

Title - The Multiple Meanings of Rock Music During the Vietnam War

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Abstract: This paper investigates the impact that rock music had on the Vietnam War and the Vietnam protest movement. The 1960s were a time of dizzying social change that was accompanied by a change in music. Rock music was coming into its own during the sixties, evolving from the rock'n' roll of Elvis Presely, to the folk rock of Bob Dylan, to the hard rock of Jimi Hendrix. The rebellious and anti-establishment feel of rock music made it the perfect musical medium to express the feelings of angst that many people had during the era. The protest movement that rose up against the Vietnam War adopted rock music as an important means of expression. Especially towards the end of the decade, several powerful anti-war rock songs were released. As the war became increasingly unpopular overtime, protest music gained more radio airplay and commercial success. Just as rock music was an essential part of the anti-war movement, it was also a part of the experience of the Vietnam soldier. Soldiers in Vietnam were listening to the same popular songs as those at home, and often taking their own unique meaning from them. In this paper, I analyze several secondary sources as well as numerous primary sources such as newspapers, interviews, concert recordings, and soldiers accounts of their service. In this paper I argue that during the Vietnam era, rock music took on the dual role of openly protesting the war, but also providing the means for soldiers to understand their experiences in the war.

Christian Worldview Integration: As the centerpiece of my identity, my Christian worldview impacts everything I do in life. My Christian ethics affect not only my personal life, but also my scholastic and professional lives. The virtue of honesty impacts my scholarship. I seek to interpret texts and other sources honestly. Honesty also impacts how I credit my sources. The part of my Christian worldview that most profoundly impacts my scholarship is Jesus' command that we love our neighbor. Christians' lives should be permeated with love, and our scholarly activities should be no exception. As a fledgling historian, I aim to show charity, or love, to the authors of the texts I interact with. Scholarship is participating in an ongoing narrative and by showing respect to and honestly interpreting the sources I use, I can demonstrate a loving Christian attitude.

My Christian worldview was involved, even in writing about rock music and the Vietnam War. War and Rock music are far from explicitly Christian subjects. Studying how soldiers and protestors expressed their emotions through music gives one insight into human emotion. By learning about how a generation responded to the realities of war, it better enables me to care for people who have been through similar traumas. Studying the humanities is a useful pursuit for Christians, as it allows us to better understand humanity, who we are charged with loving and witnessing to. Through studying history, I have the opportunity to study and learn from the experiences of people throughout diverse time periods and cultures. I believe this is helping me to become a more empathetic and loving person.