

The 1960s

Historiographic essay

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ABSTRACT

This essay is a historiographical assessment of five works on the history of the 1960s, including four books and a documentary series.

The 1960s is a revolutionary decade in the history of the United States. There was an unprecedented amount of change in the national milieu, the way that the people interacted with the government, racial relations, feelings regarding sex and reproductive rights, technology, politics, public perception and use of drugs, and feelings about war. While the approaches to understand the decade are varied as is possible, there is one consensus among the texts- that the 1960s was a period of radical change unparalleled in the history of America. Many times over in the sources I will discuss here, this claim is made. I have examined five sources primarily that all speak to aspects of historical study of America in the 1960s. The CNN documentary *The Sixties*, which first aired in 2014, could serve as a framework for the period in which the four books situate themselves. It is a broad survey of events and subjects, which three of the ten episodes align with the subject matter chosen by each other author or set of authors- “1968,” “The War in Vietnam,” and “Sex, Drugs, and Rock N’ Roll.” The 1988 political and cultural psychohistory *Chicago ’68* by David Farber examines the groups involved in and the months leading up to the Democratic National Convention in 1968 as a way to speak to the decade as a whole. *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement in the Vietnam Era* published in 1990 by Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield is a political history which examines the peace and antiwar groups that developed before and in response to the Vietnam War. Similarly a political and social take on the 1960s, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* originally published in 2000 by Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin looks at the decade through the lens of conflict, much in the way *An American Ordeal* does. Lastly, Robert Cottrell’s 2015 cultural history, *Sex,*

Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's Counterculture examines the counterculture of the 1960s by discussing four primary figures and the relationship of these individuals to the drug culture in the 1960s, including the influences on the sexual revolution, music, art, and literature of the era, which in turn influenced the masses.

Harry Edwards, a 1960s era race activist and author of *The Struggle That Must Be*, said, "1968 was the year that you could point to and say, 'Here is where the separation began between past generations and generations going forward.'"¹ In fact, 1968 has the distinction of being the only year that several of my sources isolate from the decade as a seminal year that brought the movements of the decade into fruition and reached a climax inciting pervasive change.² David Farber devotes his entire book, *Chicago '68*, to this year. Robert Cottrell focuses on most of the decade equally, but does isolate the 1968 Democratic National Convention and Olympic games as significant events of the year. These are both, however, extremely brief mentions kept shorter than a paragraph a piece and thrown in with the Tet Offensive and some arrests of protest leaders.³ CNN's miniseries documentary, *The Sixties*, covers all of these events with quite a few others as well. The eighth episode of the series "1968" is, notably, the only one of the ten episodes that is devoted to a single year. Lance Morrow,

¹ The *Sixties*. "1968." Episode 8. CNN, July, 2014.

² Both *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* and *America in White, Black, and Gray: A History of the Stormy 1960s*, the second of which informs this essay but is not included in the materials discussed, have chapters devoted to 1968, as does the documentary series *The Sixties*, which devotes one episode of ten to this year and is the only year isolated in such a way.

³ Robert Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 257-260, 280.

Time Magazine essayist, speaks over footage of stuntman Evel Knievel attempting a jump and horribly crashing at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas on New Year's Eve of 1967 saying, "If you look at the whole year as theater, as real acts of tragedy, there's almost a poetic feeling to it. 1968 was one goddamn thing after another." The episode looks at the constant protests against Vietnam, shows the State of the Union where Johnson talks about the unrest in the land, talks about the Johnson presidency, the assassination of Bobby Kennedy and Dr. King, and the violence that followed. One of the most significant moments in this series for me was watching *The Sixties* footage of the protests at the Democratic National Convention with the crowd chanting "the whole world is watching."⁴ *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* by Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield like *The Sixties* also focuses on the political dynamics of 1968. Unlike *The Sixties* or *Chicago '68*, *An American Ordeal* does not isolate the year, but fold it into a section entitled "The Contest for the Center" covering the period from 1966-1970. The coverage is most certainly a political history, much like Robert Cottrell's writing on the year, is cast in terms of their subject, namely the Antiwar movement and those in the establishment that supported continuing the Vietnam War. *An American Ordeal* takes on subjects like conscientious objectors in more depth than any of the other sources and covers the nuances of people's experiences. DeBenedetti and Chatfield include excerpts from oral history transcripts from individuals like campaigners and housewives— which is notably missing from other sources, even the documentary *The Sixties* doesn't interview anyone who isn't a significant figure outside

⁴ *The Sixties*. "1968." Episode 8. CNN, July, 2014.

of archival footage, but does supply many clips of people being interviewed in the 1960s for news organizations which achieves a similar effect.

The book published closest to the historical period I'm examining is David Farber's *Chicago '68*, which was published in 1988, only twenty years after the events. Farber attempts to shed light on the events leading up to the week of the Democratic National Convention of 1968, which was held in Chicago and was notoriously surrounded by rioting and chaos. As Walter Cronkite said before the convention, "A Democratic Convention is about to begin in a police state."⁵ President Johnson had authorized 5,500 federal troops, 5000 National Guard were called in, and Mayor Daley put 12,000 Chicago police on duty.⁶ Farber tells the same story from three points of view: the Yippies, the National Mobilization to End the War (Mobe), and Mayor Richard J. Daley's office and his police force. The Yippies were organizing a "festival of life" in the parks (even though Mayor Daley had denied them permits) and wanted to run an actual pig for president (named Pigasus) at the convention as a stunt to attract attention to their cause. They had become disenchanted with the political process and more interested in political theater to make their point, one of their leaders, Abbie Hoffman, is cast a sort of P.T. Barnum figure.⁷ Farber uses Hoffman as a way to represent the technological and media savvy of the counterculture. Speaking on Hoffman's belief of media as a tool, Farber states, "Information...Hoffman believed, came not as much from concrete experiences with everyday life as it did from the world the mass media brought into people's home in heavier and more frequent doses." Mobe was another group with

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David Farber. *Chicago '68* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 142.

⁷ Ibid, 53.

an eccentric history, also known for trying to levitate the Pentagon with telekinesis at one point in protest of the military industrial complex.⁸ Lastly, Farber handles the police in an interesting manner, both from a place of understanding that most were doing their jobs and felt responsible for keeping the peace, but also owns that this was a police riot, they interfered with news coverage of the event, and sought to reestablish authority through excessive force. Farber makes the argument that the information gained by examining this microcosm can be extrapolated to ascertain a larger understanding of the politics of the 1960s as a whole. He claims, “despite, or perhaps because, of its unanticipated nature- both possibilities need to be examined- Chicago revealed a great deal about the state of American politics in the 1960s.”⁹ He offers the thesis that each group represented a different worldview of how politics and social order should ideally function. The book’s main goal is to unpack the political thought and practice. Farber seeks to offer an explanation for the radicalization of politics in the 1960s.

David Farber, a Chicago native, offers a vague childhood impression of the climate surrounding that August. It is singular though; among the books I've read on this period that the author wasn't personally involved in the conflict. He makes a point of saying that he is stifling his own voice, and neither condemning nor condoning the actions of any of the groups. This book was published twenty years after the conflict and naturally lacks much of the scholarship that was available in the following years.

The sources he used to compile consist mainly of public records, transcripts of interviews, private papers, organizational records and files, newspapers, magazines,

⁸ Ibid, 13.

⁹ David Farber. *Chicago '68* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), xvii.

films and filmed accounts, books of the times, and a wealth of secondary sources. While insistent that this is not a psychoanalytical history, language is used to examine the state of mind and perspective of groups, such as the creation of the word Yippie.¹⁰ Farber measures a movement's success by the group's relationship with media, language, and culture. The conflict is set within the actors' own perspective of events—allowing for a fuller, less biased understanding of the decisions made. He attributes Mobe's protest as much to frustration with the political process and the exclusion from this process as to the war in Vietnam. Overall Farber seems ahead of the curve in his scholarship by utilizing the assessment of language and a dynamic investigation accounting for multiple points of view that was not as common until the 1990s.

While there is discussion of popular culture as a catalyst of social change, Farber is careful to place each of the historical actors in the context of where each generation was coming from in relation to World War II and the Cold War, particularly paying attention to the key players of each group. For instance, Farber links Yippie development to the Jewish experience and growing up a generation away from the Holocaust. The effect of framing the narrative in three parts following each through the genesis of the group, the six months leading up to the convention, and the week of the convention is a broader view of any single event than is offered in any of the histories covering this period that I have examined here and is reminiscent of the most recently published book I examined, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's Counterculture* by Robert C. Cottrell in that while Farber limits his scholarship to a small

¹⁰ Ibid, 15.

window, Cottrell examines the decade through a limited framework to understand the broader period.

Cottrell is primarily a biographer, which is apparent in his book. He explores a social history of the counterculture of the 1960s principally through the lives of four main individuals: Jack Kerouac, Ken Kesey, Allen Ginsberg, and Timothy Leary. This approach is reminiscent of the “great men” or “dead white men” approach, as Susan Ware called it.¹¹ While his focus isn’t on politics or presidents, in the same way that Farber attempts to talk about the decade by discussing a week and three specific groups, Cottrell seeks to talk about the entire counterculture, including the sexual revolution, widespread use of drugs, and music of the 1960s with relation to a handful of individuals. He makes passing mentions of the traditionally understood “great men” of the era like John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, Malcolm X, or Martin Luther King Jr.— and the Tet Offensive and 1968 Democratic National Convention both occupy the same page, mentioned almost in passing among this 435 page book. For a recent book, there is very little discussion of women’s or racial issues. Cottrell makes the argument that Kerouac, Kesey, Leary, and Ginsberg were the representation of the intellectual offspring of the Beats and Bohemians of earlier decades, or perhaps rather a new iteration of a segment of culture that always exists. Like Farber, Cottrell offers a multi-perspective take on his subject. He both describes these pioneers of the drug culture as missionaries seeking enlightenment and compares them to a misguided and doomed

¹¹ Susan Ware, “Century of Struggle: The History of Women’s History” in *A Century of American Historiography* (Bedford: St. Martin’s, 2009), 101-113.

children's crusade.¹² He talks about LSD by talking about Leary and Kesey's work and social experiments; he explores peyote and marijuana by using Ginsberg's poems written under the influence.¹³ His sources include novels, plays, songs, music, personal letters, and also more conventional ones like newspapers and scholarly journals.

Cottrell argues that the hippies were more media driven than any previous decade and that this is the area that should be explored to gain a better understanding of their culture.¹⁴ David Farber touches on this point, but like Cottrell, there is little depth in their exploration of this facet. The CNN documentary *The Sixties* wonderfully achieves this and even focuses an entire episode of the role that the emerging medium of television played in the 1960s. "Television Comes of Age" is the first episode of the series and sets the stage to understand how the public received much of their information during the 1960s.¹⁵ For instance, 1960 held the first ever televised presidential debate, many claiming that Kennedy won the presidency largely due to his appearance and performance there. As New York Magazine editor John Heilmann puts it, "People recognized that television was now the medium that mattered. It wasn't before 1960 and it was everyday after 1960 in those presidential debates." *The Sixties* examines the relationship to burgeoning television advertising and how it effected entertainment and to an extent, the culture in America. The books, however, discuss the response to the culture of consumerism, but not the creation of the culture.

¹² Robert Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), X-xii.

¹³ Ibid. 144.

¹⁴ Ibid, Xi.

¹⁵ *The Sixties*. "Television Comes of Age." Episode 1. CNN, May, 2014.

One of the strengths of this documentary series is the conversation that it creates among archival footage. One moment you have a survey of the television line up, and then you see footage contemporary to the era of comedian George Carlin responding to the absurdity of shows like *Hogan's Heroes*. This is a wonderful example of the constant self reflection the counterculture imposed on the broader culture in the 1960s. *The Sixties* connected the technological advancement of television's transition to color to the mod movement in fashion and a new, more visceral reaction to seeing footage from Vietnam with red blood and orange fire than previous generations had been able to experience when seeing war footage. No other source even came close to discussing this technological advancement's impact on the culture. They even manage to talk about race issues through including moments like the first interracial kiss ever televised (on Star Trek between the characters Kirk and Uhura) and breakthrough shows like *Julia*, where for the first time an African American woman was depicted in a career other than domestic work and was the leading character.

The Sixties is far and above on every other source when it comes to covering a wide range of subjects. The diversity ranges from political, social, and cultural movements, to music, technology, and military movements. The breadth of coverage may not allow to go as in depth as any other source discussed here, but the series does achieve a more inclusive approach giving more time to the women's movement, environmental movement, and racial issues, especially the Latino civil rights movement which almost no other source even mentioned, than any book on the subject I've included.

I think that the documentary format offers something that none of the other histories I looked at can— emotional appeal. On a personal note, I am not one to cry when watching movies, but watching this series was a highly emotional experience. I cried when JFK and MLK were assassinated, I had to collect myself after watching news footage of African American students being beaten for sitting at a lunch counter and children being knocked back with high-pressure hoses.¹⁶ These are all experiences covered in most every text that I examined, however it is outrageously different to read *An American Ordeal's* description, “A week later John F. Kennedy was dead,”¹⁷ when you compare it to news footage of a crowd huddled around a radio listening to a report and hearing of the death, watching grown men openly crying and a woman’s scream as her knees give way in shock, seeing the footage of Jackie Kennedy reaching to scoop a portion of her husband’s head off of the car, and this is all set to moving incidental music. Fort Worth Press reporter, Johnny Tackett, said of this moment, “In the average man’s life there are two or three emotional experiences burned into his heart and his brain. And no matter what happens to me, I’ll remember November 22nd as long as I live.”¹⁸ This speaks to the effectiveness of reaching an audience, when heightened emotion is attached to memories they become more memorable. As a public historian, reaching an audience and making an impact should always be kept as a goal. In

¹⁶ *The Sixties*. “A Long March to Freedom.” Episode 7. CNN, July, 2014. On a side note, checking this footnote- I watched a portion of this episode. Even just a moment was highly emotional watching the students fighting for desegregation in Nashville.⁷

¹⁷ Charles DeBenedetti and assisting author Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 66.

¹⁸ Archival footage. *The Sixties*. “The Assassination of President Kennedy.” Episode 3. CNN, June, 2014.

addition to the art, imagery, and music, there is no narration aside from news footage and talking heads including relevant figures, historians, authors, and journalists.

This method of “talking heads” lends much credibility to the information. Terry O’Neill, the person discussing a clip of Betty Friedan, founder of N.O.W. is the organization’s current president. Gloria Steinem offers reflection on her own experiences and role in the period. This oral history style does an amazing job of both recounting and recording history. The most impressive standout here is the diversity of voices. We hear from men and women, influential individuals on both the political right and left, individuals from television and film, authors, historians, musicians, and most notably the people weighing in are racially diverse. The books I am examining here have one voice, all authors are white males, well-educated historians, mostly who were politically left of center during the 1960s. This is the biggest weakness in studying even a variety of histories. How many voices can be represented when you only examine that which comes out of academia? However, due to the sensational nature of writing for television and the conversation the series attempts to create by including multiple points of view, the result is sometimes a conflicting message. In the episode on television, Kennedy’s presidential win is attributed to the debate being televised. Six episodes later Kennedy reportedly narrowly wins the presidency after placing a phone call showing support of Martin Luther King Jr. after he was jailed— securing the African American vote. Other episodes of *The Sixties* similarly compete with each other’s statements. As previously stated, many swore that Kennedy’s assassination was the moment that changed everything. In the episode, “The Space Race” one of the executive producers,

Tom Hanks made the somewhat sensational claim, “All of human experience will be divided into two eras- before man walked on the moon and after man walked on the moon.” The effect isn’t jarring though; these multiple oppositional claims illustrate a complex narrative that shows a great deal of viewpoints. If *The Sixties* was a book, it would be entirely quotes. It is comprised of archival footage and “talking heads” without any single narrator. The effect is democratic. Historians like Douglas Brinkley, Tim Naftali, and Mark Kurlansky are given equal weight to actors, journalists, and musicians when speaking about the period. The question of experience and authority is examined merely through whom is selected to speak on a subject. The choices they made for this series was varied and appeared appropriate for the material. The added drama does occasionally give pause to the question of the documentary as a historical authority. As a person who has conducted several video interviews for marketing purposes, more than once I wondered if the individuals being interviewed were speaking their own thoughts or if some of what they said had been scripted, at the very least guided.

The 1960s is unique as a decade, because it is the first period of time that has enough archival footage to cover every subject. Film existed before then, but was not produced in such mass quantities. It marked the beginning of live television news coverage and moments that a nation could all share simultaneously, the majority of Americans watched the moon landing. Pulitzer Prize winning author of *In the New World*, Lawrence Wright said of the broadcast of the Kennedy assassination coverage, “It was a signal moment in our cultural history, suddenly it occurred to us, the right thing

to do is to turn on the television.”¹⁹ Before this period of time, national en masse shared experiences weren’t possible, so the documentary format makes more sense to be able to discuss this period than it ever did before. As Dan Rather said, “Television became the campfire the whole tribe gathered around.”²⁰

While *The Sixties* covers a great deal of material, the series offers little set up of how situations came about before or resolved after the period. It holds firmly to the constraint of only speaking about the 1960s. However, a popular history intended to be sold to mass audiences as entertainment in a primetime slot would require editorial changes that a book intended for academic purposes would not. One specific instance that stood out for me was the amount of time spent lauding actor Bill Cosby for being ground breaking in his role as a leading man. This series was made and produced in 2013 and 2014. I couldn’t help but wonder if that they had made this today if they would have chosen not to talk about Cosby because of his recent admission of drugging women in order to sexually assault them. At any rate, it is notable that they excluded 50 years of accusations and lawsuits when discussing Cosby as a major figure. There is also the consideration that a major corporation like CNN is more likely to be sued for defamation.

While *The Sixties* only dedicates one episode to the conflict in Vietnam, some historians see it as the major crux of the change in the decade. Both *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* by Charles DeBenedetti and Charles

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *The Sixties*, “Television Comes of Age.” Episode 1. CNN, May, 2014.

Chatfield and *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* by Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin approach the 1960s as a study in conflict. DeBenedetti went as far as to say, “The Vietnam War was the catalyst for changes in peace advocacy, as well in the nation...,”²¹ DeBenedetti goes on to argue that a twenty year time span is necessary to understand the war and genesis of movements responsible for radical change.

Charles DeBenedetti, who passed away before the book’s completion, primarily authored *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*. Before his death he asked fellow historian and friend Charles Chatfield to complete the work, which he did, publishing the book 3 years after DeBenedetti’s death. Like Isserman and Kazin, both DeBenedetti and Chatfield were involved in political movements on the left during the 1960s. The book’s scope covers the antiwar movement within the twenty-year period spanning 1955–1975. *An American Ordeal* frames the time in the context of conflict, calling it a “war of the American interior.”²² They make an interesting distinction from an antiwar movement to a peace movement. The conflict is viewed as a social one rather than a political one. The thesis is bound up in the claim that the Vietnam War radicalized and focused the New Left and as a result they challenged “important cultural norms- traditional religious beliefs, scientific objectivity, white and male dominance,

²¹ Charles DeBenedetti and assisting author Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 2. The full quote is “The Vietnam War was the catalyst for changes in peace advocacy, as well in the nation, but in order to appreciate this fact it is necessary to locate the movement’s prewar sources and to follow its course beyond the formal termination of the war in 1973. Otherwise we are left with only the stereotypes formed in the period of most intense conflict– images that obscure the continuity between seeking peace and confronting war.”

²² Ibid 1.

adult standards of behavior, the assumption that poverty was a normal part of society, the notion of the Cold War mission, and the liberalism of consensus.”²³ Both books focus so much on the conflicts of the era that it is to the exclusion of everything else. These books entirely ignore gender issues and barely speak about the racial issues of the 1960s. There is also no mention of developing technologies. While it is understandable to narrow a topic, narrowing it to the point of exclusion to these basic factors that dramatically impact a period seems negligent.

Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin were college students and activists in the 1960s and later became historians. *America Divided* is more of a chronicle than a narrative, dividing subjects by chapter and timeline, but not always in the most organized manner. For instance, the chapter about race issues talks about Jackie Robinson, but leaves out Dr. King’s assassination. The overarching idea is a comparison of the 1860s to the 1960s and the Civil War parallels as both examples of the “dramatization of our humanity,”²⁴ it is a weak argument that runs out of steam midway through the book and isn’t really referenced again. Like *An American Ordeal*, *America Divided* views the 1960s through the lens of conflict. “We have chosen to tell a story about the intertwined conflicts— over ideology and race, gender and war, popular culture and faith that transformed the U.S. in irrevocable ways.” They cover the topics broadly, but with too little depth to justify their coverage. Each chapter, with the exception of three, starts post World War II and continues through Nixon’s presidency.

²³ Ibid, 4.

²⁴ Maurice Isserman and Michale Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 55.

The chapter on 1963 jumps from race, to rock n' roll, to Vietnam, and ends in Dallas with Kennedy's assassination. The plight of Hispanic people is summed up in less than a paragraph and then only as workers and political clout to be earned.²⁵ "History,' a great scholar once declared, 'is what the present wants to know about the past,'"²⁶ is the opening line of Isserman's and Kazin's book. This seems to be their plumb line for dividing what should and shouldn't be included in the book. This is also notably the first time I saw an attempt at artistic language, rather than writing a straightforward history, There seemed to be an aspect of emotional appeal to their writing agenda. Though the appeal was to little affect given the discombobulated organization of the information.

The time period I've considered here is naturally truncated because the 1960s were only 50 years ago, with my sources spanning 1988-2015. Yet, there seems to be surprisingly little growth in the sources I have examined compared to what I had expected to find. Excluding the documentary, women's issues and racial issues were barely covered. This is possibly due to the shared background of most of the writers. German born Klaus Fischer, author of *America in White, Black, and Gray: A History of the Stormy 1960s*, writes a scathing critique of historians of the era and those writing on the 1960s looking back. He claims that their association with the period biases them. Essentially stating that the young college students of the 1960s who developed into our modern historians are bias by the nature of their early involvement and culture of

²⁵ Ibid, 16.

²⁶ Ibid, Xi.

colleges in the 1960s that provided the framework for their thinking.²⁷ The collective writing and thinking on the period is surprisingly old-fashioned for this perceived left-leaning bias. The narratives mostly hinge on the actions of “great” white men and political machinations. There is little to no explorations of multicultural perspectives. A serious vacuum of progression exists among these works. The largest shift in scholarship I have seen is the change in which audience the writers are aiming for. Whereas the three earliest works seem to be written as academic histories that delve deeply into a single subject— be it conflict or a particular moment in history, the two most recent works are composed as more of a survey of the period, even Cottrell’s intense focus on four figures is used to talk about a larger array of subjects. The documentary is the only place where you find a wide variety of subjects explored from many points of view, where each topic has been reduced to the sound bytes necessary to have a general understanding of the point. The reason for this is perhaps as the distance from the time period increases the most significant pieces are what continue to be passed down and explored by the public. As Isserman and Kazin wrote in *America Divided*, “The meaning of the ‘60s depends, ultimately, upon which aspects of that time most significant to the retrospective observer.”²⁸

If you were to have asked Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield what single aspect was most responsible for the explosive and radical changes of the 1960s, he would have like responded that Vietnam and the protest movements that grew up

²⁷ Klaus Fischer, *America in White, Black, and Gray: A History of the Stormy 1960s* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2006), 7.

²⁸ Maurice Isserman and Michale Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), X.

around it were the most significant. David Farber would likely tell you that the involvement of young people in politics was the defining factor in pushing changes through during the period. In *The Sixties*, Robert Kennedy Jr. points out that his father talked about the founders of the American Revolution being young people. The youth culture was unlike it had been in America before.²⁹ Almost every episode of *The Sixties* would provide a different answer to this question. The episode on television coming of age is what changed the world, the episode on space exploration would likely give you the answer of the space race influencing the way we thought about the world, and of course the Kennedy Assassination episode would tell you that it was that event that changed everything, even stating, “The decreasing trust in their government by Americans all started with the Kennedy assassination.”³⁰ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin would likely say that the pressure created between conflicting groups came to a boiling point as a catalyst for such dramatic change. Lastly, Robert Cottrell would likely tell you that the counterculture itself is what brought about the change in the larger culture. His assessment is in agreement with *The Sixties* episode of the same title of his book “Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll” in which actor Peter Coyote speaks to his experience in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco on the use of drugs, “... it was a congregating place for artists. And the dividing line seemed to be the psychedelic experience. You couldn’t understand the posters, you couldn’t understand the fashions, you couldn’t understand anything if you hadn’t gotten high.”³¹

²⁹ *The Sixties*. “1968.” Episode 8. CNN, July, 2014.

³⁰ *The Sixties*. “The Assassination of President Kennedy.” Episode 3. CNN, June, 2014.

³¹ *The Sixties*. “Sex, Drugs, & Rock & Roll.” Episode 10. CNN, August, 2014.

Cottrell claims that the drug culture was the key to understand the 1960s counterculture, which was responsible for the radical changes in the decade.

Each of these perspectives adds valuable information to the scholarship conversation about the 1960s. I was disappointed to see a lack of coverage on the environmental movement in the 1960s and the increased awareness that sprung up of social and health problems connected with pollution. *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson was briefly mentioned in *The Sixties*, and even then only as a commentary on women's roles as advocates and an introduction to the legislation that followed, but nowhere else discussed the environmental issues of the period. Looking to the future, I would also hope to see more incorporation of women's and people of color's roles in the development of this period.

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