

The sociological reactions to the return of vietnam veterans

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The Sociological Reactions to the Return of Vietnam Veterans Upon their return from the Vietnam War, many veterans were shocked upon the reaction (or lack thereof) displayed by the citizens of the States who had remained on the home front. When finally landing back on American soil, many veterans expected to be greeted with celebration and maybe even a parade, acknowledging their service and dedication to the Vietnam cause.

However, veterans were instead greeted by protestors who did not agree with the United States' participation in the war (ironically, not all veterans wholly supported the cause itself, but instead went out of respect and devotion to their country). In an article written by Vietnam veteran Bill Hunt, it is clear to see that not only were strangers hostile towards veterans, but even friends and family treated the returning soldiers with annoyance, anger, or at the best, apathy.

He states that it felt like family members had not even known he was at war; they reacted to his return much like one would react to someone returning from the grocery store: with just a casual hello, disregarding the danger and the high level of devotion that had been experienced. Hunt's family barely acknowledged that he had ever even gone to war. The experiences of Vietnam vets were simply viewed as a part of every-day life.

The war was not even taken seriously by many people, and veterans (specifically Hunt) were appalled by the flippant and insensitive (though innocent and thoughtless) comments made by others, family included. To the vets, it had been a hellish experience, and many experienced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, and many became dependent on drugs

and alcohol to get through the psychological after-effects of being involved in such stressful and torturous circumstances.

However, appallingly, many were unable to get the help they needed. Medical aid was not made available to them right away, and a shocking percentage of Americans viewed them as crazy and dangerous to society. Some even thought that the veterans deserved their psychological conditions. Suicide became increasingly common as many veterans experienced completely unfounded hatred and degradation. Part of this is due to the younger generation, which had begun the hippie movement.

The ideas of "peace" and "love" were emphasized. Because of this, many returning veterans were greeted with shouts of "baby killer" and other completely untrue and offensive things. They were also given stereotypes of overarching drug use. Additionally, television was available to households for the first time. Because of this, there was no watering-down or censorship of the conditions of the Vietnam War. Many veterans were portrayed incorrectly and much confusion was experienced by the public due to mixed messages.

Regardless of the cause, the fact remains that the Vietnam veterans are one of the most unjustly maligned groups of people in American history. The war was politically unpopular and many veterans were accused of a lack of dedication and "not fighting hard enough". The disrespect that had been shown towards these veterans was and still is disgusting: regardless of whether or not one agrees with the cause, it is inexcusable that these veterans were not commended for their sacrifice. Comparison to The Return of a Private and Currently Returning Veterans The Return of a Private