented fashion with montages of various battle scenarios juxtaposed to images of camaraderie among the troops and images of symbols of death: coffins and boots, helmets, and guns that are fallen soldier memorials. The films tend to highlight the masculine machismo that is associated with the "fight or flight" syndrome that necessitates that "real men" will valiantly stand and fight , and the overall image that the American mantra of "might makes right" prevails in their job and duty.

It is interesting to note that an overwhelming majority of the combat films sampled for this study concentrated on the physical actions of the American troops, shooting or blowing up targets, rather than showing the face of the enemy or mutilated and dead bodies. They are showing the functions that soldiers perform when using weapons but are not showing direct targets because, in truth, the troops do not actually

see the enemy until they are dead. This way of capturing activity exudes masculinity and simultaneously shows that engaging in combat is a major part of their job. The soldiers in these personal videos do not define themselves in terms of what they are not or in relation to the "other," who is the enemy. Rather, they see themselves in terms of soldiers doing their jobs. So what happens to the "other"? Is this a deviation from the order? In war, Ivie says that we begin to imagine the "other" and how we must manage that "other."[30] Yet these factors do not inhibit these soldiers. It is incredible that the sort of imperialist Orientalist American thinking about the "other" is absent from most of these videos. This clearly shows that American military members are simply doing their job and they would do it the same no matter what the face of the enemy looked like. There are a small number of videos that illustrate the more barbaric sides of war in which soldiers revel in killing the enemy. These productions appear to be made by young troops who are still enamored with the masculine emotion of bravado and "might makes right."

To further discuss the idea of the "other" it is important to refer back to videos that project ideas of innocence lost. An overwhelming number of these videos contain images of Iraqi children in which the notion of the "other" has the potential to represent the paternalism of American politics and military. The images of children not only engage a sense of innocence but they also evoke the strong paternalism of the American soldier. The videos that include images of innocence as seen through children could possibly serve as an allegory to the idea that Iraq is a child who cannot care for itself and America must intervene and serve as a father figure of guidance.

A video on YouTube called "1-303 Scouts: Cavalry Platoon,"[31] is also edited to an Evanescence song and is a typical example of a combat video. A common practice in these videos is that they too are edited for the music not the other way around. As far as the technical production, the quality of these videos is questionable and they would not meet film school standards; yet, the impact of what they are showing is still poignant. When the music crescendos, there is a vision of live action: buildings blowing up, bombs going off and cheers from soldiers. Although, the viewer sees the action, the live targets are not shown; they are off in the distance. The video opens with footage from a mission shot in night vision. The use of night vision creates a surreal vision of war. There are several stills that show the juxtaposition of Iraqi culture and America occupation: convoy vehicles and Humvees parked in the desert behind two young Iraqi goat herders with their herd and scenes of rural antiquity and technological mayhem. Another interesting photo juxtaposes the innocence of youth and the lack of innocence or harsh reality that accompanies war; it is a photo of a young Iraqi boy riding his bike down a street lined with people and a military convoy behind him. The next part of this montage is a short clip of a convoy that has been hit by an IED. After showing these sad and tragic dichotomies the video ends with an image of a memorial for the fallen soldier. The most interesting parts of this video were the comments and messages left about the video and its creator. The comments called into question the so-called toughness of the troops in this video. The statements questioning this toughness were left by non-military strangers and other members of the military who are in different units and branches. The comments by members of other services show the competitive nature of the different branches of the military in their questioning of who has harder more demanding jobs.

They also reflect the notion that only tough and abrasive action has value and that the sensitive human side is seen as weak and wimpy. Because Generation Y cherishes its right to individuality and its ability to figure out relationships and one's place in each relationship, the posting of videos and comments about these videos allow for personal interaction in cyberspace and the ability to chose whether to interact or not.

Another example of a combat video shown on YouTube is titled "sickness."[32] It depicts bombings and is narrated by heavy metal music. This video, shot in Ramadi, shows soldiers under fire. It is a mixture of stills and actions. The images in this video are more depressing than heroic. It shows imprisoned and dead insurgents, and even though the stills of the dead are shown in the aftermath not while they are getting shot, it is still disquieting. In yet another frame, one insurgent is shown getting shot. The video ends with a black screen with words that say "THE END?" This video begs the question as to whether the creator is saying something about the futility of what they are doing because no matter how hard they are trying to bring forth a positive conclusion, the ending of this video, "THE END?" seems to suggest or fear that there is no end in sight.

The combat videos found on military.com are in many ways more sophisticated in their approach but not necessarily in their technology and less sensationalized than those found on YouTube. A video entitled "Insurgent Chase"[33] pictures soldiers under fire by a hit and run sniper squad. It is a counter ambush Operation with Charlie Company and MA44, 1/25 RCT – 5- 060428. The men are panicked and angry and shooting at the insurgents who attack them. There is no shock and awe to these videos. This is reality on a dusty quiet Iraqi street. The place looks isolated and elicits a feeling of separation

and fragmentation for these soldiers. This world is totally alien to members of our free American society.

"Night RPG Ambush,"[34] is another example of combat footage found on military.com. The action in this video is an intense fire fight captured via helmet cam. U.S. Forces repel an RPG attack in total darkness. There is a sense of panic in this complete obscurity glittered with heavy fire and burst of light as bullets speed back and forth. The pressure and stress that these soldiers are under is intense. There is instruction that is hard to hear amid the gunfire, and chaos which one can only assume accompanies these sorts of battles. The footage is difficult to watch without becoming emotionally distraught because involvement is total when heavy scared breathing can be heard. There is no masculine bravado in this action rather there is a sense of fear that is accompanied by a willingness to do their jobs in order to survive the night. This is the real sense of combat, genuine bravery and machismo, and a reality of war as opposed to other combat videos that are edited to music and seem to valorize the blowing up of targets. The music edited videos make soldiers seem tough and callous but never really in fear; it makes them heroic in the "Reaganesque" mindset. The live action combat video is no frills and simply depicts it the way it is. It has not been edited to glorify aggressive behavior. There is an obvious psychological difference in these two types of videos: One is live and the other is augmented to project the feelings. The videos that use heavy metal background music are simulating the adrenaline rush that soldiers felt during their missions and resemble in their effect the scenes from *Apocalypse Now* that incorporate the "pump-up" music of Ride of the Valkyries. The live feed videos without music

provide the viewer with an adrenaline rush by allowing the observer to overhear what is going on during the mission.

One of the major benefits for the soldiers producing these videos is the coping mechanism they provide. The apparatus (camera) can act as an eye for the soldier; it can serve to disassociate self by the camera lens becoming the viewer thus relieving the soldier of that stress. The lens allows one to distance oneself from an experience even while it is being experienced. Considering that war is so horrific, looking at it through a lens provides an excellent coping mechanism. If in fact this is a means to handle the psychological stress that war induces, does it distance a soldier or bring him closer? If the soldier can dispassionately watch what he has created, the experience can be cathartic; but, if he relives the experience each time he views his work then it can be an agonizing endeavor.

The camaraderie and brotherhood videos differ from the combat footage in that the essence of what they express is the brotherhood that they feel for their fellow troops. These videos often take on a rather humorous approach to the bad conditions under which they are living. The levity allows for a cathartic experience for the filmmaker. Some of these videos illustrate the boredom that soldiers feel when they are not in action and show them creating a way to release nervous energy. Filming the frivolity allows soldiers to escape the realities that these young men and women have been forced to live in. The troops are serving in a world wrought with trauma, destruction, and violence and these videos appear to be their escape to a more innocent being: this helps ease the pain and horror they are experiencing on a daily basis.

Both Military.com and YouTube.com have several videos that are parodies of television shows and songs. A parody that has now garnered some fame and status from its original exposure on YouTube is titled "Lazy Ramadi."[35] The soldiers responsible for its inception have reached celebrity status and have even appeared on late night talk shows including David Letterman. "Lazy Ramadi" is rap song about Ramadi in which they make light of their situation and it is based on a Saturday Night Live skit. The filmmakers SSG Josh Dobbs and SSG Matt Wright have made various other spoof comedy videos based on television sitcom theme songs. Because Dobbs and Wright's videos have become so popular, other soldiers have followed suit spoofing scenes from films such as *Office Space*. These videos make use of pop culture and mock the serious situations of war. This comic relief was an element that was often used by the Vietnam filmmakers in their attempt to show troops in downtime activities. For those troops as well as the troops of today, for survival, it is necessary to have outlets to relieve tension in high stress situations.

In the memorial or tribute videos, there is a tendency toward a third party creator. The videos are produced either in honor of or memorial for a particular soldier or a group of troops. The commemorative videos are more emotional in content and there is a prevalence toward the use of slides. The majority of these videos are not created by the troops but rather by individuals who want to support them: family members, friends, and community members who believe in these young people. There is a plethora of these types of videos on YouTube that have been contributed by family members, complete strangers, or fellow military. "Arms of the Angel, Fallen hero's tribute,"[36] encompasses the emotion that is tangent to this type of video. It was made in memory of two soldiers

in particular but is dedicated to all fallen soldiers and their families. It is set to the Sarah McLaughlin song “Angel” and is a series of stills of soldiers alone, soldiers with their families, families at the funerals of these soldiers, and even includes one of the most controversial images of death in war that is reminiscent of Vietnam: the images of coffins draped with the American flag lined up on a cargo plane. Barbie Zelizer discusses these powerful wartime images in her article “Death in Wartime: Photographs and the ‘Other War’ in Afghanistan”. Many feel that this is an unfair image in terms of criticizing the war; yet on another level, its placement within this video is one of sheer beauty. These men and women have died for our freedom and our country and they are the symbols of America. Flags on coffins do not necessarily symbolize war or politics rather they are a human message of patriotism and honor. These photos depict the anguish and grief that war causes for families and soldiers. There are photos that illustrate the unity of soldiers and also the isolation they must feel when they are in the face of danger. There is nothing more telling than the face of a soldier in a still when he is caught in thought or revealing his deepest emotions: the look is distant and sad. In this video, there is also something bittersweet about the soldiers who are photographed smiling, because this video includes juxtaposition of soldiers alive with their families and then cuts to coffins and funerals. In this format it forewarns about the consequences that some of these men and women will have to face. Even though the stark realities of this video are sad, the video is uplifting and merciful in its display of the beauty in death. This type of video intends to rally Americans in support of the troops by setting political agendas aside and dealing with the humanity issues that are inherent in combat.

The memorial video on military.com called "Thanks to Our Heroes,"[37] is also a series of stills with a song about a hero as the background music. These photos demonstrate the anguish and fear in the faces of these men and women. This video does not just attempt to valorize the military rather it shows individual photos of soldiers alone dealing with their emotions. It authenticates the sense of alienation, isolation and fragmentation. The video concludes with a soldier mourning next to a coffin draped by the American flag. This image proffers an ultimate uniting of the fragmented lives and parts of the video and offers the salvo that ultimately everything is brought together under one flag. The fighting, dying, loving, losing, all human emotions are unified by one America and one symbol of humanity: the flag.

Another interesting category of videos falls under the heading of reaction and response. These videos are reactions to some facet of the Iraq War or discontentment with the establishment that has us engaged in this conflict. These videos represent Generation Y's reaction to the Iraq War in some of the same ways that the narrative films of the Vietnam War showed the Baby Boomer's discontent with Vietnam. Generation Y seems to express itself in various music forms including rap and heavy metal and these videos incorporate the use of the various music formats. These videos are usually made by someone stateside and they seem to have music that has been written for the video to express its sentiments or music that has been incorporated to create the theme.

A video created stateside by a webmaster and video producer aged 29 named Chemos is titled "Where is the Love?"[38] which is a song by Black Eyes Peas. The song asks the question "where is the love?" as it shows video of the KKK carrying flaming torches and then it skips to clips of war, intentional harassment, destruction of property

and brutality from clips taken by News of the World and CNN as the lyrics continue with the idea that we are spreading animosity. The song concludes with "we only have one world" and the obvious dissension of the creator is apparent. The creator seems to beg the question of why we can't make peace as opposed to war when he chooses the music and theme for his video and like those discontent with Vietnam before him, he offers his stab at instant art in hopes of changing history going forward. The final section of his video powerfully states "cost 250 billion and counting, lives 16,000 and counting."

Another video from this genre is "Timz-Iraq."[39] This video was created by a 25 year old Iraqi-American rapper named Tommy Hanna who lives and works in San Diego. Hanna is an American born rapper of Chaldean and Iraqi descent.[40] According to his bio, he is a soft-spoken college graduate who is pro-American, anti-war and has posted a politically charged rap video that he stars in on YouTube. He hopes to be a rallying cry during what he terms as these difficult political times because he feels that he is able to connect to both sides of this war more than the average person.[41] He wrote the first verse from the perspective of an Iraqi, the second from the perspective of an American and the third as a history lesson.[42] The video starts with him standing with a mike on the desert and then flashes to scenes of war: bombs falling from the sky, Abu Ghraib, injured children, Bush. His song begs the question: "Dear Mr. Bush, why do you insist to make a fool of us?...For over 200 years…we stood for what's good, now we despised by our peers; And what do you…but add fuel to the fire and send in more troops. Oh the troops God save the troops; it wasn't their war, their lies, their fault. American the beautiful what did they do to you, they used you its so indisputable!"[43] His video speaks to the stereotype that has been cast upon him since 9/11; he attempts to show the injustice that

has been perpetuated on both sides and tries to show sympathy and understanding for all involved.

The final and most recent category of videos to appear on the popular websites is the dissenter video. These videos have emerged on the video internet sites during the past few years as a part of the growing opposition to the Iraq War. These videos, although not necessarily made by soldiers in Iraq, are about and starring soldiers that are going to, or have been in, Iraq. The dissenter videos are generally informational and they tend to use interview techniques. There are over 100 videos on YouTube that either reference Ehren Watada or star him.

The video "Ehren Watada: a soldier refuses an illegal war"[44] is a 38 1/2 minute video posted on YouTube by a company called The Pinky Show. The Pinky Show proffers itself as the original super lo-tech hand-drawn educational TV show.[45] Its objective is to focus on information and ideas that it deems misrepresented, distorted, suppressed, ignored, or otherwise excluded from any mainstream discussion.[46] The creator has designed a cat that presents and analyzes the material about the show. This allows the information to be disseminated in an easy-to-understand informal way.[47] The site advertises itself as a learning tool for both teachers and students and seemed to present the material on Watada in a relatively fair and impartial manner. The cat introduces Watada's speech that was presented in Honolulu on Dec 19, 2006. She states that Watada is the first commissioned officer to refuse to be deployed to Iraq. She goes on to explain that he is objecting because the international as well as domestic standards of war make this war in Iraq an illegal war. She says that his major premise is this is a war of aggression and wars of aggression are not only war crimes but in fact they are

more heinous because they are supreme examples of war against humanity. The cartoon cat then says Watada is awaiting his sentence of 6 years in jail. This introduction to the issues is the first part of the video and then the cat suggests the viewer watch the entire speech in order to understand Watada's thoughts. She closes with the idea that we are living in disturbing times. Watada, in his speech, states that he joined the military in March 2003 for patriotic reasons and a willingness to serve his country. He believed in the administration and what they had to say about Saddam, weapons of mass destruction, and Iraq's ties to Al Qaeda and 9/11. He explains that his unwillingness to serve now is because he believes that the country has been intentionally manipulated by fear and this deception has been an unbearable betrayal of trust. For him, this is a war of lies and mistruths. His ideas parallel the fictional ideas that were presented in *Apocalypse Now* in the scene in which Kurtz wanted his son to understand the truth. The symbolism used showed that our government was acting like a parent and lying to its children and Kurtz wanted to right those wrongs as does Watada in his effort to make the country understand his position and his feelings about the deceitful way our patriots were coerced into this war.

The Iraq videos and Vietnam films have many similarities and differences. For example, in the Iraq videos, the viewer can see heroes and celebrated veterans as well as images of wounded soldiers not just from the Iraq War but from previous wars who are viewed as a legacy for the returning Iraq War vets. Another similarity, but recorded differently, is in the chaos that is filmed in the fictional narrative Vietnam War films and the videos from Iraq. The chaotic feelings and sounds are evoked in both types of production but there is a significant difference in the camerawork. The filming is

obviously shakier and more realistic in the Iraq videos because the participants are engaged in real combat. Where friendly fire deaths and killing among the troops may be fictionalized, it is not seen in the Iraq videos. The videos in Iraq do however show photos of injured soldiers making their existence more real. The Vietnam films tended to show injured soldiers on massive numbers of gurneys to try to depict the volume of injured, but the Iraq videos have shown their faces to humanize the situation. The Vietnam films spent much time dealing with the problems of the soldiers' reintegration back into the States and by contrast, many videos have been made about the troops in Iraq that have expressed warmth and gratitude to these men and women who are serving their country. The contrast of the terrible treatment that Vietnam Vets received and the respect that the troops in Iraq are receiving is an important dichotomy that can be seen in the Vietnam films and the Iraq videos. One might question the change in attitude, but upon careful inspection there is a tremendous change in the collective conscience and the understanding that although we may not support the war, we do support the troops who are doing the job they have been assigned. For Generation Y, we respect our peers and their rights to make decisions and follow their convictions. For the Baby Boomers, there appears to be much sentiment of remorse for how they treated the troops returning from Vietnam and they appear to be trying to correct all the wrongs that were wrought upon their peers by bending over backward to support the troops of today.

Notes

[1] To read more details about the contemporary media phenomenon you might refer to the following books and articles: Matthew Currier Burden, The Blog of War. Henry Jenkins, Convergence Culture. CNet News, "Report: Pentagon investigates YouTube video of U.S. troops. Michael Hedges, "Executive Director Paul Rieckhoff's Comments in Houston Chronicle Piece on Soldiers' Online videos." Michael A. Cohen and Maria Figueroa Küpçü, Congress and the 'YouTube War'." Mark Glaser, "Your Guide to Soldier Videos from Iraq." Glenn Harlan Reynolds, "The Blogs of War: How the Internet Is Reshaping Foreign Policy." Ana Marie Cox, "The YouTube War."

[2] Amanda Rivkin, "Iraq war comes to you live on YouTube" Columbia News Service 2/27/2007. <http://jscms.jrn.columbia.edu/cns/2007-02-27/rivkin-iraqwarrealitytv>

[3] Rivkin, 3.

[4] GeorgeGerbner, "Instant History—Image History: Lessons of the Persian Gulf War' Velvet Light Trap, 31, 1993, 4.

[5] Jacqueline Sharkley, "Desert Storm Disinformation," posted AlterNet 2001: 1 < http://www.alternet.org/story/11606/>

[6] Daniel C. Hallin, "Living Room Wars: Vietnam vs. 'Desert Storm,'" Center for Media Literacy 2002-2003:1 < http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article53.html>

[7] There have been several good books already written by and about the troops in the Iraq War as well as the political ramifications of that war. My favorite is George Packer's The Assassins' Gate. Other books of interest about Iraq include: Trish Wood, What Was Asked of Us, An Oral History of the Iraq War by the Soldiers Who Fought It.

Anthony H. Cordesman, The Iraq War Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons. Williamson Murray and Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr., The Iraq War. Thomas E. Ricks, Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq. Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq.

[8] Barbie Zelizer, "Death in Wartime: Photographs and the 'Other War' in Afghanistan," The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics 10 2005: 3

[9] username: StevenHelton. "I get blown up," March 27, 2006. < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrdcddNx29c>

[10] Rivkin, 2.

[11] Rivkin, 2.

[12] Rivkin, 2

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[13] Rivkin, 2.

[14] Rivkin, 2.

[15] Susan Jeffords, Hard Bodies Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press,2004) 11.

[16] Jeffords, 13.

[17] Jeffords, 13.

[18] Jeffords, 13.

[19] Jeffords, 184.

[20] Jeffords, 184.

[21] Jeffords, 191-192.

[22] Username: Bloodraid. "Iraq War: The soldiers," June 7, 2006. < http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUm05_I8xJ4>

[23] username: Bloodraid

[24] username: anonymous. "IED Damage," N/A
< http://shock.military.com/Shock/videos.do?displayContent=119969>

[25] username: anonymous. "2/5 Ramadi Marines," N/A
< http://shock.military.com/Shock/videos.do?displayContent=118699>

[26] username: 3turtle3. "Iraq Video Why," July 19, 2006.
< http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hPVPqERfTM4>

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Conclusion

Generation Y, like generations before, has been influenced by those who proceeded us. Our perceptions of the values, as well as advantages and disadvantages of America's involvement in world processes are based on what we have learned historically. Even though the term simulacra was not used until the 1970s, what it defines has been prevalent throughout the narrative of modern history. By looking at the threads of heroism, patriotism, camaraderie and loss, it is possible to see some major psychological connections between generations and to understand how each presents its experiences and perceptions of war through audio-visual imagery such as film or digital video.

The decade of the 1960s saw a repeated traumatization of American society. The nation was facing crisis in race relations, a heated-up Cold War, generational conflict and there was the beginning of the moral defeat in Vietnam. The decade of 2000 is experiencing a similar sensation of crises. This decade has already seen repeated trauma with 9/11, the ever present threat of terrorism, the explosion of technology and the internet, as well as the Iraq War. The Baby Boomers were facing a fragmentation and disintegration of the systems that they had previously taken for granted and a modern era was transforming into a postmodern era. The Baby Boomers were being exposed to constant upheaval, and they were seeing it brought into their living rooms on a daily basis through the television newscasts. The Baby Boomers assimilated all this information and then began to redefine themselves and their goals. The Baby Boomers were a "generation of seekers," different from Generation Y that has become a "generation of

individuals."[1] Our parents have taught us the feeling of individuality and the freedom to figure out who we are. We have explored relationships with God and spirituality, and struggled to find our place in society. Generation Y has been afforded an opportunity for open mindedness and tolerance. For some, the generation appears to be directionless in that it lacks community ties and meaningful participation in communal life largely because of its connectivity to the global cyberworld and its lack of need for constant interpersonal communications.[2] Researchers have also found that Generation Y does seek community and meaningful involvements even though it is often in informal and non-traditional ways. [3] Generation Y has found its own community albeit one that is loosely structured and connected through cyberspace. This community is more global in reach, and even though it allows for personal expression, it affords as much anonymity as an individual would want.

For the creators of the Iraq War videos, the cyberworld offers a place to express themselves and allow others to offer feedback. When comparing these videos to the Vietnam films, there are many common threads that indicate the videographers of Generation Y have been influenced by the Baby Boomer filmmakers. Incorporation of ideas such as the use of pop culture, "pump up music," juxtapositioning of images, symbols of death and patriotism, camaraderie and brotherhood, discontentment with the establishment and guerilla warfare in an urban setting are the elements that make up the themes that are reoccurring in the Iraq War videos.

The documenting of war has progressively changed throughout American history and continuously brought forth new forms of media coverage: from newspapers to newsreels to the evening news to blogs. Scholars have argued that "instant history" has

been created with our ever-increasing access to video, satellite, and computer technologies. Because of these new technologies, the world is blanketed with "real time" images that provoke immediate reactions that influence outcomes and "quick freeze" texts of received history.[4] According to historians, history becomes simultaneous, global, and encompasses the masses. Past, present, and future become packaged, witnessed, and presented in moving imagery and thus create "instant history."[5] This results in the writing of a new brand of historiography.[6] The phenomenon that has occurred, during the Iraq War, of soldiers posting personal videos to internet sites has brought a new unfiltered personal experience to the face of war. These videos defy traditional ways of experiencing and witnessing war. Footage is being personally recorded on the frontlines and being distributed or made available to the masses. With the widespread use of the internet, blogs, and personal recording devices, the technological revolution has changed the perspective of war in the last fifteen years. The internet allows soldiers on the frontline, those on the home front, and even the enemy, access to the war experience and how that experience is articulated through visual imagery. With the simple click of a mouse, the entire world is at one's fingertips, and this accessibility enables individuals to make their own judgments and shape their own experience of what they believe war to be, if they choose to find and view these images. As the Baby Boomer filmmakers created artistic works in response to the Vietnam War, Generation Y can do today via websites and internet in reply to what they see and hear about the Iraq War.

Unlike the Vietnam films, one of the dichotomies seen in these videos is the role that masculinity plays in the conflict between the fighting conquering hero soldier image, and the humane caring individual who might not be considered as manly or heroic.

Masculinity as a condition of governmental control or overriding power was not readily recognized, exploited, or used until Reagan became president. In understanding the relationship of people and the State, it is interesting to reference the Reagan era when he offered himself up as the image of the "hard body" leader. This concept of a national unified body with a masculine chief is pursued by Susan Jeffords in her book, Hard Bodies. She argues that this reformulation of the relationship between the people and the nation in terms of militarism, patriotism, individualism, family values, and religious beliefs re-articulated both the individual and the nation in terms of masculine identities. It was a reciprocal relationship in that actions by either were seen as impinging on and determining the other.[7] I have conducted my research based on the definition of the masculinity of the State, the creation of "instant history," and Generation Y in their postmodern culture, in reaction to the Vietnam films.

In Chapter One, I discussed celluloid recreations of war. In movies about World War I, such as *Wings* and *The Big Parade*, there were themes of male relations, love, patriotism, and the gruesome realities of modern warfare. These filmmakers were doing their best to create realism, and yet, they remained artistic visions of war. These films established the perception of what war was believed to be, and the audiences who viewed them came to accept these works of art as reality. The films of World War II, emphasized the theme of the masculine hero. *Sands of Iwo Jima,* a typical World War II propaganda film, incorporated the very patriotic music of the Marine Hymn to further glorify the hero and his cause.

The Vietnam War brought with it political debate and created a vast array of artistic expressions that included themes of pro-war, anti-war, pro-military, anti-military,

failure, dissension, and disenfranchisement. Baby Boomers as well as later generations grew up watching World War I and World War II films and consequently had a visual framework for the formula war film in their minds by the time they were inundated with television news media images of the Vietnam War on a daily basis. Vietnam was a politically polarizing war at home and abroad because we felt diminished as a nation as a consequence of our disappointment in the war. The psychological effects of guerilla warfare, America's dubious need to be involved and our ultimate failure were factors that shattered our impressions of soldiers as heroes. All of these factors lead to the Baby Boomer's narrative film recreations that have become the simulacra today for an entire generation of emerging filmmakers and videographers. The Baby Boomer filmmakers' works began to materialize during the height of postmodernism and as a result were deemed the new Hollywood renaissance, a style that was disjointed and fragmented.

I have examined and discussed in detail *Apocalypse Now*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Platoon*, and *Born on the Fourth of July* and have shown how the content and filmic tendencies of these films has left an impression on Generation Y. I have delineated themes that lent themselves to comparisons in Generation Y's Iraq War videos, and have found that commonalities exist within a postmodern framework and ideology. What is particularly prevalent in these films is the use of pop culture references, "pump-up" music, images of death, masculinity, brotherhood and camaraderie, connectivity and a sense of identity or lack thereof.

In Chapter Two, I discussed Generation Y's creation of the Iraq War videos that are recorded in real time and that are creating "instant history." I divided the types of videos found on YouTube and Military.com into six general categories: memorials,

combat and everyday life in Iraq, peaceful social interaction during war, brotherhood, reaction and response to the Iraq War, and dissension. And, I draw parallels, contrasts and comparisons between the Baby Boomer's Vietnam War films and Generation Y's videos of the Iraq War. After examining approximately 50 to 60 videos, I found that there were clearly common themes projected in the Iraq War videos that had been prevalent in previous narrative fictional war films. In most instances, an inherent difference is that these Iraq videos are personal footage that is created by the troops themselves. However, as I discussed, there are videos that have been produced by friends and family back in the United States in order to memorialize or pay tribute to the troops. One of the main conclusions that I have drawn about the Iraq War videos is that the troops are creating them in order to help themselves, and the people at home, understand the horror, the struggles, the drudgery and boredom they are going through, how they are living their daily lives, and for some, how they are creating a portrait of how they would like to be remembered in this conflict. Many troops create videos as a means of catharsis as well as to fill gaps of downtime.

The fact that these videos can be immediately posted to a site such as YouTube or Military.com does allow for other ramifications of their viewing. These websites create a public arena for response and critiquing of the videos and videographers themselves. The videos become open to a global public audience who can constructively critique or criticize their contents and the videographers' intentions. The interesting part of this is that it is an open forum where the videographer can rebut anything that is said to him or her.

This concept of exchanging comments in cyberspace is very common for Generation Y. We have found, in many instances, that computer communications and text messaging are a faster and more efficient way to communicate than using a telephone. We are a digital generation linked globally through online communities. The anonymity, as well as the connectivity, opens avenues that we might not otherwise pursue. Generation Y communicates and reconnects via cyberspace. Prime examples of this connectivity are networking websites such as MySpace, Facebook and Friendster. Arguably, the most popular of these is MySpace. Troops use these sites in order to stay directly connected with friends and family at home. They can post personal footage on their own sites, but generally, these are not as public a forum, and therefore do not get the same kind of reaction and response from strangers as videos on YouTube or Military.com. Back in the U.S., Generation Y's involvement in the war is minimal because of the global world that provides escape from news and reality and a lack of required wartime sacrifices on the home front such as rationing or war bond drives. We can connect to whatever we choose and we can just as easily close ourselves off never needing a genuine connection to public affairs because our whole world can be experienced from a keyboard.

Issues and questions of masculinity, valor, and patriotism are the subjects that garner the most reaction and response to soldiers Iraq videos. The common scenario is the user posts a video, and other site members leave their own positive or negative comments on the websites space below the video. This open forum prompts the promoting of other concepts or videos and opens other avenues of thought and dialogue. The banter goes back and forth and the videographer might react with comments or

additional video footage. The conversation seems to continue ad infinitum and someone always wants the last word. This promotes healthy and/or often conflicted online discourse about war and the feelings of those involved. Because the internet is more interactive than the news media, it offers a format that helps to create a completely different news resource. With the inception of videos streaming onto internet websites, we might find that the discussion of war among members of Generation Y would be more widespread, however, this does not seem to be the case. Not long ago, I presented my thesis topic to studies in an undergraduate film history course and was surprised to find that no one in the class had ever seen any of the troop-posted Iraq War videos on the internet. Even though Generation Y is generally informed and technological savvy, there was a lack of awareness by the students in the class that took me by surprise. If film and communication students are this unaware of the existence of these videos, my fervent belief is that in order to have any major impact on the American populace, these videos must be leaked into mainstream media.

There are a multitude of television shows that have begun to incorporate this guerilla style of film and video making. Among these are the popular television shows "24," starring Kiefer Sutherland, and "The Unit," a program that shows a special covert military unit that goes on special assignments into regions of turmoil and terrorism. Both of these programs depict the masculine hero figures attempting to save the United States from evils abroad. These shows have not necessarily used found footage from the internet sites, but they have incorporated the style of filming that is prevalent in YouTube or military.com videos created by and for the troops. This is an MTV style of fast cuts that promote and support fast action, edited to music, with the incorporation of elements

of popular culture. These types of productions are clearly geared toward a Generation Y type of audience. The television shows are also filming urban guerilla warfare in a style reminiscent of these videos including the use of night vision cameras and jerky camera movements.

The news media has even begun to incorporate the images that soldiers capture in their personal videos into their 24/7 news loop. Even though the networks have their own reporters imbedded in Iraq, one of the only ways for reporters to get footage from combat or patrols outside of the Green Zone or the wire is to use the footage that soldiers have taken via helmet cam or handheld camcorder. Unfortunately, the scenes displayed on television news media channels are only of combat and carnage and very rarely do they show the human interest elements. These human interest elements are usually saved for hour long evening programming such as "60 Minutes," "20/20," and "Anderson Cooper."

Personal videos have a place in the honest presentation of war today. A major question nevertheless remains: in time will traditional television news programs become outdated and outmoded due to these videos streaming onto the internet for all to see? Only time can answer this question. Because news is already simulcast on internet video feeds, and a greater number of people are spending more time in front of a computer than in front of a television, it is likely that television news coverage will have stiff competition. Knowing this, the major networks already have a huge presence on the internet. The internet gives them another avenue on which to project their news but this venue too is still responsible to network censorship of traditional reporting. The internet is a platform for traditional reporting as well as for the personal videos coming out of Iraq today and one will not detract from the other. They will actually augment each other by

showing different sides and aspects of the story or narrative that war creates. Are these videos depictions of the fragmented society in which we live? These videos are personal and isolated, yet they are global in a consumerist market. Will this change the news business all together? In all actuality, it cannot change the news business completely because there is a need for various forms of expression. The television and televised internet offer news of war whereas the soldier-produced internet videos bring personal projections of the people who are involved in the war. Furthermore, war will never be outdated, therefore neither will any type of reporting. It is easy to hypothesize that these traditional news feeds on television may move exclusively into a computer realm as the television becomes more and more obsolete and computers function not only as computers but also as household televisions.

As valuable as the personal videos have become in understanding the human complexities of war, they have also changed several aspects of the war and its relationship to individuals and nations involved. National security and the revelation in dealing with psychological stress have both been impacted by these videos and the fallout has affected military decisions and operations. The implications of these factors are broad in terms of national security and they deserve further research.

The videos of the soldiers become uncensored instant history and they present the events in another form and fashion. Future history will determine whether these personal accounts are a cure for alienation and over consumption in a capitalist society in which virtual reality can be bought and sold. Since these videos are a free commodity, they can aid in removing the marketability from war. Even though this was not the intent of the soldiers who created the videos, it is a bi-product of this phenomenon. How does this fit

into a capitalist world that propagates alienation but at the same meshes everyone in the world together with one click of a mouse? Because the internet is a portal into a global world, when an individual posts a personal production on a website he is inviting strangers into his world. These videos are data that stops the necessity for other data, but are these videos the ghosts of things to come? Television is oversaturated with reality shows that are replacing other forms of TV entertainment and this could be a precursor to what might happen in film. These personal videos are a creation of history and possibly an art form for the next century.

American politics are under a microscope with the emergence of internet technology which in turn can change the cultural interpretation of war. The internet breeds in a viral manner, and minor things erupt at all times that break with form. The authenticity of what is being presented changes minute by minute and is a reaction to other data that is also present in the realm of cyberspace. So how do we understand what we understand? Today knowledge is a combination of authentic experience, personal interaction and technological interface. The interface changes the way that humans communicate and operate and it affects every one of our lives: therefore our experiences in the cyberworld help formulate our opinions, views, and ideologies.

Even though we have seen that these videos are affecting the type of television productions, will they in fact impact future war films? Will these videographers of Generation Y become the feature-length filmmakers of Generation Y? Right now we are at a crossroads. Will the soldiers put their cameras down when they return home? Will this personal video journalism continue? Or is this just a momentary democratization of

media images? Will the future just hold images of what the news means to say or what wealthy filmmakers choose to say?

Notes

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