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**HONOR RESTORED:
AMERICAN VIETNAM VETERANS' MEMORY DISCOURSE
AND PUBLIC RHETORIC 1967-2017**

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes about American veterans of the Vietnam War have differed widely among American people since the earliest days of the war. This humiliating defeat and its shocking news about mass massacres and other atrocities committed by American troops deeply affected the country. As a result, the image of Vietnam veterans was stereotyped in the mass media and in popular American consciousness as cruel and inhuman insane killers for many years. Accordingly, most veterans did not receive a happy welcome home in America after their service in the war. Rather, their treatment was characterized by disrespect and ignorance from the public, causing many cases of social problems and unemployment issues which took a long time to find solutions. However, to a number of soldiers who fought in Vietnam, this was unfair because they believed they risked their lives for their country, for what they believed would be good for the American people. Experiencing great difficulties adjusting to life back in America, many of these veterans started to raise their voices to get back their honor and the respect they felt they deserved. With an investment of time and effort over time from the Vietnam veterans, the American public started to feel that those veterans deserved more respect than they had previously received. Vietnam veteran rhetoric was critical in influencing this shift in popular American attitudes toward the legacy of the war – and America’s defeat -- from the role and responsibility of frontline common soldiers to that of government strategy and policy. By applying the theory of critical discourse analysis -- a text-analysis method in social scientific research -- this study explores Vietnam veteran rhetoric, both during and after the war, and the role it played in bringing about this shift in public opinion. Text analyzed includes memoirs, documentaries and interviews, and the timeline covered is the fifty years from the establishment of the Vietnam veterans Against the War organization (VVAW) in 1967 up to the landmark debut of director Ken Burns’ PBS documentary *The Vietnam War*.

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