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Society affects the lives of people who live in it. It dictates how they should behave and establishes norms that are expected to be obeyed otherwise people who do not fulfill the expectations are considered as deviant, rebellious and society's outcasts. Society, however, is susceptible to change, as it is highly shaped by the events and its resulting pervasive ideas, occurring in certain periods of time.

The three stories, "The Vanishing American Hobo" by Jack Kerouac, "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut and "Soldier's Home" by Ernest Hemingway clearly illustrates how society changes and how it affects the people in it and how people attempts to suppress deviance. The story "Soldier's Home" is a story of a young man who returns as a changed man to Oklahoma in 1919 after the First World War. This story was first published in 1925. The young soldier Harold "Krebs" enlisted in the Marines and goes to war for two years.

When he returns home it is very obvious that he is not the same hopeful, slick, religious young man in the picture who goes to a Methodist College and enjoys college lives with fraternity brothers anymore. Now he is passive and refers to himself as not part of the "Kingdom". Moreover, it seems he does not want to be involved with life in general, the reason is that, "He did not want consequences he wanted to live along without consequences," therefore he withdrew (Hemingway 2007).

Around him there is an air and sense of loss, he even has to lose his own war stories as he had to tell lies about his experiences since people in his town decided they have had enough of the stories of atrocities related by the soldiers who came home earlier than him. Moreover, there are so many

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things that he does not want to take part anymore even courting as it states, " He did not want to have to do any courting" (Hemingway 2007). It is pretty obvious that the war had changed Krebs, and the line " he couldn't make her see it", when he comforts his mother after telling her that he does not love her, hinted to the reason (Hemingway 2007).

The war had taught him a lot of things including stifling his emotions. And most importantly, he could not explain to his mother what he had gone through in the war, he could not make her understand and see the horror the war has exposed him. But his family, especially his parents, could not see why he has to act that way while the other soldiers in the neighborhood had clearly moved on, having good jobs and getting married, and so they pressured him to go back to the normal society. The First World War brought many countries into a global armed conflict that was considered the first devastating and horrible event in all of human history.

People died by the thousands and many suddenly find themselves losing their family and friends. The soldiers, especially, are daily exposed not only to the hardships of war but the terror and anxiety that accompanies it. Trench warfare specifically exposed the soldiers to a very harsh, stagnant and extremely dangerous environment. Right before their eyes skulls and brains were blown away. An example of a horrible incident is when a man who had the top of his head blown away was groaning like an animal for three hours before he died (Hemingway Lecture Notes).

Soldiers surrounding him cannot avoid being affected by such painful human torture, as they were helpless to ease his pain. No wonder that an incident like this made many soldiers who return home after the war broken, without

hope and suffer emotional numbness and disbelief like Krebs did. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs it is normal that soldiers experiences a kind of trauma (shellshock and post traumatic stress disorder) after the war since it is indeed a very shocking human experience.

Soldiers feel somehow dissociated from what they know is "normal life". It is possible that the other soldiers like Charley Simmons who easily adjusted to normal life in Oklahoma did not suffer as much as Krebs did. Studies revealed that soldiers do not experience the same kind of trauma as not all of them are exposed to more "prolonged, extensive, and horrifying" situation as Krebs probably was. However, society put pressure on them by expecting them to move on, to forget the war ("National Center" 2007).

The short story "Harrison Bergeron" reflects the 1950's conformity lifestyle and the rebellious protestation of a young boy against it. It was published in 1961. The story describes the hopeful and desperate attempts of that society to eliminate differences and to achieve equality especially in terms of intellect and physical appearance. If any man has above normal average intelligence, they put a metal handicap radio in his ear which in every 20 seconds, a noise from the government transmitter will interrupt his thinking, so that he cannot use his intelligence for his advantage.

If a woman is beautiful, a hideous mask covers her face to conceal her beauty. Moreover, people are burdened with sash weights and bags of birdshot to keep them from being graceful in their movements or to reduce their strength. The point is, anything that can make them look as superior from every body else are made into a handicap. They do not want "to go

back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else" (Vonnegut 2005).

Moreover, the idea of disobeying the law, when Hazel suggested that they made a hole to take out some lead balls from the birdshot canvas bag, was an unthinkable thing for according to George, " The minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society"(Vonnegut 2005)? They believe that cheating on laws brings social upheavals that they do not like. The strange thing is that Hazel and George and the people around them seem to get used to the idea of conformity, as George states, " I don't notice it any more. It just a part of me" (Vonnegut 2005).

However, their son, Harrison, is put into jail and eventually killed for rebelling against it. As the Handicapper General attacked their son on TV, parents of Harrison were not able to help him. Two are several forces that led into the conformity of the 1950" s: the Korean conflict and the threat of communism. But the underlying root cause of it all is the fear of the terrors of war that they previously experienced in the Second World War. Therefore to avoid any conflict, social conformity is encouraged since they believed that conformity is unity.

The place of men and women in society were clearly defined: women stay home while the men go out to work and achieve the American dream. This is being depicted by Hazel and George Bergeron: Hazel stays at home while George works. Men are especially drawn to the collective idea of " organization man"; they were expected to work in corporations, to put on flannel suits and pursue the American dream. The American dream is like the Handicapper General that dictates the ideas and dreams of the people. Every

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one is encouraged to think and act alike and was preoccupied with the lure of consumerism and materialism.

Conformity are also seen in the sameness of house designs , like the one in Levittown and the sameness of appetite, as Americans began to be obsessed with fast foods. Conformity was especially achieved with the aid of Television. As in the story, all of the action occurred in front of the Television (Costello 2007). However, the young generations are beginning to rebel, as symbolized by Harrison, but the force of conformity was so strong that parents are in bondage to it, unable to extend the necessary psychological and emotional help that their children desperately needed.

The “ Vanishing American Hobo” was published in 1960. It tells of the experiences of the hobos as they travels like vagabonds from place to place across America usually with back packs on their backs. They are a people who choose to live as exiles of society, who sleep just anywhere, to experience the freedom that they desire, “ There's nothing nobler than to put up with a few inconveniences like snakes and dust for the sake of absolute freedom” (Kerouac 2008). But freedom from what?

Obviously from their restrictive society who dictates what they should do or have. According to Kerouac, the hobo “ is born of pride, having nothing to do with a community but with himself and other hobos and maybe a dog” (Kerouac 2008). This means that they are proud of their lifestyle or subculture, that they deliberately do not want to associate with society and maintain little intimate interest with other people, aside from the hobos like them. The author laments that they are quickly becoming a vanishing lot because of the police and the media.

The police, riding in their tax-paid police, cars searches for them everywhere suspecting them as possible spies against the government while the media, on the other hand, portray them as “ the rapist, the strangler, and child-eater” so that adults and children stay away from them and no longer provides them with the food that they need (Kerouac 2008). This shows clearly the attempts of the government to suppress the subculture that they symbolizes and to force them back to what is “ normal”.

In the wake of the conformity of the 1950's arises the Beat generation. “ Beat generation” is attributed to Jack Kerouac. Though it could mean being defeated or weary of life “ like being pushed up against the wall” or implying a sense of being used or raw Jack would also like it to refer to what is beatific (The Beat Generation Lecture). Jack and his friends, in ushering in the beat generation, encourages the protest of the 60's against the established society of materialism, where everyone are encouraged to own cars and decent homes.

The generation, having experienced uncertainties of the Depression and the terror of war in childhood, is a disillusioned lot who desperately wants to hold on to something that they can believe in (Beat Generation Lecture Notes; Abieva [no date]). They do not find such meaning in the collective conformity of the 1950's, the generation of their fathers. In fact, they do not trust this collective society who was responsible for the bad circumstances of depression and global wars.

The hobos, particularly, are glorified as people who defy the restrictive and demanding norms of society in pursuit of freedom. They symbolize the solitary desire of that generation, to be left alone, to figure things out for

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themselves, to search for meaning. As the period was compounded by hysteria of the rise of communism, it seems that the right thing to do in that generation, to preserve one's individual identity, is to quit that society.

Attempts were made to discourage this deviance (subculture) as what McCarthy did in his pursuit against communism. The media and police were effective tools for suppression (Abieva, [no date]). The three stories therefore clearly give an insight into the societies in the periods of American history following just after turbulent struggles. The horrors and uncertainties of the Wars and Depression molded the consciousness of the people, and as they try to cope with the challenge of their era, it therefore changed their way of thinking and lifestyle.

People become united for certain causes and also united in their sufferings. However, some people do try to get out of its safe mold, to carve a life according to the dictates of their own minds. To be different is what scares most people so that society always attempts to suppress this deviance back to conformity by exerting force or pressure. Works Cited Abieva, Natalia. Protest and Experiment in the Literature of the Beat Generation. Fairfield University. [no date]. Accessed November 4, 2008

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