



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**A STUDY OF MUSICOLOGY AND SOCIAL DISCOURSE
IN MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA**

by

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December 2020

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC, 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE December 2020	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE A STUDY OF MUSICOLOGY AND SOCIAL DISCOURSE IN MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) James B. Briggs			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.			
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) Social scientists and philosophers generally agree that music pervades most cultures and helps form people's identities and worldviews. This thesis examines music associated with mid-twentieth-century discourse movements in the United States to establish musicological patterns and analyze their relationship to social discourse. Documented historical accounts and music-chart ratings across movements were used to determine the popularity and historical significance of songs. The present study finds that mid-twentieth-century popular music reflected and amplified belief systems held during the era and reciprocally affected social action. This work identifies how music interacted with the counterculture movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, and reveals an intimate and multifaceted relationship with music across multiple subgenres. This exploration of the youth-powered mid-twentieth-century music industry shows how larger-than-life performers emerged and exerted tremendous influence on young people, thus developing youth identities and fueling youth activism during the era. Ultimately, this thesis suggests that music can help practitioners who are responsible for resolving social imbalances and maintaining peace to explain the belief systems and motivations of people involved in discourse, especially for those such as the youth of most cultures, whose personal identity and worldview formation are commonly in flux during the coming-of-age process.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS discourse, sociology, musicology, music, culture		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 135	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

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IN MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

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ABSTRACT

Social scientists and philosophers generally agree that music pervades most cultures and helps form people's identities and worldviews. This thesis examines music associated with mid-twentieth-century discourse movements in the United States to establish musicological patterns and analyze their relationship to social discourse. Documented historical accounts and music-chart ratings across movements were used to determine the popularity and historical significance of songs. The present study finds that mid-twentieth-century popular music reflected and amplified belief systems held during the era and reciprocally affected social action. This work identifies how music interacted with the counterculture movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement, and reveals an intimate and multifaceted relationship with music across multiple subgenres. This exploration of the youth-powered mid-twentieth-century music industry shows how larger-than-life performers emerged and exerted tremendous influence on young people, thus developing youth identities and fueling youth activism during the era. Ultimately, this thesis suggests that music can help practitioners who are responsible for resolving social imbalances and maintaining peace to explain the belief systems and motivations of people involved in discourse, especially for those such as the youth of most cultures, whose personal identity and worldview formation are commonly in flux during the coming-of-age process.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis carries out a historical and musicological exploration of popular music from the United States during the mid-twentieth century in an effort to understand the complex connections between the music and social discourse. This work analyzes historically significant songs to provide answers for the following questions: Which consistent musicological patterns can be observed in mid-twentieth-century American discourse? Which characteristics gave the most influential mid-twentieth-century music its power? How are differences in the counterculture movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement reflected in prominent mid-twentieth-century song messaging?

This study of music as popular culture shows how music evolved to effect social action on a mass scale. Many historical and sociological works group the entire era of mid-twentieth-century discourse under the “counterculture” umbrella.¹ However, a more nuanced view of the era, through the lens of music, highlights three prominent movements associated with distinguishing music portfolios. Because it offers the most significant, multifaceted, and well-known music catalog, the music of the counterculture (a movement searching for something) helped to establish a baseline for comparing the music associated with the civil rights movement (a movement in support of something) and the anti-Vietnam War movement (a movement in opposition to something). The goal was to examine differences in how music interacted with these three movements/discourses to establish musicological distinctions and determine their significance.

Across movements, documented historical accounts and music chart ratings were used to determine the popularity and historical significance of songs. The first step was to compare messaging in the songs to discourse doctrine and the timing of social action—protests, for example—to test relationships between music messaging and discourse-

¹ See, for example, Robert C. Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

related attitudes and activity. Studying these relationships helped this author evaluate how messaging in music reflects multiple relationships to discourse.

Trends in the music industry during the mid-twentieth century responded to audience demands, rather than creating them. For example, the industry responded to working-class youth demands in the 1950s and to educated middle-class youth demands in the 1960s.² The music industry, including radio, had to develop unique business strategies to deal with the rock music market because this youth audience could not be controlled.³ Therefore, one might conclude that the messaging in mid-twentieth-century music that helped organically drive discourse did not result from market manipulation or top-down intentions, leaving the music a true indicator of audience beliefs.

Perceived authenticity provided a basis for and was a determining factor in how much influence music had across mid-twentieth-century discourse. Music that adheres to expected aesthetic traditions or builds upon them in a recognizable way is more meaningful to audiences.⁴ Mid-twentieth-century music might have seemed radical at the time, but in retrospect, this music built on established traditions and never veered from accepted musical aesthetics too rapidly to be absorbed into popular culture. The most important artists of the time capitalized on established musical traditions and other principles to carefully establish and maintain a sense of authenticity that gave their music the ability to motivate social groups to action.

Counterculture music developed as an identity-defining force under the umbrella of the youth-driven music distribution industry, a development that allowed counterculture music to carry its own sense of authenticity and trust among young audiences. Simon Frith states that students and other youth culture members viewed rock music as vital—the “most important” form of expression throughout the counterculture movement.⁵ Rock music in

² Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 62.

³ Frith, 91.

⁴ For an in-depth explanation, see Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 7th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); and Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009).

⁵ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 4.

its many manifestations was inextricably linked to counterculture politics in the 1960s.⁶ All along the complicated trajectory of mid-twentieth-century discourse, audience acceptance of authenticity drove the most reflective songs to popularity and, in some cases, to persisting longevity.

The civil rights movement that preceded and then paralleled the counterculture movement demonstrated a different relationship with music. Most notably, civil-rights-affiliated music tended not to be antagonistic but instead welcomed and enlisted supporters from all walks of life, especially white youth who could have easily focused their ideological and activist attention elsewhere. Civil rights music never lost its meaning in the movement, unlike the counterculture movement, which wandered in focus over time.

Civil rights music embodied a harmonistic interplay between three primary genres: folk or folk-rock, soul, and blues. Each genre brought civil rights issues to its respective audience in an aesthetic format that embodied authenticity for that audience. Civil rights music reflected the nature of a “movement for something” in that it remained overwhelmingly optimistic and inclusive across genres throughout mid-twentieth-century discourse.

Like the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement had concrete goals that could be achieved through policy demands, namely ending the draft and the war. This agenda gave music related to the movement more focus than counterculture music. Although anti-war music did verge on the antagonistic, as the broader category of counterculture music did, it never reflected any real disillusionment with the cause. On the other hand, anti-war music never offered the hope or inclusion of civil rights music either.

Anti-war music took its meaning from various audiences—idealists, soldiers, and activists. The differences among listeners were significant; for example, soldiers in Vietnam used music in a way that is mostly unseen in either the counterculture or civil rights movements. They commonly appropriated songs that were not written to represent

⁶ Frith, 4.

them or their situations. This practice lends to the assessment that in discourse movements, where purposed music does not exist, participants will find music to make their own and apply it as needed.

Although many opportunities and potential focus areas for studying the social impact of music abound, one of the most beneficial opportunities for understanding and developing social solutions through music is in working with the youth. Mid-twentieth-century American discourse was youth discourse after all and was observably driven by music. Music continues to be important to young people and shapes youth identities and belief systems.⁷ The coming-of-age process in any generation could itself be seen as an act of discourse. This thesis finds that musical analysis is a valuable tool in forming an understanding of the youth and working toward a better future.

⁷ Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Plume, 2014), <http://rbdigital.oneclickdigital.com>.

I. SOUND CHECK

Music moves us. It is safe to say that most people have a favorite song. Perhaps people even have multiple treasured songs that they associate with different moods or events in their lives. Couples often have “their” song, which represents the forming of their relationship. Moviegoers remember the soundtracks to their favorite films, with many of the songs’ popularity lasting well beyond that of the films.¹ Generational genres of music—’80s channels, for example—serve to connect listeners to the music that formed their futures or that at least provide familiar sounds and associations.²

Social scientists and philosophers generally agree that music pervades most cultures and most people’s lives. Music has long been recognized as both a reflection and motivator for the emotional and intellectual makeup of the collective, as well as the individual human psyche. Researchers can affirm that music has the ability to alter temporal perception and to influence the cadence, fast or slow, of physical as well as social movement.³ Music can work beyond the conscious mind in setting the scene and defining social reality, even moving people to inadvertently perform unintended behaviors encouraged by the music.⁴ Behavioral reactions to music tend to be tempered by the social context in which the music is received. For example, raw physical expressions of emotion are seldom seen in public settings, as these reactions would be discouraged in most social environments.⁵ However, displays of raw emotions are manifest when people use music to drive discourse.

Music helped initiate and fuel the social movements that comprised the greater social discourse era of the mid-twentieth-century and codified belief systems that gave

¹ See, for example, *Easy Rider*, directed by Dennis Hopper (Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 1969); and *Purple Rain*, directed by Albert Magnoli (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1984).

² For more information on the importance of familiarity and repeated exposure in music, see Leonard B. Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 7th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

³ Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 8.

⁴ DeNora, 123.

⁵ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 10.

these movements long-term purpose.⁶ In the song “For What It’s Worth,” for example, Buffalo Springfield warned that “battle lines [were] being drawn” and advised the “children” to stop and “look what’s going down” as a response to uncertainty in power struggles of the time.⁷ Tensions had already been building for several years leading up to this song’s release in 1966, and the “battle lines” persisted in overlapping discourse movements throughout the decade and well into the 1970s.

Indeed, the mid-twentieth-century era of discourse that took hold in the United States—starting in the 1950s, reaching its climax in the 1960s, subsiding through the 1970s, and finally fading into the early 1980s—represents one of the richest opportunities to study music’s influence on culture. Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’” became an era-defining anthem after its introduction in 1964.⁸ “A Change Is Gonna Come” by Sam Cooke is credited with fueling the hope and strengthening the resolve of those involved in the civil rights movement.⁹ The Animals’ “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” was originally meant to be a coming-of-age song, but Vietnam War draftees adopted it as a theme song for leaving the war behind and returning home.¹⁰ These and many more examples help to reveal such characteristics as musicological consistencies, timing in song adoption for groups compared to group actions, and general mood themes in music as compared to social conditions of the era.

Musicology as a topic of study mostly resides in the humanities and focuses on music’s relationship with society rather than its technical composition. Musical construction is left as a topic for students of music theory, but some overlap exists. The

⁶ On the role and impact of music, see Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and Its Role in Literature, Music, and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009); Susan Fast and Kip Pegley, eds., *Music, Politics, and Violence*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012); and DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*.

⁷ “For What It’s Worth,” track 1 on Buffalo Springfield, *Buffalo Springfield*, Atco, 1966, LP.

⁸ Jim Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 2019), 172; “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” track 1 on Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changin’*, Columbia Records, 1964.

⁹ Jon Meacham and Tim McGraw, *Songs of America: Patriotism, Protest, and the Music That Made a Nation* (New York: Random House, 2019), 153; “(Ain’t That) Good News,” track 1 on Sam Cooke, *Ain’t That Good News*, RCA Victor, 1964, LP.

¹⁰ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 175; Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 181; “We Gotta Get Out of This Place,” track 1 on Animals, *Animal Tracks*, MGM, 1965, 7" single.

easiest way to think of the distinction is that music theory tells a musician how to do something, whereas musicology tells a musician why to do something and helps to explain the impact of musical techniques that have been applied. Most professionals study musicology and songcraft to enhance the commercial success of their commodity: music. However, the same principles show great potential as a largely underused analytical tool for those who need to understand motivations for and potential action in social movements. For example, those participating in youth outreach programs where young people are notoriously unwilling or unable to express their deepest concerns could examine music that is popular with the youth to determine the issues important to them and understand ideologies followed by them. Such analysis of songs associated with future discourse movements may be used to evaluate the emotional underpinnings, intentions, relative intensity, and potential actions of groups directly involved in or tacitly supportive of any social movements being examined.

A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis takes a historical and musicological view of popular music from the United States during the mid-twentieth century in an effort to understand the complex connections between the music and social discourse. Notably, Bob Dylan's song "Blowin' in the Wind," released in 1963, forecast the idealistic disillusionment of a generation who initiated a youth movement that resonates still today in society and politics.¹¹ This work analyzes such influential songs to provide answers for the following questions that will aid practitioners in future efforts to understand motivations for discourse movements and develop avenues for engagement with those involved. Which consistent musicological patterns can be observed in mid-twentieth-century American discourse? Which characteristics gave the most influential mid-twentieth-century music its power? How are differences in the counterculture movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement reflected in prominent mid-twentieth-century song messaging?

¹¹ "Blowin' in the Wind," track 1 on Bob Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, Columbia, 1963, LP.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Composers and performers of music have enjoyed elevated status throughout societies past and present. Frith, DeNora, and Levitin suggest that musicians' relatability and ability to project qualities of personal connection determine their commercial success and influential reach.¹² This literature review establishes the social significance of music.

1. The Study of Music as a Social Force

For many decades, scholars in fields ranging from history to sociology and psychology have studied the social significance of music beyond pleasure and entertainment.¹³ However, popular music has historically been intended by its distributors, above all else, to generate profit.¹⁴ In fact, scholars of popular music define it as commercially produced music distributed through the most widely available media.¹⁵ The messaging and style of popular music is typically directed toward mass audiences with the purpose of being consumed for pleasure and entertainment above social influence.¹⁶ In other words, meaning is often secondary to marketing in and of popular music. And yet, the message or mood or moment of popular music can resonate among listeners, often in unexpected—and unexpectedly powerful—ways.

Scholars and professionals have dedicated considerable effort to developing an understanding of popular music and its effects. During the mid-1960s, scholars examined the effects of music in the context of a re-prioritizing of information-sharing media in a

¹² See, for example, DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*; Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Daniel J. Levitin, *The World in Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature* (New York: Plume, 2009); and Adam Behr, "Group Identity: Bands, Rock and Popular Music" (PhD diss., University of Sterling, 2010).

¹³ See, for example, Simon Frith, ed., *Music and Society*, vol. 1 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies (New York: Routledge, 2004); Simon Frith, ed., *The Rock Era*, vol. 2 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies (New York: Routledge, 2004); Simon Frith, ed., *Popular Music Analysis*, vol. 3 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Simon Frith, ed., *Music and Identity*, vol. 4 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁴ Simon Frith, introduction to *Music and Society*, vol. 1 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, ed. Simon Frith (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3–4.

¹⁵ Frith, 3–4.

¹⁶ Frith, 3–4.

rapidly changing society.¹⁷ The media explosion, emphatically called “extensions of man” by Marshall McLuhan, was projected to be an unprecedented expansion of consciousness that would reach all of humanity.¹⁸

McLuhan claimed that the expansion of available media had profound effects on how people gained social influence and perceived their place in the world and in life.¹⁹ Mass media broke down social barriers in such a way that self-expression by those of reduced status—whether from racial isolation, sexism, or youth—could no longer be limited by established social communication frameworks.²⁰ Mainstream resistance to social expression from previously underrepresented groups became impossible due to the broad social leveling effect of new information distribution media.²¹ For example, radio stations emerged for subgroups, such as the youth, that previously had no public outlet for expression.²²

Popular music as an official topic of academic study evolved into its own in 1981 with the formation of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music.²³ This group was founded to bring together scholars from multiple fields to study the musicological and social impacts of popular music.²⁴ Members were to examine music as not only a passive cultural phenomenon but also an active social practice.²⁵ The organization describes “promoting inquiry, scholarship and analysis in the area of popular music” as its official purpose, and it publishes a biannual journal.²⁶

¹⁷ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

¹⁸ McLuhan, 4.

¹⁹ McLuhan, 4.

²⁰ McLuhan, 5.

²¹ McLuhan, 15.

²² McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 5. See, for example, "Home Page," KSHE 95, accessed November 9, 2020, <https://www.kshe95.com/>, which was founded in 1961.

²³ Frith, Introduction, 1.

²⁴ Frith, 1.

²⁵ Frith, 1.

²⁶ "Welcome to IASPM," International Association for the Study of Popular Music, accessed November 9, 2020, <https://www.iaspm.net/welcome/>.

Still, the study of music's social importance has continued to be multidisciplinary and difficult to frame or define. Each interested academic discipline approaches the topic with different, if sometimes overlapping, goals. Many scholars and professionals have chosen not to take on the strict role of musicologist, musical theorist, literary analyst, or pure sociologist when approaching the study of popular music. They have instead attempted a variation of holistic or task-focused approaches when defining the medium and analyzing its effect.²⁷

2. Authenticity, Legitimacy, and Popular Perception

Perceived authenticity in artists as truly representing the beliefs and interests of audiences is a recurring theme in analyzing the social influence of music, with numerous scholars arguing extensively about what constitutes authenticity and who gets to define it.²⁸ Given the understanding that music in general is a powerful medium for reinforcing self-identity, unsurprisingly, audiences desire authenticity in the creation and performance of music. Issues of continuity in orthodoxy and authenticity are especially important in such populist forms as folk and blues music and their derivatives such as rock and roll.²⁹

Simon Frith says, "The rock aesthetic depends, crucially, on an argument about authenticity."³⁰ Frith asserts that perceived authenticity is what makes rock music acceptable as an influential platform to a mass audience.³¹ Frith further argues that music perceived as good authentically expresses the singer-songwriter's persona, abstract concepts such as a shared experience or cause, and ultimately, a defining spirit.³² Judgement of music relies on how authentically it relates the feelings, experiences, and

²⁷ See, for example, Frith, *Music and Society*; Frith, *Sound Effects*; and Levitin, *The World in Six Songs*.

²⁸ See, for example, essays contained in Simon Frith, ed., *Popular Music, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, 4 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Behr, "Group Identity: Bands, Rock and Popular Music," 202–28.

²⁹ Frith, Introduction, 9.

³⁰ Simon Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," in *Music and Identity*, vol. 4 of *Popular Music, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pt. A, sec. 62, 35.

³¹ Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," pt. A, sec. 62, 35.

³² Frith, pt. A, sec. 62, 35.

issues that it seeks to portray.³³ Authenticity in artists' public images and performance personas determines the level of acceptance and transcendence they will enjoy among audiences.³⁴

The earlier blues forms, as an illustrative example, evolved from the field hollers of black slaves into classic blues while retaining their relevance to life experience.³⁵ Baraka has characterized blues music as encapsulating personal struggles with which casual audiences of the traveling blues player could identify.³⁶ Given that most blues performers were not professionally trained, Baraka notes that audiences credited blues music with a higher level of authenticity for its raw form, and attributed greater sincerity of meaning to it.³⁷ Simple instrumentation, topical content, and song structures represented in 12-bar-blues songs performed on a guitar by a single performer create intimate and relatable musical experiences as were characteristic of early blues players.³⁸

To Frith, very successful music tends to “define its own truth” and establishes its own authenticity, therefore defining its own social meaning and context.³⁹ Examples are manifest in such Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR) songs as “Green River,” “Cotton Fields,” and especially, “Born on the Bayou,” which are so successfully enmeshed in CCR’s self-proclaimed swamp-rock style that the songs achieved great popularity with audiences—even though no member of the band had ever been to the Louisiana swamps at the time of writing.⁴⁰ In contrast, John Blacking suggests that perceived authenticity in music and the listeners’ ability to put songs into the context of their own experiences and

³³ Frith, pt. A, sec. 62, 35.

³⁴ Frith, pt. A, sec. 62, 35.

³⁵ Ulrich Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 3.

³⁶ Amiri Baraka, “Classic Blues,” in *Music and Society*, vol. 1 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, ed. Simon Frith (New York: Routledge, 2004), pt. A, sec. 3.

³⁷ Baraka, pt. A, sec. 3.

³⁸ See, for example, early twentieth century recordings by such blues players as Mance Lipscomb, Blind Willie Johnson, and Son House.

³⁹ Frith, “Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music,” pt. A, sec. 62, 36–37.

⁴⁰ Craig Hansen Werner and Dave Marsh, introduction to *Up around the Bend: The Oral History of Creedence Clearwater Revival* (New York: Spike, 1998).

preferred consumption aesthetics is more important than actual authenticity in performance.⁴¹ This concept is demonstrated by the popularity of Led Zeppelin's covers of the early-century blues songs "Nobody's Fault But Mine" and "Gallows Pole."⁴² The original recorded versions by Blind Willie Johnson and Leadbelly, respectively, remain obscure while Led Zeppelin's versions have achieved timeless popularity and still enjoy regular radio airplay.

The success of appropriation in cases like Led Zeppelin may be partially accounted for in the weight of perceived authenticity invested in "the band" versus an individual performer. "Rock is a social construct of a particular way of making music" says Behr in his study of group identity and rock music.⁴³ The concept of a band making music as a collective adheres to traditional audience expectations about how rock music has been created from its inception. This compliance with expected practices for making the music of the genre gives historic and nostalgic credibility to a band vis-à-vis an individual artist.⁴⁴ The group-based music-making tradition for rock artists also motivates band members to collaborate on creative efforts—however difficult such group work may be, depending on personalities and inflated egos—as opposed to going solo.⁴⁵

Authenticity matters not only in the relationship between audience and performer but also in how musicians form their own social groups. Stebbins's examination of how amateur musicians relate to each other shows that through playing music, people who would not otherwise associate with one another might form bonds.⁴⁶ Because of the relatively basic level of skill required for blues and folk players, compared to classical

⁴¹ John Blacking, "Let All the World Hear All the World's Music: Popular Music-Making and Music Education," in *Music and Identity*, vol. 4 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, ed. Simon Frith (New York: Routledge, 2004), pt. A, sec. 61.

⁴² Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III*, Rolling Stones Mobil Studio/Olympic Studios, 1970, LP; Led Zeppelin, *Presence*, Swan Song Records, 1976, LP.

⁴³ Behr, "Group Identity: Bands, Rock and Popular Music," 226–27.

⁴⁴ Behr, 227.

⁴⁵ Behr, 232.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Stebbins, "Music among Friends: The Social Networks of Amateur Musicians," in *Music and Society*, vol. 1 of *Popular Music*, Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies, ed. Simon Frith (New York: Routledge, 2004), pt. C, sec. 11.

musicians, for example, folk and blues musicians tend to adopt social characteristics of amateur musicians in general, regardless of skill. In other words, these artists' social status within the group is based more on adherence to norms and social expectations than on playing abilities.⁴⁷ Stebbins surmises that artists must maintain a perception of authentic social identity as a primary concern when achieving access to associate in the inner circles of these communities.⁴⁸ Coincidentally, acceptance by the established group of musicians, or within a genre, serves as a social currency and establishes credibility for an artist with associated audiences.⁴⁹ This method of establishing authenticity and influence is evident in counterculture music with lesser-known artists—such as Barry McGuire enjoying the authenticity and influence established in the folk format by such prolific players as Woodie Guthrie and, later, Bob Dylan.

C. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis explores the relationship between music and social discourse by examining music related to the mid-twentieth-century discourse era in the United States. First, this study of music as popular culture and of interrelationships between artists, audiences, and the mid-twentieth-century music industry establishes criteria for understanding how music evolved to effect social action on a mass scale. Next, it examines differences in how music interacted with three movements/discourses—the counterculture movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-Vietnam War movement—to establish musicological distinctions and determine their significance. Because it offers the most significant, multifaceted, and well-known music catalog, the music of the counterculture (a movement searching for something) helped to establish a baseline for comparing the music associated with the civil rights movement (a movement in support of something) and the anti-Vietnam War movement (a movement in opposition to something).

Across movements, documented historical accounts and music chart ratings were used to determine the popularity and historical significance of songs. This thesis compares

⁴⁷ Stebbins, pt. C, sec. 11, 230–233.

⁴⁸ Stebbins, pt. C, sec. 11, 234.

⁴⁹ Stebbins, pt. C, sec. 11, 234.

messaging in the songs to discourse doctrine and timing of social action—protests, for example—to test relationships between music messaging and discourse-related attitudes and activity. Studying these relationships helped this author evaluate how messaging in music reflects multiple relationships to discourse.

This thesis presents many examples of music, extensively displaying lyrics for analysis. For better readability, long lyrical passages have not been explicitly quoted. Copyright law exempts explicit quotation requirements under the conditions of this thesis.⁵⁰ To best understand the discussion and analysis, this author recommends listening to the songs as they are presented. Not doing so will deprive the reader of important nuance and valuable insight into the true meaning and impact of this study.

D. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter II discusses how music evolved with popular culture in the United States during the mid-twentieth century and how the interplay between artists, audiences, and industry made music a powerfully influential medium. Chapter III explores how messaging in music paralleled the evolution of counterculture belief systems and reflected as well as influenced attitudes throughout the counterculture movement. Chapter IV evaluates the role music played in the civil rights movement, with a comparison to the counterculture movement discussed in the previous chapter. Chapter V makes a similar study of music related to the Vietnam War, examining music's role in the anti-war effort until withdrawal of troops effectively ended mid-twentieth-century activism in the United States.

⁵⁰ 1) The purpose is really for quotation, criticism, or review; 2) the material used is available to the public; 3) the use of the material is fair; 4) where practical, the use is accompanied by a sufficient acknowledgment; and 5) the author includes only the amount of material necessary for this critique. For a detailed explanation of quotation exceptions, see Hayleigh Boshier, "Quotation, Criticism & Review," Copyright User, accessed November 27, 2020, <https://www.copyrightuser.org/understand/exceptions/quotation/>.

II. MUSIC, THE INDUSTRY, AND AUDIENCE RESPONSE

This chapter aims to show how the music industry evolved into the mid-twentieth century under the influence and ultimate control of youth audiences. Music of the era came to reflect youth beliefs and express their discourse. Responding to youth audiences positioned rock music as popular culture rather than mass culture because it reflected the general consciousness of the audience rather than the preferences of the music production industry.⁵¹

The proliferation of popular music is the result of symbiotic relationships between artists, audiences, and industry, with the impetus ultimately being audiences. Deciding the best way to produce music that pleased audiences became a point of constant contention between the industry and artists. The music industry would have preferred to manufacture music and its associated marketing based on business calculations. Artists, however, wanted to express their creativity freely and satisfy audiences organically. With fans being extremely sensitive to authenticity in artists' personas, the organic methods preferred by artists were more effective.

“Popular music” is music produced specifically for mass distribution by sales of portable media.⁵² By the mid-twentieth century, leaders in the record industry believed they could maintain long-term profitability based on markets for popular music.⁵³ Coinciding market forces within the music industry and widespread radio broadcast availability, along with cooperative interaction among producers and consumers, established rock music and its subgenres as the dominant popular format. Initial commercialization produced rock music for mass consumption and made it widely available.⁵⁴ Rock/popular music evolved as a widely influential expressive medium propelled by the new consumer purchasing-power of the youth.⁵⁵ By taking advantage of recording and distribution methods and by

⁵¹ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 62.

⁵² Frith, 6.

⁵³ Frith, 6.

⁵⁴ Frith, 11.

⁵⁵ Frith, 93.

correctly responding to audience demands, the music industry profitably connected artists and audiences in unprecedented ways and to previously unattainable degrees, making music a defining quality of the generation.

This chapter begins by exploring how rock music emerged as popular culture versus mass culture in the United States during the mid-twentieth century through music industry relationships with youth audiences. Next, the chapter discusses the conflicting interests of artistic expression and commercialism—and their impact on artists. The material then covers how artists formed trust-based relationships with audiences to remain artistically and commercially relevant. Finally, the chapter examines how music evolved to influence social activism in the mid-twentieth century.

A. MUSIC AS POPULAR CULTURE

For music to have any significant social impact, it must sell well and enter mass consciousness.⁵⁶ Still, commercial success was—and is—a double-edged achievement. While the songs of an era may gain audience exposure through increased commercialization, they risk losing at least some of their perceived authenticity and acceptance among audiences.⁵⁷ Popular music producers have constantly combatted the perception of mass-distributed music’s reflecting limited originality and being produced for the sole purpose of commercial gain.⁵⁸ “Rock” not only denotes a musical style but also a desired sociological intention, carrying connotations of authenticity that contrast with commercial interests.⁵⁹ When artists and the industry have successfully managed the balancing act between commercial interests and audience perception, as was the case with Bob Dylan and CCR, artists have successfully demonstrated this sociological intention and satisfied audience demands, therefore achieving significant success and social influence.

Trends in the music industry during the mid-twentieth century responded to audience demands, rather than creating them. For example, the industry responded to

⁵⁶ Frith, 61.

⁵⁷ Frith, 52.

⁵⁸ Frith, 42.

⁵⁹ Frith, 11.

working-class youth demands in the 1950s and to educated middle-class youth demands in the 1960s.⁶⁰ The music industry, including radio, had to develop unique business strategies to deal with the rock music market because this youth audience could not be controlled.⁶¹ Therefore, one might conclude that the messaging in mid-twentieth-century music that helped organically drive discourse did not result from market manipulation or top-down intentions, leaving the music a true indicator of audience beliefs.

Repetition readily reinforces messaging in music and other audio-only formats initially controlled by centralized radio operators, giving early radio operators unprecedented social influence.⁶² Early sociological analysis labeled radio “hot media” because of its ability to “extend one sense in high definition.”⁶³ Hot media allow contained messaging to be received directly and passively, without much intentional participation on the part of the recipient.⁶⁴ Radio evolved toward the function of entertainment with widespread youth acceptability being necessary for commercial success, thus lending itself to pluralistic themes driven by mass audiences.⁶⁵ As record distribution increased among youth groups, young listeners themselves could assert greater influence through the music choices they enjoyed in their own social settings, leaving radio to respond to their preferences while promoting new music for sale.

Mass distribution of recorded music, over time, decentralized control of music consumption away from radio operators, allowing people everywhere to gather and play music of their choice at their leisure.⁶⁶ Recorded music, then publicized by radio exposure, gave audiences the final say in which artists became popular and successful because the audiences decided whose records to buy. Ultimately, artists and record distribution companies alike had to respond carefully to audience preferences and interests—helping

⁶⁰ Frith, 62.

⁶¹ Frith, 91.

⁶² McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 297–98.

⁶³ McLuhan, 22–23.

⁶⁴ McLuhan, 22–23.

⁶⁵ McLuhan, 305.

⁶⁶ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 50.

them find music they liked and identified with—when deciding what music to record and distribute. Consumers were in control of which artists’ messaging reached widespread distribution in buying records and motivating the industry to further support them.

Rock music matured along with its initial audience members to become an identity-defining social force. Mid-twentieth-century middle-class youth were leisure oriented, and music fueled their discussions rather than physical movements. Through the late 1950s and into the 1960s, artists responded to audience preferences by moving away from the established physical performance approach—music made to be danced to—to forms that emphasized the studio itself as an enhanced, artistically constructive device. Performers were no longer solely recording themselves as they performed live but were instead using studio techniques to enhance their recorded works and add emotional complexity to youth-focused messaging.⁶⁷

Because of the relationship with rock music, the concept of youth itself developed into an ideology in the United States during the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁸ Simon Frith contends, “The sociology of rock is inseparable from the sociology of youth.”⁶⁹ Youth-based ideology helped increase the generational divide that separated the mainstream music industry from establishment culture. This gap left popular music in the position of being a mainstream form of expression for non-conforming youth attitudes.

As youth audiences evolved, they were especially responsive to the entertainment promotion aspect of rock-fueled radio advertising and content selection, augmented by concerts, festivals, music-ranking charts, and publications that supplemented their coffee house and university commons discussions.⁷⁰ American rock music promoters, critics, and writers became cultural “mythologists” studying and developing American culture through

⁶⁷ Frith, 20–21.

⁶⁸ Frith, 10.

⁶⁹ Frith, 9.

⁷⁰ Frith, 99.

music rather than just documenting music-related facts.⁷¹ Popular music became more than just entertainment; it became a ubiquitous thread through the social fabric.

B. ARTISTS AND THE INDUSTRY

From the infancy of rock music in the 1950s, no matter how much record companies wanted to control artists—and have them create music based primarily on industry product-value estimations—they could not. For example, the Rolling Stones’ propensity to create music based on their own muses was a constant source of contention between the group and record companies. Record companies had to continuously assess and reassess the marketability of artists in their catalogs.⁷² In the end, the music industry had to promote musicians who cultivated relationships with fans in order to remain profitable. These conditions required the industry to seek out relatable artists, rather than manufacturing them.

Rock artists’ success in connecting with audiences goes beyond musical prowess alone. Becoming a famous rock musician may owe more to such abstract characteristics as charisma than musical ability.⁷³ Multiple prolific musicians have suggested that creating successful music involves intangible factors that have remained unquantifiable.⁷⁴ Elevating a musical act to celebrity status and maintaining that status requires much more from artists and the record industry than music production expertise.⁷⁵ Musicians’ personas are equally or more important than content in how their songs are perceived and how authenticity is applied by audiences.⁷⁶ The intrinsic ability to engage an audience is what record companies and music critics have referred to as “star quality.”⁷⁷ Using audience response as a gauge, record companies had to seek out star quality wherever they could find it.

⁷¹ Frith, 10.

⁷² Frith, 104–5.

⁷³ Daniel J. Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music: The Science of a Human Obsession* (New York: Plume, 2014), 220–21, <http://rbdigital.oneclickdigital.com>.

⁷⁴ Levitin, 209.

⁷⁵ Levitin, 211.

⁷⁶ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 199–200.

⁷⁷ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*, 211.

Record companies employed professionals in a position called artists and repertoire (A&R) to judge the market and find, recruit, and elevate artists who would give audiences—the youth in the case of rock music—what they wanted. Musical abilities were a secondary concern to A&R professionals.⁷⁸ Such artists as Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell, possessing a seemingly otherworldly aura, have all overcome a lack of musical training to offer a more nuanced and unique performance style to the delight of audiences.⁷⁹ These artists’ ability to captivate through “star power” demonstrates the importance of their charisma over raw musical skill and marketing, especially so with Bob Dylan and his observably unpolished vocals. Artists’ ability to captivate audiences allowed the music industry to survive and thrive, and companies spent great sums of money on A&R.

The tension and conflicting interests between artistic freedom of expression and record company revenues helped to spawn a cottage industry of managers who served as mediators to help resolve this tension, while trying to avoid creating their own.⁸⁰ The role of rock manager matured into a function to keep the musicians happy and productive, so they could deliver for both record producers and audiences in the studio and on stage.⁸¹ The most successful popular artists, for instance, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, enjoyed a high degree of flexibility and took control over more and more of their own production management process as they evolved into products in themselves.⁸² As a result, artists, at least those who commanded the top of the charts, continued to decide the best way to respond to audiences, who retained the final say on what music became popular and influential by exercising purchasing-power.

C. ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES

Trust is observably the most important factor in establishing relationships between artists and audiences. An audience’s sense of artist authenticity heavily influences trust

⁷⁸ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 102–10.

⁷⁹ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*, 212.

⁸⁰ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 106–8.

⁸¹ Frith, 108–9.

⁸² Frith, 110, 134–35.

and, therefore, music selection.⁸³ Listeners often feel transcendently connected to music in a way that requires a certain degree of emotional surrender to the artist.⁸⁴ Extreme personal surrender in audiences drives fanaticism toward groups like the Grateful Dead and the Beatles.⁸⁵ Consumers often listen to music alone, in intimate settings, and allow it to sway their opinions and moods, thus allowing artists to influence their inner beings.⁸⁶ Artists must carefully cultivate a sense of trust among audiences to remain artistically and commercially viable.

Artists must keep their music relatable to listeners who may have little to nothing in common with them. Artists who have lost touch with their origins, or perceived origins, in their musical content have also lost touch with their audience and have not been as effective.⁸⁷ Rock musicians tend to project a sense of self-determination that helps avoid the appearance of succumbing to the social pressures that naturally come with fame and success.⁸⁸ In their fame-induced isolation, the primary way artists have managed this struggle is through messaging in their music. The effects of this concept are manifest in the audience's reaction to Bob Dylan's switch to electrified folk-rock from his traditional acoustic folk music style at the 1965 Newport Music Festival.⁸⁹ Dylan's established fan base feared that his stylistic evolution signified his abandoning of the social stance embodied in his music, with which they strongly identified.⁹⁰ If stylistic changes give the impression that artists have submitted to commercial interests or changed their values, the artists risk having audiences abandon them.

⁸³ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*, 242–43.

⁸⁴ Levitin, 242–43.

⁸⁵ Levitin, 243.

⁸⁶ Levitin, 242–43.

⁸⁷ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 78–81.

⁸⁸ Frith, 77.

⁸⁹ Elijah Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!: Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties* (New York: Dey Studio, 2016), 113–140.

⁹⁰ Wald.

Most people listen to music to be carried away in an emotional experience.⁹¹ Belief in the seriousness, purpose, and “logic” of the artist and the work produced is vital for music to achieve an emotional impact and sense of credibility.⁹² Artists’ trustworthiness, resulting in audience appreciation of their music, depends more on character development, the story behind the creative process, and shared appreciation among audience members than on any systematic understanding of musicology or music theory.⁹³ As demonstrated by Dylan’s exceptional influence throughout the counterculture movement, careful backstory and character development in the performer enhance the impact of that performer’s music.⁹⁴ The idea that rock artists emerged not from bourgeois culture but ascended from the audience’s social groups allowed audiences to accept artists through perceived kinship and intimacy.⁹⁵ Namely, Bob Dylan connected with his young peers while developing as an artist in Greenwich Village.⁹⁶ Artists have had to carefully guard their performance personas while developing themselves as professionals, able to survive the financially competitive environments inherent in any profit-making endeavor.⁹⁷ Thus, only a small percentage of musical acts ever balanced the need to survive financially in the music industry while retaining enough stylistic credibility for meaningful connections with large fan bases.

Frith holds that fans—more so than artists—determine what popular music means and how it is used socially.⁹⁸ However valuable isolated interpretations of music’s symbolic significance and popularity may be, they must be combined with input from audiences to hold any real value.⁹⁹ A substantial audience, demonstrating a high degree of

⁹¹ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*, 208.

⁹² Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 75–76.

⁹³ Meyer, 76.

⁹⁴ Regarding Dylan’s character evolution, see Bob Dylan, *Chronicles*, vol. 1 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004); and Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!*

⁹⁵ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 49.

⁹⁶ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 145.

⁹⁷ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 64–65.

⁹⁸ Frith, 165.

⁹⁹ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, 32–34.

enthusiasm for a musician or piece of music, increases the perceived credibility of the piece and the musician and, therefore, makes the music more influential.¹⁰⁰ Audiences associate music with events in their lives in unpredictable yet impactful ways.¹⁰¹ Where artists have been able to establish trust-based connections with audiences, they can be seen to have associated music with events throughout the mid-twentieth century.

D. MUSIC AND SOCIAL ACTION

Frith asserts that music serves as a template for controlling group actions and energy levels and can set the conditions for social action.¹⁰² Music can be used to define and make sense of social situations, especially when people are familiar with the musical format. Format familiarity is important because musical genres such as mid-twentieth-century rock develop along with social contexts that can then be associated with their expected meanings.¹⁰³ DeNora demonstrates through observations of past research that music not only reflects group culture but also helps form it. Music and culture reciprocally affect each other.¹⁰⁴ This reciprocity is strongly evident in the feedback loop that existed between mid-twentieth-century youth, musicians of the time, and the rapidly developing music industry.

Musical analysis can be used to identify common beliefs and anticipate behaviors within social groups, but with some important caveats. The same pieces of music take on different meanings and evoke different experiences depending on the context in which they are perceived.¹⁰⁵ Cultural context and nuance affect the perception of music and, therefore, shape musical analysis.¹⁰⁶ The tendency of different social groups to associate disparate values and meanings to music makes it impossible to establish simple meaning maps for

¹⁰⁰ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 76–77.

¹⁰¹ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, 41–45.

¹⁰² DeNora, 122.

¹⁰³ DeNora, 12.

¹⁰⁴ DeNora, 4–7.

¹⁰⁵ Ola Stockfelt, "Adequate Models of Listening," in *Music and Society*, vol. 1 of *Popular Music*, *Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Simon Frith (New York: Routledge, 2004), pt. C, sec. 18.

¹⁰⁶ Stockfelt, 11.

various musical forms. However, patterns do emerge over time and can be used to associate behavior with specific groups and their music.¹⁰⁷ Thus, students of social behavior may use music associated with groups to gauge attitudes and actions, even though patterns and implications may not be obvious at first. Mid-twentieth-century American youth constitute one such group with strong musical associations available for study.

The mid-twentieth century in the United States comprises three related social discourse movements. Two political movements existed in the civil rights and the anti-Vietnam War movements. Along with these political causes, counterculture youth undertook a philosophical movement meant to disrupt society by replacing established norms with new ideologies. Popular music of the era strongly reflected the ideological content and intensity of youth beliefs across movements, from the time of self-aware ideological development, through years of rebellion and protest resulting in political successes, and finally to ideological disintegration.¹⁰⁸

Throughout the mid-twentieth century, music had to reflect youth ideologies in order to be commercially successful in the music industry at the time. Music that successfully reflected youth ideologies and represented their discourse became so dominant and commercially successful that it has enjoyed long-standing popularity into the modern age. But more importantly, mid-twentieth-century youth were empowered by an exceptional amount of music that truly expressed their beliefs and powered their discourse.

¹⁰⁷ DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life*, 125.

¹⁰⁸ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 40.

III. MUSIC AND THE MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY COUNTERCULTURE MOVEMENT

Counterculture music developed as an identity-defining force under the umbrella of the youth-driven music distribution industry, a development that allowed counterculture music to carry its own sense of authenticity and trust from young audiences. Simon Frith posits that students and other youth culture members viewed rock music as vital—the “most important” form of expression throughout the counterculture movement.¹⁰⁹ Rock music in its many manifestations was inextricably linked to counterculture politics in the 1960s.¹¹⁰ In the apex of the movement, activist musicians successfully captured the counterculture youth’s attention by simply producing songs in familiar popular formats. The impact on the youth was significant and evident in their actions.

This chapter demonstrates how concepts of musicology, storytelling, and songcraft converged in the artists and songs of the counterculture era to empower as well as reflect its social action. To this end, the chapter first explores the counterculture youth’s emerging ideology and its relationship with music. Next, it discusses music’s relation to counterculture youth rebellion and protests that largely defined the era. The next section follows music’s association with the ideological disillusionment that developed in the latter half of the 1960s and led to the self-destructive drug use that took its toll on counterculture youth members, especially musicians. The final section discusses the counterculture youth’s last efforts to redefine their movement through music, and recounts the tragic results. As this chapter does, “American Pie” by Don McLean artfully captures how music followed counterculture discourse from the loss of veneered innocence as the 1950s ended to the loss of idealism as homicide defined the events at Altamont Speedway in 1969.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Frith, *Sound Effects*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Frith, 4.

¹¹¹ "American Pie," track 1 on Don McLean, *American Pie*, United Artists Records, 1971, LP; James Morgan, "What Do American Pie’s Lyrics Mean?," BBC News, April 7, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32196117>.

A. RISE OF A MOVEMENT AND CULTURAL UPHEAVAL

With neither war nor privations to form the era, the origins of the mid-twentieth-century youth may seem an unlikely incubator for social upheaval. Counterculture youth were born between 1946 and 1964—the so-called baby boomers—with the first of the cohort reaching their teenage years in the early 1960s.¹¹² The 1950s and 1960s were a time of post–World War II economic growth and prosperity in the United States. Resources were relatively plentiful, and the standard of living for most was considered high.¹¹³ Changes to the socially driven lifestyle led to monumental changes in civic arrangements and infrastructure—mass production, mass consumption, and mechanization.

Economic activities in towns moved away from town centers and “main street” to town bypasses with shopping malls and big box stores.¹¹⁴ Drive-in cafes and fast food became popular throughout the baby boomers’ childhoods.¹¹⁵ These changes brought immediate product availability, circumventing the common waiting period that had traditionally come with ordering products from sole proprietor stores or catalogs, or preparing one’s own food. Immediate availability circumvented the discipline traditionally learned from anticipation and delayed gratification.¹¹⁶ In retrospect, a propensity toward immediate gratification would logically fuel tumultuous political action in a generation that would not have the patience for traditional methods of political change or the pace of organic social evolution.

These years in the United States also emphasized conformity and convention by mainstream society.¹¹⁷ As counterculture youth matured to early adulthood, they began to rebel against this rigid conformity for all that it obscured. Youth of the counterculture believed that society and the world were “crumbling,” and they represented its only hope

¹¹² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 63.

¹¹³ Willis, 155–170.

¹¹⁴ Willis, 156.

¹¹⁵ Willis, 78–82.

¹¹⁶ Willis, 158.

¹¹⁷ Willis, 64.

for rescue.¹¹⁸ The youth abandoned what they saw as failed traditional American values and expressed new belief systems through revolution and radicalism.¹¹⁹

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a political organization for college students, published its manifesto called the “Port Huron Statement” in 1962.¹²⁰ The document outlines counterculture youth beliefs and fears. The authors express concerns with such real-world political issues as civil rights and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, but most concerns are philosophical. Specifically, the authors denounce the inequity of “superfluous abundance” in the U.S. labor and consumer-based economic system—precisely the circumstances that led to the relative prosperity the writers had enjoyed growing up and the prosperity and comfort they reviled.¹²¹ The beliefs and values defined in the “Port Huron Statement” came to be widely shared across the generation.

Indeed, the SDS document decried the purportedly happy days of the immediate post-war years in the United States as a “glaze above deeply felt anxieties about their role in the new world.”¹²² For example, movies like *American Graffiti*, set in the summer of 1962, later portrayed the leisurely lifestyle of early ‘60s teenagers who went on to act out the discourse in the counterculture movement.¹²³ This romanticized depiction exemplifies how society glossed over or took for granted looming threats such as the Cold War, red scares, and mutually assured destruction.¹²⁴ The document lamented American “colonialism” and “imperialism,” nebulous terms that became a broader refrain in the movement.¹²⁵ Ultimately, this manifesto demanded tearing down established society in favor of communal social structures based on collectivist ideology, including “love” and

¹¹⁸ Willis, 61.

¹¹⁹ Willis, 61.

¹²⁰ Students for a Democratic Society, "The Port Huron Statement" (Port Huron, MI, 1962), <https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/929-utopias-2013/Real%20Utopia%20Readings/Port%20Huron%20Statement.pdf>.

¹²¹ Students for a Democratic Society.

¹²² Students for a Democratic Society.

¹²³ *American Graffiti*, directed by George Lucas (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures, 1973).

¹²⁴ Lucas, *American Graffiti*; Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 78.

¹²⁵ See, for example, Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement."

“dignity . . . as the essential measure of success.”¹²⁶ These beliefs set the stage for generational conflicts’ having no easy or even definable resolution.

Manifestos fit the mood of the moment, but music far more effectively communicated counterculture ideology and became the preferred outlet for expressing disillusionment with the American past and present.¹²⁷ Counterculture songwriters diagnosed social ailments and gave their proposed solutions throughout the counterculture era in the spirit of folk music traditions. Early in the counterculture movement, adhering to folk aesthetics like those produced with acoustic instruments and simple chord progressions gave artists an edge in winning the trust of audiences. U.S. audiences had long been conditioned to receive political and social messaging in folk-style formats through songs such as Woodie Guthrie’s great depression and dust bowl era political songs.¹²⁸ Folk groups such as Peter, Paul, and Mary and the Kingston Trio produced mostly what is now called Americana music—folk-style songs about contemporary American life—but they also played some civil rights protest music.¹²⁹ Artists such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez later built vast counterculture audiences during the early ‘60s folk revival and heavily incorporated political messaging into their music. Dylan’s updated brand of folk became his claim to fame and made him the voice of his generation.¹³⁰

Bob Dylan was one of the most prolific singer-songwriters of the time and one of the most engaged activist musicians in the early days of the mid-twentieth-century counterculture era. Initially, Dylan made a name for himself as a folk revival artist while living in Greenwich Village in the late 1950s through the early 1960s.¹³¹ After studying

¹²⁶ Students for a Democratic Society.

¹²⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 172.

¹²⁸ Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!*, 9–32.

¹²⁹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 186. Americana music is defined by the Americana Music Association as contemporary music based on traditional American styles. "Home Page," Americana Music Association, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://americanamusic.org/>. John Prine and Robert Earl Keen and, more recently, John Moreland are exemplary Americana artists. The music of Bruce Springsteen and, more recently, American Aquarium (and B. J. Barham) is increasingly categorized as Americana rock.

¹³⁰ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 146; *No Direction Home: Bob Dylan*, directed by Martin Scorsese (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 2005).

¹³¹ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 145.

and imitating Woodie Guthrie, one of his idols, Dylan crafted a persona that allowed him to speak for a working class of which he had never himself been a part. Because his overwhelmingly middle-class audience had also never been part of the working class, he could maintain authenticity and trust in the early 1960s folk revival music scene.¹³²

A native of Hibbing, Minnesota, Robert Zimmerman was born to a middle-class Jewish family in 1941, but later changed his name to Bob Dylan in honor of the poet Dylan Thomas.¹³³ Dylan's name change helped relieve him of any stereotypes and social connotations that came with being Jewish under the pressure of a casual anti-Semitic undercurrent that developed in the United States during the 1950s.¹³⁴ Richard Goldstein of *The Village Voice* is quoted as saying "today, [Dylan] is Shakespeare and Judy Garland to my generation. We trust what he tells us."¹³⁵ Dylan used his success in establishing a sense of authenticity and trust with audiences to become a social force through his musical influence.¹³⁶

In 1963, Bob Dylan released the *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* album—his second release—which well may represent his most politically important work.¹³⁷ The release date coincided with increased U.S. involvement in Vietnam and was shortly followed by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.¹³⁸ Kennedy's death in November of 1963 became a personal loss to many counterculture youth, most of whom can still recall exactly

¹³² Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!*, 55–82.

¹³³ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 145.

¹³⁴ David S. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzweig, eds., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 717–19; Barry M. Rubin, *Assimilation and Its Discontents* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 110.

¹³⁵ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 146.

¹³⁶ Dylan's character development also resembles that of famed singer-activist Pete Seeger, the Harvard dropout and son of a well-off music professional who chose a life of "hardship" through "primitive" living, although his so-called homestead was no more than an hour and a half from Manhattan, which he frequented. Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!*, 9–32. In this way, this artist's persona was largely a performance, a reinvention of himself and a trust-cultivating creation for the benefit of his audience.

¹³⁷ Peter Dreier, "The Political Bob Dylan," *Dissent*, May 24, 2011, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/the-political-bob-dylan; Bob Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, Columbia, 1963, LP.

¹³⁸ Doug Bradley and Craig Hansen Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 21–24.

where they were when they heard the news.¹³⁹ Such events as these drove many musicians to prioritize activism in their work, with Dylan's work arguably being the most lastingly effective. This record included the songs "Blowin' in the Wind" and "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall."¹⁴⁰

"Blowin' in the Wind" is one of the most acclaimed songs from the counterculture era. Dylan's recorded version of the song was appreciated among his fan base, but the cover version by Peter, Paul, and Mary received widespread acclaim and was said to be "the fastest-selling single in the history of Warner Records."¹⁴¹ The lyrics juxtapose lofty philosophical prose with real-world concerns such as war and racial discrimination. This thematic combination of political issues and greater ideological concerns reflects the "Port Huron Statement." The first verse addresses coming of age and finding a place in the world while pining to permanently ban instruments of warfare.

How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
How many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, 'n' how many times must the cannon balls fly
Before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind¹⁴²

The second verse combines a metaphorical comparison of nature and time's ability to slowly wear down seemingly immovable objects with eroding institutionalized racism and the people's willful ignorance.

Yes, 'n' how many years can a mountain exist
Before it is washed to the sea?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?

¹³⁹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 30–31.

¹⁴⁰ Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.

¹⁴¹ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 156. Peter, Paul, and Mary's version of "Blowin' in the Wind" peaked at no. 2 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1963. See "Chart History: Peter, Paul & Mary," Billboard, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/peter-paul-mary/chart-history/HSI/song/574090>. Dylan's single did not chart.

¹⁴² Dylan, "Blowin' in the Wind."

Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head
And pretend that he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind¹⁴³

The final verse is the most abstract. Dylan again uses a metaphor to lament the difficulty in gaining existential knowledge and people's inability to empathize with others' suffering.

Yes, 'n' how many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take 'til he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind¹⁴⁴

The song's hook—"The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind. The answer is blowin' in the wind"—is repeated three times throughout the song to emphasize that while solutions are elusive, they can be found and are worth seeking. A "hook" is used to engage an audience and repeatedly convey an important message.¹⁴⁵ The overall lyrical and musical theme of the song demonstrates a melancholic urgency reminiscent of Woody Guthrie's work and remains consistent with tearing down established social structures as prescribed in the "Port Huron Statement." However, despite the song's melancholy, it still had mainstream appeal. The Peter, Paul and Mary version of the song received regular radio airplay and inspired other songs supporting movement causes.¹⁴⁶

"A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" also employs several metaphors. In this case, those metaphors are sometimes so abstract that deciphering them requires analyzing them against their historical context. The lyrics speak of war, cruelty, and fear. Dylan himself said this

¹⁴³ Dylan.

¹⁴⁴ Dylan.

¹⁴⁵ Friedemann Findeisen, *The Addiction Formula* (Enschede, Netherlands: Albino Publishing, 2015), 32–40.

¹⁴⁶ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 152.

was a song of “desperation” and “terror.”¹⁴⁷ The song offers a story told from the perspective of some unnamed prophet who portrays a dark premonition and ultimately underscores the need for youth activism to change the world to prevent the apocalypse.

The first verse is consistently symbolic of the search for knowledge that the youth movement saw itself undertaking—and saw previous generations ignoring.¹⁴⁸

Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?
I've stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains
I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways
I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests
I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans
I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall¹⁴⁹

The next two verses address such primary concerns of the counterculture as squandered opportunities for prosperity and threats to the world that will make it unlivable for the young. The “broken tongues” of “talkers” and poets “who died in a gutter” allude to a critique of the censorship that counterculture youth saw taking place in established institutions and that drove the free speech movement, leading to protests at Berkeley and other universities.¹⁵⁰ Large and looming existential threats are represented in warnings of “waves that could drown the whole world.”¹⁵¹

Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what did you see, my darling young one?
I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin’

¹⁴⁷ Meacham and McGraw, 145.

¹⁴⁸ For a further explanation of generational conflict over the search for knowledge, see Students for a Democratic Society, “Port Huron Statement.”

¹⁴⁹ “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall,” track 6 on Bob Dylan, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*, Columbia, 1963, LP.

¹⁵⁰ Dylan, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*. For counterculture attitudes on censorship, see Students for a Democratic Society, “Port Huron Statement.” For an interactive history of the free speech movement, see “Free Speech Movement 50th Anniversary,” Berkeley Free Speech Movement, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://fsm.berkeley.edu/>.

¹⁵¹ Dylan, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*.

I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin'
I saw a white ladder all covered with water
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?
And what did you hear, my darling young one?
I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin'
Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world
Heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin'
Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter
Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall¹⁵²

The imagery portrayed by lyrics that repeatedly reference dripping blood and the aftermath of an apocalyptic war or natural disaster left lasting impressions on listeners.¹⁵³ The final verse is longer than the others, emphasizing its message that activism is imperative to save the world from impending doom. The closing words outline a powerful plan to go out into the world and speak about the looming dangers among the masses—to “reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it” so that everyone will know. “But I’ll know my song well before I start singin’” so the message won’t get confused or lost while “I’ll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin’” because time is limited and there is no room for delay or failure.¹⁵⁴ This song is a call to action commensurate with the activism that defined the counterculture era and consistent with the counterculture youth’s enthusiasm to overhaul society and save the world as they saw it.

Oh, what’ll you do now, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what’ll you do now, my darling young one?
I’m a-goin’ back out ‘fore the rain starts a-fallin’
I’ll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest
Where the people are many and their hands are all empty
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison

¹⁵² Dylan, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall."

¹⁵³ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 144–71.

¹⁵⁴ Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*.

Where the executioner's face is always well-hidden
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten
Where black is the color, where none is the number
And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'
But I'll know my song well before I start singin'
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall¹⁵⁵

Like "Blowin' in the Wind," "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" follows a common folk format reminiscent of Guthrie and consistent with protest song aesthetics that had already been proven affective with audiences. Both songs follow a consistent rhythm progression that drives their mood and sense of urgency. Dylan uses an established folk structure in that he foregoes a chorus in favor of straight verses with a simple repeated hook.¹⁵⁶ Interestingly, a second, more subtle message repeats throughout the song's structure as in its topic. Having every verse start with a question from an elder and end with an answer from a youth symbolizes a moving away from establishment norms in favor of issues important to youth activism.

B. YOUTH REBELLION AND PROTEST

Messaging in the associated music reflected the increasing frequency and intensity of youth protest activity. Counterculture music themes built on spreading ideologies and became more antagonistically anti-establishment. Campus protests took place regularly throughout the counterculture movement.¹⁵⁷ Protestors used such songs as "Blowin' in the Wind," along with associated messaging, to define and fuel discourse throughout.¹⁵⁸ Many times, songs became group chants during demonstrations to further motivate the crowds.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ Dylan, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall."

¹⁵⁶ Sheila Davis, *The Craft of Lyric Writing* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1985), 34–44; Findeisen, *The Addiction Formula*, 32–40.

¹⁵⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 19.

¹⁵⁸ Willis, 171–73.

¹⁵⁹ Willis, 177–78.

Free speech was a key issue in the beginning of counterculture protests.¹⁶⁰ In the early 1960s, student activism was on the rise at the University of California at Berkeley.¹⁶¹ As the fall semester began in 1964, administrators banned the placement of tables on campus that were commonly used to disseminate political messaging.¹⁶² After weeks of conflict, protesting students marched on the administrative building in December to demand an end to this “censorship.” The protest became violent when students refused to leave after being ordered to do so by the dean, and police attempted to extract them.¹⁶³ Nearly 800 students were reportedly arrested.¹⁶⁴ Many more such student protests followed throughout the counterculture era for various causes—some national and some more localized.¹⁶⁵

Another of Bob Dylan’s songs, “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” released in 1964, stands out for describing an unstoppable cultural upheaval meant to cure perceived looming calamities and replace established social structures. The song declares that the counterculture youth were to lead this revolution.¹⁶⁶ The song was never released as a single, but the album of the same name on which it appears reached no. 20 on the Billboard 200 albums list.¹⁶⁷ The song was a favorite at protests and rallies, has gone on to become a symbol for revolution in general, and has remained popular since its release.¹⁶⁸ Subsequent generations have adopted the song as conveying their perceived struggles.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁰ John Robert Greene, *America in the Sixties*, America in the Twentieth Century (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 109.

¹⁶¹ Greene, 107–8.

¹⁶² Greene, 108.

¹⁶³ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 5.

¹⁶⁴ Willis, 5.

¹⁶⁵ Willis, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin’.”

¹⁶⁷ Billboard, “Peter Paul & Mary.”

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, the song “The Times They Are A-Changin’” referenced in the context of modern protest: Felice Shapiro, “The Protests and Mothers: The Times They Are A-Changin’,” *Better after 50* (blog), June 8, 2020, <https://betterafter50.com/the-protests-and-us-what-is-coming-up/>.

¹⁶⁹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 173.

In the song, Dylan seems to directly engage the counterculture youth, a group to which he belonged. Dylan assumes the role of the main character—a teacher or mentor—and compels his audience to pay attention to changes taking place and even bigger changes to come:

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'¹⁷⁰

Dylan also issues a challenge to previous generations. The lyrics warn the “establishment” that if the older generation interferes with the sweeping social upheaval to come, it will experience the consequences and “[get] hurt.”¹⁷¹

Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
The battle outside ragin'
Will soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'

Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand
Your sons and your daughters
Are beyond your command
Your old road is rapidly agin'
Please get out of the new one

¹⁷⁰ Dylan, "The Times They Are A-Changin'."

¹⁷¹ Dylan.

If you can't lend your hand
For the times they are a-changin'¹⁷²

Dylan directly challenges parents' authority over their children, bringing anti-establishment messaging to an unprecedented level for any medium of the time. These lyrics contrasted with messaging in such prime-time television shows as the *Andy Griffith Show*, which heavily reflected traditional parental values.¹⁷³

Another prominent example of '60s folk-rock music is "Eve of Destruction," written by P. F. Sloan (a professional session guitarist) and recorded by Barry McGuire in 1965.¹⁷⁴ McGuire was marginally successful as an artist compared to Dylan, but by this time, such songs as "Eve of Destruction" thrived on the inherent authenticity of the musical format and took on their own meanings, as Frith explains.¹⁷⁵ The counterculture youth accepted this song as a clarion call to address a catastrophic emergency, one of impending nuclear doom or certain ruin because of the faults of established society.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the songwriter depicted the song as "written as a prayer to God" and as "a love song to and for humanity" to "identify what is sick" and to "open a dialogue with Congress and the people."¹⁷⁷

The title of the song readily communicates its message of impending doom wrought of violent nationalism (or nationalistic violence). The lyrics build on the messaging in the title with detail on issues such as death and disenfranchisement by war.

The eastern world, it is explodin',
Violence flarin', bullets loadin',
You're old enough to kill but not for votin',
You don't believe in war, but what's that gun you're totin',

¹⁷² Dylan.

¹⁷³ Traditional parenting practices of the time are demonstrated in the interactions between fictional father Andy Taylor and son Opie Taylor in *The Andy Griffith Show*, created by Sheldon Leonard, Aaron Ruben, and Danny Thomas, featuring Andy Griffith, Ron Howard, and Don Knotts, 249 episodes (Hollywood: Paramount Studios, 1960).

¹⁷⁴ Barry McGuire, *Eve of Destruction*, Geffen Records, 1965, LP; Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 173.

¹⁷⁵ Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," pt. A, sec. 62, 36–37.

¹⁷⁶ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 174.

¹⁷⁷ Willis, 174.

And even the Jordan river has bodies floatin',
But you tell me over and over and over again my friend,
Ah, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.¹⁷⁸

The lyrics also illustrated the fears of a Cold War nuclear holocaust.

Don't you understand, what I'm trying to say?
And can't you feel the fears I'm feeling today?
If the button is pushed, there's no running away,
There'll be no one to save with the world in a grave,
Take a look around you, boy, it's bound to scare you, boy,
And you tell me over and over and over again my friend,
Ah, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.¹⁷⁹

Consistent with ingrained countercultural disposition toward immediate gratification, "Eve of Destruction" also expresses frustration with the established means of resolving grievances and hints at other methods, such as anger-fueled protest, as necessary.

Yeah, my blood's so mad, feels like coagulatin',
I'm sittin' here, just contemplatin',
I can't twist the truth, it knows no regulation,
Handful of Senators don't pass legislation,
And marches alone can't bring integration,
When human respect is disintegratin',
This whole crazy world is just too frustratin',
And you tell me over and over and over again my friend,
Ah, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction.¹⁸⁰

Similar to "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," "Eve of Destruction" foregoes a chorus for the repeated hook: "Tell me over and over and over again my friend. Ah, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction."¹⁸¹ This phrase repeats five times throughout the song in an apparent challenge to the youth, directing them to realize looming existential threats. Take away the folk delivery and the working-class style expressed in such consonant-cutting phrasing as "a-changin'" or "frustratin'," and any of these songs could be seen as a serious manifesto put to music.

¹⁷⁸ McGuire, *Eve of Destruction*.

¹⁷⁹ McGuire.

¹⁸⁰ McGuire.

¹⁸¹ McGuire.

Mainstream society did not embrace “Eve of Destruction.” The song received negative press as being unpatriotic, and the media alleged that the song “scared children.”¹⁸² Many radio stations banned the song both in the United States and abroad, but it still spent six weeks at no. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1965 due to its extreme popularity with the counterculture youth.¹⁸³ Much later, “Eve of Destruction” was applauded as a perfect song for motivating people toward political action.¹⁸⁴ But in spite of these enthusiastic efforts on the part of musicians and counterculture youth, activism in the years between 1962 and 1965 did not produce the cultural overhaul that the generation demanded. Many counterculture youth became disillusioned and began looking for other ways to push social boundaries as captured in music during the last half of the 1960s.

C. INDIVIDUALISTS AND IRREVERENCE

Even before 1964 rang out, Bob Dylan, who always seemed to be ahead of his time, purposefully faded from the counterculture activism scene.¹⁸⁵ Dylan’s shift foreshadowed changing moods in the overall counterculture movement toward types of rebellion meant to be personal rather than social or political. Specifically, Dylan started to turn away from social philosophy and collective causes toward individualism and introspection in his writing when he released his *Another Side of Bob Dylan* album in 1964.¹⁸⁶ The album consists of songs about personal issues, including love, and boasts of only one long-standing hit in “It Ain’t Me Babe,” an anti-love song. The general lack of interest in this album demonstrates that he had moved out of line with youth audiences, being just ahead of them in his thematical shift.

Dylan’s next, and perhaps last, big contribution to mid-’60s activism was to help cast rock music instead of traditional folk as the preferred format for social expression among the counterculture generation. The change came almost as an accident when Dylan

¹⁸² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 174.

¹⁸³ "Barry McGuire," Billboard, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/barry-mcguire/chart-history/HSI/song/574210>.

¹⁸⁴ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 174.

¹⁸⁵ Dreier, "The Political Bob Dylan."

¹⁸⁶ Dreier.

took the stage at Newport Folk Festival on July 25, 1965, with a Fender Stratocaster electric guitar hanging where his flat top acoustic guitar would have been, moving him away from his folk roots. Dylan's "going electric" had implications beyond preferred methods of sound amplification.¹⁸⁷ This event established a new folk-rock subgenre that inherited folk music's established authenticity and brought folk messaging and social consciousness in line with mainstream rock marketability. Dylan later suffered a motorcycle crash in July of 1966. Afterward, he purposefully retreated from activism and the music scene for an extended period, admitting to have used the crash as an excuse to leave the "rat race" and take care of himself and his family.¹⁸⁸

1. Individualism

As with Dylan, the youth's deeply rooted counterculture belief systems shifted toward self-focused concerns by the latter half of the 1960s.¹⁸⁹ When society did not change as they had envisioned, a now maturing counterculture youth looked inward to effect new thinking and promote independence. The latter 1960s experienced a rapidly expanding and technologically advancing music distribution industry that helped many prominent rock genre musicians propel individualism-based messaging for counterculture audiences now entering early adulthood. Even though political activism persisted, the remainder of the 1960s heavily featured individualist-themed rock songs and reflected the counterculture youth's inward focus instead of raising political consciousness.

The Rolling Stones released their *Out of Our Heads* album in 1965. The album contained one of the bands most popular songs of all time: "(I Can't Get No)

¹⁸⁷ Wald comprehensively examines the implications of Dylan's going electric in his book. See Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!*

¹⁸⁸ Robert C. Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll: The Rise of America's 1960s Counterculture* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 133. For a detailed discussion of Dylan's mid-60s refocus on individual concerns and his post-accident withdrawal from the music scene, see Dylan, *Chronicles*.

¹⁸⁹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 110.

Satisfaction.”¹⁹⁰ The song exudes individualism—and its discontents vis-à-vis the well-advertised cultural conventions—from the start:

I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no

When I'm drivin' in my car, and the man come on the radio
He's tellin' me more and more about some useless information
Supposed to fire my imagination

I can't get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey
That's what I say
I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try
I can't get no, I can't get no¹⁹¹

The song notes “the man’s” useless information again, now in the context of television, thus covering information coming from the two biggest popular media platforms of the time—TV and radio. Referring to “the man” as having nothing useful to say typifies counterculture irreverence for previous generations and their values.¹⁹²

When I'm watchin' my TV and a man comes on and tells me
How white my shirts can be
But, he can't be a man 'cause he doesn't smoke
The same cigarettes as me

I can't get no, oh, no, no, no, hey, hey, hey
That's what I say¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ The album was certified gold almost immediately after its release in 1965 and was later certified platinum. See "Gold & Platinum: 'Out of Our Heads,'" Recording Industry Association of America, accessed December 6, 2020, https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=out+of+our+heads#search_section. "Satisfaction" enjoyed a multiweek stay at no. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1965. See "Chart History: The Rolling Stones," Billboard, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/the-rolling-stones/chart-history/HSI/song/571657>.

¹⁹¹ "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," track 7 on Rolling Stones, *Out of Our Heads*, ABKCO Records, 1965.

¹⁹² "The man" is a slang term used by counterculture youth to refer to establishment culture. See *Merriam Webster*, s.v. "the man," accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/the%20man>.

¹⁹³ Rolling Stones, "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction."

The song ends with the Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger singing he just wants to get "some girl" and is not concerned with heavier issues, indicating fatigue with trying to effect widespread social change and a new concentration on personal gratification.

When I'm ridin' 'round the world
And I'm doin' this and I'm singin' that
And I'm tryin' to make some girl, who tells me
Baby, better come back maybe next week
Can't you see I'm on a losing streak?¹⁹⁴

Pointedly, the song makes no mention of war, civil rights, or ideological concerns. It deals with the pursuit of self-fulfillment and irreverence for "the man," or people in positions of power, the establishment.

Similarly, celebrated musician Jimi Hendrix, regarded as the best guitarist of all time by *Rolling Stone*, released his second album, *Axis: Bold as Love*, in 1967.¹⁹⁵ The song "If 6 Was 9" from this album heavily features individualist themes consistent with those exhibited in "Satisfaction."

The first verse implies that no matter what happens, the protagonist will continue to do his own thing:

If the sun refused to shine
I don't mind, I don't mind
If the mountains fell in the sea
let it be, it ain't me
Alright, 'cos I got my own world to look through
And I ain't gonna copy you¹⁹⁶

The next verses continue to make statements about not caring what goes on in society and being engrossed in one's own world. This irreverence includes not caring when accepted knowledge and truths turn out to be wrong, as illustrated in the following lyric:

¹⁹⁴ Rolling Stones

¹⁹⁵ "100 Greatest Guitarists," *Rolling Stone*, December 18, 2015, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/100-greatest-guitarists-153675/jimi-hendrix-7-37992/>; Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Axis: Bold As Love*, Olympic, 1967, LP.

¹⁹⁶ "If 6 was 9," track 7 on Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Axis: Bold as Love*, Olympic, 1967, LP.

Now if 6 turned out to be 9
I don't mind, I don't mind¹⁹⁷

The following lyrics from the same verse signify not caring about fashion trends or about fitting in:

Alright, if all the hippies cut off all their hair
I don't care, I don't care
Dig, 'cos I got my own world to live through
And I ain't gonna copy you¹⁹⁸

Hendrix ends the song with a verse that directly challenges established culture by calling it “plastic” and announcing he does not care about social expectations:

White collared conservative flashing down the street
Pointing their plastic finger at me
They're hoping soon my kind will drop and die
But I'm gonna wave my freak flag high, high
Wave on, wave on
Fall mountains, just don't fall on me
Go ahead on Mr. Business man, you can't dress like me
Sing on Brother, play on drummer¹⁹⁹

The “fall mountains, just don't fall on me” line indicates indifference to what goes on in the world as long as it does not affect the singer personally.²⁰⁰ Hendrix displays attitudes mirrored in such other songs as Steppenwolf's “Born to be Wild,” the group's most recognized song, and “Wasn't Born to Follow” by the Byrds. All three of these songs personify the shift away from early '60s folk music and a stronger tendency toward individual experimentation in the music itself to match the individualist messaging. The unique novelty of organ music in “Born to be Wild,” the dissonant and distorted guitar parts in “Wasn't Born to Follow,” and the multilayered dissonant guitar and bass riffs in “If 6 was 9” all contribute to the musical attitude that continued to reflect and celebrate individualism through the end of the decade.

¹⁹⁷ Jimi Hendrix Experience.

¹⁹⁸ Jimi Hendrix Experience.

¹⁹⁹ Jimi Hendrix Experience.

²⁰⁰ Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Axis: Bold As Love*.

2. The Drug Culture

Individualist pursuits, including the search for spiritual self-fulfillment and the need to push social limits, led many of the counterculture youth to experiment with different substances, especially in the mid-latter 1960s. The motto “sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll,” coined during the counterculture years, has been used extensively to characterize the values of the movement ever since.²⁰¹ Drugs featured prominently in the counterculture, with members referring to the common use of drugs among groups of friends.²⁰² Many ‘60s songs—especially Beatles songs—referenced drug use in a positive way, keeping with the theme of rebelling against established attitudes.²⁰³

Such Beatles songs as “Strawberry Fields Forever” and “Happiness Is a Warm Gun” are well recognized as being about drug use.²⁰⁴ The Beatles seldom refer directly to drugs or drug use in their songs but instead use somewhat vague references and metaphors. “Strawberry Fields Forever,” which appears on the *Magical Mystery Tour* album released in 1967, exhibits characteristics of a then-emerging psychedelic-rock subgenre.²⁰⁵ The song begins with the chorus that offers an escape through drug use and then expands on the proposed experience in verse:

Let me take you down
‘Cause I’m going to Strawberry Fields
Nothing is real
And nothing to get hung about
Strawberry Fields forever

Living is easy with eyes closed
Misunderstanding all you see
It’s getting hard to be someone

²⁰¹ Represented in the title of Cottrell’s *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll* is a comprehensive recollection of the 1960s and the counterculture.

²⁰² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 67.

²⁰³ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 125.

²⁰⁴ See, for example, Will Levith, "Day Tripping: The 10 Druggiest Beatles Songs," Diffuser, April 20, 2016, <https://diffuser.fm/druggiest-beatles-songs/>.

²⁰⁵ Beatles, *Magical Mystery Tour*, Parlophone/Capitol, 1967, LP.

But it all works out
It doesn't matter much to me²⁰⁶

As explored in the verse, escape is an individual experience that allows the user to close his eyes and not worry about an identity in the real world because it does not matter. This dismissal of the world strays far from the idealistic activism characterized by Dylan's songs as the counterculture movement started. Subsequent verses claim that not "tun[ing] in" and not knowing the difference between a dream and reality are worthy aspirations.

No one I think is in my tree
I mean it must be high or low
That is you can't, you know, tune in
But it's all right
That is, I think, it's not too bad
.....

Always, no, sometimes think it's me
But you know I know when it's a dream
I think, er, no, I mean, er, yes
But it's all wrong
That is I think I disagree²⁰⁷

"Strawberry Fields Forever" is musically composed to add a dreamy emotional context. The Beatles used newer studio techniques to create a sense of dissonance that portrays being detached from reality as one would feel from drug use. The overall experience from the song is one of relaxed escape.

"Happiness Is a Warm Gun," which was released in 1968 on the self-titled *The Beatles* album, also known as "the white album," describes heroin use.²⁰⁸ Much of the song is spent obtusely describing addicts:

She's not a girl who misses much
Do do do do do, oh yeah
She's well-acquainted with the touch of the velvet hand
Like a lizard on a window pane
The man in the crowd with the multicolored mirrors

²⁰⁶ "Strawberry Fields Forever," track 8 on Beatles, *Magical Mystery Tour*, Parlophone/Capitol, 1967, LP.

²⁰⁷ Beatles.

²⁰⁸ Beatles, *The Beatles [White Album]*, Apple, 1968, LP.

On his hobnail boots
Lying with his eyes while his hands are busy
Working overtime
A soap impression of his wife which he ate
And donated to the National Trust²⁰⁹

The more interpretable parts of the song narrate a heroin user's losing his high, needing a fix, and shooting up.

I need a fix 'cause I'm going down
Down to the pits that I left uptown
I need a fix 'cause I'm going down
.....

Happiness is a warm gun (bang, bang, shoot, shoot)
Happiness is a warm gun, mamma (bang, bang, shoot, shoot)

When I hold you in my arms (ooh, oh, yeah)
And I feel my finger on your trigger (ooh, oh, yeah)
I know nobody can do me no harm (ooh, oh, yeah)²¹⁰

The "warm gun" is a heroin-filled needle. The upbeat tempo of the song seems to provide an approving tone, but the careful listener will notice an expressed ironic dissonance in the minor key chord progression. The mood and messaging in the song seem to acknowledge the self-destructive nature of heroin but validate its use anyway. To have a popular song about shooting up heroin—among other drug use songs by the Beatles such as "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" and "Day Tripper"—sung by a very popular band undermines established culture and reflects the spiteful irreverence felt by the counterculture youth in the late 1960s timeframe.²¹¹

Some songs, for example, the Velvet Underground's "Heroin" from *The Velvet Underground & Nico* album released in 1967, address the issue of drug use with darker

²⁰⁹ "Happiness Is a Warm Gun," track 8 on Beatles, *The Beatles [White Album]*, disc 1, Apple, 1968, LP.

²¹⁰ Beatles.

²¹¹ For examples of the Beatles' songs about drug use, see Levith, "Day Tripping." Also note that the abbreviation for "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" is LSD, for lysergic acid diethylamide, a popular hallucinogen in the 1960s meant to produce effects similar to those described in the song.

despair.²¹² The Velvet Underground represented the counterculture music fringe. The group was known for being ahead of its time and for pushing topical and musical limits in its work. Although not very commercially successful in its prime, it has been recognized as among the most influential artists ever.²¹³ The grittier portrayal of drug use in the song “Heroin” contrasts with the almost sarcastic dreaminess of the Beatles’ portrayal and highlights the counterculture’s tendency to normalize and strive for the grotesque. “Heroin” shows complexity from the start by contrasting being lost with using the drug to feel “like a man.”

I don’t know just where I’m going
But I’m gonna try for the kingdom, if I can
‘Cause it makes me feel like I’m a man
When I put a spike into my vein

And I’ll tell ya, things aren’t quite the same
When I’m rushing on my run
And I feel just like Jesus’ son
And I guess that I just don’t know
And I guess that I just don’t know²¹⁴

The lyrics continue to explain how the user knows every use risks his life, but he chooses to do it anyway as the only relief from life’s misery, and no one can do anything else to help.

I have made the big decision
I’m gonna try to nullify my life
‘Cause when the blood begins to flow
When it shoots up the dropper’s neck
When I’m closing in on death

And you can’t help me, not you guys
Or all you sweet girls with all your sweet talk
You can all go take a walk

²¹² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 183; Velvet Underground, *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, Verve, 1967, LP.

²¹³ "100 Greatest Artists," *Rolling Stone*, December 3, 2010, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/100-greatest-artists-147446/>.

²¹⁴ "Heroin," track 7 on Velvet Underground, *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, Verve, 1967, LP.

And I guess I just don't know
And I guess that I just don't know²¹⁵

The song goes on to confront establishment culture directly by claiming that heroin is an escape from the ills of society, a justified escape that is worth the risk.

Because when the smack begins to flow
I really don't care anymore
About all the Jim Jim's in this town
And all the politicians makin' crazy sounds
And everybody puttin' everybody else down
And all the dead bodies piled up in mounds

'Cause when the smack begins to flow
Then I really don't care anymore
Ah, when the heroin is in my blood
And that blood is in my head²¹⁶

At just more than seven minutes, the length of “Heroin” makes the song into an immersive experience. The two-chord alternation with a rising and falling tempo achieves a sad turbulence. Both the words and the music in the song leave the listener with the impression that heroin use is both fascinating and terrifying. A violin plays at a higher octave, and slightly off key at times, over the entire song in an increasing and decreasing volume. This dissonance makes the song an uncomfortable experience at certain points, but then retreats to allow comfort to return. This technique was ingeniously used in a way that simulates the advancing and retreating comfort of satisfying addiction. “Heroin” both condemns addiction and justifies it for being an escape from the worse conditions of establishment culture and society.

The loss of such artists as Jimi Hendrix to barbiturate overdose and Janis Joplin to heroin overdose, both in 1970, demonstrates the dichotomy in the counterculture youth's relationship with drug use. The fascination with dark experiences that propelled counterculture youth toward self-destructive drug habits testifies to their state of disillusionment and scorn for established culture—especially so with musicians of the time,

²¹⁵ Velvet Underground.

²¹⁶ Velvet Underground.

who continued to support drug use, even as it took its toll on members of their ranks and their audiences by killing them or destroying their lives with addiction.

3. Religion

As disillusionment drove idealism toward self-fulfillment, counterculture youth looked for spiritual fulfillment as well. Late-'60s individualism moved established religious beliefs and further emphasized a stark gap between counterculture youth and established society.²¹⁷ On the one hand, a decline in traditional religious beliefs carried through the 1960s and into later decades.²¹⁸ Still, Willis states that counterculture youth sometimes combined Christian-style evangelicalism with "new age" religious beliefs to formulate dogma aligning with their protest culture.²¹⁹ On the other hand, such commentators as Stanley Kurtz, senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, have stated that counterculture youth developed "liberalism" as a religion in itself in the 1960s.²²⁰ According to Kurtz, this change left adherents to "liberalism" relying on it as an all-encompassing belief system meant to answer all of life's questions.²²¹ A variety of religious views exhibited by musicians during the late 1960s and early 1970s indicated they, along with their audiences, were searching for new belief systems to supplant those of previous generations.

John Lennon, after leaving the Beatles, released his solo song "Imagine" in 1971.²²² The song contains a controversial anti-religion stance:

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky

²¹⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 110.

²¹⁸ Willis, 101–22.

²¹⁹ Willis, 213.

²²⁰ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 105; Students for a Democratic Society, "Port Huron Statement."

²²¹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 105.

²²² "The Beatles Are Back," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 8, 1964, 25; John Lennon, *Imagine*, Apple, 1971, 7" single.

Imagine all the people
Living for today . . . Aha-ah . . .

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace . . . You . . .²²³

Although critics often underscore religion in the song, the line “imagine there’s no countries” suggests it more significantly addresses changing the structure of society than of religion.²²⁴ Still, removing religion was suggested in support of more holistic goals like doing away with nation-states and private property in favor of peace, fostered by utopian collectivism. Lennon himself is quoted as saying the song was essentially the “Communist Manifesto” put to music.²²⁵

Universal and long-standing popularity attributed to “Imagine” may owe more to its musical composition than to lyrical content. That is to say, Lennon constructed a beautiful major chord progression in the key of C to be played at a slow tempo on piano in a way that truly showcases his talent for music. One might reason that the song could have achieved significant popularity as a love song or a melody for any number of other themes. However, the song in its chosen theme further showcased the counterculture’s search for a belief system that did away with a society and its religion altogether as such systems failed to achieve the changes sought for established society for nearly a decade.

Jethro Tull’s album *Aqualung*, released in 1971, was another notable example of religious expression in counterculture era music.²²⁶ One *Rolling Stone* review argues that the album addresses the “distinction between religion and God.”²²⁷ On side 2 of the original

²²³ Lennon, *Imagine*

²²⁴ Lennon.

²²⁵ John Blaney, *Lennon and McCartney—Together Alone: A Critical Discography of Their Solo Work* (Zurich: Olms, 2007), 52.

²²⁶ Jethro Tull, *Aqualung*, Chrysalis/Island Records, 1971, LP.

²²⁷ Ben Gerson, "Aqualung," *Rolling Stone*, July 22, 1971, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-album-reviews/aqualung-189561/>.

vinyl release, subtitled “My God,” Ian Anderson as the band’s songwriter directly accuses established religious norms of being hypocritical.²²⁸ This counterculture tendency to defy established norms takes on an increased intensity in this later example of counterculture era music.

Aqualung represents a grittier, heavier side of rock music than John Lennon and the Beatles did, and its popularity demonstrates the fragmenting of preferences in rock subgenres as the counterculture era progressed and listeners further developed their musical tastes. Jethro Tull enjoyed a cult following that resulted in multiple gold and platinum record releases. *Aqualung* was certified gold within weeks of its initial release and has since been certified triple-platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for selling more than three million units.²²⁹ As Meyer explains, positive reinforcement and praise among audiences build credibility for works of music; therefore, this record’s extreme popularity implies its authenticity.²³⁰

The most popular song on the *Aqualung* album is “Locomotive Breath.” The lyrics use a runaway train as a metaphor to portray living in a world and society that are out of control and headed for calamity. This theme is reminiscent of “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall.”

In the shuffling madness
Of the locomotive breath,
Runs the all-time loser,
Headlong to his death

He feels the piston scraping
Steam breaking on his brow
Old Charlie stole the handle and
The train it won’t stop going
No way to slow down²³¹

²²⁸ Gerson.

²²⁹ “Gold & Platinum: Jethro Tull,” Recording Industry Association of America, accessed December 6, 2020, https://www.riaa.com/gold-platinum/?tab_active=default-award&se=jethro+tull#search_section.

²³⁰ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 75–76.

²³¹ “Locomotive Breath,” track 10 on Jethro Tull, *Aqualung*, Chrysalis/Island Records, 1971, LP.

Throughout the song, Anderson refers to God as “Old Charlie” in a way that implies resentment for being trapped in this chaos allowed under God’s control.

He hears the silence howling
Catches angels as they fall

And the all-time winner
Has got him by the balls
He picks up Gideons Bible
Open at page one

I think God He stole the handle and
The train it won’t stop going
No way to slow down²³²

The song’s last verse reveals “Old Charlie” as God, having oppressive control over humanity. Picking up “Gideons Bible . . . at page one” alludes to making one’s own sense of the world, religion, and God to take back control of life.²³³ This song displays irreverence for established beliefs and a search for one’s individual truth in a way consistent with counterculture attitudes of the time.

D. DESPAIR AND TURMOIL

As the 1960s bled into the 1970s, the counterculture suffered from crises on many levels. The movement became politically divided with factions forming to support varying degrees and styles of radicalism. The counterculture undertook many efforts to rekindle the fundamental spirit of the movement but was unsuccessful and in disarray by the early 1970s. Popular culture reflected the exasperated state of counterculture ideology in both film and music. Music heavily expressed the counterculture youth’s lamentations about the fading of their ideological movement after a battle-worn decade.

Growing frustrations with the pace and success of the movement motivated the development of a more radical, violence-prone fringe group called “the Weathermen.”²³⁴ Such radicalism had only marginal representation in music, and groups were left to

²³² Jethro Tull.

²³³ Jethro Tull.

²³⁴ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 137–59.

appropriate mainstream music references on their own. Other counterculture youth chose to turn further inward for answers to questions about better social arrangements and gathered with the like-minded in drug-fueled explorations for alternative lifestyles.²³⁵ Further still, some who held on to the utopian notions that began the counterculture movement attempted to rekindle its spirit through large music-focused gatherings, such as the Woodstock Music & Art Fair and the Altamont Speedway Free Festival in 1969.²³⁶ Mainstream counterculture music reflected broad support of philosophical explorative endeavors rather than radical or violent ones.

1. Fragmentation and the Weathermen

As divisions set in among the counterculture youth and some factions became more radical, even prone to violence, the musical connections to radical factions became more fringe and tangential. The few musical acts that did support radical groups did not feature prominently in musical charts or pop culture at the time. Messaging from mainstream artists was appropriated by radical groups to reinforce their activities, but these artists offered no direct support. This arrangement leads to the observation that radical violent action was only marginally supported by the counterculture youth and, therefore, resulted in few, if any, examples of audience-demanded music production from the still fan-driven music industry.

The same counterculture youth who rallied around the Kennedys and the Democratic Party in the early 1960s became fragmented and turned on the party, thereafter led by the Johnson administration. The resulting violent confrontations moved from campuses to the streets during the mid to late 1960s. For example, in 1968, student groups and activists staged a day-long protest at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.²³⁷ The protestors objected to President Johnson's handling of the Vietnam War—

²³⁵ See, for example, Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll*, 137–154, 285–304.

²³⁶ Cottrell, 285–318.

²³⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, xxiv.

notably his expanding U.S. involvement in Indochina—and demanded an alternative to the Democratic Party’s status quo, even entering a pig as a preferred candidate.²³⁸

The radical hard rock band MC5 provided a musical backdrop for the ‘68 Convention protests.²³⁹ The protests erupted in violent conflict with police again and again, especially so after the MC5 performance had emotionally charged the crowd.²⁴⁰ Although popular on the radical protest scene and with groups such as the Black Panthers, the MC5 enjoyed no mainstream popularity at the time. The group had not even produced an album by the 68 protest. The band would later produce two studio albums—*Back in the USA* in 1970 and *High Time* in 1971—neither of which enjoyed commercial success.²⁴¹ Because of its historical and political significance, however, the group was named no. 38 among VH1’s Top 100 Greatest Hard Rock Artists.²⁴² However, MC5 remained on the fringe during its most active days, along with the fringe groups that it supported.

Disenfranchisement with the Democratic Party motivated some in the counterculture to form their own organizations focused on more intense activism. The SDS had expanded its membership to more than 100,000 by 1969, with a great many adherents identifying themselves as radicals.²⁴³ The SDS factionalized based on multiple groups’ not agreeing on how to implement the wholesale revolution they still believed was coming.²⁴⁴ One of the factions, the Weathermen, issued a new manifesto that in many ways supplanted the “Port Huron Statement.” The group derived its name from a Dylan lyric—“You don’t

²³⁸ Willis, 1–22.

²³⁹ Richard Harrington, "The MC5, Kicking Out the Jams," *Washington Post*, June 18, 2004, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/2004/06/18/the-mc5-kicking-out-the-jams/657d4ab5-efbf-4e65-b086-efa27183b007/>.

²⁴⁰ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 176.

²⁴¹ MC5, *High Time*, Atlantic, 1971, LP; MC5, *Back in the USA*, Atlantic, 1970, LP.

²⁴² "VH1: 100 Greatest Hard Rock Artists: 1–50," Rock on the Net, accessed November 14, 2020, <http://www.rockonthenet.com/archive/2000/vh1hardrock.htm>.

²⁴³ Peter B. Levy, ed., *America in the Sixties—Right, Left, and Center: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 233.

²⁴⁴ Levy, 233.

need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows”—in the song “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” released in 1965 on his *Bringing It All Back Home* album.²⁴⁵

The Weathermen took a with-us-or-against-us approach to naming allies and enemies, with the deciding factor being a demonstrated willingness to oppose U.S. “imperialism”—understood by the group as global capitalism.²⁴⁶ Their manifesto outlined a radical strategy to carry on with the revolution that was supposed to dethrone the United States from its perceived position as an imperialistic world overlord.²⁴⁷ Their propaganda continued to reference popular music in the same tangential manner that led to their name, pulling other such lyrics as “looks like we’re in for nasty weather” from CCR’s “Bad Moon Rising”—from the 1969 *Green River* album—as they saw fit.²⁴⁸

The ultimate strategy employed by the Weathermen was not to infiltrate the universities and spread their ideology as had been a goal in the “Port Huron Statement” but to violently establish a “classless . . . global communism” by whatever means necessary.²⁴⁹ This development in militant radicalism had no significant representation in music. The absence of musical representation is a telling indicator of the fringe characteristic in the Weathermen’s stance. Most of the counterculture youth were in a different state of mind at this point in the movement and expressed their ideologies in different ways. By this time, the music industry, being driven by fan support, reflected existentially exploratory views held by the vast majority of the counterculture youth as opposed to violent views held by a violently radical subset.

²⁴⁵ Levy, *America in the Sixties*, 233; Jeremy Varon, “‘The Sound of a Thunder’: Weatherman and the Music of Late-Life Regrets,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, September 1, 2017, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/sound-thunder-weatherman-music-late-life-regrets/>; Bob Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home*, Columbia, 1965, LP.

²⁴⁶ Levy, *America in the Sixties*, 231–33.

²⁴⁷ Levy, 233–39.

²⁴⁸ Varon, “The Sound of a Thunder”; Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Green River*, Fantasy, 1969, LP.

²⁴⁹ Levy, *America in the Sixties*, 233–39.

2. Summer in the Haight

In response to high-profile promotional efforts, including the creation and distribution of the song “San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair),” and to increased national press exposure in general for the counterculture movement, the summer of 1967 saw tens of thousands of counterculture youth make a pilgrimage first to the Monterey Pop Festival to celebrate the counterculture movement through music and then to the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco to “affirm and celebrate a new spiritual dawn.”²⁵⁰ This summer came to be known as the “summer of love.”²⁵¹ The event—and it was as much gig as “happening”—was initiated when established music industry promoters allied with prominent musicians such as Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney to promote a music festival in Monterey, California. Monterey was selected for its natural beauty, its proximity to San Francisco—then already an epicenter for counterculture activity—and its history of hosting music festivals.²⁵²

The Monterey Pop Festival, as it was named, personified the counterculture custom of using festivals to put alternative lifestyles on display.²⁵³ Additionally, the festival was advertised as a charity event with profits dedicated to such things as legal defense funds for activists.²⁵⁴ To publicize the Monterey event and capitalize on the summer-of-love phenomenon, John Phillips of the Mamas and the Papas wrote the song “San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)” to be released by Scott McKenzie in May of 1967.²⁵⁵ The song immediately shot to the top of Billboard’s Hot 100 chart and achieved national popularity, indicating that its message and promise resonated with the youth on a large

²⁵⁰ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 211–12.

²⁵¹ Cottrell, 209.

²⁵² Cottrell, 210.

²⁵³ Cottrell, 138.

²⁵⁴ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 210; Michael Lydon, “The High Cost of Music and Love: Where’s the Money from Monterey?,” *Rolling Stone*, November 9, 1967, 1, 7.

²⁵⁵ Scott McKenzie, *San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)*, Columbia, 1967, single LP.

scale.²⁵⁶ The lyrics invited the counterculture youth to San Francisco for a summertime “love-in” with “gentle people.”²⁵⁷

If you’re going to San Francisco
Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair
If you’re going to San Francisco
You’re gonna meet some gentle people there

For those who come to San Francisco
Summertime will be a love-in there
In the streets of San Francisco
Gentle people with flowers in their hair²⁵⁸

The song goes on to indicate something big, a generational happening, but offers no specifics other than it “will be a love-in.”

All across the nation
Such a strange vibration
People in motion
There’s a whole generation
With a new explanation
People in motion
People in motion
.....

If you come to San Francisco
Summertime will be a love-in there²⁵⁹

While the song offers no promises to promote activist causes, it does seem to promise a good time for all who attend and possess the right mindset. The widespread belief that drove the song’s popularity, the idea that love had some kind of social restructuring power, drove thousands of counterculture youth to the Bay Area.

²⁵⁶ For chart performance history, see "Chart History: Scott McKenzie," *Billboard*, accessed December 6, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/scott-mckenzie/chart-history/HSI/song/575461>; and Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 211.

²⁵⁷ McKenzie, *San Francisco (Be Sure to Wear Flowers in Your Hair)*.

²⁵⁸ McKenzie.

²⁵⁹ McKenzie.

The Haight-Ashbury district had for some time been established as a counterculture safe haven with utopian aspirations.²⁶⁰ The district was a convenient next-stop for counterculture youth who had attended the Monterey Pop Festival and was ground zero for the summer of love.²⁶¹ The hopeful sentiments of participants in the summer-of-love experience were reinforced by such music as “All You Need Is Love,” released by the Beatles on July 7, 1967, and associated with the event.²⁶² In keeping with the spirit, the song gives an idealistic yet intangible account for “love” being the most important resource to accomplish anything, by saying:

There’s nothing you can do that can’t be done
Nothing you can sing that can’t be sung
Nothing you can say, but you can learn how to play the game
It’s easy

Nothing you can make that can’t be made
No one you can save that can’t be saved
Nothing you can do, but you can learn how to be you in time
It’s easy

All you need is love
All you need is love
All you need is love, love
Love is all you need²⁶³

The song’s messaging was consistent with other documented counterculture proclamations of the supernatural power of love in multiple contexts—such as the counterculture publication *Sunday Ramparts*’ defining love as “communication.”²⁶⁴

Such activist groups as “the diggers” tried to set up education centers that they called “be-ins” to spread counterculture ideals during the summer of love, but the entire event mostly turned into drug-induced wandering.²⁶⁵ Drug use characterized the summer

²⁶⁰ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 137–154.

²⁶¹ Cottrell, 139–40.

²⁶² Cottrell, 135; Beatles, *All You Need Is Love*, Parlophone/Capitol, 1967, single LP.

²⁶³ Beatles, *All You Need Is Love*.

²⁶⁴ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 197.

²⁶⁵ Cottrell, 212–13, 217.

of love, leading to multiple social maladies, police raids, and the drug-induced murder of two well-known acid dealers in the Haight-Ashbury district.²⁶⁶ Drug-afflicted vagrants wandered the streets “imposing their trip on others” while proclaiming that they were building a new society based on personal liberation.²⁶⁷

As reality about the summer of love set in, many in the media criticized the event. Hunter S. Thompson later wrote that the Haight-Ashbury experience was nothing more than “an escape to live on the far perimeter of a world that might have been” in the wake of waning idealism and resulting disillusionment.²⁶⁸ The *Saturday Evening Post* said of the counterculture youth in the Haight, “In trying to protect our children so long, we let them remain overgrown children, restless and basically helpless. It’s this life that the hippies, far from dropping out, pathetically cling to.”²⁶⁹ As the summer ended and the counterculture youth drifted away, Haight residents conducted a mock funeral procession in the streets for the “death of the hippie” that reportedly had a 15-foot ceremonial coffin and 10 pallbearers and drew more than 200 attendees.²⁷⁰

The first ever front-page article in *Rolling Stone* magazine asked “Where’s the money from Monterey?” as it outlined the failure of Monterey Pop Festival organizers to fulfill their promises of using the proceeds for social activism.²⁷¹ Although the event did propel some musicians such as Jimi Hendrix into the mainstream, when evaluated on the basis of exemplifying the benefits counterculture ideology through art and music, the Monterey Pop Festival and its social backdrop of the summer of love were abject failures.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ Cottrell, 217–18.

²⁶⁷ Cottrell, 219–21.

²⁶⁸ Cottrell, 209.

²⁶⁹ “Our Mysterious Children,” *Saturday Evening Post*, September 23, 1967, quoted in Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 219.

²⁷⁰ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 223.

²⁷¹ Lydon, “The High Cost of Music and Love.”

²⁷² The Jimi Hendrix Experience’s performances of “Hey Joe,” “Foxy Lady,” and “Wild Think” were especially celebrated. See also Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 213.

3. Easy Rider

The counterculture tried to reinvent itself and its ideology for the remainder of the decade. The youth had to do so amid intensified civil unrest over the Vietnam War that many of them had abandoned altogether.²⁷³ Their next icon was a pair of fictional drug profiteers on a motorcycle adventure from Los Angeles to New Orleans. That is, on July 14, 1969, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper released their heavily music-laden movie *Easy Rider*.²⁷⁴ The movie appeared at a time when aging and tired members of the counterculture vanguard were experiencing disillusionment and were then mired in illegal narcotics and despair.²⁷⁵ The songs “If 6 was 9” by the Jimi Hendrix Experience, “Born to be Wild” by Steppenwolf, and “Wasn’t Born to Follow” by the Byrds were chosen for the soundtrack, likely because their connotations fit well with the movie’s individualistic statement.²⁷⁶ However, the first song heard in the movie is “The Pusher” as performed by Steppenwolf on its 1968 self-titled album release.²⁷⁷ After a significant drug deal takes place among the main characters, the song distinguishes between good drug dealers who only sell “grass” and “pills” and those who sell harder drugs.²⁷⁸

You know I’ve smoked a lot of grass
O’ Lord, I’ve popped a lot of pills
But I never touched nothin’
That my spirit could kill

You know, I’ve seen a lot of people walkin’ ‘round
With tombstones in their eyes
But the pusher don’t care
Ah, if you live or if you die²⁷⁹

²⁷³ For a detailed explanation of late ‘60s civil unrest, see Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 251–304.

²⁷⁴ Hopper, *Easy Rider*.

²⁷⁵ For an in-depth explanation on the conditions of the counterculture movement at the time, see Levy, *America in the Sixties*, 229–56; and Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 137–230.

²⁷⁶ Hopper, *Easy Rider*.

²⁷⁷ Steppenwolf, *Steppenwolf*, ABC Dunhill, 1968, LP.

²⁷⁸ Hopper, *Easy Rider*.

²⁷⁹ “The Pusher,” track 8 on Steppenwolf, *Steppenwolf*, ABC Dunhill, 1968, LP.

In the following lyrics, the “pusher” is seen as a “monster” to be “goddamn[ed]” unlike the “dealer” who only sells acceptable stuff:

God damn, the pusher
God damn, I say the pusher
I said God damn
God damn the pusher man

You know the dealer, the dealer is a man
With the love grass in his hand
Oh but the pusher is a monster
Good God, he’s not a natural man

The dealer for a nickel
Lord, will sell you lots of sweet dreams
Ah, but the pusher ruin your body
Lord, he’ll leave your
He’ll leave your mind to scream²⁸⁰

The conflict over drugs as depicted in “The Pusher” leaves the counterculture at odds with establishment culture over drugs but also at odds with itself as it tried to distinguish boundaries on drug use where there was previously wholesale acceptance of unfettered experimentation. The main characters in the movie, “Captain” and “Billie,” had crossed the line by becoming “pusher [men]” who trafficked hard drugs—quintessential anti-heroes who somehow seem to have their ignominious end coming.

Also on the *Easy Rider* soundtrack is the song “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” by Bob Dylan.²⁸¹ The song aptly mirrors the movie’s overall statement that in spite of everything the counterculture tried to do to institute a cultural overhaul of U.S. society, nothing had really changed. Dylan, again customarily ahead of his time, released “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding)” on his *Bringing It All Back Home* album in 1965.²⁸² The lyrics had reached full poignance by the time the song was included on the 1969 soundtrack for *Easy Rider*. Dylan characterizes the despair felt because of lingering social ills:

²⁸⁰ Steppenwolf.

²⁸¹ Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home*.

²⁸² Dylan.

Darkness at the break of noon
Shadows even the silver spoon
The handmade blade, the child's balloon
Eclipses both the sun and moon
To understand you know too soon
There is no sense in trying

Pointed threats, they bluff with scorn
Suicide remarks are torn
From the fool's gold mouthpiece
The hollow horn plays wasted words
Proves to warn that he not busy being born
Is busy dying

Temptation's page flies out the door
You follow, find yourself at war
Watch waterfalls of pity roar
You feel to moan but unlike before
You discover that you'd just be
One more person crying²⁸³

Peter Fonda's character ("Captain America") mirrors the sentiment of these and the remaining lyrics of the song during the heart-to-heart campfire scene at the end of the movie, when he tells Dennis Hopper's character ("Billy") "we blew it."²⁸⁴ Specifically, they "blew it" because they sold out and became drug traffickers. But, more importantly, the statement—and the movie—signifies their generation's failure in the larger context for not successfully remaking society. The movie's pessimistic sentiment reaches its climax in the ending sequence when the main characters are murdered by straight society, antagonistically personified as rural America. *Easy Rider*, along with its soundtrack, is a timeless representation of the counterculture movement at that time in its evolution. The movement was "only bleeding" as Dylan put it, but would still attempt to resurrect itself.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ "It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)," track 9 on *Music from the Soundtrack: Easy Rider*, written by Bob Dylan, featuring Roger Guinn, MCA, 1969, LP.

²⁸⁴ Hopper, *Easy Rider*.

²⁸⁵ Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home*.

4. Final Festivities

Critics have said that Woodstock represented the death of an illusion held onto by the counterculture youth that the world could be turned into a utopia through collective appreciation of art and music.²⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the festival demonstrated the importance of music to the counterculture youth as their preferred form of expression after years of protest and fatigue. The Woodstock Music & Art Fair (hereafter Woodstock) held August 15–18, 1969, marked a counterculture rally in the form of a concert. The festival assembled 32 musical acts that were important to the time in an event meant to showcase the collective sentiment, values, and possibilities of the counterculture movement.²⁸⁷ More than half a million people attended the festival as a statement about what the “counterculture movement could be if given a chance by straight society.”²⁸⁸

The song “Woodstock,” written by Joni Mitchell and released by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young on their *Déjà Vu* album in 1970, commemorated a reverential sentiment for the Woodstock festival.²⁸⁹ The song peaked at 11 on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart, indicating the importance of the song and the festival to mainstream audiences.²⁹⁰ As one of Woodstock’s performing groups, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young gave the song a level of first-person credibility that contributed to its authenticity and likely its popularity.

The song’s intro speaks to getting “back to the land” while at the same time joining a “rock and roll band.” This juxtaposition represents a paradox because rock and roll runs on electricity, an expensive complex of sound equipment, and meticulously manufactured musical instruments. Such a contradiction signifies the fantastical perception that the counterculture had of Woodstock.

Well, I came upon a child of God
He was walking along the road

²⁸⁶ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 193.

²⁸⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 188.

²⁸⁸ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 158.

²⁸⁹ Crosby, Stills, Nash, & Young, *Déjà Vu*, Atlantic Records, 1970, LP.

²⁹⁰ “Woodstock by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young,” Song Facts, December 6, 2020, <https://www.songfacts.com/facts/crosby-stills-nash-young/Woodstock>.

And I asked him, Tell me, where are you going
This he told me

Said, I'm going down to Yasgur's Farm
Gonna join in a rock and roll band
Got to get back to the land and set my soul free²⁹¹

The idea of freeing the soul can be interpreted as the primary purpose of the Woodstock event as presented in these lyrics. The song continues with references to environmentalism, to being part of something bigger, and to learning in an existentialist sense. The lyrics fit with the broad sweeping messaging of the "Port Huron Statement" issued years earlier and the cultural upheaval imbued by the counterculture youth.²⁹²

Well, then can I roam beside you?
I have come to lose the smog,
And I feel myself a cog in somethin' turning
And maybe it's the time of year
Yes and maybe it's the time of man
And I don't know who I am
But life is for learning²⁹³

The chorus from "Woodstock" reflects a supernatural reverence for the Woodstock event, in spite of its failures both as a high-quality music event and as a socially revolutionary act. The contradiction in such mythic status demonstrates the dedication to counterculture attitudes that had audiences and rock mythologists ignore many serious problems at the festival, ranging from logistics to widespread drug-induced medical incidents.²⁹⁴ The sound quality was even so bad that none of the live recordings were suitable for production of a commemorative soundtrack.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ "Woodstock," track 5 on Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *Déjà Vu*, Atlantic Records, 1970, LP.

²⁹² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 7–8.

²⁹³ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, "Woodstock."

²⁹⁴ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 157. Calamities at Woodstock included involuntary doping, food shortages, medical problems due to lack of shelter and exposure, and even a concert-goer being overrun by a sewage removal truck. For further information, see Becki Robins, "Messed Up Things at Woodstock," Grunge, November 6, 2019, <https://www.grunge.com/123016/messed-up-things-woodstock/>.

²⁹⁵ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 158.

The song's chorus is repeated three times throughout in a format consistent with rock music instead of the straight verses of folk and emphasizes the supposed ideal of Woodstock for the counterculture youth: a return to a symbolic garden of Eden, or at least to a more idealized state:

We are stardust, we are golden
We are billion year old carbon
And we got to get ourselves back to the garden²⁹⁶

If music-based utopian notions had not been completely snuffed out once everyone had left Woodstock nothing more than a muddy field, the events at the Altamont Raceway in Altamont, California, on December 6, 1969, finally crushed the notion of music events as an example of what “the counterculture movement could be.”²⁹⁷

The Rolling Stones made the final performance on their 1969 world tour, a free show in Altamont, California, in the spirit of Woodstock—indeed, the event was heralded as “Woodstock West.”²⁹⁸ Mick Jagger—the Rolling Stones’ lead singer-songwriter and event promoter—boldly stated that the concert was supposed to “create a microcosmic society for the rest of America.”²⁹⁹ An estimated 300,000 people attended the event, and the sheer number was part of the disastrous results.³⁰⁰

Everyone from the concert-goers, to critics, to musicians reported the event as a miserable experience.³⁰¹ Drug use was rampant, with many attendees being out of their minds on hallucinogens to the point of self-destructiveness.³⁰² Hell’s Angels Motorcycle Club members were recruited to provide security as the event grew out of control.³⁰³

²⁹⁶ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, “Woodstock.”

²⁹⁷ Greene, 158.

²⁹⁸ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 158; *Gimme Shelter*, directed by Albert Maysles, David Maysles, and Charlotte Zwerin, featuring Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, and Mick Taylor (Los Angeles: Cinema 5, 1970).

²⁹⁹ Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin, *Gimme Shelter*.

³⁰⁰ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 158; Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin, *Gimme Shelter*.

³⁰¹ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 158–59.

³⁰² Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin, *Gimme Shelter*.

³⁰³ Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin.

Violence that escalated between the crowd and club members came to a climax as the band played “Sympathy for the Devil,” causing Mick Jagger to stop in the middle of the song and request that the crowd “just cool out” while referring to them as “brothers and sisters.”³⁰⁴ As the band moved on to play the next song, “Under My Thumb,” the concert ended when the Hell’s Angels beat and stabbed an 18 year old to death after he wielded a handgun on several of their members in front of the stage.³⁰⁵ The events at Altamont hardly “[created] a microcosmic society” worthy of the aspiration that promoters boasted of.³⁰⁶ There would be no more counterculture efforts to use large music events as social statements about model societies after Altamont.

Musicians wasted no time capturing the tragedy and philosophical finality represented by the Altamont event. Blue Öyster Cult offered its musical commentary about Altamont in “Transmaniacon MC” from its self-titled debut album. The song refers to “bully boys” leaving Altamont on their motorcycles under the control of “Satan” after leaving the Altamont stage in “unknown terror.”³⁰⁷ More prominently, Don McLean—who indicates a consistent perception that pure evil affected this event by also referencing Satan—commemorated the Altamont event in several verses of his ballad to the tragedy and loss of innocence experienced from the beginning to the end of the counterculture generation, the 1971 song “American Pie.”³⁰⁸

Oh, and there we were all in one place
A generation lost in space
With no time left to start again

So come on Jack be nimble, Jack be quick
Jack Flash sat on a candlestick
‘Cause fire is the devil’s only friend

Oh and as I watched him on the stage
My hands were clenched in fists of rage

³⁰⁴ Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin.

³⁰⁵ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 158–59.

³⁰⁶ Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin, *Gimme Shelter*.

³⁰⁷ Blue Öyster Cult, *Blue Öyster Cult*, Columbia, 1972, LP.

³⁰⁸ McLean, “American Pie.”

No angel born in Hell
Could break that Satan's spell

And as the flames climbed high into the night
To light the sacrificial rite
I saw Satan laughing with delight
The day the music died³⁰⁹

After years of speculation, McLean confirmed that these verses described Altamont.³¹⁰ Lyrics depict the generation as gathering there in a last effort to bring meaning to what was left of their ideological movement but instead watching as the “angel[s] born in Hell”—members of the Hell’s Angels—could not “break that Satan’s spell”—maintain order even though it was their job as makeshift security.³¹¹ The “spell” had the event and the movement end in murderous disaster.³¹² This ending signals the end of naïve hopefulness in the movement and its connection to music, as “Satan [laughed] with delight, the day the music died.”³¹³

From Dylan’s initial antagonistic idealism to McLean’s remorse and discontent, attitudes projected from counterculture music followed the same path as attitudes in the movement itself. With the counterculture discourse being a movement searching for something, a complex relationship developed between the movement and music that displayed an array of musicological patterns, ranging through the folk forms in the beginning to psychedelic and rock music by the end. Counterculture music reflected ideological exploration as opposed to the single-minded focus of civil rights music or anti-Vietnam War music. The lack of tangible, specific goals in the counterculture movement

³⁰⁹ McLean.

³¹⁰ Morgan, "What Do American Pie's Lyrics Mean?"

³¹¹ "Sympathy for the Devil" is a song from the Rolling Stones' album *Beggars Banquet*, released one year and a day before the Altamont event. Songwriters Richards and Jagger feature Lucifer as a first-person character who represents the underlying evils of mankind and its resulting chaos throughout history. The song is surrounded in rock-and-roll mythology because of uncanny misfortune. A fire that occurred in the studio during the song's recording established its eerie aura. At Altamont, Mick proclaimed, "It always happens, something funny happens when we start that number," about the song when trying to calm the fighting crowd. In "American Pie," McLean alludes to the spooky connection between "Sympathy for the Devil," Mick Jagger, and the Altamont tragedy in his lyric "that Satan's spell." For video footage of "Sympathy for the Devil" played at Altamont, see Maysles, Maysles, and Zwerin, *Gimme Shelter*.

³¹² Morgan, "What Do American Pie's Lyrics Mean?"

³¹³ McLean, "American Pie."

left the counterculture youth in an adversarial position toward many parts of society, including themselves at times. That the thematic flow in music reflected counterculture attitudes through these multiple changes indicates that music can serve as a guide for following and reacting to movements that search for something when analyzing discourse movements generally.

All along the complicated trajectory of the counterculture movement, audience acceptance of authenticity drove the most reflective songs to popularity and, in some cases, to persisting longevity. Audiences sought out music that represented their beliefs. Songs determined worthy and acceptable served to emotionally represent and propel the counterculture in whatever direction it happened to be going.

IV. MUSIC OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

The civil rights movement, which preceded and then paralleled the counterculture movement, demonstrated a different relationship with music. Most notably, civil-rights-affiliated music tended not to be antagonistic but instead welcomed and enlisted supporters from all walks of life, especially white counterculture youth who could have easily focused their ideological and activist attention elsewhere. Civil rights music never lost its meaning in the movement unlike the counterculture movement, which finally left its followers groping for a cause.

Music supporting civil rights was generally uplifting and empowering on a spiritual level, thus emboldening adherents to overcome worldly problems. Being based in musical forms that evolved from black spirituals gave civil rights music a Christian underpinning as opposed to the religious uncertainty or antagonism common in counterculture music. Civil rights music did not engage the audience in despair, self-pity, or self-destruction. Instead, the music brought empathy to white America in a way that only music could have done, and it may have made the defining difference in gaining needed mainstream support that kept the movement alive and advancing forward.

This chapter briefly explains how associations emerged between music, the civil rights movement, and the counterculture youth. It then explores the interplay between three musical subgenres—folk, soul, and blues—in relation to the civil rights cause. The material discusses how such folk artists as Bob Dylan displayed greater inclusiveness in their civil rights offerings than in their counterculture songs—even when those songs were recorded at the same time—and served to raise awareness for civil rights issues among young white middle-class audiences. The next section covers how soul music as the preferred musical form for black artists, including soul renditions of traditional spirituals, captured and nurtured the spirit of the civil rights movement for black and white audiences alike. The chapter closes with a discussion of how blues music evolved to enlist the emotions and empathy of white audiences in a way that made them feel that civil rights was their cause, as well as that of black Americans.

A. HARMONY AND EQUALITY

Before students and social activists from white middle-class America ever began their discourse of philosophical concerns about social structures, black Americans had been embroiled in a decades-long struggle for equal rights under the law. Indeed, the civil rights movement began immediately following the abolition of slavery in 1865.³¹⁴ And by the late 1950s, black Americans were motivated—by changing attitudes toward racial exclusion, the largely successful desegregation of the U.S. armed forces, and the evidence (much of it captured in the new medium of television) that the post-war economic boom was unevenly distributed, among other things—to improve their conditions through activism.³¹⁵ Civil rights gained attention and motivated activism that ran on energy from its own soundtrack. Some associated music emerged from within the greater counterculture movement. Some emerged in parallel and thrived within its own market.

The 1950s had brought unprecedented integration into the mainstream American music world for black artists. Chuck Berry and James Brown were international favorites who shared the stage of fame with such white artists as Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. White artists such as Jerry Lee Lewis and black artists such as Howlin' Wolf often played and recorded together at Sun Records in Memphis.³¹⁶ Musicians borrowed from each other's styles across racial boundaries. A new form of music called rock and roll was the result of this multi-racial collaboration.³¹⁷

Still, the 1950s were by no means a time of interracial utopia. A prolonged legal battle over equal education opportunities for black Americans climaxed with the desegregation of schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954.³¹⁸ Then, Rosa Parks took her famous bus ride in 1955.³¹⁹ On August 28 that same year, a 14-year-old

³¹⁴ Zhang Aimin, *The Origins of the African American Civil Rights Movement, 1865–1956*, Studies in African American History and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.

³¹⁵ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 72.

³¹⁶ John Floyd, *Sun Records: An Oral History* (Memphis, TN: Devault-Graves Digital Editions, 2015).

³¹⁷ Floyd.

³¹⁸ Aimin, *The African American Civil Rights Movement*.

³¹⁹ Lean'tin Bracks, "Rosa Parks (1913–2005)," *African American Almanac* (Invisible Ink Press, 2012), Credo Reference.

boy named Emmett Till was kidnapped and killed in Money, Mississippi, for allegedly making advances toward a married white woman, an accusation that both the woman and the murderers later disavowed.³²⁰ The Eisenhower Administration supported the Civil Rights Act of 1957, protecting black Americans' voting rights, which somehow had not been entirely normalized in the near century after the advent of black male suffrage.³²¹

Many incidents related to the civil rights struggle, notably the Emmitt Till murder, were so egregious that even the most apathetic white Americans had to take notice in a way that was later reflected in white folk music. This connection had powerful implications for activist planning and practice. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), formed in 1957, supported three principles: 1) White Americans should not remain idle "while wrongs were being committed against the black community"; 2) Black Americans should "stand up against injustices"; 3) This effort should be achieved through non-violence, embodying the motto "Not one hair of one head of one white person shall be harmed."³²² In 1963, the SCLC's Birmingham campaign resulted in violence from police against protestors, including high pressure fire hoses and bite-dogs. The televised violence gave national exposure to the SCLC and the civil rights movement.³²³ Observance of peaceful activism in the face of violence motivated support from counterculture youth and mainstream America alike, thus giving the civil rights cause needed critical mass.

The civil rights movement's most notable progress culminated in the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Equal access to facilities and services was a major motivator for the black activism that resulted in the passing of these acts.³²⁴ Such definable goals and tangible achievements existed in contrast to the more ethereal nature of counterculture aspirations. Civil rights-related music did not have to define the movement for its participants because the movement was already defined by

³²⁰ Devery S. Anderson and Julian Bond, *Emmett Till: The Murder That Shocked the World and Propelled the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015), 39.

³²¹ Michael S. Mayer, "The Eisenhower Administration and the Civil Rights Act of 1957," *Congress & the Presidency* 16, no. 2 (1989): 137–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07343468909507929>.

³²² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 13.

³²³ Willis, 13.

³²⁴ Willis, 72.

circumstances of identifiable injustice and oppression. Civil rights music instead needed to uplift those already invested and to recruit others who might not already be engaged in the cause.

B. FOLK SCENE INVOLVEMENT

The British strategist and historian B. H. Liddell Hart wrote, “Keep strong, if possible. In any case, keep cool. Have unlimited patience. Never corner an opponent, and always assist him to save face. Put yourself in his shoes—so as to see things through his eyes. Avoid self-riotousness like the devil, nothing is so self-blinding.”³²⁵ White folk performers like Bob Dylan exercised exceptional discipline in adhering to this principle in their civil rights songs, making them more relatable and their message acceptable to more people. Folk Singer Pete Seeger, who participated regularly in civil rights activism, said that music was vital.³²⁶ Civil rights activists and folk musicians Guy and Candie Carawan recounted having songs for every mood and occasion.³²⁷ Folk songs about civil rights not only point out wrongs but also welcome the wrongdoers to change and join the ranks of reconciliation.

Bob Dylan wrote the song “The Death of Emmett Till” about the 1955 kidnapping and murder.³²⁸ Due to contention over publishing rights, the song was not recorded on any of Dylan’s studio albums—making it a sort of underground anthem—but was preserved in such live recordings as the March 11, 1962, Radio Show included on his *Bootleg Series* release, which indicated the song had significant public exposure.³²⁹ The song used a typical folk chord progression and straight verses with no chorus or bridge.³³⁰ This arrangement effectively delivers the message in a more deliberately impactful constant cadence:

³²⁵ B. H. Liddell Hart, quoted in Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 147.

³²⁶ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 180.

³²⁷ Willis, 179.

³²⁸ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 135.

³²⁹ Bob Dylan, *The Bootleg Series, Vols. 1–3 (Rare & Unreleased 1961–1991)*, Columbia Records, 1991.

³³⁰ See Davis, *The Craft of Lyric Writing*, 34–44, for an explanation of the straight-verse song format.

Twas down in Mississippi not so long ago,
When a young boy from Chicago town stepped through a Southern door.
This boy's dreadful tragedy I can still remember well,
The color of his skin was black and his name was Emmett Till.

Some men they dragged him to a barn and there they beat him up.
They said they had a reason, but I can't remember what.
They tortured him and did some evil things too evil to repeat.
There was screaming sounds inside the barn, there was laughing sounds
out on the street.³³¹

Dylan outlines the evil of the crime and the callousness of the murderers. He goes on to describe the injustice of the trial in which the murderers were not convicted:

And then to stop the United States of yelling for a trial,
Two brothers they confessed that they had killed poor Emmett Till.
But on the jury there were men who helped the brothers commit this awful
crime,
And so this trial was a mockery, but nobody seemed to mind.³³²

The final verses of the song speak to the activist listener, as well as to the general public. Dylan calls people to action from a point of sad regret:

If you can't speak out against this kind of thing, a crime that's so unjust,
Your eyes are filled with dead men's dirt, your mind is filled with dust.
Your arms and legs they must be in shackles and chains, and your blood it
must refuse to flow,
For you let this human race fall down so God-awful low!

This song is just a reminder to remind your fellow man
That this kind of thing still lives today in that ghost-robed Ku Klux Klan.
But if all of us folks that thinks alike, if we gave all we could give,
We could make this great land of ours a greater place to live.³³³

This last verse is the most interesting. Dylan does not express confrontational zeal but instead acknowledges the country as "this great land of ours" and gives the hope that everyone can participate in making it better. He does not single groups of people out as the enemy the way he does in "The Times They Are A-Changin'" but instead admonishes an

³³¹ "The Death of Emmett Till," track 13 on Bob Dylan, *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 9: The Witmark Demos: 1962-1964*, disc 1, Columbia/Legacy/Sony Music Entertainment, 2010, LP.

³³² Dylan.

³³³ Dylan.

ideology. This stance is difficult in any discourse as it is easier for people to single out an opposing group and vilify them through challenges that give a face to contradictory beliefs.³³⁴ Given that Dylan does single people out in songs such as “The Times They Are A-Changin’” and “Masters of War,” songs written and played during the same period but about different issues, indicates that he took a wholly different and welcoming approach to the civil rights movement.

Dylan addresses poor white Americans’ being manipulated by powerful politicians to carry out their racist agenda in his song “Only a Pawn in Their Game.” Dylan notes that poor whites have committed hateful acts as a result of manipulation from evil overlords. This approach ingeniously invited poor white people of the South into the civil rights cause. Recorded in 1963 and released on Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’” album, this song justifies and reinforces the need for the wholesale cultural upheaval already portrayed and warned of in the title track.³³⁵

A South politician preaches to the poor white man
“You got more than the blacks, don’t complain
You’re better than them, you been born with white skin,” they explain
And the Negro’s name
Is used, it is plain
For the politician’s gain
As he rises to fame
And the poor white remains
On the caboose of the train
But it ain’t him to blame
He’s only a pawn in their game³³⁶

Dylan gave Southern whites a way to overcome the idea that once someone starts down a path of action, one cannot change. Poor Southern whites were given an excuse for their past actions that allowed them to change course without having to transform their personal identity completely. Although evidence showing how much or little such inviting

³³⁴ David Brannan, Anders Strindberg, and Kristin Darken, *A Practitioner’s Way Forward: Terrorism Analysis* (Salinas, CA: Agile Press, 2014), 65–79.

³³⁵ Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin’.”

³³⁶ “Only a Pawn in Their Game,” track 6 on Bob Dylan, *The Times They Are A-Changin’*, Columbia Records, 1964.

messaging affected poor white audiences is difficult to discern, the difference in this messaging compared to that of the counterculture songs is telling. In the civil rights movement, a movement for something, those spreading the message displayed different attitudes. Dylan was out to recruit those poor Southern whites who might have been on the opposite side of the civil rights cause as opposed to antagonizing them the way he did establishment culture in “The Times They Are A-Changin’.”

C. SPIRITUALS AND SOUL

The civil rights movement continued to be enriched and supported by an eclectic blending of black spirituals and soul with music playing an important role in the evolution of associated activism.³³⁷ Of the musical forms associated with civil rights activism, soul is observably the most soothing, uplifting, and inviting. The tone and messaging of soul music used a different aesthetic to extend the same inviting message that Dylan did in the folk genre. Soul music remained important to black Americans throughout the civil rights struggle and helped enlist white counterculture youth with its inviting and hope-filled messaging.

More than 200,000 activists marched on Washington in the March for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963, to express discontent over inequalities for black Americans. Activist musicians including Peter, Paul, and Mary attended, providing a musical backdrop.³³⁸ “We Shall Overcome,” a traditional black American spiritual, set the tone and defined the purpose of the event. The song’s title became the motto for the event and was pictured on official pamphlets (see Figure 1).

³³⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 179.

³³⁸ Willis, 11.



Figure 1. 1963 March on Washington Pamphlet³³⁹

“We Shall Overcome” was a residual favorite of the spirituals throughout the civil rights movement as it had been during the economic hardships of the Great Depression. Use of the song in marches, meetings, and protests accelerated in the late ‘50s and continued through the ‘60s. The lyrics for “We Shall Overcome” simply offer hope to those who use the song to represent their cause while offering peace to those in opposition. The song’s hook, “We shall overcome,” lends itself as a mantra for continuing a struggle against any opposition. The song was reportedly a favorite of Martin Luther King Jr.³⁴⁰ President Lyndon Johnson’s speech after the “bloody Sunday” Selma, Alabama, march on March 7, 1965, also referenced the song extensively, thus showing that white Americans as well as black Americans were empowered by its lyrics.³⁴¹

We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome, some day.

³³⁹ Source: National Urban League, *We Shall Overcome March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom* (souvenir portfolio, August 28, 1963), <https://www.loc.gov/item/2005689618/>.

³⁴⁰ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 150.

³⁴¹ Meacham and McGraw, 165.

Oh, deep in my heart,
I do believe
We shall overcome, some day.

We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand,
We'll walk hand in hand, some day.³⁴²

As is typical of the black spirituals appropriated for the civil rights movement, the lyrics do not antagonize, belittle, or single anyone out for attack or even scorn. These songs stand in stark contrast to the messaging seen earlier in counterculture songs such as Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'" or "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall." The song—and its message—is inclusive, inviting, and motivating, while embodying the peaceful intent and progress of the main civil rights movement. Being derived from traditional black American folk songs or African slave songs, black spirituals as well as soul carried their own inherent authenticity for all audiences, possibly even for many white audiences who descended from long traditions of listening to versions of this music since the initial settlement of the United States.

Soul musicians produced many more examples of important protest music throughout the civil rights movement. In 1964, Sam Cooke wrote his song "A Change Is Gonna Come." The song, composed in a soulful melancholic form, conveys a message of progress despite the troubles of the past:

Then I go to my brother
And I say brother help me please
But he winds up knockin' me
Back down on my knees, oh

There have been times that I thought I couldn't last for long
But now I think I'm able to carry on
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will³⁴³

The Library of Congress preserved "A Change Is Gonna Come" for being a song with timeless popularity for its message. The song reached no. 9 on the Billboard Rhythm

³⁴² "We Shall Overcome," traditional African American spiritual, *People's Songs*, 1948.

³⁴³ "A Change Is Gonna Come," track 7 on Sam Cooke, *Ain't That Good News*, RCA Victor, 1964, LP.

and Blues (R&B) singles chart and no. 31 on the more racially and stylistically integrated Billboard Hot 100.³⁴⁴ Its popularity on the Billboard Hot 100 indicates widespread acceptance in its messaging among mainstream white America.

In a more declarative message, “This Is My Country,” released in 1968 on the album of the same name by Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions, directly addresses the lack of belonging that many black Americans still felt by the late 1960s in spite of mid-decade political successes.³⁴⁵ This soul hit uses slow horn melodies to invitingly adorn its straight verse layout, commonly seen in all genres of traditional folk. The refrain “Do do do” establishes—and then reestablishes—the emotional tone of the song throughout. The Impressions appeal to listeners about the need to be accepted as equal members of American society, lest “we [all] perish unjust.”³⁴⁶

Do do do
Do do do

Some people think we don't have the right
To say it's my country
Before they give in, they'd rather fuss and fight
Than say it's my country
I've paid three hundred years or more
Of slave driving, sweat, and welts on my back
This is my country

Do do do
Do do do

Too many have died in protecting my pride
For me to go second class
We've survived a hard blow and I want you to know
That you'll face us at last
And I know you will give consideration

³⁴⁴ "Sam Cooke, A Change Is Gonna Come," Billboard, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.billboard.com/charts/search?artistname=Sam+Cooke&charttitle=A+Change+Is+Gonna+Come&label=&chartcode=&chart_date=.

³⁴⁵ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 15.

³⁴⁶ Impressions, *This Is My Country*, Curtom, 1968, LP.

Shall we perish unjust or live equal as a nation
This is my country³⁴⁷

The final verse keeps the song in line with the civil rights music custom of inviting all to join in equality, promoting inclusiveness as the goal:

And I know you will give consideration
Shall we perish unjust or live equal as a nation
This is my country³⁴⁸

This song came at the same time the counterculture movement was trying, however unsuccessfully, to reinvent itself through music and festival events such as Woodstock and Altamont. "This is My Country" retained its civil rights focus and displayed steadfast dedication to a measurable goal as was customary for the movement. The song did not display disillusionment, but instead hope, as late '60s counterculture music did.

Both song and album were well received, with the song being ranked the no. 8 R&B song of 1969 and the album the no. 5 R&B and Soul album of the year.³⁴⁹ The song also peaked at no. 25 during a multi-week stay on the Billboard Hot 100 pop chart, with the album being ranked 107 on the pop album chart for the year.³⁵⁰ The multi-chart success indicates that the song and its messaging were well received by mainstream audiences across racial boundaries.

D. THE BLUES FOR ALL

Even though folk and soul music played an extremely important role, blues music is possibly the most important musical form for emotionally investing white middle-class youth in the civil rights struggle. The evolution of blues music into electric blues-rock carried white audiences along in a way that helped make the civil rights issue universal.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ Impressions.

³⁴⁸ Impressions.

³⁴⁹ "The Impressions: This Is My Country," Billboard, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.billboard.com/charts/search?artistname=The+Impressions&charttitle=This+is+my+country&label=&chartcode=&chart_date=.

³⁵⁰ Billboard.

³⁵¹ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 58–59.

Such singers as Bob Dylan may have inspired white counterculture youth to acknowledge and care about the civil rights movement with their folk songs, but the blues and its blues-rock derivatives were vital in bringing the white counterculture youth into the movement, identifying themselves as embodying “blackness” and adopting the civil rights cause as their own as well.

Previously lost or underappreciated black music, including blues, was rediscovered in the 1960s with works collected, recorded, and redistributed. Traditional blues was subsequently heard by a broader audience than ever, and white audiences were especially exposed to blues as they had never been before.³⁵² This trend created the 1960s blues revival, which coincided with the civil rights and “black power” movements, and represented as well as fueled a revolt against elitist values for many black and white Americans alike, who identified with the message of struggle in blues music.³⁵³ Identifying with the universal aspects of blues messaging brought a sense of “blackness” to white middle-class youth that drew them personally closer to the black American civil rights cause.³⁵⁴

As white audiences initially grew interested in blues music, they focused on the gospel-derived universal messaging related to struggle and power in general.³⁵⁵ The blues also embodied a kind of masculinity unfamiliar and attractive to white audiences. Concepts of masculinity portrayed in black music offered an avenue of expression and release not found in other musical forms. This perceived “black masculinity” became a unique marker of authenticity in blues for white audiences, making it an essential feature of the music as

³⁵² Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 179.

³⁵³ Frith, *Popular Music Analysis*, pt. A, sec. 44, 70.

³⁵⁴ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 58–59.

³⁵⁵ Adelt, 14.

it developed into blues-rock.³⁵⁶ White artists' appropriation of blues messaging and the blues brand of masculinity in blues-rock led to mainstream white interest in blues music and mainstream white identification with black causes.

During the '60s blues revival, black musicians expressed discontent about racial issues to an expanding white audience as the genre was reconceptualized as "white"—meaning its proliferation was driven by white audiences—through mainstream commercial influence after the mid-1960s.³⁵⁷ Blues artists who needed to maintain commercial significance had to remain ever conscientious of perceptions and acceptance among white audiences who funded their success.³⁵⁸ The shift to primarily white audiences was a double-edged sword for such blues performers as B. B. King and for blues music in general. On the one hand, artists enjoyed more commercial success than they ever had. However, these artists were subsequently rejected by black audiences as sellouts. B. B. King described this experience as "being black twice," having to face cultural adversity from both black and white America.³⁵⁹

Most major black performers played soul, Motown, or rock-and-roll music starting in the late 1950s. By the late '60s, the style of blues that white audiences initially developed an affinity for had been abandoned by black artists and audiences.³⁶⁰ This abandonment had been somewhat motivated by an overbearing historical interest in traditional folk blues among purist white music conservationists through the '40s and '50s that left many black Americans feeling they had been preempted from continuing to develop blues music as an

³⁵⁶ Ulrich Adelt, introduction to *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 14–16. "Black masculinity" as described here refers to masculine themes portrayed in songs such as "Trouble No More," a traditional blues song originally recorded by Muddy Waters in 1955 and later covered by the Allman Brothers Band, among other artists. "Stack O' Lee," a traditional blues song made famous by Mississippi John Hurt and later covered by modern bands such as the Black Keys, the White Stripes, and Left Lane Cruiser, also puts masculinity on display. More recently, "Blood, Sweat, & Murder" by Scott H. Biram represents even more aggressive masculinity in blues. See Scott H. Biram, *The Dirty Old One Man Band*, Knuckle Sandwich Records, 2004, LP.

³⁵⁷ Adelt, Introduction; Frith, *Popular Music Analysis*, pt. A, sec. 44, 82.

³⁵⁸ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 21.

³⁵⁹ Adelt, 13–29.

³⁶⁰ Adelt, 13.

identifying form.³⁶¹ Black audiences had grown weary of the suffering in traditional blues music—viewing it as antiquated—and preferred the upbeat, flashy, and ultimately progressive image of soul music and its performers.³⁶² Without the support of black audiences, messaging in the music had to become more generic to appeal to wider white audiences who, by and large, shared no connection to the very real and specific suffering expressed in traditional blues.³⁶³

Even as some blues artists lost credibility with black audiences, the new connection with white audiences helped mobilize the white middle-class youth to the cause of civil rights.³⁶⁴ Adelt argues that through a fascination with traditional blues, white audiences adhered to a perception of the past that was home to a less-threatening version of the race politics prevalent in the 1960s.³⁶⁵ For whatever damage white reification of blues authenticity might have done, it did serve to engage white audiences in civil rights.³⁶⁶ In the end, the civil rights movement could leverage the support of white middle-class youth—who could have chosen to apply their activist energy in the direction of many causes ranging from environmentalism to existentialism—to maintain the civil rights cause as mainstream.³⁶⁷

The Newport Folk Music Festival held for several years in Newport, Rhode Island, beginning in 1959 was vital in engaging white counterculture youth audiences with blues music.³⁶⁸ Blues performers were prominently featured as main attractions.³⁶⁹ The festival is credited with distinguishing blues music as its own distinct subgenre aside from folk in general.³⁷⁰ Already steeped in such acts as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, white middle-class

³⁶¹ Adelt, 14.

³⁶² Adelt, 15–16.

³⁶³ Adelt, 14–16.

³⁶⁴ Adelt, 14–20.

³⁶⁵ Adelt, 32.

³⁶⁶ Adelt, 48.

³⁶⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 50.

³⁶⁸ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 38–41.

³⁶⁹ Adelt, 41.

³⁷⁰ Adelt, 41.

youth were exposed to, and invigorated by, civil rights issues through the music of black American blues musicians such as “Mississippi” John Hurt, John Lee Hooker, Fred McDowell, and “Lightnin’” Hopkins.³⁷¹ The civil rights connection was more subtle in blues songs than in the overt civil rights songs by Dylan, for example, and made the music more palatable for those who might have been apprehensive about the civil rights cause or weary of politics in music.

Songs popular during the 1960s blues revival portrayed themes of hardship, suffering, working yourself to death, and benefitting someone else without ever getting ahead. Songs such as “Spike Driver Blues” were favorites at the Newport Folk Music Festival when played by “Mississippi” John Hurt.³⁷² The lyrics convey the simple message that John Henry, a folk hero of exceptional strength, worked himself to death.³⁷³ The singer assumes the role of the protagonist in first-person form and refuses to stay and work himself to death like “John Henry” did.

John Henry was a steel driving man
But he went down, but he went down, but he went down
John Henry was a steel driving man
But he went down, but he went down, that’s why I’m gone³⁷⁴

The song “Cotton Patch Blues,” written by Tommy McClennan, was performed by Lightnin’ Hopkins at the Newport festival in 1965.³⁷⁵ As a worker hardship song, “Cotton Patch Blues” relates the singer’s working and living conditions to those of slaves—with an emphasis on the continuity:

I left my babe in Mississippi, pickin’ cotton down on her knee
I left my babe in Mississippi, whoo, pickin’ cotton down on her knee
She said, “Babe, if you get Chicago,
Please write me a letter, if you please”

³⁷¹ Adelt, 39, 45.

³⁷² John Hurt, vocalist, “Mississippi,” Library of Congress Recordings, 1963.

³⁷³ Hurt.

³⁷⁴ Hurt.

³⁷⁵ “Lightnin’ Hopkins Setlist at Festival Field, Newport, RI, USA,” Setlist, accessed July 1, 2020, <https://www.setlist.fm/setlist/lightnin-hopkins/1965/festival-field-newport-ri-2bcb88b6.html>; Tommy McClennan, *Tommy McClennan, Vol. 1: Whiskey Head Woman*, Document Records, 2002, LP.

I said, "Baby, that's all right, baby, that's all right for you"
I said, "Baby, that's all righ-yigh-yigh', that's all right for you"
"You just keep a-pickin' cotton
Right there, oh babe, 'til I get through"³⁷⁶

The protagonist is leaving his significant other in a life of toil to take a chance on making things better. The chance includes the risk of things not getting better and the protagonist's being unable to return home:

Now I'm gon' leave Mississippi, hopin' I might flag a ride
I say, I'm gonna leave Mississippi, baby, hopin' I might flag a ride
And if I don't get nobody, oh babe, I'm gon' pass on by

Baby, when I get in Chicago, I do swear I'm gonna take a chance
"Spoken": Take your time now and play
It right, here, 'cause it's last a while
When I get in Chicago, babe, I do swear I'm gon' take a chance
If I don't never get back to
Mississippi, I'm sure gonna change your name³⁷⁷

In addition to the impact of traditional blues, played in an acoustic format at such festivals as Newport, blues pieces that crossed into the rock scene reached other segments of the counterculture youth audience that might have been missed.³⁷⁸ One of the most prominent examples is Robert Johnson's "Cross Road Blues," originally recorded in 1937.³⁷⁹ Voluminous and almost supernatural lore surrounds this song and inextricably ties it with Robert Johnson's life story and his time as a Depression-era troubadour. There is a long-standing myth that the song recounts Robert Johnson's selling his soul to the devil in exchange for playing ability.³⁸⁰ "Cross Road Blues" has been covered many times since 1937 and serves as an example of how blues songs blended into rock music and achieved more influence than their original versions. The meaning in the lyrics goes far beyond surface-level implications of being stranded somewhere without a ride. The protagonist

³⁷⁶ "Cotton Patch Blues," track 6 on Tommy McClennan, *Tommy McClennan, Vol. 1: Whiskey Head Woman*, Document Records, 2002, LP.

³⁷⁷ Tommy McClennan.

³⁷⁸ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 50–54.

³⁷⁹ Robert Johnson, *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, Columbia, 1937, LP.

³⁸⁰ See, for example, Craig Hansen Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 65–67.

finds himself asking God for help while being caught between choices or situations. The submission to God signifies a more optimistic and accepting attitude toward traditional religious values than those evident in counterculture music:

I went to the crossroad, fell down on my knees
I went to the crossroad, fell down on my knees
Asked the Lord above, "Have mercy, now, save poor Bob if you please"

Ooh, standin' at the crossroad, tried to flag a ride
Ooh-ee, I tried to flag a ride
Didn't nobody seem to know me, babe, everybody pass me by

Standin' at the crossroad, baby, risin' sun goin' down
Standin' at the crossroad, baby, eee-eee, risin' sun goin' down
I believe to my soul, now, poor Bob is sinkin' down³⁸¹

The "risin' sun goin' down" implies a sense of urgency in that if the protagonist does not make the right decision or help does not arrive, then "sinkin' down" will be the consequence.³⁸² Werner reasons that the "crossroads" represents the higher stakes of choices and situations that could mean the difference between life and death or freedom and bondage for black Americans, be it a political or physical form of bondage.³⁸³

Many of Robert Johnson's songs carry abstract supernatural themes of existential threats woven into the messaging.³⁸⁴ "Hellhound on My Trail" and "If I Had Possession over Judgement Day" resonate with themes of biblical consequence.³⁸⁵ "Cross Road Blues" specifically embodies cultural transcendence with the concept of a crossroad representing a place of spiritual and physical convergence in West African culture.³⁸⁶ Although the deeper African connections and spiritual connotations contained in Johnson's songs were most likely lost on white audiences, the universal "blackness" achieved by identifying with the universal aspects in the messaging nonetheless captivated white audiences.

³⁸¹ "Cross Road Blues," track 1 on Robert Johnson, *King of the Delta Blues Singers*, Columbia, 1937, LP.

³⁸² Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come*, 66.

³⁸³ Werner, 65.

³⁸⁴ Werner, 65.

³⁸⁵ Johnson, *King of the Delta Blues Singers*.

³⁸⁶ Werner, *A Change Is Gonna Come*, 66.

The cultural transcendence of blues music enjoyed its most significant progress when artists such as Eric Clapton molded traditional blues music to their own electric guitar-driven form and presented it back to white Americans for their own appropriation.³⁸⁷ Clapton's rendition of Robert Johnson's "Crossroads" was a staple at live performances.³⁸⁸ Immensely popular rock bands like the Rolling Stones produced many blues-rock renditions of traditional blues songs. For example, the Rolling Stones released their cover of the traditional blues song "Little Red Rooster" on their album *The Rolling Stones, Now!* to critical acclaim in 1965, at the beginning of the '60s blues revival.³⁸⁹ As the '60s progressed, artists such as Led Zeppelin and the Allman Brothers Band released more blues-rock songs. Led Zeppelin covered Willie Dixon's "You Shook Me" on its self-titled debut album in 1969.³⁹⁰ The album was the no. 10 best-selling album on the Billboard Hot 200 albums list for 1969.³⁹¹ The Allman Brothers covered Muddy Waters' song "Trouble No More" on their self-titled debut album in 1969.³⁹² The album was slow to achieve commercial success, only reaching 188 on the Billboard Hot 200 albums list upon release, but was given a favorable review by *Rolling Stone* for its authentic blues sound and eventually certified gold by the RIAA.³⁹³

Blues-rock continued to contain the energy and brand of masculinity that initially attracted white audiences to blues. Blues-rock did not waiver in its messaging through the late 1960s or early '70s the way counterculture music did. Unwavering appeal for this music helps songs such as Led Zeppelin's version of the traditional blues songs "Gallows

³⁸⁷ Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 57.

³⁸⁸ See, for example, Eric Clapton, *Eric Clapton's Rainbow Concert*, recorded at the Rainbow Theatre, London, 1973, LP.

³⁸⁹ Rolling Stones, *The Rolling Stones, Now!*, London Recordings, 1965, LP.

³⁹⁰ Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin*, Atlantic, 1969, LP.

³⁹¹ "Led Zeppelin, Led Zeppelin," Billboard, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.billboard.com/charts/search?artistname=Led+Zeppelin&charttitle=Led+Zeppelin&label=&chartcode=&chart_date=.

³⁹² Allman Brothers Band, *The Allman Brothers Band*, Atco/Capricorn, 1969, LP.

³⁹³ Dan Rys, "7 Great Blues Songs the Allman Brothers Made Their Own," Billboard, May 28, 2017, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/rock/7809635/the-allman-brothers-band-best-blues-covers/>; Lester Bangs, "The Allman Brothers Band Album Review," *Rolling Stone*, February 21, 1970.

Pole” from *Led Zeppelin III* and “Nobody’s Fault but Mine” from *Presence* remain classic rock radio staples to this day.³⁹⁴

Civil rights music embodied a harmonistic interplay between three primary genres in folk/folk-rock, soul, and blues. Each genre brought civil rights issues to its respective audiences in an aesthetic format that embodied authenticity. Civil rights music reflected the nature of a movement for something—or movement trying to build something—in that it remained overwhelmingly optimistic and inclusive across genres throughout the mid-twentieth-century discourse era. Folk and folk-rock singers of the early 1960s, such as Bob Dylan, remained inclusive about civil rights issues even as they released antagonistic counterculture songs or anti-war songs on the same albums.³⁹⁵ Soul music provided such songs as “We Shall Overcome,” which set the standard for songs of hope and inclusion. In the continuing spirit of crossing racial boundaries established during the ‘60s blues revival, modern blues players such as Cedric Burnside still express struggle in blues music in a unifying way that can be appreciated by many.³⁹⁶ Audience identification with the universal aspects of blues music has so far proven timeless.

³⁹⁴ Led Zeppelin, *Presence*; Led Zeppelin, *Led Zeppelin III*.

³⁹⁵ See, for example, Dylan, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*.

³⁹⁶ See, for example, Single Lock Records, “Cedric Burnside ‘Hard to Stay Cool’ (Official Video),” YouTube, August 24, 2018, video, 6:30, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_5wtJPaG88.

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V. MUSIC OF THE VIETNAM WAR

Like the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement had concrete goals that could be achieved through policy demands, namely ending the draft and the war. This agenda gave music related to the movement more focus. While anti-war music did verge toward the antagonistic as the broader category of counterculture music did, it never reflected any real despair and disillusionment with the cause. On the other hand, anti-war music never offered the hope or inclusion of civil rights music either. Anti-war music took its meaning from its various audiences—idealists, soldiers, and activists. The differences among listeners were significant. For example, soldiers used songs as a coping mechanism, reappropriating meanings to suit their experiences in a drawn-out, unpopular conflict, far from home.

This chapter begins with an explanation of how fear of the horrors of war as well as fear of corruption drove the anti-Vietnam War effort. The analysis then explores how folk artists wrote songs against war that took on the same antagonistic tone as their counterculture songs, with overlap in both topic and mood. The next section discusses how music heavily reflected anti-draft sentiment. The chapter continues by discussing how soldiers applied their own soundtrack to the Vietnam War by appropriating music to escape the harshness of their deployments. Finally, the material shows how the music called for more intense activism when establishment opposition to protests became deadly.

A. WAR AND FEAR

Members of the counterculture youth, especially men, perceived themselves as being in constant danger. Sometimes the threat came from such counterculture maladies as conformity and capitalism or Cold War nuclear destruction, but their dominant fear was of being drafted and sent to Vietnam.³⁹⁷ As the “war machine” demanded ever more American conscripts—and especially after the so-called draft lottery was instituted in 1969—the

³⁹⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 172.

discourse and the music became more urgent and more barbed.³⁹⁸ As philosophical fulfillment through the counterculture movement proved fruitless for many youth by the late '60s, anti-war sentiment above all else animated them as activists and became the primary topic for contentious political speech and protests.³⁹⁹ In some cases, this contention was directed at war veterans themselves, with veterans recounting being called “sucker[s]” for allowing themselves to be taken to Vietnam, or being shunned as “drug addict[s]” or “reckless killer[s].”⁴⁰⁰

The disconnect between a soldier’s supposed part in the war and its reality disenfranchised veterans. Disengagement left many military personnel simply wanting to survive their time and leave, having nothing otherwise personally invested in Vietnam.⁴⁰¹ Many veterans who had been in the Vietnam War returned home to become anti-war activists.⁴⁰² Anti-Vietnam War attitudes dominated the times for soldiers as well as activists, and split mainstream America into two clear and opposing camps. Student groups often chose ROTC—Reserve Officer Training Corps—functions as targets for protest in multiple locations because of the Corps’ connection to the military.⁴⁰³ Anti-war activism maintained intensity until the war ended in 1975.

Vietnam was the first televised war, with Americans receiving graphically violent reports on a nightly basis that fueled discontent in the collective consciousness. The same kind of graphic reporting that displayed the violent nature of civil rights clashes on TV now brought the war home, often in shocking detail.⁴⁰⁴ The 1960s media abandoned conventions that had them largely censor themselves in portrayals of the U.S. government

³⁹⁸ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 23–24. Indeed, even with nearly a half century intervening, many men who were of draft age in 1969–1974 can still recite their draft-lottery number without hesitation, as it was, to them, a matter of life and death.

³⁹⁹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 6.

⁴⁰⁰ Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 187.

⁴⁰¹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 123–42.

⁴⁰² See, for example, Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 185–223.

⁴⁰³ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 10.

⁴⁰⁴ Willis, 41.

and began to expose government indiscretions, especially so with the Vietnam War.⁴⁰⁵ Journalists covering the war discovered that government press releases about the war had simply been false, so much so that they dubbed the difference between reports and reality the “credibility gap.”⁴⁰⁶ This unprecedented exposure to the Vietnam War through TV coverage—as well as a number of other political scandals, culminating in Watergate—also drove public sentiment toward ending the draft in 1973—and finally the war in 1975.⁴⁰⁷

President Nixon, who had been heavily supportive of the war, more or less opened his ill-fated second term in 1973 with a speech that promised “peace with honor” that would get American troops out of Indochina.⁴⁰⁸ The last U.S. soldier left Vietnam three months later, though the war did not end officially until Saigon fell in April 1975—after Nixon resigned the presidency in August 1974.⁴⁰⁹ By the end of the Vietnam War, the American public had grown weary of turmoil, foreign and domestic, with everyone from activists to veterans trying to put the whole ordeal out of their consciousness.⁴¹⁰ Bruce Springsteen is quoted as saying “Vietnam turned this whole country into [a] dark street” in his recounting that people did not want to talk about the war.⁴¹¹ Once the Vietnam War ended, all discourse activity observably lost its fervor.

Music related to the war effort was overwhelmingly in opposition. Despite a few feeble attempts to support the war through music such as the song “The Ballad of the Green Berets” by Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler, from the earliest days of the war to the end, most musicians opposed the war and its supporting military apparatus.⁴¹² Anti-war-themed

⁴⁰⁵ Greene, *America in the Sixties*, 130–31.

⁴⁰⁶ Greene, 131.

⁴⁰⁷ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 40–42, 132.

⁴⁰⁸ Richard Milhous Nixon, “Second Inaugural Address” (speech delivered in Washington, DC, January 20, 1973), https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/nixon2.asp.

⁴⁰⁹ David F. Schmitz, *Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War: The End of the American Century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 136–45.

⁴¹⁰ Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 185–223.

⁴¹¹ Bradley and Werner, 185.

⁴¹² For an explanation of the song “Ballad of the Green Berets,” see Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 177–80.

music featured heavily through the progression from activist folk music in the beginning of the '60s to rock music as the war wound down in the mid-'70s.

B. THE COUNTERCULTURE AND THE WAR MACHINE

By 1963, the United States had been involved in the Vietnam conflict to varying degrees for eight years, beginning in 1955. The song "Masters of War," released in 1963 on the *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* album along with the song "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," displays the counterculture youth's budding perception of war and of the military industrial complex that Eisenhower warned of in 1961.⁴¹³ The song is exemplary of antagonistic youth-counterculture attitudes toward the military and its particular connections to wealthy elites who are presumptively war profiteers:

You that never done nothin'
But build to destroy
You play with my world
Like it's your little toy
You put a gun in my hand
And you hide from my eyes
And you turn and run farther
When the fast bullets fly
.....

You fasten all the triggers
For the others to fire
Then you sit back and watch
When the death count gets higher
You hide in your mansion
While the young people's blood
Flows out of their bodies
And is buried in the mud⁴¹⁴

Essentially, the song holds that these "masters" have provoked the war for their own purposes—and profit. This conspiratorial idea about manufactured war saturated the

⁴¹³ Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*; U.S. National Archives, "Eisenhower's 'Military-Industrial Complex' Speech Origins and Significance," YouTube, January 19, 2011, video, 3:16, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg-jvHynP9Y>.

⁴¹⁴ "Masters of War," track 3 on Bob Dylan, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, Columbia, 1963, LP.

belief systems of the counterculture generation throughout the anti-war period.⁴¹⁵ “War Pigs,” released in 1970 by Black Sabbath on the *Paranoid* album, demonstrates how antagonistic sentiments toward war mongering and conspiracy persisted through the end of the decade.⁴¹⁶

One way or another, the wrong-headed ideas of the mainstream—and the wars they begot—were going to bring about the end of the world, even in early anti-Vietnam War music. “Masters of War” goes on to say that the “masters” have so corrupted the world that people are afraid to bring children into it:

You’ve thrown the worst fear
That can ever be hurled
Fear to bring children
Into the world
For threatening my baby
Unborn and unnamed
You ain’t worth the blood
That runs in your veins⁴¹⁷

The song ends by condemning the “masters” to a welcome death and suffering in Hell:

And I hope that you die
And your death will come soon
I’ll follow your casket
By the pale afternoon
And I’ll watch while you’re lowered
Down to your deathbed
And I’ll stand over your grave
‘Til I’m sure that you’re dead⁴¹⁸

“Masters of War” takes on the tone and gravity of “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” and “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” Unlike Dylan’s songs addressing the civil rights movement,

⁴¹⁵ Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 41.

⁴¹⁶ Black Sabbath, *Paranoid*, Vertigo, 1970, LP. The album peaked at no. 12 on the Billboard 200 albums list in 1970. See “Black Sabbath, Paranoid,” *Billboard*, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.billboard.com/charts/search?artistname=Black+Sabbath&charttitle=Paranoid&label=&chartcode=&chart_date=.

⁴¹⁷ Dylan, “Masters of War.”

⁴¹⁸ Dylan.

in which he offers a way to redemption or reconciliation for the antagonist, these lyrics notably suggest only absolute punishment when it comes to military industrialists.

C. ACTIVISTS AND THE DRAFT

Approximately 2.2 million of the 8.7 million military service members between 1964 and 1973 were drafted.⁴¹⁹ Of those who were not drafted, many volunteered for service to avoid being drafted and have control of their destined military branch and their occupational specialty.⁴²⁰ Many draft-eligible men moved to other countries, including Canada, to avoid the draft.⁴²¹ As was demonstrated in songs such as “Masters of War,” the youth already strongly opposed the war well before the draft lottery began in 1969, but the lottery only exacerbated disdain for the war due to inequities in how people were chosen, and in the ability for those with the right connections to avoid the draft.⁴²²

On the issue of the draft, John Fogerty wrote the song “Fortunate Son” to be released on the CCR album *Willy and the Poor Boys* in 1969.⁴²³ John Fogerty is quoted as saying the song was “a confrontation between [him] and Richard Nixon.”⁴²⁴ Fogerty, himself a draftee, also addressed the unfairness of the system as he recalled “the haves, the people who have it all . . . these were the people who didn’t have to go to war.”⁴²⁵ The song was popular with soldiers, veterans, and activists alike for capturing the sentiment that the rich and powerful could avoid the draft while less fortunate people were sent to die at war:

Some folks are born made to wave the flag
Ooh, they’re red, white and blue
And when the band plays “Hail to the chief”
Ooh, they point the cannon at you, Lord
.....

⁴¹⁹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 123.

⁴²⁰ Willis, 124.

⁴²¹ Willis, 62,76.

⁴²² Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 179.

⁴²³ Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Willy and the Poor Boys*, Fantasy, 1969, LP.

⁴²⁴ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 175.

⁴²⁵ Meacham and McGraw, 179.

Some folks are born silver spoon in hand
Lord, don't they help themselves, oh
But when the taxman comes to the door
Lord, the house looks like a rummage sale, yes⁴²⁶

A single verse of the song rebukes the draft and those who send people to war. The verse gives the impression that people in power who send others to war do so for no other reason than a misaligned sense of patriotism, represented in lyrics about those with “star spangled eyes”—and a bottomless lust for “more.”⁴²⁷

Some folks inherit star spangled eyes
Ooh, they send you down to war, Lord
And when you ask them, “How much should we give?”
Ooh, they only answer “More! More! More!”⁴²⁸

Arguably, the simple two-line chorus, which is repeated four times throughout the 20-line song, has the greatest impact. With slight variations among the iterations, though, the words in the chorus also distinguish the first-person protagonist from the perceived abuse of power of senator's sons, millionaire's sons, “military” sons, and ultimately, “fortunate” sons.

It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no (senator's/millionaire's/military) son, son
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate (one/son), no⁴²⁹

“Fortunate Son” peaked at no. 3 on the Billboard charts, demonstrating widespread support for the messaging.⁴³⁰ The song's popularity reflects that the song was explicitly written to catch on. Like so many influential rock songs, the memorable chorus acts as the hook. The chorus is sung along to a simple G-based pentatonic three-chord progression that complements the rest of the song. Although it may have been difficult to match John Fogerty's vocal abilities, due to its simple chord progression, this song would have been

⁴²⁶ “Fortunate Son,” track 6 on Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Willy and the Poor Boys*, Fantasy, 1969, LP.

⁴²⁷ Creedence Clearwater Revival.

⁴²⁸ Creedence Clearwater Revival.

⁴²⁹ Creedence Clearwater Revival.

⁴³⁰ “Creedence Clearwater Revival,” Billboard, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/creedence-clearwater-revival>.

easy to sing and was memorable enough to facilitate its widespread notoriety through sing-a-longs and cover performances.

D. SOLDIERS AND THEIR SONGS

Songs like “Masters of War” and “Fortunate Son” fueled activists in the United States, but those young Americans directly engaged in the Vietnam conflict adopted their own expressive soundtrack aside from the student-driven protest movement. Military personnel used makeshift radio equipment to set up radio stations and play songs popular with soldiers, including songs by Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, Iron Butterfly, the Rolling Stones, the Doors, and the Animals.⁴³¹

The Vietnam War carried such social weight and complexity that it lent itself to having song meanings applied to it, whether intended or not. For example, “Paint it Black” by the Rolling Stones, a song originally written about a funeral procession, was co-opted by soldiers for having a dark foreboding tone that matched the mood of the war in Vietnam.⁴³² Interpretations of a song ultimately depend as much on the listeners’ emotional responses as on other evaluative factors such as the actual textual meaning and context of the story, or the situation being described.⁴³³ Different emotional responses to the same songs can partially be accounted for in how different audience members fill in unspoken or missing pieces of information according to their own interpretive contexts.⁴³⁴ Interpretive flexibility results in meaning being applied to some songs in unintended or surprising ways. Thus, the CCR song “Run Through the Jungle” was appropriated by soldiers and activists as an anti-Vietnam anthem because its lyrics matched the war’s physical setting, and the music expressed a sense of urgent distress.⁴³⁵

Thought I heard a rumblin’
Calling to my name

⁴³¹ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 176.

⁴³² Willis, 171–90.

⁴³³ Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason*, 122–25.

⁴³⁴ Robinson, 117–22.

⁴³⁵ Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Cosmo’s Factory*, Fantasy, 1970, LP.

Two hundred million guns are loaded
Satan cries “take aim”

Better run through the jungle
Better run through the jungle
Better run through the jungle
Whoa don’t look back to see⁴³⁶

According to songwriter John Fogerty, the song actually dealt with gun proliferation in the United States.⁴³⁷ Nonetheless, the song became significant to U.S. forces in Vietnam, who read their own experiences into the lyrics.

Similarly, “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” by the Animals was one of the most frequently requested and played by bands at officers’ clubs or military bars.⁴³⁸ Granted its popularity, music researchers have named this song the anthem of the Vietnam War.⁴³⁹ The song is broadly recognized as capturing the longing of U.S. soldiers in Indochina for home—maybe at college or on a road trip—instead of in the jungle, under fire. This piece was originally written as a coming-of-age song, but it lends itself to generic protest.⁴⁴⁰

The opening verses of “We Gotta Get Out of This Place” emphasize generational conflict in which younger people yearn to escape the conformist lifestyle that has left their parents grey haired and dying in bed:

In this dirty old part of the city
Where the sun refused to shine
People tell me there ain’t no use in tryin’

Now my girl you’re so young and pretty
And one thing I know is true
You’ll be dead before your time is due, I know

⁴³⁶ "Run Through the Jungle," track 6 on Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Cosmo’s Factor*, Fantasy, 1970, LP.

⁴³⁷ Kory Grow, "John Fogerty: ‘Run Through the Jungle’ Is Plea for Gun Control," *Rolling Stone*, January 12, 2016, <https://www.rollingstone.com/tv/tv-news/john-fogerty-run-through-the-jungle-is-plea-for-gun-control-60581/>.

⁴³⁸ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 175–76.

⁴³⁹ Willis, 175.

⁴⁴⁰ Willis, 175.

Watch my daddy in bed a-dyin'
Watched his hair been turnin' grey
He's been workin' and slavin' his life away
Oh yes I know it⁴⁴¹

The part of the song that resonates most, both generically and specifically to the case of soldiers deployed to Vietnam, is the chorus repeated three times with slight variation throughout the song:

We gotta get out of this place
If it's the last thing we ever do
We gotta get out of this place
'cause girl, there's a better life for me and you⁴⁴²

The chorus serves as the song's hook and yields a repeatable message that can be sung enthusiastically in groups. Musically, the song constitutes simple three-chord progressions that lend themselves to being easily covered by amateur musicians, bands composed of deployed military personnel, for example.⁴⁴³ The repeated sentiment of the phrase "we gotta get out of this place" reflects the feelings and intent of soldiers who wanted to get out of Vietnam "if it's the last thing they ever [did]."⁴⁴⁴

E. WAR AND PROTEST

On May 3, 1970, the Ohio National Guard killed four students during anti-Vietnam War protests at Kent State University. Twenty-nine soldiers are reported to have opened fire, killing four students and wounding nine. Two of the students killed were not part of

⁴⁴¹ Animals, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."

⁴⁴² Animals.

⁴⁴³ Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 183.

⁴⁴⁴ Animals, "We Gotta Get Out of This Place"; Bradley and Werner, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place*, 1–19.

the protests.⁴⁴⁵ Like the events at Altamont, this killing shocked the popular consciousness.⁴⁴⁶

In response to the Kent State shootings, Neil Young wrote the song “Ohio.”⁴⁴⁷ The song was promptly released as a single by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young in June of 1970 and peaked at no. 14 on the Billboard charts.⁴⁴⁸ The lyrics are simple, composed only of two verses repeated twice, each time in opposing order. A three-chord rock riff in the D minor pentatonic scale accompanied the lyrics, giving the song a blues-rock delivery that projects a sense of urgency and power, above remorse:

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,
We’re finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drumming,
Four dead in Ohio.

Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are cutting us down
Should have been done long ago.
What if you knew her
And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?⁴⁴⁹

Being “finally on our own” conveys complete opposition to the power structure with no ability to work within the system.⁴⁵⁰ The phrases “Gotta get down to it” and “How

⁴⁴⁵ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 19–20.

⁴⁴⁶ Leading up to May 1970, the anti-Vietnam War movement had become the primary focus of activism. Campuses across the United States experienced more numerous, more violent student protests, including the use of explosives. ROTC buildings were destroyed on the campus of Kent State University as part of a protest against the secret bombing of Cambodia by the Nixon administration, which deployed the National Guard to Kent State to quell the protest and destruction. Early on in the protest, students and police, along with National Guardsmen, exchanged stones and teargas. See Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 327, 328.

⁴⁴⁷ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 328.

⁴⁴⁸ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *Ohio*, Atlantic Records, 1970, single LP; “Crosby Stills Nash Young, Ohio,” Billboard, accessed December 10, 2020, https://www.billboard.com/charts/search?artistname=Crosby+Stills+Nash+Young&charttitle=Ohio&label=&chartcode=&chart_date=.

⁴⁴⁹ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, *Ohio*.

⁴⁵⁰ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

can you run when you know?” seem to present a call to action that leaves no excuse for complacency when the listener knows of the tragedy.⁴⁵¹

Examining music related to the anti-Vietnam War discourse indicates that discourse movements set against something specific produce music that is more focused than discourse movements searching for nebulous gratification. Throughout the anti-war discourse, clearly defined goals gave music related to the anti-Vietnam War movement more focus than counterculture music, specifically on ending the draft and the Vietnam War. A close analysis also suggests that music from movements against something is more antagonistic than from movements looking to construct something in society. It is no surprise, then, that more antagonism is manifest in anti-Vietnam War music than in that of the civil rights movement, a movement for creating interracial equality and mutual respect.

Civil disorder continued until the end of the Vietnam War in April of 1975.⁴⁵² Years of protest and conflict left the country politically and philosophically divided.⁴⁵³ Still, songs such as “Masters of War,” “War Pigs,” and “Fortunate Son” antagonized specific targets related to the military industrial complex or the war and draft, rather than targeting society as a whole the way counterculture music did in support of nebulous ideologies. Unspecific goals in discourse movements seem to lead to more antagonism than cases where finite goals can be demanded and achieved.

Soldiers in Vietnam used music in a way that was mostly unseen in either the counterculture or civil rights movements. They commonly appropriated songs that were not written to represent them or their situations. This practice lends to the assessment that in discourse movements where purposed music does not exist, participants will find music to make their own and apply it as needed.

⁴⁵¹ Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.

⁴⁵² Meacham and McGraw, *Songs of America*, 184–88.

⁴⁵³ Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock 'n' Roll*, 319–342.

VI. THE CLOSING ACT

The whole of this work demonstrates that music is tightly associated with multiple discourse movements that took place in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. Many historical and sociological works group the entire era of mid-twentieth-century discourse under the “counterculture” umbrella.⁴⁵⁴ However, a more nuanced view of the era through the lens of music highlights three prominent movements, each associated with a distinguishing music portfolio. As a result, this work effectively explores differences in how music interacted with a movement searching for something (the counterculture movement), a movement for something (the civil rights movement), and a movement against something (the anti-Vietnam War movement).

This final chapter summarizes the abrupt change in themes and purpose reflected by popular music after the end of the Vietnam War. Next is a discussion of musicological characteristics observed in this thesis, which closes with a discussion of future applications for musicological analysis.

A. THE WANING OF A MOVEMENT AND ITS MUSIC

After the draft ended in 1973 and the Vietnam War ended in 1975, social activism did not maintain its previous pace. Correspondingly, the music almost immediately reflected the receding intensity. Bob Dylan fell out of favor and was referred to as a “sixties wash-out” by critics at the time.⁴⁵⁵ Folk music moved away from the thematic gravity of such songs as Bob Dylan’s “Masters of War” to more light-hearted fare—for example, John Denver’s “Thank God I’m a Country Boy,” which peaked at no. 1 in May of 1975 during a 14-week stay on the Billboard charts.⁴⁵⁶ The song celebrates living simply, enjoying food and music, honoring tradition, and taking care of oneself as a virtuous and satisfying rural

⁴⁵⁴ See, for example, Cottrell, *Sex, Drugs, and Rock ‘n’ Roll*.

⁴⁵⁵ “Readers’ Poll: The Best Bob Dylan Albums of All Time,” *Rolling Stone*, September 12, 2012, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/readers-poll-the-best-bob-dylan-albums-of-all-time-12405/9-oh-mercy-64266/>.

⁴⁵⁶ “Chart History: John Denver,” *Billboard*, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/john-denver/chart-history/country-songs/song/346512>.

lifestyle, opposed to that of “a lotta sad people” living in cities.⁴⁵⁷ In essence, Denver promotes checking out for personal gratification and health.

On the rock scene, the growing popularity of bands such as AC/DC and Led Zeppelin exemplified a move away from collectivist concerns to individualism and outright self-gratification. Such anti-drug songs as Lynyrd Skynyrd’s “The Needle and the Spoon” gained in popularity along with regional identity songs like “Sweet Home Alabama.”⁴⁵⁸ Both songs show a shift in attitudes away from counterculture ideals, with the former condemning drug use and, more importantly, the latter dismissing bigger issues like the Watergate scandal and placing importance on honoring tradition and celebrating American cultural treasures such as the Swampers of Muscle Shoals.⁴⁵⁹

More pointedly, Blue Öyster Cult’s 1976 chart success *Agents of Fortune* opened with “This Ain’t the Summer of Love,” a song that seemed to proclaim the end of counterculture momentum with such lyrics as “things ain’t the way they used to be, and this ain’t the summer of love.”⁴⁶⁰ And, for the ultimate in self-promotion, the disco subgenre raised bands like the Bee Gees to stardom, with songs such as “Stayin’ Alive” reaching no. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart in 1978.⁴⁶¹ The song encourages celebrating oneself and dancing one’s problems away, regardless of “the *New York Times*’ effect on man” or a “life going nowhere.”⁴⁶²

As the 1970s faded into history and the 1980s ushered in the age of MTV and synthesized pop music, musical themes trended toward self-indulgence, as expressed in Blondie’s upbeat pop song “Call Me,” which was rated the no. 1 song in 1980 by

⁴⁵⁷ John Denver, *Back Home Again*, RCA, 1974, LP.

⁴⁵⁸ Lynyrd Skynyrd, *Second Helping*, MCA, 1974, LP.

⁴⁵⁹ The Swampers were a renowned group of session musicians that played on hundreds of prominent recordings in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, from the 1960s to 1980s. For further information, see *Muscle Shoals*, directed by Greg “Freddy” Camalier (New York: Magnolia Pictures, 2013).

⁴⁶⁰ Blue Öyster Cult, *Agents of Fortune*, Columbia, 1976, LP.

⁴⁶¹ Bee Gees, *Stayin’ Alive*, RSO, 1977, 7" vinyl.

⁴⁶² Bee Gees.

Billboard.⁴⁶³ The fading voice of the counterculture movement arguably made its last notable musical pronouncement in Bruce Springsteen's song "Born in the U.S.A.," which was released on the album of the same name in 1984.⁴⁶⁴ That this song competed in the charts with Prince's "Purple Rain"—a synth enhanced piece about internal reflection and personal relationships—demonstrates the contrasting shift in focus that had taken place in popular music by the mid-1980s. The lyrics for "Born in the U.S.A." and its official music video reflect the disheartened sentiment of a generation who fought a war regarded as having no purpose, and for which they received no benefit. The song also illustrates the disappointment in being trapped at the bottom of a labor-based society after the counterculture movement failed to produce the socioeconomic overhaul that many had dreamed of. Counterculture youth, now approaching middle age, were left either to embrace '80s music or to revel in the nostalgia of music from their era, soon to be standardized as "classic rock."

B. MUSICOLOGY

Musicology is the study of music's relationship with society. Music played a large part in counterculture youth society. Counterculture youth grew up with music as an integral part of the social fabric and, in a sense, grew into themselves through music.⁴⁶⁵ Young audiences were the driving force and focal point of the music industry in the mid-twentieth century. The industry was forced to respond to youth tastes and desires in an unprecedented arrangement of market forces not since repeated with music or any other mass-media format.⁴⁶⁶

Counterculture era music might have seemed radical at the time, but in retrospect, this music built on established traditions and never veered from accepted musical aesthetics too rapidly to be absorbed into popular culture. Music that adheres to expected aesthetic

⁴⁶³ Blondie, *Call Me*, Polydor, 1980, 7" single; "Chart History: Blondie," Billboard, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/blondie/chart-history/HSI/song/372873>.

⁴⁶⁴ Bruce Springsteen, *Born in the U.S.A.*, Columbia, 1984, LP.

⁴⁶⁵ Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 171–90.

⁴⁶⁶ For more information, see Frith, *Sound Effects*.

traditions or builds upon them in a recognizable way is more impactful to audiences.⁴⁶⁷ Counterculture era protest music evolved slowly out of folk traditions established in the early twentieth century by artists such as Woody Guthrie. Folk-rock resulted from a slow synthesis of folk music and rock-and-roll music that gained a youth audience foothold through the 1950s. The socially active character of rock music continued in this trajectory to its apex in the late 1960s.

Myer and Robinson's assertion that responses to musical forms are learned in a similar manner to learning spoken languages and that musical forms are interpreted through cultural contexts holds true in examining counterculture era music.⁴⁶⁸ Mid-twentieth-century counterculture music happened to be the mainstream pop-culture musical style of the day, giving it an influential reach that has never been matched. Music in such divergent formats as that of the Velvet Underground only appealed to niche audiences, and their commercial success and influential reach were limited as a result. In contrast, after leaving the Velvet Underground as lead singer-songwriter, Lou Reed was able to achieve chart success as a solo artist with songs such as "Take a Walk on the Wild Side" from his 1972 *Transformer* album by adopting a less dissonant sound that was more conventional for popular music of the time.⁴⁶⁹ The song peaked at no. 16 on the Billboard Hot 100 for 1973, with the album ranking no. 29 for the year on the Billboard 200 album chart.⁴⁷⁰

Strong evidence demonstrates that music both reflected and amplified the beliefs and actions of those involved in the mid-twentieth-century counterculture movement in the United States. Associations between counterculture youth music, doctrine, and discourse support this assessment.⁴⁷¹ Counterculture audiences craved music that expressed concerns and emotions with which they identified or were at least somewhat representative of their

⁴⁶⁷ For an in-depth explanation, see Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*; and Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason*.

⁴⁶⁸ Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, 61–64; Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason*, 367–68.

⁴⁶⁹ Lou Reed, *Transformer*, RCA, 1972, LP.

⁴⁷⁰ "Chart History: Lou Reed," Billboard, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/lou-reed/chart-history/HSI/song/339043>.

⁴⁷¹ See, for example, Willis, *Daily Life in the 1960s Counterculture*, 171–190.

overall worldview.⁴⁷² Radical beliefs such as those outlined in the “Port Huron Statement” represented a drastic departure from established cultural values.⁴⁷³ These cultural values were reflected in such songs as “The Times They Are A-Changin’.” The counterculture movement did not have the advantage of being directed toward quantifiable goals. This disadvantage led the movement to eventually lose its direction altogether and finally disintegrate. The entire process from ideological formation in the beginning to tragedy and dissolution in the end was reflected in music.

Counterculture music started out as radical. The music later became dismissive, then despondent, then hallucinogenic, and finally remorseful as the movement progressed through its phases. The wandering focus in the music mirrors the tumultuous nature of the counterculture ideology that largely defined the era. Contrastingly, music reflected more uplifting and inclusive attitudes within the civil rights movement as it continued to work toward the goal of equality under the law for black Americans. Music of the anti-Vietnam War movement took on an antagonistic tone at times but still applied its energy toward recognizable goals. That this movement was one of resistance rather than progression like the civil rights movement makes antagonistic attitudes in the music completely unsurprising.

Perceived authenticity provided a basis for and was a determining factor in how much influence music had across mid-twentieth-century discourse. Blues music had a long-standing association with the civil rights movement in a very complicated way and perhaps best achieved effectiveness through perceived genuineness. Transcending generational and racial boundaries, blues and, eventually, blues-rock artists reappropriated anguish in the messaging of traditional blues music and applied it to a wider youth audience that broadened the understanding of racial issues.⁴⁷⁴ During the counterculture era, the most impactful artists carefully established and maintained a sense of authenticity. For example, Bob Dylan and CCR both took remarkable care in crafting their images as performers and

⁴⁷² Willis, 171–190.

⁴⁷³ Levy, *America in the Sixties*, 44–45.

⁴⁷⁴ See Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, for further study.

preserving an aura of authenticity. An artist's demonstrated sincerity will likely persist as a determining factor in music's ability to motivate social groups to action.

The music industry is very different now than it was during the mid-twentieth century, with popular music falling more into the role of mass culture than popular culture.⁴⁷⁵ "Popular" music, or "pop" as it is most commonly called, is observably socially benign today, with artists such as Katy Perry reaching top chart status with music about dating, for example.⁴⁷⁶ Socially impactful genres and styles of music are more fragmented today due to more dispersed production means and marketing to niche audiences.

Present-day sociologists and musicologists will likely find a more challenging environment for evaluating which musical acts will become socially influential. The added modern difficulty stems from increased manipulation of mainstream music tastes by the music industry compared to the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁷⁷ Social groups involved in future discourse movements will most likely continue to identify with musical acts. However, these musicians will probably come from smaller production companies within the independent music scene. Poignant examples coming from mainstream pop music will probably be those appropriated in a similar fashion as unrelated songs were appropriated by soldiers in the Vietnam War, with their meanings applied in a way unintended by originating artists. All examples will nonetheless need to be examined in depth on a case-by-case basis to fully understand their impact on associated social groups.

C. FUTURE APPLICATIONS

As demonstrated by the music associated with the mid-twentieth-century era in the United States, music has persisted as a central focus, driving force, and intensity indicator for cultural groups engaged in discourse the world over.⁴⁷⁸ While conducting efforts to

⁴⁷⁵ Joan Serrà et al., "Measuring the Evolution of Contemporary Western Popular Music," *Scientific Reports* 2, no. 1 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep00521>.

⁴⁷⁶ For information on Katy Perry's musical rankings, see "Katy Perry," *Billboard*, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/music/katy-perry>.

⁴⁷⁷ Serrà et al., "Contemporary Western Popular Music."

⁴⁷⁸ Jonathan R. Pieslak, *Radicalism & Music: An Introduction to the Music Cultures of Al-Qa'ida, Racist Skinheads, Christian-Affiliated Radicalism, and Eco-Animal Rights Militancy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2015), 3.

resolve conflicts, practitioners will likely achieve longer-term results with efforts to understand motivations for the conflict rather than by focusing solely on tactical solutions. Purely tactical solutions may provide temporary relief but often leave underlying problems to fester and erupt into future conflict. Music is an important and often-overlooked resource for understanding human behavior and developing conflict resolution strategies.

Although many opportunities and potential focus areas for studying the social impact of music abound, one of the most potentially beneficial opportunities for understanding and developing social solutions through music is in working with the youth. Mid-twentieth-century American discourse was youth discourse after all and was demonstrably driven by music. Music continues to be important to young people and shapes youth identities and belief systems.⁴⁷⁹ The coming-of-age process in any generation could itself be seen as an act of discourse.

Johnny Cash released the song “What Is Truth?” in 1971 as an empathetic acknowledgment of the era’s young people.⁴⁸⁰ The song demonstrates Cash’s sympathy for the youth finding their way in a rapidly changing world as well as their questioning of war in a world where adults are not receptive to their opinions.

The old man turned off the radio
Said, “Where did all of the old songs go
Kids sure play funny music these days
They play it in the strangest ways”
Said, “it looks to me like they’ve all gone wild
It was peaceful back when I was a child”
Well, man, could it be that the girls and boys
Are trying to be heard above your noise?
And the lonely voice of youth cries “What is truth?”

A little boy of three sittin’ on the floor
Looks up and says, “Daddy, what is war?”
“son, that’s when people fight and die”
The little boy of three says “Daddy, why?”
A young man of seventeen in Sunday school
Being taught the golden rule
And by the time another year has gone around

⁴⁷⁹ Levitin, *This Is Your Brain on Music*.

⁴⁸⁰ Johnny Cash, *What Is Truth*, Columbia Records, 1970, single LP.

It may be his turn to lay his life down
Can you blame the voice of youth for asking
“What is truth?”⁴⁸¹

Cash goes on to say that the older generation needs to realize that the future belongs to the youth and that the youth express themselves and learn to understand themselves through music.

The young girl dancing to the latest beat
Has found new ways to move her feet
The young man speaking in the city square
Is trying to tell somebody that he cares
Yeah, the ones that you’re calling wild
Are going to be the leaders in a little while
This old world’s wakin’ to a new born day
And I solemnly swear that it’ll be their way
You better help the voice of youth find
“What is truth?”⁴⁸²

In a fashion similar to Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” Cash emphasizes the need for the older generation not to take an oppositional role in changes happening with the youth. Cash presents the idea in less of a get-on-board-or-get-out-of-the-way fashion in favor of presenting the idea as a proud and solemn duty. If practitioners today can take Cash’s advice and work to understand the youth rather than oppose them, music may offer one of the most valuable tools to form that understanding and to work toward a better future.

⁴⁸¹ Cash.

⁴⁸² Cash.

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