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'FIGHT THE POWER'  
OPPOSITIONAL DISCOURSE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC

por

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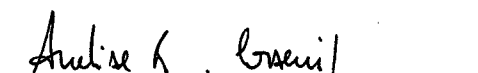
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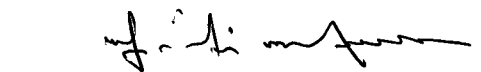
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This thesis is dedicated to my wife for always pushing me forward and never letting me down and also to my son, Theo, who tried to understand his father had to work.

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## ABSTRACT

## 'FIGHT THE POWER'

## OPPOSITIONAL DISCOURSE IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULAR MUSIC

MARCOS ANTONIO MORGADO DE OLIVEIRA

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

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In this thesis I investigate the oppositional discourse present in song texts of African-American popular music in the United States in two distinct periods. I analyse the song texts which were written during the Black Power movement, from 1968 to 1972, and the political rap song texts written from 1988 to 1992. The main objective of this work is to identify the textual elements that characterise the discourse in African-American popular music as oppositional, and relate these elements to the representation of social relations and social identities of elite groups and the African-American minority. In order to fulfil this objective I draw mainly upon Halliday's (1989) concepts of context of culture and context of situation and also Halliday's (1994) lexicogrammatical system of transitivity. The findings of this study show that: 1) elite groups, especially European-Americans, are represented negatively and African-Americans positively; 2) African-Americans' social beliefs are constructed emphasising the identity and values that are important for the well-being of their community; 3) hegemony is consistently challenged and/or resisted through the strategy of censoring and blaming elite groups. Altogether, these three main points help constitute the discourse of song texts as oppositional. As a suggestion for future research, a comparative study of this work with an analysis of African-Brazilian rap songs would broaden the understanding of the oppositional discourse of minorities.

(120 pages)

(28.643 words)

## RESUMO

## ‘FIGHT THE POWER’

## O DISCURSO DE OPOSIÇÃO NA MÚSICA POPULAR AFRO-AMERICANA

MARCOS ANTONIO MORGADO DE OLIVEIRA

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

1999

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Nesta dissertação investigo o discurso de oposição presente nas letras de músicas Afro-Americanas dos Estados Unidos em dois períodos distintos. Eu analiso as letras que foram escritas durante o movimento “Black Power”, de 1968 a 1972, e as letras de rap de cunho político escritas de 1988 a 1992. O principal objetivo deste trabalho é identificar os elementos textuais que caracterizam o discurso da música popular Afro-Americana como de oposição, e relacionar estes elementos às representações de relações sociais e identidades sociais das elites e da minoria Afro-Americana. Para satisfazer este objetivo eu refiro-me aos conceitos de contexto de cultura e contexto da situação de Halliday (1989) e ao sistema lexicogramatical de transitividade também de Halliday (1994). Os resultados deste estudo mostram que: 1) as elites, especialmente os Euro-Americanos, são representadas negativamente e os Afro-Americanos positivamente; 2) as crenças sociais dos Afro-Americanos são construídas para enfatizar a identidade e os valores que são importantes para o bem estar de suas comunidades; 3) a hegemonia é constantemente desafiada e/ou resistida através da estratégia de censurar ou culpar as elites. Juntos, esses três pontos principais ajudam a compor o discurso de oposição das letras das músicas. Como sugestão para futura pesquisa, um estudo comparativo deste trabalho com a análise de letras de rap Afro-Brasileiro ampliariam o entendimento do discurso de oposição das minorias.

(120 páginas)

(28.643 palavras)

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the oppositional discourse in the song texts (lyrics) of African-American popular music in two distinct moments in time. The first comprehends the period of 1968 to 1972. It parallels the period of the 'Black Power' movement, whose objective was to promote pride, unity, and social change within the African-American community. This led many artists, including songwriters, to promote such ideas in their work (Vincent, 1995). The second comprehends the period of 1988 to 1992, when political rap came into existence within the Hip-Hop movement and helped reverse the focus on drugs, gangs and violence common to the rap scene, producing a more socially and politically conscious rap that criticised the social inequalities suffered by the African-American underclass (Vincent, 1995; Henderson, 1996).

The choice for these two periods was arbitrary and two-fold: firstly, to have song texts that would fit the Black Power movement and Black Arts movement (in the case of the 68-72 period) and political rap (in the case of the 88-92 period) and secondly, to have two distinct groups of song texts that could be compared in relation to their oppositional discourse.

Thus, the major objective of this study is to analyse textual elements and features of the discourse in African-American popular music that can

characterise this discourse as oppositional, linking these elements to social beliefs of African-Americans as a minority group in the United States, the social, political and cultural structures they were inserted in, and their connection to broader issues of racism and discrimination.

Recent work on discourse and racism (Van Dijk, 1991, 1992, 1998), has shown that in a wide range of different discourses, such as political, professional, business, scholarly, and the media discourse, the “elite” groups are constantly engaged in discourses that reinforce and/or reproduce their dominance over all other minority groups.

Van Dijk defines elite groups as “...those groups in the socio-political power structure that develop fundamental policies, take the most influential decisions and control the overall modes of execution...” (1991: 4). These groups can be considered, in general, the European and the European-American (white) groups and their institutions.

According to Van Dijk (1991), the discourse of these groups may be active, when they engage in subtle or blatant racist talk against minority groups, or more passive through the representation of ethnic events and minorities in the press, advertising, film, textbooks, etc. At the same time, the discourse of the underprivileged groups may be submissive, indicating acceptance of the status quo (e.g.: Meurer, forthcoming).

Van Dijk (ibid.) further argues that elite discourses form the basis for the production, reproduction and acquisition of the ideologies of racism,

since racism is ‘... socially learned,’ (1991: 3). Thus, given the dominance of the elite groups over minority groups, Van Dijk states that the latter are hardly given any voice, if given at all. In his research on racism and the press, for instance, minority groups are shown to be represented in a very limited number of topics, such as immigration, violence and crime, ethnic relations, and cultural differences, among others.

According to Van Dijk, the original bias of these topics are emphasised, for they are constantly seen within a negative perspective:

[I]mmigration will be described primarily in terms of problems, conflicts or difficulties for ‘us’ (overpopulation, illegal entry and residence, lacking resources), and seldom as a problem for ‘them’, such as harassment by immigration officers, or denials of access or residence even when legally entitled to them. The same negative perspective is inherently present in the topicalization of violence, crime or deviance. Similarly, cultural differences are often at least interpreted as problematic, if not as threatening for majority culture, as is typically the case for the special interest in Islam and Moslem practices and values. (ibid., 9).

The same applies to his research of the representation of minority groups in textbooks, where not only topics are similar to the ones in the press, but also the emphasis is on negative perspectives, that is, on problems and/or conflicts which may threaten the dominant group.

Since minority groups are hardly represented, or they are represented negatively, in mainstream discourses, such as the press, this work will investigate how one minority group, namely, the African-Americans in the United States, represent themselves and the dominant groups in the song texts of their own music. The choice of this particular genre, African-American popular music and its song texts, is due to its fairly reasonable

access to the public in general (they are recorded and sold worldwide), which is not usually the case of documents and/or publications of anti-racist or minority groups' organisations and institutions.

Two major assumptions will guide this thesis. The first is that African-Americans are a minority group, among many in the United States, and, therefore, they might be subject to oppressive conditions of the European-American groups and their institutions. The second is that, due to these conditions and the lack of access to mainstream discourses, as providers of opinions, African-American songwriters make use of songs to express their views of the social unbalance they are subject to in order to promote social change and resist discrimination of European-Americans.

### **1.1 Objectives**

Assuming the social, political, cultural and economic dominance of European-Americans over African-Americans in the United States, and the consequent oppositional discourse of the latter, through song texts, against such dominance, the objectives of this dissertation are as follows:

- a) to identify and describe the textual elements and structures that might define and/or characterise the discourse in African-American popular music as being an oppositional discourse;
- b) to investigate how this oppositional discourse interacts with and/or is related to the social beliefs of African-Americans (and the ones they

have of European-Americans) and the social structures it is embedded in;

- c) to examine the broader issues of social, political and cultural contexts within which the oppositional discourse in African-American popular music has emerged.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, this thesis requires an interdisciplinary approach. For the analysis of the textual elements and structures of the oppositional discourse I will draw upon Halliday's grammatical system of transitivity (1994). This system will allow the investigation of how African-Americans experienced what went on around them, how they represented themselves, and how they represented European-Americans. The focus of this investigation will be the verb processes and also the participants involved in these processes.

For the analysis of social beliefs, social structures, and social, economic and political contexts, I will draw upon Halliday's (1989) concepts of context of culture and context of situation and Fairclough's (1992) concept of social practices.

Finally, for considerations on the issues of racism and discrimination, I will draw upon the works of Van Dijk (1991, 1992, 1998), and Hooks (1992, 1994).

These theoretical issues will be discussed in more detail as the analysis unfolds, in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

### **1.3 Research questions**

Following the outline of the objectives and the theoretical framework above, it is important to define the questions that this thesis aims at answering:

A . Which are the verb processes in the song texts related to African-Americans and the ones related to European-Americans?

B . In what main participant positions are African-Americans and European-Americans found?

C . Are verb processes, participant positions and topics similar in the two periods?

D . How are song texts related to social beliefs and social structures of the two periods?

E . How do song texts challenge and/or resist power relations and hegemony?

### **1.4 Data**

The song texts that were selected for the analysis followed the criteria below:

A . Albums of African-American artists were selected according to their inclusion in the 'Billboard Top 200 albums chart' (Billboard Music Guide CD-ROM, 1996) for each year of the period 68-72 and for each year of the period 88-92. The only exception to this criterion is the inclusion of one song by James Brown which reached the # 1 position in the "Rhythm & Blues charts" and # 10 in the "Pop charts" in 1968, but whose album was not included in the 'Top 200 albums' category;

B . After the selection of albums, only those albums which had one or more social and/or political songs remained (by social and political songs I mean songs whose content can be interpreted as an expression of dissent towards the status quo). This selection of albums with social and political songs followed also their inclusion in the works of Maynard (1995), Vincent (1995), and Henderson (1996);

C . The third step was to select songs that had been written and sung by the same artists. This was chosen to avoid a further distinction between the notions of 'animator', "an individual active in the role of utterance production", 'author', "someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded", and 'principal', "someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken" (Goffman, 1981: 144). Thus in this thesis artists are considered to be animator, author, and principal;



D . Finally, only the song texts whose original recordings I have managed to find are included in this dissertation.

The result of the above selection are twenty song texts from seven different African-American artists/bands: ten songs from the period 68-72 and ten songs from the period 88-92, printed in appendixes A and B, respectively, for reference. Below is a list of the songs and the artist/bands for each of the mentioned periods:

A . The 68-72 period:

1. "Stand!", and "Everyday People", by Sly & the Family Stone;
2. "What's Going On", and "Inner City Blues" by Marvin Gaye;
3. "Say it Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud", by James Brown;
4. "Mighty Mighty (Spade and Whitey)", "We're a winner", and "We, the People who are Darker than Blue", by Curtis Mayfield;
5. "Choice of Colors", and "This is my country", by The Impressions.

B . The 88-92 period:

1. "Bo! Bo! Bo!", "Who Protect Us From You?", "You Must Learn", and "The Racist" by Boogie Down Productions;
2. "Party For Your Right To Fight", "Fear of a Black Planet", "Burn Hollywood Burn", "Brothers Gonna Work It Out", "Fight The Power", and "Power to the People", by Public Enemy.

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

The fundamental basis of this study, as seen previously, is the fact that minority groups seldom have access (as producers) to public discourses such as the press, and are, thus, mostly represented (and most often, negatively) through the discourse of the elite (European and European-American) groups (van Dijk, 1991, 1992, 1998).

According to Van Dijk, elite groups engage in discourses which avoid open discrimination against minority groups, using instead a discursive approach which naturalises, in a very subtle way, their dominance, creating an 'ethnic hegemony' which becomes widely accepted within their own groups. He mentions that "... this unique control of the majority over the prevalent forms of public discourse, policies and social conduct, makes minority resistance (or white dissidence) against such racism even more difficult and precarious." (1998: 2).

A critical analysis of one particular genre, namely the song texts in African-American popular music, associated with the resistance of a minority group against dominance of the elite ones, is essential to the understanding of the intricate relationship of power between the dominant and the dominated group, and how such relation can be challenged and/or resisted.

This genre, popular music, is '... one of the many ways in which popular culture affirms its potential to develop counter hegemonic spaces, in

spite of and in interaction with a dominant culture ...' (Rodriguez-Rodriguez, 1995: 3). And African-Americans, perceiving the power of the discourse of popular music, have used it as a means to resist the oppressive conditions they are subject to.

Although focusing on a genre which is not so widely studied, this thesis will have a different point of view from those studies on racism and discrimination, such as the ones carried out by Van Dijk. Here, the investigation is not on how minorities are represented in public discourses dominated by the elite groups. Rather, the focus is on how minorities represent themselves against the elites or, more specifically, on the oppositional discourse in song texts produced by African-American artists.

The major attempt of this work is, thus, to contribute to research on racism, discrimination and ethnic relations with a different perspective on these issues and their relationships to social beliefs and social structures from the point of the view of one minority group, the African-Americans.

## **1.6 Organisation of the Chapters**

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation I will review the literature on popular music focusing on recent studies which have concentrated on the analysis of song texts. I introduce the chapter with a brief look on popular culture which is followed by the review of relevant studies.

In the third chapter I will explore the concepts of context of culture, context of situation and its three features, the field, the tenor and the mode of discourse (Halliday, 1989), and the concept of social practices (Fairclough, 1992). I also explore these concepts in relation to the song texts in the second and third part of the chapter.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 will present the analysis of the data following Halliday's grammatical system of transitivity.

Finally, the conclusions of this thesis will be presented in Chapter 6, along with general considerations for future research on the issues of this work, ethnic relations and the discourse of minorities.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **STUDIES ON POPULAR MUSIC**

In this chapter I will discuss relevant research carried out in the field of popular music, particularly on song texts. The intention is to provide a theoretical background against which this thesis can be examined for. This review is an outline and a critique to these studies rather than an extensive theoretical research.

A brief discussion of the concept of popular culture, which popular music is part of, will be developed first and its importance will be considered for the discussion of the data in this work.

#### **2.1 What is popular culture?**

Much controversy has surrounded the concept of popular culture since the beginning of the twentieth century, and a proper definition is yet to be achieved. According to Strinati (1995: 3), “[t]he development of the idea of popular culture is tied in with contests over meaning and interpretation which predate but become strikingly evident in the debates over mass culture.”

With the advent of the mass culture theory in the 1920s and 1930s and subsequent theories, popular culture has been discussed around three main themes or aspects which, as stated by Strinati, are central to these

theories: “what or who determines popular culture”; “the influence of commercialisation and industrialisation upon popular culture”; and “the ideological role of popular culture” (ibid.: 3).

In relation to the first aspect, the question is whether popular culture comes from the people as their own way of manifesting their experiences or it comes from the elites which use their social power to influence people and decide for them what can be considered popular culture, or yet it is the result of an interaction of the two.

The second aspect is related to the question whether, with the advent of a mass production industry and cultural commodities, what matter most is the profitability of a given commodity or the most important factor is its quality and artistry.

The third and last aspect concerned with popular culture is related to the question whether its ideological role is that of promoting ideas and values which may be designed to maintain the dominance of the elites or it is the possibility for the people to oppose and resist such dominance.

These aspects are discussed below when I refer to the mass culture theory and the culture industry theory, and also when I consider them in relation to my data at the end of this section.

### **2.1.1 The mass culture theory**

The mass culture theory is closely linked to the ideas and concepts of the mass society theory which have developed against the background of industrialisation and urbanisation. For the latter, what has resulted with the rise of industries and large cities is a society where the sense of community, morals and beliefs of the people has given way to more individualistic and distant relationships. With the decline of institutions such as the church and the family, people increasingly dissociated from their previous values and beliefs and engaged in a more amoral and individual way of life. This, in turn, has opened up opportunities for these people to be manipulated and controlled by the mass media, for instance (Strinati, 1995: 6).

Accordingly, popular culture in the context of a mass society has been defined as the culture produced by a mass production industry with a mass public in mind and which can be made profitable.

Thus, for the mass culture theory, what determines popular culture is the decision of those in control of the industrialisation process whether a cultural commodity has the potential for profit or not. As a consequence, quality and artistry of cultural products are regarded as secondary in comparison to profitability and commercialisation.

Linked with that is the concept of mass audience which is viewed as people open to manipulation and appeals of the commercialisation of cultural products. What happens next, according to the theory, is that people

are driven into the manipulative world of mass consumption where emotions are created by the industry and sold through mass cultural products. Instead of challenging such created emotions, mass audience surrender to them and the profit of the mass culture industry is guaranteed, thus accepting the social influence and the dominant position of the elites (ibid., 12).

### **2.1.2 Culture industry and the Frankfurt School**

Similarly to the position of the mass culture theory, the scholars of the Frankfurt School, and especially Adorno, see popular culture as being determined by the elites that control the cultural industry. Adorno states that “[t]he autonomy of works of art .... is tendentially eliminated by the culture industry, with or without the conscious will of those in control .... [which] include those who carry out directives as well as those who hold the power” (1991: 1).

When autonomy is “eliminated”, what becomes most important is not quality and artistry, but instead the profitability of the products the industry aims at selling to the consumers. According to Adorno, “[t]he cultural commodities of the industry are governed .... by the principle of their realization as value, and not by their own specific content and harmonious formation” (1991: 1). In the search for profit, cultural



commodities undergo a process of standardisation that expands to a greater extent their profitability but, on the other hand, makes them more alike.

However, the culture industry gives those commodities an individualistic aspect which hides their standardisation and helps disguise the way the industry is able to manipulate the consumers. According to Adorno, “[e]ach product affects an individual air; individuality serves to reinforce ideology, in so far as the illusion is conjured up that the completely reified and mediated is a sanctuary from immediacy and life” (ibid.; 2).

Once the industry manages to exert influence on people’s minds, consumers’ consciousness is replaced by conformity and people become passive and dependant consumers. This ideological role of the industry makes it dominant and powerful and consequently the ideological role of culture in such context is that of reinforcing the dominant position of those in control of culture and cultural commodities.

### **2.1.3 Cultural populism**

Conversely, a more recent theory of popular culture known for being the antithesis of both the mass culture and the culture industry theory is referred to as cultural populism. Fiske (1989), one of its most influential theorists, attempts to arrive at a definition of what popular culture is:

Popular culture in industrial societies is contradictory to its core. On the one hand it is industrialized – its commodities produced and distributed by a profit-motivated industry that follows only its own economic interests. But on the other

hand, it is of the people, and the people's interests are not those of the industry .... To be made into popular culture, a commodity must also bear the interests of the people. Popular culture is not consumption, it is culture – the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system: culture, however industrialized, can never be adequately described in terms of the buying and selling of commodities (23).

The focus of the cultural populism theory is on the people. It stresses that what determines popular culture is not the cultural industry or the elite groups that control the industry but instead the people. What the industry does is to provide the commodities for the people to use them or reject them. The people, for Fiske, "... are a shifting set of allegiances that cross all social categories; various individuals belong to different popular formations at different times, often moving between them quite fluidly" (ibid., 24).

These popular formations are what determines whether or not a commodity can be considered a popular culture product. Fiske stresses that popular culture arises from the interaction of products and everyday life. "Popular culture has to be, above all else, *relevant* to the immediate situation of the people"(ibid., 25, his italics). In this sense, the relevance of a cultural commodity is not the profit motive of the industry, but instead its relevance for the people.

The role of popular culture in the cultural populism theory is that of allowing the people, the social allegiances, to construct meanings out of the system where it is created. For instance, Australian Aborigines watching Western movies form social allegiances with the Indians and cheer them as they kill the white men. For Fiske, "Aboriginal meanings and pleasures can

be made only within and against white domination: without the textual reproduction of the power that is being struggled against, there can be no relevance” (ibid., 25). Thus, the ideology in popular culture is not that of manipulating consumers into consumption. Instead it is of forming social allegiances that are part of the dominant force but can also speak against it.

As the mass culture theory and the culture industry theory have been criticised for being elitist, so has populism for concentrating almost exclusively on the people. According to Strinati (1995: 258), they “... operate in terms of unfounded caricatures, and without an adequate empirical and historical appreciation of the social and cultural nature of audiences.”

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to carry out an empirical research on the audience of the song texts. However, I briefly consider their relevance when I discuss the tenor of discourse in Chapter 3.

The importance of the theories mentioned above for the present research lies on the fact that they help raise important questions that need to be addressed. Thus, they bring into question the role of the music industry in the production of song texts and music; the relationship between quality and profitability in the production of music: are they really in opposition or do they both work together?; and the ideological role of popular music. These questions are dealt with in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Although these questions are not addressed specifically by the authors in the next section, some of them do discuss important points that are part of the popular culture debate. Kizer (1983), for instance, provides insights on the role of the audience or consumers in relation to protest music. Maynard (1995), on the other hand, discusses the cultural and/or ideological roles of protest music lyrics. Vincent (1995) explores the industry, the people as well as the social environment involved in the complex field of popular music. These issues are discussed below and also in the following chapters.

## **2.2 Review of the literature related to music and song texts**

In this section of Chapter 2 I will present the review of the literature starting, arbitrarily, in a chronological order of the publishing date of each of the studies. They will be first described and then followed by a critical interpretation of their findings and relevance for the present study.

### **2.2.1 Cole's *Top Songs in the Sixties***

In his analysis of song texts from the 60s decade, Cole (1971), an American sociologist and professor at the University of Minnesota, sought to establish a relationship between popular music recordings and youth subculture, assuming that the "... record is a factor in transmitting elements of the youth..." (389). The objective of his study was an attempt "... to

provide a more meaningful criterion for popularity by analyzing leading lyrics throughout a decade, ..." (ibid., 390).

The selection of the data for his study was based on the annual Top 10 singles rated by the Billboard magazine for each year of the decade, divided in two halves from 1960 to 1964 and from 1965 to 1969. From a total of 100 songs, his final sample had 93 songs (7 were instrumental ones) which were coded according to mood as happy – “expressing pleasure or contentment”, unhappy – “expressing sadness or anxiety” or balanced – “expressing neither happiness or unhappiness” (ibid., 391).

Four topics were selected for analysis of occurrence in relation to “their relevance to the youth subculture” (ibid., 391), which were, respectively, ‘Love-Sex’, ‘Violence’, ‘Religion’, and ‘Social Protest’.

The love-sex topic was examined under five categories: the relationship, determination of the relationship, dominant participant, predominant type of love, and attitude toward romantic love and physical love. Violence was observed under three categories, namely physical violence, manipulation of others and verbal violence. Religion was only observed in relation to its inclusion or not in the songs.

In relation to the last topic, Cole states that “[i]t was expected that recent songs would manifest more references to social protest – defined as disapproval of situations existing in society or of attitudes widely held or

approval of attitudes not held-widely e.g., a protest against war or approval of illegal drugs.” (ibid., 391)

Results showed that 44% out of 93 songs were unhappy, against 39% of happy ones. Balanced and unhappy songs totalled 61%. Concerning topics, there were 71% of Love-Sex songs throughout the decade, but with 12% fewer songs in the second half of the decade. Social Protest accounted for 10% of the lyrics, all of them occurring between 1965 and 1969. And there were few songs whose primary topic was religion or violence.

In relation to Love-Sex, relationships were classified as an elusive quarry in 26% of the lyrics, as happy in 23% of them, and isolation in 5% of them. The relationship was determined by the participants (the boys or girls) in 70% of the songs, against fate in 15% of them. Girls were the dominant participants in love relationships in 42% of the lyrics compared to 15% of the boys. The predominant type of love was romance in 71% of the lyrics in opposition to 14% of physical desire. Finally, the attitudes toward romantic love were positive over both periods, decreasing in 13% in the second one when 23% of the lyrics had a positive attitude towards physical love.

Religion as the main theme was found in only two of the 93 songs, and violence appeared in only 12% of the songs for the decade, but not as the predominant theme. Only one song had violence as the main topic, including physical violence and manipulation of others. The remaining

songs mentioned the manipulation of others and no one was concerned with verbal violence.

Social Protest accounted for 10% of songs, all of them in 1968 and 1969. Cole mentions that “[i]n contrast to statements by critics, not only did no song manifest drugs as a predominant or secondary theme, but no lyric made a clear-cut reference to drugs or to common slang terms for them” (ibid., 396).

Cole’s conclusions from his study are that the most significant theme for popularity of a song is love and sex. The inclusion of violence, religion and social protest as topics for analysis, together with love and sex, helped to show that there was no correlation between “... deviant messages and popularity...” (ibid., 398).

Although Cole has studied a great number of songs covering a whole decade, his quantitative findings do not seem to provide a consistent analysis of the content of the lyrics. For instance, for songs with religion themes (two only) he did not attempt to provide an analysis of what is said about religion, whether it is praised as a belief or attacked as outdated. The same happens with social protest themes, even avoiding to mention what the subtopics of the protest were.

As a content analysis of popular lyrics (the subtitle of his work), Cole’s work lacks significance, failing to provide a social perspective or correlation between the ‘youth subculture’ and the popular lyrics. When he

states that the popular record transmits 'elements' of the youth subculture and "... not only do [they] *entertain* listeners and *inform* of novel and sometimes deviant messages, but they may exert a substantial *influence*, especially on the youth subculture." (ibid., 398, his emphasis), one would expect, at least, a more detailed analysis of what elements are transmitted and how they inform listeners. As it is, his study stands for a rather statistical record of the popularity of songs.

Although this present study does not cover the whole of the 1960s decade or has a large number of songs when compared to Cole's study, its intention is to look at one topic that seems rather relevant and which has not been tackled properly in the research reviewed above, namely social protest.

Cole defines what may be considered a social protest song but in the course of his work he does not go deeper into the subject, other than making comments about the non-existence of songs with reference to drugs. This seems at odds with his findings where 10% of all the songs were about social protest, and the reader is left puzzled by the fact that there is no report of what the songs could be protesting against.

The gap left by Cole is fulfilled only partially in this study since I include in my investigation only the social protest songs of the years 1968 and 1969 which are related to African-Americans. However, I explore the general content of the song texts in the first part of Chapters 4 and 5. Furthermore, Cole's concept of social protest presented above is further



complemented with notions from the authors below and applied to the song texts.

### **2.2.2 Kizer's *Protest Song Lyrics as Rhetoric***

Concentrating more on theoretical issues than on empirical research, Kizer (1983), Assistant Professor in the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, aimed at "...defin[ing] protest music, assess[ing] the rhetorical properties of the genre, and analyz[ing] historical and contemporary protest lyrics..." (3).

Kizer states that to protest means "...to verbalize a dissatisfaction with the status quo" (ibid., 3). According to her, this verbalisation usually involves complaining and, only occasionally a desire for change. She considers that such verbalisation represents the feelings of the songwriter; however, if dissatisfaction is "... widely felt then the protest becomes a voice for and about many people. In some instances, the identity of the composer then becomes of secondary importance, and the song is a collective cry for change." (ibid., 3). As a consequence, a protest song becomes a collective social and cultural message as opposed to an individual one.

This collective sense of the protest song might be considered a reflection of the role of the audience. Her argument is that

Since people tend to believe what they want to believe as being true, or what fits the individual's psychological mind set and value system, the 'logic' in protest lyrics usually is the auditor's perception of honest statement of 'fact' in them, or

the discursive messages which sometimes accompany the musical statement. Although rhetorical in nature, protest lyrics are creative expressions designed to elicit an emotional response rather than being polemics for cognitive examination. They do not call for intellectual processing from the auditors to whom they are directed; the treatment of topics, and the topics themselves, appeal to the emotions (ibid., 5).

Although an important consideration regarding the appeal a song has towards the feelings of the people, one cannot deny that cognition has to be a part of, if not essential to, the interpretation of a song. The audience brings with it all the resources they have available in relation to social structures, social beliefs, and relations of power. It might be said that when these audience resources are brought, consciously or unconsciously, to the interpretation of the message of a song then the latter is likely to trigger the appeal to the emotions of the audience.

In relation to rhetoric, Kizer divides protest lyrics into 'deliberative' and 'epideictic'. The former is "... concerned with whether to do or not to do something in the future" (ibid., 5). The latter is "... concerned with censuring or praising someone or something in the present, although recalling the past or predicting the future may also be involved" (ibid., 6). She argues that the majority of protest music falls in the second category since they mostly blame the status quo instead of advocating a policy of change.

As far as theory is concerned, Kizer presents some important views on the concepts of protest music, its definition, its rhetoric, and insights on the participants, the artist and the audience. However, she does not provide

any formal empirical basis to support her claims, except when she occasionally mentions and discusses some protest songs, rather arbitrarily.

For this work, her classification of the rhetoric of song texts into deliberative and epideictic will further specify Cole's definition of social protest above. If protest can be considered as dissatisfaction with the status quo or disapproval of situation and attitudes widely held, then it is important to know whether song texts are only censuring or complaining about the status quo or they are proposing a different course of action. This investigation is done in Chapters 4 and 5.

### **2.2.3 Maynard's *Protest Music Lyrics, 1962-1975***

A more extensive research on the issue of protest music is the Ph.D. dissertation by Maynard (1995). A former journalist, news editor and producer, and more recently Associate Professor at the Southern Illinois University in American Studies, Maynard has studied protest music lyrics from 1962 to 1975, in order to check their cultural role during this period, their relationship to the social movements of the period, and their lasting impacts upon social and musical trends after that period.

Maynard also analysed social structure drawing upon C. Wright Mills:

In Character and Social Structure Mills differentiates between individual character and social structure. For the latter term he lists five component orders: (1) the political order, (2) the economic order, (3) the military order, (4) the kinship order and (5) the religious order. These orders underwent tremendous changes in the affected time period of 1962-1975. Protests and protest music were important

factors in these transformations. Each order will be analyzed as to its changes brought about by these factors (ibid., 5).

The time period chosen was due to its relation to "... historical changes which occurred in the world and in the four musical genres selected for examination" (ibid., 3). The four musical genres Maynard selected were rock'n'roll, rhythm and blues, country, and western and gospel. Songs from this period were selected according to their record sales and radio airplay measured by the Billboard magazine. Finally, Maynard interviewed performers and surveyed the literature on protest music in order to "...reveal the intellectual reactions and artistic discussions related to the affected protest songs" (ibid., 3).

The conclusions Maynard arrives at show that in the early 60s one of the cultural roles of protest music was the symbolism and spirituality it provided for the causes and movements it was attached to. A second cultural role "... was to unite the subcultural or countercultural groups, such as the socialists, the beats, union members, poor people, minorities, women, clergy, etc." (ibid., 117). According to Maynard, protest music also served as a predictor of events, for instance when artists would sing about resistance by young men yet to happen as in the song "I Ain't A-Marching Any More" by Phil Ochs, a folk singer contemporary to Bob Dylan, where he foretold the open resistance to the draft for the Vietnam war.

Maynard argues that the influence of protests and protest music on the five orders of social structure were difficult to ascertain, but "... there were definitely changes in the way these orders conducted their business and the way Americans came to view and react to them" (ibid., 120). For instance, Maynard states that the political order, possibly influenced by protests, had to change its form of action "from escalation to peace talks to Vietnamization to total withdrawal" (ibid., 121).

Concerning the relationship of protest music and the social movements, Maynard states that music legitimated causes and confirmed the sense of unity among the people in the movements.

The question of the impact of protest music on social trends after the period of analysis, according to Maynard, is visible. It is apparent in clothing, due to the influence of musicians' own clothing styles, and in the language when "...terms like sit-in became a part of the idiom, along with busing, soul, soul brother, black power, black history and black studies" (ibid., 127). Other impacts were not so visible:

The music served as a vehicle for an inner revolution. It offered an alternative to traditional society by offering an inner-directed, alternative value system. Protest music's influence centered frequently on individual actions and thoughts. Some people moved on to greater commitment, some resorted to violence, some withdrew to alienation and some just harbored the dreams of peace, love and happiness in their hearts and minds (ibid., 127).

Despite the fact that Maynard (1995) investigates protest music covering a wide period of time, findings and conclusions seem rather subjective. To arrive at conclusions, Maynard relies on the literature on

protest music and interviews with some artists who recorded protests songs. Maynard actually stresses that "...all these methods [four musical genres, the time period, ratings from Billboard magazine, interviews and the literature] are used in an inductive reasoning approach to answer the research questions" (ibid., 3).

Maynard's study provides some insights on the relationship between protest music and social structures. However, these are only superficially dealt with and seem not to shed light on the issue of power relations that are inherent in social movements. Thus, in relation to the five orders of social structure in Maynard's research mentioned above, I am interested more specifically in the political, and economic ones. I look at how political and economic decisions might have affected the lives of African-Americans and how or whether they have influenced, directly or indirectly, the discourse of their song texts. The discussion of political and economic policies in the United States during the two time periods under investigation here are found in Chapters 3 and 5.

#### **2.2.4 Vincent's *Funk: The Music, The People, and The Rhythm of The One***

A much more comprehensive work was implemented by Vincent (1995). In his book 'Funk: the music, the people, and the rhythm of the one', Vincent explores the musical genre, namely funk, that emerged in the

late sixties and coincided with the social revolution that was taking place.

He states that:

A black *music* revolution spread across the country just as the social upheavals of the sixties were taking center stage. Changes took place in the people's dance music, and the themes expressed within their entertainment began to take on much more meaning. With soul music capturing the hearts of the mainstream media and the nationalism within jazz causing controversies among the critics, the real black rhythm revolution was taking place right under their noses (ibid., 60, his italics).

Vincent presents a thorough analysis of African-American music, focusing more specifically on funk music and establishing its relationship to the social system that surrounded it during its inception in the music scene. He starts his work with the analysis of the meanings of the word funk and develops it further connecting it to other musical styles and pursuing a historical approach to produce a coherent picture of the importance of funk music, always in relation to the social environment:

It was the *social* revolution in America that inspired the *rhythm* revolution. The desegregated mobility of black performers, their well-trained versatility, the playfulness and optimism of the times, and a profound sense of mission drew black musicians in the 1960s to combine and interrelate the many strands of their musical traditions, affirming them all, while creating still others (ibid., 62, his italics).

There is a good account of the many musicians who played an important role in the process of creating a new musical genre, and other musical genres are acknowledged for their influence. Vincent also provides an interesting and clear view of the historical background of the Black Power movement and the social implications it had on the lives of the African-Americans. He mentions that "what was happening was the

realization of the complete humanity of black people. The revolution in black America had as much to do with *identity* as it did with one's political or social status" (ibid., 54, his italics).

His research does not in any instance present an analysis of song texts. However, he stresses the relationship the arts, including music and song texts, had with the time of the black revolution:

Artists, writers and orators turned the artistic world upside down by attempting to affirm the destiny of the black uprising and denouncing all things European in vivid texts. Playwright Baraka's *The Slave* was set in the home of an interracial family in the midst of a national race war. The novelist Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* was a fictionalized account of a black CIA agent who leaves his government job to secretly train black guerrillas to cripple the U.S. system. Jazz musicians soaked in the black nationalism and expressed their views in instrumental fashion. Titles such as "Justice", "Now's the Time", and "Black Revolution" were typical .... "Black Power" was chanted in the marches, on the streets, and finally in a song, "Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" by the Godfather of Soul, James Brown (ibid., 55).

Vincent also makes a connection of the funk ideals and music in the 60s and 70s with the Hip Hop of the 80s and 90s. He mentions that

The underground culture of rap music served to rekindle the black pride movements of the 1960s – often by sampling the funky beats of that same period. By 1988, Hip Hop had evolved into what was rightly being called the Hip Hop Nation. And it was clear to anyone listening to rap from a funk perspective that the same values and ideals in modern rap had their genesis in The Funk (ibid., 11).

The relevance of the Vincent's work for this study is that it provides an important background and aid for the assumptions that the oppositional discourse of African-American music was a response to many of the social problems African-Americans have gone through and to the oppressive domination of European-Americans. His work can help define the social structures and practices that involved African-American music in both the



68-72 period and the 88-92 period. This is discussed in chapters three and chapter five, respectively.

Hopefully, the insights provided by his research will illustrate better my attempt to explore the oppositional discourse in African-American popular music.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE SOCIAL CONTEXT**

In the first part of this chapter I introduce some of the concepts that helped me to investigate social structures and social practices. I take into account Halliday's (1989) notions of context of culture, context of situation and its three components, the field, tenor and mode of discourse. Along with such concepts, there is also a discussion of the notions of ideology, power relations and hegemony which are part of Fairclough's (1992) social practices.

In the second part of the chapter I explore the socio-historical context where African-American popular music has developed and I also present a discussion of the production of such music, particularly in relation to the artists of 68-72 period.

In the last section of the chapter I investigate the context of situation specifically in relation to the song texts of both periods.

#### **3.1 Halliday's notions of context of situation and context of culture**

It is important to consider here the concepts of context of situation and the context of culture presented by Halliday (1989) in order to place the song texts within a framework which will facilitate their analysis not only as texts but also as discursive and social practices.

First of all a basic concept has to be understood here: the notion of text. For Halliday, a text is ‘... language that is functional ... language that is doing some job in some context ...’ (ibid., 10). He further explores this notion when he emphasises that a text needs to be seen as a product and as a process. A product in the sense that it can be ‘recorded and studied’ and a process ‘in the sense of a continuous process of semantic choice’ (ibid.).

Therefore, a text for Halliday is both an object and a social exchange of meanings, a process, within a particular context of situation. For this thesis, thus, African-American popular music and its song texts are considered as instances of texts in Hallidayan terms. They are products or objects and processes wherein social meanings are constructed, exchanged, transformed and/or challenged within a specific and immediate context, the context of situation, and within a wider cultural context.

The context of situation, according to Halliday, is ‘... encapsulated in the text ... through a systematic relationship between the social environment on the one hand, and the functional organisation of the language on the other’ (ibid., 11). To describe such relationship, Halliday presents three components called the field, the tenor and the mode of discourse which are used to analyse the ‘social context of a text’ (ibid.).

Furthermore, each of these components represents “... a type of constraint placed on the discourse itself” (Haynes, 1989: 12), and each one of them offers a different focus for the investigation of the environment of a

given discourse. The field component stands for the social activity that is going on, or more precisely, what activity participants are involved in; the tenor component encompasses the social interaction of the participants, their roles and attitudes; and the mode component stands for the role of the language in the discourse itself, including its organisation, its function, its channel, and the rhetorical mode.

The use of these theoretical concepts of the context of situation are justified, according to Halliday, when the actual analysis of texts refers to the relationship between the grammatical features of the text and the features of the situation. For Halliday, "... the participants in a culture make use of this relationship between the text and the situation as a basis for their own interaction" (1989: 36).

In addition to the analysis of the relationship between the grammatical features of the text and the context of situation, which for Halliday is "only the immediate environment" (*ibid.*, 46), one has to consider the wider environment, the context of culture, in which the text has emerged. The latter encompasses, for instance, institutions, and social structures that "determine, collectively, the way the text is interpreted in its context of situation." (*ibid.*, 47). For instance, government decisions, whether economic or political, might play an important role in determining the oppositional discourse of minorities. Such decisions are of interest for

this study of the African-American oppositional discourse and are explored in the socio-historical section 3.3 below.

Moreover, the wider environment can be further explored in terms of ideology, power relations and hegemony. These terms, taken from Fairclough (1992), are discussed in the next section.

### **3.2 Fairclough's concept of social practice**

The social practice concept used by Fairclough (1992) involves “discuss[ing] discourse in relation to ideology and to power, and plac[ing] discourse within a view of power as hegemony, and a view of the evolution of power relations as hegemonic struggle” (ibid., 86). In his view, ideology is the construction of “reality”, of social relations, social identities and the physical world, in different levels and dimensions of discursive practices that help produce, reproduce or transform relations of domination.

The concept of hegemony, which is “leadership as much as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society” (ibid., 92), becomes the centre of constant struggle to maintain or disrupt domination. This concept, together with the concept of ideology, might be used in the analysis of how hegemony and power relations can be transformed and/or changed. For Fairclough, these notions provide “...a way of analysing the social practice within which the discourse belongs in terms

of power relations... [and] ...a way of analysing discourse practice itself as a mode of hegemonic struggle...” (ibid., 95).

The ideology referred to above as the construction of reality, social relations and identities might be investigated with the analysis of the representation of reality using the lexicogrammatical system of transitivity. That is, the way one particular experience is represented linguistically can foreground a certain ideological point of view. The linguistic representation of reality and its possible ideological constructions are interpreted in Chapters 4 and 5.

As I have mentioned at the end of the previous section, political and economic decisions might help determine the oppositional discourse of the minority groups. On the other hand, these decisions might also be used by the dominant group, the one who takes the decisions, to reinforce its status as the dominant one. These political and economic issues and their possible effects on the song texts of the 68-72 period that are analysed in this work are discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 The socio-historical aspect under investigation**

#### **3.3.1 The ‘Black Revolution’**

The ‘Black Revolution’, as it is widely known, actually started in February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, when four college students of Greensboro, North Carolina, accidentally launched the sit-in movement, after being refused

service at the lunch counter in a grocery store (they remained peacefully seated until the store closed, whose act coined the term sit-in). From that moment on a number of other movements, such as the 'Freedom Rides' and the civil right marches, started to appear in different corners of the United States opening up possibilities of change for the African-American community. For Franklin (1980: 464),

The revolution would have many facets. The changes in public policy, in the way that Negroes viewed themselves and their place in American life, in the attitudes and thoughts of the larger community toward Negroes were about as far-reaching as the changes in the status of Negroes themselves. The decision of the young Negro college students to sit-in symbolized some of these changes and suggested the nature of others yet to come.

The civil rights movement was an effort to transform the picture of segregation in schools, in vote registration, in interstate coach travelling, in the problems of housing and employment, to name a few. African-Americans were in search of their basic rights, and this search for them was their main objective.

Employment, for instance, was one of the most serious problems African-Americans had to face:

In 1964 the unemployment rate among blacks was 9.6 percent as against 4.6 among whites; in 1971 it was 9.9 percent among blacks and 5.4 percent among whites. In 1969 the median income of Negroes with eight years of schooling was \$4,472, while it was \$7,018 for whites with the same amount of schooling. In 1970 the Census Bureau, defining poverty as a median income of less than \$3,968 for a family of four, reported that one in every three blacks as compared with one in every ten whites was in that category. And the chances for Negroes to move up were greatly restricted not only by general race bias but also by the meager opportunities for apprenticeship training and by discrimination in many labor unions. (ibid., 479)

Similarly, segregation in housing policies was as serious as the problem of unemployment. So much so that in 1964, in California, a constitutional amendment was approved and allowed owners of houses the right to choose who they would rent their properties to. Later, in 1966, the amendment was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in California (Franklin, 1980: 478). Nevertheless, African-Americans continued to suffer discrimination and difficulties concerning the housing problem did not seem to have an end.

The Civil Right Acts of 1964 favoured considerably racial equality: "It gave the attorney general additional power to protect citizens against discrimination and segregation in voting, education, and the use of public facilities." (ibid., 473). On the other hand, resistance against the Act was fierce. Some owners of public places, such as restaurants, in the south of the United States decide to close their doors in retaliation to the obligation to serve African-Americans in their dependencies. In Georgia, for instance, members of the Ku Klux Klan vehemently protested against African-American integration in a hotel, picketing and holding signs that accused the owner of the place of surrendering to the mixing of races.

Violence became inevitable. Watts, a suburb in Los Angeles, was in 1965 the site of one of the worst riots that have ever happened in the United States:

The immediate cause of the explosion in the Watts area of Los Angeles was the arrest of a young Negro who was charged with reckless driving. When a policeman drew a gun, an angry crowd assembled and began to fight the police.



On the following day, after an unsuccessful attempt to quiet the tensions, the rioting was resumed, accompanied by looting and burning. At the height of the holocaust blacks were heard to exclaim, "Burn, Whitey, Burn" and "Get Whitey." It was indeed an explosion of tension, bitterness, and hatred. By the time that the police, assisted by the California National Guard, restored peace, the toll had reached 34 dead, 1,032 injured, and 3,952 arrested. Property damage was estimated at \$40 million. (Franklin, 1980: 480)

Moreover, violence not only meant riots but also assassinations. Also in 1965, Malcolm X was the first world-wide known African-American leader to be assassinated. After Malcolm, it was Martin Luther King, Jr.'s turn, who, in April 4<sup>th</sup> 1968, was shot to death in Memphis. A leader who defended the non-violent effort to gain social rights for the African-Americans was himself the victim of the violence he rejected so vehemently. Numerous other riots followed the death of Martin Luther King in over 100 cities in the United States in response to his assassination.

The feeling of frustration and despair was continuously in evidence among African-Americans, despite the fact that they had advanced socially and economically when compared to previous decades. As Vincent (1995; 48) puts it,

Despite the passage of Civil Right Acts in 1957, 1960, and 1964, a Voting Rights Act in 1965, and housing discrimination legislation in 1969, each allowing for redress of grievances, the masses of black people in the country felt little change. Within one generation of World War II the average black workers were living in overcrowded urban tenements, suffering twice the unemployment of whites, and sending children to inferior schools that, despite the School Desegregation Act of 1954, were still underfunded and all-black.

Eventually, this feeling of frustration led to the emergence of a political movement that strove to express a new racial consciousness among African-Americans in the United States. The Black Power movement,

whose name was coined during a “Freedom from Fear” march in 1966 in Mississippi, was in search of racial dignity and independence from European-Americans in politics and economy. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, two leaders of the movement, defined Black Power:

It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this country. (cited in Vincent, 1995: 50)

In their reorganisation of the SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), Carmichael’s and Hamilton’s ideas were applied and European-Americans holding leading positions were expelled. An action-driven organisation, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, became the largest party advocating the Black Power ideals. Founded in 1966, the plans of the party involved “... community policing, active community centers, and a far-reaching plan for black liberation that included an inevitable revolution led by black Americans” (ibid., 51). The ideals of the Black Power movement and the Black Panther Party found resonance in the Black Arts movement, which promoted the African-American cultural-nationalist perspective through the arts. Larry Neal, an African-American writer, stated that “the political values inherent in the Black Power concept are now finding concrete expression in the aesthetics of Afro-American dramatists, poets, choreographers, musicians and novelists.” (cited in Albert, J. C. and Albert, S. E., 1984: 1)

The movements mentioned above indicate that African-Americans were constantly struggling against the dominant hegemony of the elite groups. Despite the fact that the U.S. Congress was able to approve many Acts in defence of the rights of African-Americans, the elite groups at large were determined to maintain their dominance and not to allow the ascendancy of African-Americans to an equal level of rights.

On the one hand there were African-Americans and their movements demanding change. On the other hand, there were European-Americans trying to avoid transformation. These power relations between the dominant group and the subordinate one were happening across different levels of discourse practices and institutions. From the opposition to school desegregation of State Governors in Southern states to discrimination in housing allocation controlled by elites, African-Americans were constantly carrying the burden of being a subordinate class.

### **3.3.2 Where does music come in?**

According to Vincent (1995: 47), “rhythm and blues music as ‘statement’ music would grow into soul music and eventually take on more explicit themes of protest, particularly after the changes promised during the civil rights movement failed to materialize.”

African-American popular music and its African-American artists/songwriters were attentive to the events that surrounded them and

occasionally would lend their work to more political themes and express their views on social issues. One of these artists was James Brown.

Brown was born in Augusta, Georgia, and has been an active artist, recording and performing, for more than thirty five years. From 1965 onwards, he created his own style, which eventually was labelled funk, and his songs started to hit the charts such as “It’s a Man’s Man’s Man’s World”, “I Got the Feeling” and “Make it Funky”. According to Escott and Ruhlmann (1996, *in* Billboard Music Guide CD-ROM), “... between the mid-60s and the mid-70s, James Brown was a force unto himself. Musically and politically, he was the dominant Black musician of the day, an importance that subsequent developments have only served to heighten.”

One of Brown’s social commentary was his “Say it Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud” a song that was the # 10 Pop hit in 1968, released after the assassination of Martin Luther King and the riots that followed his death. He comments on it:

When the young people, the Afro-Americans, were called black, it made them more irritable than anything else. Walking around feeling that you have a skeleton in your closet you gotta hide or something people can irritate you with, as long as they can do that and upset your whole system, you got a problem. So I took, with God’s guidance, the most intolerable word and made it a positive and took the negative business away from it. ‘Say It Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud.’ So once you’ve got that, there was a problem going out the window. (cited in Maynard, 1995: 66).

According to Vincent, James Brown was “... one of only a few performers who could have released a record like ‘Say it Loud’ and have it aired, because he was one of the few black recording artists with complete

control over the production of his music” (1995: 79). Nevertheless, James Brown would later state that the song had cost him much of his crossover audience, and that after its release his audience was mostly made up of African-Americans. He stated “... I don’t regret recording it, .... It was badly needed at the time. It helped Afro-Americans in general and the dark-skinned man in particular. I’m proud of that” (cited in Vincent, 1995: 79).

Curtis Mayfield was not so widely known as James Brown and did not have as many hits as Brown did. Nevertheless, he also helped in the evolution of funk music and introduced urban commentary into soul music. He started his career in the late 50s leading the band The Impressions, and with them had 14 Top 40 hits in the 60s, singing, writing lyrics and playing guitar. Richie Urtenberger (1996, *in* Billboard Music Guide CD-ROM) states that “he wrote most of his material, at a time when that was not the norm for soul performers. He was among the first – if not the very first – to speak openly about African-American pride and community struggle in his compositions.” In 1970 he left The Impressions and started a solo career.

Like James Brown, Curtis Mayfield also had complete control over his entire production. In 1968 he managed to form his own recording label, Curtom, while still leading the band The Impressions, with which he recorded a great number of hits. With the band or as solo artist from 1970 onwards, Curtis Mayfield had the “... ability to fuse the smoothest of soul harmonies with a militant, underground orientation...” (ibid., 160).

Other artists did not have as much independence as did Brown and Mayfield. Marvin Gaye, for instance, even working for an African-American owned label, Motown, had to struggle with the management of the label to have his album, "What's Going On", released in 1971. According to Vincent, "Gaye had to threaten to leave the label to defend his album .... The record shot into the Top 10, and was No. 1 soul for five weeks." (ibid., 129).

Gaye started singing in the church where his father was a minister and in the 50s became a member of a vocal group called The Moonglows. In 1961 he signed a recording contract with Motown and by 1962 he already had a R&B (Rhythm & Blues) Top Ten hit with "Stubborn Kind of Fellow", becoming one of the leading singers of the recording label. After that many other hits followed and in 1968 he reached the # 1 position in the Pop charts with his version of "I Heard It Through the Grapevine". In 1970, his singing partner died and Gaye went into seclusion to return only in 1971 with his acclaimed album "What's Going On".

Sly Stone, from the Sly & The Family Stone, in spite of working for CBS, an European-American owned label, managed to have his albums released without the interference of the label:

He convinced CBS record executive David Kapralik that 'the kids will come around' to his new sound, and CBS went for it. Sly was the first black rock star to be packaged by the corporate music industry. His ability to sell himself, to navigate the predominantly white music business, and to play on the liberal atmosphere of the times were all crucial factors in the rise of the Family Stone, for there were (and are) very few opportunities for atypical black acts to flourish in

America, and Sly managed the system better than any other performer to date (ibid., 92).

Born Sylvester Stewart in 1945 in Texas, Sly Stone moved to Vallejo, California at the age of nine and in high school began his musical career playing in different unsuccessful school bands. After that he went to radio school and became the first DJ of KSOL, an African-American radio station that opened in 1966. While working as a DJ for another station, KDIA, he started to select musicians for a new band.

Originally called Stoners, the band was later renamed Sly & the Family Stone and eventually achieved success in 1968 with their second album, "Dance to the Music", whose major hit with the same title reached # 8 in the Top 40 Pop hits of that year. Acclaim by audience and critics came with their 1969 album "Stand!" which spoke of race, love and sex and reached # 25 in the Top 200 albums category for 1969. After "Stand!" the band's career started to decline with two follow-up albums much criticised by the music press. By 1975, Sly Stone and his band left the music scene and occasionally recorded new albums that did not call major attention and did not restore success. However, the band still remains as one of the most influential groups of African-American funk music in the 60s and 70s.

The artistic production of some of the African-American music in the late 60s and early 70s, its creativity, its sound, and its song texts were controlled by the artists themselves. That opened up possibilities for them to

freely say what they wanted to. Obviously, not all the songs in the albums were songs with political messages or social commentary. For a whole political album would not be profitable and the artist would run the risk of being left aside, in an industry where profit seems to matters most.

Nevertheless, African-American artists such as the ones mentioned above managed to get their message across. Brown and Mayfield had no difficulties in releasing their works, and Gaye and Stone had to use their abilities as entrepreneurs so they could have their albums released.

The production of a song involves, at the very least, the lyricist and the music composer. Most bands have one of their members as the lyricist and the group composes the music. Once the song is created, its commercialisation as a product undergoes the process of recording it. In the studio, other people become involved in the production of the recorded song, for instance, the engineer and her/his assistants, and the producer. After the song is recorded, only then it will be decided if it will be part of the album or not. That decision involves other people, including owners of labels, who help decide together with the artists its inclusion or exclusion.

As I have mentioned previously in the data section in Chapter 1, I have selected the songs whose artists were both the singer, the lyricist, and the music composer or one of the composers to avoid the distinctions between author, animator, and principal.



Moreover, I have also tried to select those artists who had more artistic freedom and were able to release their work without the direct involvement of the owners of record labels. The intention was to have a sample of songs that could be taken as having little interference in their artistic production, so that the oppositional discourse of the song texts could be interpreted from the point of view given by the African-American artists.

### **3.4 The song texts and their context of situation**

As seen previously, the context of situation encompasses three components of discourse for its analysis in relation to a text. They are the field, tenor and mode of discourse. I will now discuss these three components in relation to the data of this thesis, the song texts. However, since the main objective of this thesis is to investigate the self-representation of African-Americans, which is related to the ideational metafunction of language and part of the field of discourse, I will leave the discussion of the field component for the final part of this section, for it provides a smoother transition to the next chapter which brings the transitivity analysis. Thus, in reversing the order I will start discussing first the mode of discourse and second the tenor of discourse.

This is a general discussion which implies that the context of situation analysed here applies for song texts of both periods.

### 3.4.1 The mode of discourse

In order to investigate the mode of discourse, three categories have to be explained before the analysis can take place. These categories, described by Hasan (1989: 57), enable us to have a better picture of the part language plays in different types of discourse.

The first is that of “language role”. Language role can be either constitutive or ancillary, that is, language is constitutive if the discourse type under investigation has no interference of any semiotic sign other than language itself. On the other hand, language is ancillary when its role in the discourse type is additional to other semiotic manifestations involved in the communicative event.

The second refers to “process sharing” or the possibility of the addressee to participate in the creation of the text, which in turn involves the “channel”, a possible path for the message to get to the addressee. That might be either through sound waves, thus phonic, or through a kind of writing, thus graphic.

Finally, the last category is the “medium”, the distinction being whether the discourse type or text is spoken or written. The latter and the previous two categories can and do interrelate, as in a discourse type where the spoken medium with a phonic channel allows for process sharing. Nevertheless, this is not always the case, as it will be seen in the analysis of the data according to mode.

The data selected for this thesis are song texts. Song texts are part of whole songs which includes, to say the very least, music. Thus, the language role is ancillary, which is clear if one considers, for instance, the rhythm, melody, and harmony of a particular song.

I would like to continue with the medium first. If one thinks of the process of composing a song text, the image which might come to mind is that of an artist writing it on a piece of paper (though not necessarily). Then music is “attached” to it (or vice-versa) and they are both recorded and sold as a commodity, a CD. At first sight, there might be a risk of considering the medium as spoken, though it is actually sung. However, some record sleeves bring the song texts printed on them. This entails that a different perspective has to be given when considering the medium of song texts. They can be both sung and written. Surely, always the first but sometimes also the second.

The same applies to the channel category, which might also be both phonic and graphic. Phonic, for song texts are words sung (sound waves) and graphic for they may be printed on the record sleeve. Again, surely the first and sometimes the second.

Finally, process sharing is monologic. Even though the language in the song texts presents features that are common to language used in talk, the audience is passive, that is, it does not participate in the creative process.

### 3.4.2 The tenor of discourse

According to Halliday (1985: 12), the tenor of discourse "... refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles...". In song texts, participants might be classified in two distinct positions or roles: an artist (individual) or artists (collective) and audience (collective). The degree of social control among participants tends to be minimum by the fact that artists attempt to establish a friendly relationship with their audience, which seems to be the case for the song texts in this thesis. African-American artists establish a relation of commonality with the African-American audience, of belonging to the same group and sharing the same problems, more specifically that of racial discrimination. In this sense, their songs can be seen as a "community-building device" (Meurer, 1998).

Artists and audience seem to have an interesting relationship. On the one hand, artists do not know or are able to see their audience. On the other hand, audiences know fairly well the artists they enjoy. Knowledge of artists might range from obsession to admiration of their work. Artists, knowing beforehand the peculiarities of their audiences, tend to identify themselves with the people who buy their records through common experiences, for instance, using the same register their particular audience does. Such behaviour, from both sides, minimises social distance.

It is important to point out that the interaction among participants in discussion here takes into account the song text as part of a song recorded in

a CD. Other types of interpretation may derive if one considers, for instance, a live concert where both artist and audience are close to, or at least can see and hear, each other or the airing of a particular song through a radio station. This consideration also applies to the mode of discourse seen previously, where process sharing might become less monologic due to possible interference of the audience.

### **3.4.3 The field of discourse**

As stated by Halliday, the field of discourse is concerned with "... [what] the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential component" (ibid., 12).

Following this premise, artists and audience are engaged in singing and playing a song and listening to that song, respectively. Artists express their views and feelings through the music. Each instrument has its function in a song and the way the music is composed might project the mood or feeling artists wanted to share with their audience. Depending on the rhythm, the melody or harmony, music can be lively producing excitement or may be slow producing sadness or relaxation. This sort of non-verbal communication is inherent of music of all genres, from classical to funk.

Investigating music to uncover how each musical element, such as rhythm, might realise certain social meanings, as for instance in van Leeuwen's (1988) study of the sociosemiotics of mass media music, can be

insightful and revealing. However, the music itself is not under investigation in this work, despite the fact that it may limit the scope of this thesis.

Conversely, songs might have a verbal component through which artists may express their views and feelings using words. They may sing about the possession of objects (a car or a house), about relationships (a lost lover, a new lover, friends) and also about social conditions they and their peers might be in.

It is the latter aspect that is under investigation here. I assume that African-American artists are singing to an African-American audience, about what they may have in common, their problems, expectations, and beliefs, which in turn might create a sort of bonding between the two that they can both identify with and the artist can be seen as a spokesperson of the group. The topics which are raised by African-Americans in the song texts are discussed in the first part of the next chapter for the 68-72 period and in the second part of chapter 5 for the 88-92 period.

Summarising the field of discourse in a very simplistic way, what is going on is the singing of a song whose topic the audience might identify with since they might share the same opinion or feeling about it. As a result, the artist may be regarded as a spokesperson representing African-Americans in general. What he sings then may be interpreted as the discourse of a whole group, the oppositional discourse of African-Americans against the dominance of the elite groups. How this discourse is

realised linguistically will be discussed in the next chapters with the transitivity analysis of the song texts.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE SONGS OF THE 68-72 PERIOD**

I start this chapter with a general overview of the content of the song texts of the 68-72 period (for the texts I refer the reader to Appendix A). That is, I present an outline of the topics dealt with in the songs which might be helpful for a better understanding of the analysis of the linguistic choices made by songwriters. In the second section of this chapter I present the analysis of the song texts using the grammatical system of transitivity, focusing on the verb processes and the participants involved in these processes.

In order to have a clearer picture for comparison of the findings the song texts are analysed in two distinct chapters and compared in chapter five and six. Thus the ones for this chapter are from the 68-72 period.

#### **4.1 What are they singing about?**

From the album "Stand!" released in 1969 by Sly & the Family Stone, as already mentioned in section 1.4, two songs were selected: the title track "Stand!" and "Everyday People". The former might be classified as the prototype song of the Black Power movement. As the title indicates, the songwriter suggests that the African-American audience/listeners should stand in order to strive for their rights. It presents a critique to the values and



beliefs of European-Americans and incentives the effort of the African-American individual to continue in her/his search for equal rights. In “Everyday People”, the topic is related to prejudice against the colour of people’s skin, more specifically, on the integration of people regardless of colour and the understanding that people are the same whatever their colour is.

Two songs, “What’s Going On” and “Inner City Blues”, both from the album “What’s Going On” released in 1971 by Marvin Gaye, were selected. “What’s Going On”, the title track, seems to criticise the use of violence in the movements for African-American rights, and advocates that a non-violent, peaceful dialogue is the best option to be followed.

“Inner City Blues” on the other hand suggests that the economic problems that affect the African-American underclass make living very difficult for them. It also seems to criticise the government for not solving the problems of inner cities.

“Say it Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud” by James Brown, released in 1968, became known as the anthem of the Black Power movement. Released after the assassination of Martin Luther King, the song seems to express its angst towards the dominance of European-Americans and suggests that the African-American community resist such dominance, and fight against it, even if people die in their struggle, in order not “... [to] be

living on [their] knees...” (sample 4 – Appendix A). It suggests that African-Americans be proud of themselves and of their colour.

From the album “Curtis Live!” released in 1971, three songs were selected: “Mighty Mighty (Spade and Whitey)”, “We’re a Winner”, and “We, the People Who Are Darker than Blue”. “Mighty Mighty (Spade and Whitey)” seems to criticise the government, the assassination of African and European-American leaders and also suggests that segregation due to the colour of one’s skin is just prejudice since “... there really ain’t no difference if/you’re cut you’re gonna bleed...” (sample 5 – Appendix A). “We’re a Winner” is another example of a song that fits the Black Power movement. It suggests that African-American people are proud of themselves, that they have achieved some of their goals and seems to reinforce the need to continue in the struggle for their rights. “We, the People Who Are Darker than Blue” is one more song about segregation. Not only prejudice against skin colour seems once again to be criticised, but also the beliefs that European-Americans have towards African-Americans, suggesting that this should not be accepted.

The last two songs selected for the 68-72 period were recorded by The Impressions. The song “This is My Country” released in 1968 appears to be criticising European-Americans for assuming that African-Americans cannot consider the United States as their country as well. It mentions that

African-Americans have worked hard to help build the country and suggests that they also have the right to consider it theirs.

The song "Choice of Colors" from 1969 suggests a different focus on the issue of skin colour. In contrast with the previous ones that addressed the same topic focusing on the understanding that people are equal regardless of their colour, this song seems directed to the African-American audience questioning whether or not people would choose another skin colour if they had such choice, and also it seems to criticise those African-Americans who are not willing to help the community.

This general overview of the content of the song texts of the 68-72 period shows that there seems to be a common aspect among all of them, that is, the need for African-Americans to be accepted as they are. Written amid the movements for equal rights in the late 60s, they seem to follow the ideals those movements preached, often by praising the values of African-Americans.

#### **4.2 The representation of the African-American world in the song texts**

Halliday's (1994:106) statement that "...Language enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them" will guide the analysis to be followed below.

In this section the song texts are analysed using the lexicogrammatical system of transitivity where "...what goes on around and

inside...”(ibid.) African-American songwriters could be traced in the song texts and their oppositional discourse against dominance of elite groups could be further explored. The analysis helped determine the linguistic choices African-American songwriters made use of to express their “inner and outer” (ibid.) experiences and this has led to the consequent inference of what may configure as choices of an oppositional discourse.

Following Halliday, I consider reality as made of processes which represent what goes on, the people’s experience of reality. Processes are divided into types that reflect the sort of going-on that is being experienced. Therefore, material processes are the ones related to our acting experiences or our doings; mental processes are related to the experiences that we perceive, feel and/or are conscious of; relational processes are the ones that enable us to classify and identify beings and/or entities; and verbal processes are those of saying and/or communicating.

Behavioural processes, those that reflect the manifestations of our internal experiences, and existential processes, those that represent simply what exists or is, are not considered in this thesis for the latter are similar to relational processes and the former are regarded the least distinct of all processes. For that matter, they are not discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

In addition to the process types mentioned above there are also two other components that take part in the linguistic representations of our experiences of reality: the Participants, which are the entities involved in the

processes and the Circumstances, which are elements that place our experiences in one determined setting, or are elements that accompany the processes but are not directly involved with them.

The two main components, verb processes and participants, of Halliday's grammatical system of Transitivity briefly mentioned above are investigated in the sample of ten song texts of the 68-72 period. Each process will be dealt with separately along with its participants for all the samples. Each sample will be given a number, for instance, S 1 (sample 1), and it will be used likewise throughout the analysis.

#### 4.2.1 Material Processes

These are the processes that involve action or doing. Participants in this process are classified into Actor, the participant that performs the action, and Goal, the participant that is affected by the action. In the ten songs analysed, of the 47 material processes found, 57,45% of them had only African-Americans in the position of Actors; 14,90% had only European-Americans as Actors; and 12,77% of them were only used with general nouns or nominal groups.

The most significant material processes that have only African-Americans as Actors are shown in the examples below:

- S 1 : [You] **Stand!** ...; ... there's a cross for you to **bear** ...; ...things to go through if you're **going** anywhere [ you have to go through things if you want to go anywhere] ...;  
 S 3 : ... Brother, there's too many of you **dying**...; ... father, we don't need to **escalate**...;  
 S 4 : ... [you] **send** that boy off to **die**...;

S 5: ... we won't quit **moving**/until we **get** what we deserve...; ... we're tired of **beating** our head against the wall and **working** for someone else...;

S 7: ... no more tears do we **cry**/and we have finally **dried** our eyes/and we're **moving** on up...; ... we'll just keep on **pushing**/like your leaders tell you too...;

S 10: ... I've **paid** three hundred years or more/of slave driving, sweat, and welts on my back...; ... too many have **died** in **protecting** my pride/for me to go second class...;

These choices of material processes seem to portray the involvement of African-Americans in the movements of the late 60s. They suggest that the community get involved, pushing forward, moving up, refusing to accept segregation, fighting and even dying to get what they consider theirs.

These processes seem to call African-Americans to action and to not accept anything less than what they need to be looked at as people. The message seems clear: African-American people have to unite and demand their rights if they want to be 'free'. This message is used to reinforce the ideals of the Black Power movement and the Black Panther Party which advocated pride and unity within the African-American community in order to avoid racism and discrimination.

The examples in S 1, S 5, and S 7 are possibly the most objective in their message to an African-American audience. James Brown's, "Say it Loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud" (S 5), written and sung after the assassination of Martin Luther King, the famous African-American leader, and the disturbances that followed his death, can be considered the finest example of the call to action.

According to Vincent (1995), African-Americans felt that little had changed so far in the recognition of their rights, despite the effort of the

Federal Government of the United States in approving Civil Rights Bills and implementing them. Discrimination was so engrained in the culture and minds of European-Americans that acceptance of the other was extensively and continually avoided. For African-Americans every single day meant striving to overcome contempt and humiliation. They needed stimulus and strength to face their problems. They needed affection and Brown seemed to have understood what was going on when he wrote “Say it Loud – I’m Black and I’m Proud”.

The greater number of African-Americans as Actors is realised by the pronoun *we*, in 21 out of 33 clauses. It is through the use of the inclusive pronoun *we* that artists and audience can be taken as one, which makes the song “... a collective cry for change.” (Kizer, 1983: 3). The intention is to gather the audience to share common ideas and position themselves as a unified group of people. The following examples illustrate this point of view:

S 3: ... we’ve got to **find** a way to **bring** some loving here today ...;

S 5: ... we’re not gonna **quit** until we **get** our share ...; ... we demand a chance to **do** things for ourselves ...; ... we’d rather **die** on our feet than be **living** on our knees ...;

S 7: ..... how we **got over** like we’re all supposed to **do** ...; ... and together we’ll **clap** our hands ...; ... we’ve **come** a long long way ....

The table below summarises the material processes used with African-American participants.

Material processes	Bring about, send, pay (2), throw, head, die (3), go (2), survive, perish, bear, find, escalate, bring, move (2), get (2), quit, beat, dry, push, leave, get over, clap, commit, stand, work, grow, crawl.
African-Americans as Actors	I, you, we, some of us, too many of us, a boyish, the joker

Table 4.2.1.1 (the number in parenthesis indicates frequency)

Nevertheless, not only African-Americans are Actors. Although in few instances (10 clauses), European-Americans also fulfil this function. The intention seems to be that of showing them as performing unacceptable actions that affect African-Americans who then are represented as Goals (*you, me, my life* – one occurrence each). In the examples below, European-Americans are represented by the *you* and *they* pronoun (in S 4 the *you* pronoun may be interpreted as the government):

S 1: ... They will try to **make** you crawl ...;

S 3: [you] Don't **punish** me with brutality ...;

S 4: ... Money, we make it, before we see it you **take** it...; ... the way they **do** my life...;

S 8: ... and let what others [they] say **come true** ...;

S 10: ... They'd rather **fuss** and **fight** [with us]...;

In S 4 there is a suggestion that the government, and its decisions, controls the life of African-Americans, for instance, through the taxes they have to pay. Economic and financial problems due to a low income which, as seen in Chapter 3, was common among African-Americans, can be said to help reinforce the hegemony of the elites. Moreover, in S 1, S 3 and in S 8 European-Americans are depicted as violent and intransigent, which reinforces the image of a dominant group.



There is also an example where the songwriter's intention was to show mainly to European-Americans that people are equal regardless of the colour of their skin:

S 5: ... there really ain't no difference if you're **cut** you're gonna **bleed** ...;

The table below summarises the material processes with European-Americans as actors.

Material processes	Take, do, give in, fight, make, punish, come from, come true, cut, bleed, spend
European-Americans as Actors	You, they, others

Table 4.2.1.2

There are also instances where the pronoun *we* stands for both African-Americans and European-Americans, where the intention seems that of calling the attention to things both groups might be responsible for.

Below are some examples:

S 2: ... We gotta live together...; ...we're all the same whatever we **do**...;

S 6: ... we're **killing** up our leaders...; ... in stupidity we've all been **caught**...;

One of the clauses in S 6 makes reference to the assassination of Martin Luther King and President John Kennedy. The other clauses call attention to the need for acceptance of each other, who then can live peacefully without racial distinction, an attempt which African-Americans

songwriters tend to emphasise, mentioning that all people are equal regardless of colour.

In the examples below there are material processes with non-human participants suggesting the hope that feelings and/or emotions might help to change their social condition or that with time their situation might improve.

S 3: ... for only love can **conquer** hate ...;

S 7: ... at last that **blessed day** has **come** ...;

S 8: ... this ain't no time for **segregating** ...; ... when the time **comes** and we are really free...;

The table below includes all the 47 material processes found in the song texts analysed here.

<p>Catch, fight, do, kill, live, take, give in, punish, cut, bleed, come true, spend, make, come, do, pile up, increase, spread, help, conquer, segregate, bring about, send, pay, throw, head, died, go, survive, perish, bear, find, escalate, bring, move, get, quit, beat, dry, push, leave, get over, clap, commit, stand, work, grow, crawl.</p>
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Table 4.2.1.3

It is possible to say that in songs written by African-Americans to an African-American audience, the intention is to create a 'revolutionary' atmosphere, where African-Americans are represented as resisting and fighting discrimination and also as the ones who are able to do the things they want simply because they are capable of doing them. These two major ideas provide the basis for the articulation and reinforcement of the pride and power discourse of African-Americans relevant for the articulation of the Black Power movement.

#### 4.2.2 Mental Processes

According to Halliday (1994), these processes involve perception, cognition and affection. They represent inner and outer experiences such as, for instance, the experiences of seeing, hearing, liking, thinking, knowing, etc. For these processes two other participants are introduced: the Senser, which is the participant that is 'endowed with consciousness' (ibid., p. 114), and the Phenomenon, which is the participant being sensed.

In the samples analysed here, 21 mental processes were found. Of these 42,86% are used only with African-American as Sensers. 38,10% are used only with European-Americans as Sensers, and 19,05% are used either with African-Americans or with European-Americans.

The following examples show all the mental processes (9) with African-Americans as Sensers:

S 1: ...You have you to **complete** [you have to complete (fulfil) yourself] and there is no deal...;

S 5: ... I say we won't quit moving/until we get what we **deserve**...;

S 6: ... I don't **want** no mess about/who's taking who...;

S 7: ... I don't **care** where you come from...;

S 8: ... shall we commit suicide before we **check out** our mind...;

S 9: ... if you had a choice of color which one would you **choose** my brother...; ... if there was no day or night which would you **prefer** to be right...; ...we shall **overcome** our beliefs one day/if you'll **listen** to what I have to say...;

S 10: ... we've survived a hard blow and I **want** you to know/that you must face us at last...;

In S 1 and in S 2, the choices for those verbs seems to imply that African-Americans are not satisfied with the life they lead and thus need to struggle to have their dreams and desires fulfilled. This may reflect the social and economic conditions many African-American individuals and

families were possibly inserted in at that time, the 60s, which brought dissatisfaction and desire for change.

In S 6 and S 10 the choices reflect the relationship between African-Americans and European-Americans. They may imply that the former want their place in society and an end to prejudice against their colour. Such prejudice is also discussed in S 9 where the problem affects African-Americans' own beliefs, that is, they may even want to become 'white' and get rid of prejudice. This might suggest how hard it is to be an African-American in a racist society. They might possibly suffer so much discrimination that at some point, if they could, they probably would think about changing their colour.

The table below presents the mental processes with only African-Americans as Sensers.

Mental Processes	Deserve, want, care, check out, choose, prefer, overcome, complete, listen
African-Americans as Sensers	I, you, we

Table 4.2.2.1

It is possible to say that when European-Americans are Sensers, the choices were made to represent them with a certain bias towards African-Americans. The examples below may illustrate such interpretation:

S 2: ... you love me you hate me/you know me and then/still can't figure out the scene I'm in...;

S 3: ... everybody thinks we're wrong/but who are they to judge us...;

S 8: ... we're just good for nothing they all figure...; ... if your mind could really see/you'd know your color same as me...;

S 10: ... some people **think** we don't have the right/to say it's my country...;

These representations show the way songwriters placed European-Americans in relation to African-Americans. The former are portrayed as unable to understand the issues of race, equality, and respect, therefore being criticised for such behaviour.

The table below indicates the mental processes with only European-Americans as Sensors.

Mental processes	Figure, figure out, think, judge, pardon, understand, get (yourself) together, make sense
European-Americans as Sensors	You, they, everybody, your mind, some people

Table 4.2.2.2

The most frequent mental process occurs with the verb *know*: twelve occurrences where six are with African-Americans as Sensors, 5 with European-Americans as Sensors and 1 which can be interpreted as being both of them. The examples below show African-Americans as the Sensors *you*, and *I*:

S 1: ... Don't you **know** that you are free? ...;

S 3: ... you **know** we've got to find a way ...;

S 7: ... I **know** you won't mind ...; ... I **know** we've all got problems ...; ... I **know** we have great respect for the sister ...; ... I **know** we've come a long long way ...;

In the first two clauses the songwriter stresses the idea that African-Americans have to perceive freedom and unite to find solutions for their

problems, which he reinforces in the last three instances when he includes himself with the pronoun *I*.

There are also generalisations where the Sensers are nominal groups that represent different groups of people:

S 2: ... then it's the blue ones who can't **accept** the green ones ...; ... it's the new man that doesn't **like** the short man ...; ... there's a yellow one that won't **accept** the black one that won't **accept** the red one that won't **accept** the white one ...;

In the instances above those participants were chosen to criticise discrimination in general as a way of pointing out that race discrimination is not a matter which concerns only African-Americans but all minorities.

An important aspect that can be observed with the analysis of mental processes in the song texts is that African-Americans as Sensers are shown as sharing the same ideals and the same problems, that is, problems become collective and apply to both the songwriter and the African-American audience.

On the other hand, European-Americans as Sensers are portrayed as those that are not capable of reasoning. They regard others as inferior people, they cannot control their emotions, and their behaviour reflects the way they think of other races. This seems to portray the social beliefs of European-Americans as being intransigent, unwilling to acknowledge equality of rights and unable to accept African-Americans as a people in their own right.

The table below includes all the mental processes found in the samples of the 68-72 period.

accept, care, check out, choose, figure, judge, give consideration, hate, know, like, love, make sense, make difference, matter, overcome, pardon, prefer, see, think, understand, and want.
--

Table 4.2.2.3

#### 4.2.3 Relational Processes

According to Halliday (1994, p. 119), in this type of process "...a relation is being set up between two separate entities." This relation is further subdivided in three main types, the Intensive, Circumstantial, and the Possessive, and each of them can be either Attributive, where "... an entity has some quality ascribed or attributed to it." (ibid., p. 120), or Identifying, where "... some thing has an identity assigned to it." (ibid., p. 122). The latter has Identified and Identifier as participants, while the former has the label Attribute for the quality ascribed to an entity, which is called Carrier.

In the samples analysed here there were eight relational processes, of which 50% (four) have African-Americans as Carriers/Identified; one process was used only with European-Americans, the verb *stand* (stand for), and the remaining three, *be*, *have*, and *get*, were used with all participants, including general nouns and nominal groups.

The following examples present the verbs used only with African-Americans in the position of Carrier:

S 5: ... some people say we **got** a lot of malice...;

S 8: ... are we gonna **stand** around this town ...; ... don't let us **hang** around this town/and let what others say come true ...; ...I know we've all **got** problems/that's why I'm here to say...; ... a boyish grown up shiftless jigger/now we can't hardly **stand** for that...;

In the instances where there is a Carrier and a circumstance as attribute, it seems to be implied that African-Americans do not need to accept the discriminatory opinions of European-Americans. They might have the option of going somewhere else instead of being disrespected where they are. This discriminatory opinion of African-Americans can be seen in two instances above, in S 5 and the last clause in S 8, where they are considered lazy and a threat by European-Americans.

The most frequent relational process occurs with the verb *be*. There are 34 instances of this process of which 73,53% are used with African-Americans as Carrier/Identified. European-Americans are Carrier/Identified in two instances, and nominal groups in seven instances. The examples below show some instances of this process with African-Americans as Carriers:

S 1: ... Don't you know that you **are** free? Well, at least in your mind if you want to **be** [free]...; ... Stand! For the things you know **are** right ...; ... All the things you want **are** real ...;

S 2: ... Sometimes I'm [**am**] right then I can **be** wrong ...; ...I **am** no better and neither are you ...; ... we're [**are**] all the same whatever we do ...; ... the black ones trying to **be** a skinny one...;

S 5: ... we're [**are**] people, we're [**are**] just like the birds and the trees ...; ... Say it loud – I'm [**am**] black and I'm [**am**] proud ...;

S 7: ... we're [**are**] a winner...; ...we're [**are**] living proof...;

S 8: ... we, people who **are** darker than blue...; ... we're [**are**] just good for nothing/they all figure...; ...let us stop **being** so satisfied ...;



These instances of African-Americans as Carriers seem to serve the function of stressing the qualities of African-Americans and promoting self-esteem among themselves. Songwriters emphasise that with their lexical choices for the position of attribute. Words like *free*, *real*, *proud*, and *winner* seem to help create that idea of self-esteem and also reinforce the values of being African-American.

There are two instances where European-Americans are Carriers, which are presented below:

S 2: ... I am no better and neither are you...;

S 8: ... Pardon me brother as you stand [are] in your glory/I know you won't mind if I tell the whole story...;

In the first instance the songwriter stresses the idea that people are the same, a common feature in the song texts seen so far. In the second, the songwriter is portrayed as apologising for what he has to say to European-Americans while they stay 'up' in their place. It seems that this particular instance is mocking the idea of a 'superior white' and an 'inferior black'.

There are also nouns and nominal groups that take the participant position of Carriers as the examples below show:

S 2: ... my own beliefs are in my songs ...; ... the short man for being such a rich one ...;

S 3: ... you see, war is not the answer ...;

S 6: ... your black and white power is gonna be a crumbling tower ...; ... might I get a little bit deeper human life is from the semen seed ...;

Once again the choices made in some of these instances seem to reinforce the idea that prejudice leads nowhere and that it might be more sensible to accept life as it is.

Interestingly, as I have already pointed out above, the majority of the relational processes in the protest discourse of songs written by and to African-Americans the aim was to portray themselves as people who are equal to all others, and having their own values and beliefs.

The table below shows all the relational processes that were found in the song texts:

Relational Processes	Be, have, stand around, hang around, get, stand, stand for, got
African-Americans as Carrier/Identified	I, we, black ones
European-Americans As Carriers	You
Nouns or Nominal groups as Carrier/Identified	Lord, black & white power, human life, war, the short man

Table 4.2.3.1

#### 4.2.4 Verbal Processes

These processes are related to the act of saying or, perhaps more appropriately, the act of communicating. Therefore, they refer to verbs that can express these types of acts, for instance saying, telling, and talking, among others. Participants in these processes are called Sayer, Quoted,

Reported, Receiver, Verbiage, and Target. Sayer stands for ‘... anything that puts out a signal ...’ (Halliday, 1994, p. 140); Quoted corresponds to the representation of what is communicated in direct speech; Reported stands for the representation of what is communicated in indirect speech; Receiver is the entity to which the message is addressed; Verbiage corresponds to nouns and nominal groups representing what is said; and Target stands for an entity involved in the message conveyed.

There are eight verbal processes in the samples analysed in this chapter. 50% of them (four) are used only with African-Americans as Sayers. The other processes are used with European-Americans, both European-American and African-American, and a nominal group as Sayers.

The most frequent process is the verb *say*, with 9 instances out of 21 occurrences of verbal processes. It appears with African-Americans in six instances and with European-Americans in three instances. The examples below portray African-Americans as Sayers:

- S 5: ... I say we won't quit moving...; ... [you] Say it loud – I'm Black and I'm Proud ...;  
 S 6: ... now I'm gonna say it loud/I'm just as proud as the brothers too...;  
 S 7: ... Let us all say Amen/and together we'll clap our hands...;  
 S 8: ... That's why I'm here to say/keep peace with me and I with you...;  
 S 10: ... Some people think we don't have the right to say/it's my country...;

The choice for the verb *say* in the song texts written by African-Americans seems to be that of motivating the audience/listeners to become involved in what they are communicating. As singers, Sayers have the possibility to persuade the audience/listeners to accept the message as true

and make it their own, which is reinforced also by the use of the inclusive *we* or as a command, as is the case in the second instance of sample 5.

In the context of the African-American movements, this interpretation seems more plausible, for the intention of making African-Americans more aware of the attitudes and values defended by them seems realised through what the songwriters/singers can communicate to their audiences/listeners.

On the other hand, in the three instances where European-Americans are Sayers (referred to by the nominal group *some people* and by the indefinite pronoun *anyone*) of the process *say* they are represented as mistakenly evaluating African-Americans in the reported verbalisation. This can be seen below:

S 5: ...*Some people say* we got a lot of malice/*some* [people] *say* it's a lot of nerds...; ... We've been [re]buked [by them] and we've been scorned...;

S 7: ... and never let *anybody say/boy* you can't make it/cause a feeble mind is in your way...;

Such instances serve to illustrate that the dichotomy positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation found by Van Dijk (1991) in the media discourse, where the tendency is to represent minorities negatively and the elite as tolerant and non-racist, is reversed. That is, European-Americans are negatively represented, usually through their beliefs, and African-Americans on the contrary are depicted as sensible and with a more broad-minded approach to the issue of discrimination. Their

own values and beliefs tend to highlighted positively, so as to encourage them to have a better image of themselves.

The second most frequent verbal process, with 5 occurrences, is the verb *tell*. Three of the instances have African-Americans as Sayers or nominal groups referring to them ( S 7 and the last instance of S 8), one has European-Americans as Sayer (S 9), and one a nominal group as Sayer (first instance in S 8). These are shown below:

S 7: ... we'll just keep on pushing/like your leaders **tell** you to...; ...we'll just keep on pushing/like Martin Luther King **told** us to...;

S 8: ... high yellow gal can't you **tell**/you're just the surface of our deep dark well...; ... pardon me brother as you stand in your glory/I know you won't mind if I **tell** the whole story...;

S 9: ... How long have you hated your white teacher/who **told** you, you love your black preacher...;

In the instances in S 7, African-Americans are asked to keep on striving for their rights and following the leaders of the movements for equal rights. They show, once more, that songwriters were involved in the dissemination of the ideals of those movements continually insisting in the involvement of the African-American community in them. The first instance in S 8 seems to suggest that skin colour follows a continuum where in one end one finds the 'black' individual and on the other the 'white' individual, thus equally portraying all individuals regardless of the colour of their skin.

The other verbal processes with Arican-Americans as Sayers can be seen in the examples below:

S 4: ...Money, we make it/before we see it you take it/Oh, make you wanna **holler**...;

S 5: ... now we **demand** a chance to do things for ourselves...;

S 9: ... now some of us would rather **cuss** and **make a fuss** than to bring about a little trust...;

The two first instances portray African-Americans in situations which seem to become part of their everyday lives, screaming for being helpless and also demanding their way out of such situation. However, in S 9 the criticism is on the African-Americans who do not strive for a better situation for their peers.

The table below shows all the verbal processes found in the data of this chapter:

Verbal Processes	Say, tell, talk, demand, cuss, make a fuss, holler, and [re]buked.
African-Americans as Sayers	I, you, we, your leaders, and Martin Luther King.
European-Americans as Sayers	You, some people, anybody, white teacher.

Table 4.2.4.1

The choices of verbal processes for the song texts of the 68-72 period, as could be seen above, are used to suggest mainly three ideas: the first is to make the African-American audience aware of the importance to continue striving for a better social situation; the second is to create a positive identity for the African-American community and the individual; and the third is to show the mistaken beliefs European-Americans have towards African-Americans.

Such interpretation leads to an evaluation of such discourse as oppositional, since it seems to censure attitudes of European-Americans and also demands that African-Americans do something to change their own situation.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE SONG TEXTS OF THE 88-92 PERIOD**

In the first section of this chapter I present a discussion of the socio-historical context within which the song texts of this period have emerged, as well as a discussion of the artists and musical genre in question, namely rap. This discussion will precede the transitivity analysis, as it has been done with the discussion related to the 68-72 period presented in Chapter 3. Also, it is important to point out that the analysis of the context of situation explored in Chapter 3 applies for the song texts of both periods. This means that it will not be necessary to have a second analysis of the context of the situation in this chapter.

The second section of the chapter brings a discussion of the general content of the song texts, that is, what songwriters/singers wrote and sang about.

Finally, I present the transitivity analysis applied to the song texts of the period comprehended between 1988 and 1992. It will follow the same pattern of the previous chapter with the analysis of the verb processes and their participants. That is, each processes will be discussed separately along with the participants involved in these processes for all the samples.



### 5.1 The socio-historical context

In the 80s, with the election of President Ronald Reagan, many of the gains of African-Americans in the previous decades seemed to lose strength without the help of the Federal Government of the United States.

According to Franklin (1988), the government was increasingly moving away from the responsibilities of assuring the rights of African-Americans:

Através de um programa de enfraquecimento da Administração de Assistência à Aplicação da Lei, o Presidente não somente restringiu a aplicação das leis contra a discriminação na habitação, como também retirou das pessoas pobres a única oportunidade que tinham de obter assistência para reparos legais em suas reclamações contra senhorios, donos de loja, agiotas e outras pessoas pelas quais se julgavam prejudicadas. Também insistia que a aplicação das leis sobre os direitos civis devia ser deixada para os estados. .... Enquanto isso, a nova administração interessava-se pela redução do papel do governo no trato com matérias surgidas segundo os dispositivos da legislação, como a Lei de Direitos Civis de 1964 e a Lei do Direito de Voto de 1965. Realmente, o Presidente demorou a apoiar a renovação da Lei do Direito de Voto de 1982 e, quando finalmente se dispôs a isto, foi com aparente relutância (485).

While still in presidential campaign, Reagan insisted that government concessions only made people more dependent on the government. After his election, he started to cut down on financial aids to social programmes such as medical assistance, scholarships to students, and unemployment benefit, among others. Tax concessions also affected those who earned less:

Os 31,7 milhões de contribuintes de impostos que ganhavam 15.000 dólares anuais ou menos deviam receber 8 por cento de redução tributária, enquanto os 1,5 milhões que recebiam 50.000 dólares ou mais deviam receber 35 por cento. (ibid., 487).

In 1984, a survey revealed the dissatisfaction of African-Americans in relation to governmental policies when 83% of them mentioned that the politics of the Reagan administration was damaging to African-Americans and 94% disapproved the way poor people's conditions were handled. Unemployment among African-Americans was rising steadily:

Em 1982, o índice de desemprego negro foi de 18,9 por cento, mais do que o dobro do índice dos brancos, de 8,4 por cento. Até mesmo em 1985, quando a situação foi melhor, o índice de desemprego entre os negros foi de 16,3 por cento, enquanto entre os brancos havia caído para 6,2 por cento. Enquanto isso, o índice de desemprego dos negros jovens, entre 16 e 19 anos, se elevava a mais de 50 por cento, pela primeira vez na história. Quando se examinava a renda, via-se que o quadro era igualmente desanimador. Os trabalhadores negros no início dos anos 1980 ganhavam menos do que os trabalhadores brancos em todas as classificações significativas, fosse por idade, instrução, sexo ou ocupação (ibid., 488).

These numbers reveal the difficult reality African-Americans were facing at that time since, in general, a great amount of them were unemployed, and governmental aids and social benefits such as welfare were becoming scarce. The situation for them continued to worsen:

With the Bush administration maintaining the apathy toward the inner cities that was established in Ronald Reagan's eight years in office, things were not getting better in the black communities nationwide in 1990. Murder rates and supplies of crack cocaine, powdered heroin, and automatic weapons all increased dramatically in the inner cities. To add to the sense of helplessness, a number of nationally renowned black figures were imprisoned or humiliated – such as the Godfather of Soul James Brown's high speed chase through Georgia and subsequent six-year sentence in 1989, Washington, D.C., Mayor Marion Barry's videotaped arrest smoking crack with a prostitute in 1990, and heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson's controversial rape conviction in 1992, to name a few.

While from the outside these appeared to be isolated events involving individuals who violated the law and were punished for it, many in the inner cities made the connection with the lack of opportunities in their own communities and what appeared to be state harassment of even their most successful role models. The perception was clear: Racism was in full effect, from the bottom all the way to the top. .... With less and less to believe in, contempt for the system was at an all-time high. Eventually, the rage of the people could not be repressed, as the so-called Rodney King rebellion swept the nation on April 29, 1992, and frustrated citizens disrupted, burned and looted business districts from Los Angeles to Toronto (Vincent, 1995: 317).

The reality facing African-Americans in the 80s and the beginning of the 90s was not very different from that in the 60s and 70s. Unemployment was still a major problem, and the government that supposedly should provide better opportunities for minorities and poor people was on the contrary avoiding further responsibilities and denying already given facilities.

Political and economic decisions were reducing the possibility of better living conditions for African-Americans. These decisions acted directly upon the budget of many people and the social distance between European-Americans and African-Americans only grew wider. Underclass, underprivileged, and with an uncertain future ahead, being an African-American in the United States meant (and possibly still means) a constant struggle to survive amid insecurities.

It might be possible to say that what has been mentioned above can be an example of hegemony in the United States. Political and economic decisions help reinforce domination of the elite groups, including the government, and the subordination of others, specially African-Americans. Economic deprivation might be a less direct form of racial discrimination whose grounds might be less contested since budget cuts seem to be a common policy among governments. What it does is simply relegate minorities to an inferior level and confirm dominance without much resistance.

### **5.1.1 The African-American popular music in the 80s and 90s**

Originally, the Hip-Hop cultural movement that started in the mid-70s evolved as an art form which included graffiti art and break dance. Rap music, a third component of the movement, came into existence shortly after in the late 70s. According to Havelock (1996, *in* Billboard Music Guide – BMG – CD-ROM), rap music came “straight from the streets of the South Bronx – a sort of poverty theme park whose ruin and destruction became the primary symbol of urban decay in America...”

In the beginning, rap was no more than turntable art. The first DJs would bring their stereo equipment and plug them into the bases of street lamps and transform public places such as parks, residential blocks and community centres into party spaces. They would gather different musical styles, such as blues, funk, and rhythm and blues, and extend the rhythmic peaks of records with the aid of two turntables and a mixer. One DJ called Grandmaster Flash, “... redirected their [listeners’] attention by attaching an open mike to his equipment and inviting audience participation. Soon, neighborhood kids began reciting their simple rhymes over public address systems. Thus, rap was born.” (ibid.)

It was only in the early 80s that rap started to be marketed as a musical genre on its own, and its powerful force became evident in the late 80s and early 90s when some rap artists developed what became known as political rap. According to Vincent (1995: 305),

The late 1980s and early 1990s brought about a radical turnabout in black American culture. An intelligent youth movement in fashion, attitude, rhythm, and rhyme spread across the country through the beats of Hip Hop. Yet beyond the stylistic change was the development of a new historical consciousness and a frank new racial dialogue among the young. In almost every perceptible way, the new movement in the music, in the proud new attitude, and in the grim, bittersweet, and almost absurd ideals of change amounted to a renaissance of the funk movement of the 1970s.

The context in which political rap has emerged nation-wide was concurrent to the Republican administration in the U.S. of both Reagan and Bush. As seen in the previous section, in the 12 years of the Republicans in power (8 for Ronald Reagan and 4 for George Bush), unemployment was the most serious problem for African-Americans, specially the young ones. Music accompanied the hard times and rap "... spoke to the realities, perceptions, misperceptions, and aspirations that for too long lay stillborn on ghetto streets..." (Henderson, 1996: 7).

The two most influential and important rap groups that became known for producing political rap songs and speaking about the problems of the young African-Americans in the ghettos were Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions, BDP (Wynn & Erlewine, 1996 *in* BMG CD-ROM).

The latter was formed in 1986 by Laurence K. Parker, the singer and songwriter known as KRS-ONE (an acronym for Knowledge Reigns Supreme Over Nearly Everyone), and DJ Scott La Rock. Shortly after they released their debut album "Criminal Minded" in 1987, Scott was murdered. Instead of ending the group, KRS-ONE invited his brother Kenny Parker and friend D-Nice to be his DJs and continued to record as BDP.

In their second album released in 1988 called "By All means Necessary", BDP started to talk about the problems facing African-Americans on the streets of New York. Songs such as "Illegal Business" and "Stop the Violence" spoke of the drug-dealing matter and the 'black-on-black' violence, respectively, among African-Americans. In 1989 BDP released "Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop" an album that concentrated more on racial issues and spoke openly of the 'black - white' dichotomy. Three of its songs "You Must Learn", "Who Protect us From You?" and "Bo! Bo! Bo!" are analysed below.

According to Erlewine, KRS-ONE "... began calling himself 'the Teacher', promoting self-awareness and education in his rhymes." (1996, *in* BMG CD-ROM) and his 1990 follow-up album "Edutainment" was criticised for being lectures over music. BDP released two more records and by 1993 KRS-ONE decided to start a solo career yet still focusing on issues relevant to African-Americans.

Public Enemy released in 1987 their first album "Yo! Bum Rush The Show" and had Carlton Ridenhour (Chuck D), William Drayton (Flavor Flav), Norman Rodgers (Terminator X), and The Bomb Squad (the production team) as members. With Chuck D as the songwriter and head rapper sharing some of the singing with rapper Flavor Flav and backed by the music of DJ Terminator X and The Bomb Squad, their debut album

caused surprise in the rap scene with a different complex sound, with multiple sampling, scratching and much heavier than other rap groups.

However, it was with their second album “It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back”, released in 1989, that the group started to reveal its political and social views. Songs like “Don’t Believe the Hype”, “Night of the Living Baseheads”, and “Black Steel in the Hour of Chaos” dealt with, respectively, criticisms to the media, drug addiction, and imprisoned African-Americans.

In a manifesto released by the group to the British press in 1987, Chuck D summarised what their objectives were:

We’re out for one thing only, and that’s to bring back the resurgence of black power. We’re out for the preservation and the building of the young black mind; trying to make people aware, making ‘em educate themselves. We represent the young black in America. We’re the targets of the system there. In order for *them* to find out what I’m talking about, they’d better get the right interpretation from the kids. The system has to understand that we’re coming from a point of power and intimidation to get respect in the white system (*in Fortnam, 1997, his italics*).

Their third album “Fear of a Black Planet” from 1990 was consistent with their statement and brought some of their strongest criticisms to the ‘black-white’ relationship. Five of its song texts “Fight the Power”, “Power to the People”, “Burn Hollywood Burn”, “Brothers Gonna Work it Out”, and the title track “Fear of a Black Planet” are analysed below.

Their following album released in 1991 continued to be critical, however focusing more on problems within the African-American community than discrimination. After that they did not record for three years and their next album from 1994 was considered weak by the critics. In

1995, they decided to stop playing live and the members pursued solo projects. Since then they have recorded occasionally but are still considered one of the best rap groups ever.

Although rap came from the streets of the ghettos in New York, it did not go unnoticed by the music industry. Rap groups such as Boogie Down Productions and Public Enemy were hired by independent, African-American owned, record companies. However, mainstream success required the national distribution that only major, European-American owned, companies could provide. That led many of the independent ones to sign distribution deals with the majors to secure nation-wide distribution.

Such involvement of the major companies was mainly economic. As Garofalo (1997, 247) has noted “in general, the major record companies have been intelligent enough to leave the creative functions of rap production at street level.” What the major industries wanted was profit, and giving the artists freedom to produce and reach their young audience with uncut messages made rap the most profitable musical commodity in the United States. In a recent report in the Time magazine, Farley (1999) shows that

In 1998, for the first time ever, rap outsold what previously had been America’s top-selling format, country music. Rap sold more than 81 million CDs, tapes and albums last year, compared with 72 million for country. Rap sales increased a stunning 31% from 1997 to 1998, in contrast to 2% gains for country, 6% for rock and 9% for the music industry overall (p. 1-2)

Arguably, rap became one of the most valuable assets of African-Americans.



## 5.2 The general content of the songs

When compared to the song texts of the previous chapter, the topics and general content of the ones analysed here show some similarities but also seem to be more diverse than those of the 68-72 period. While there was a general picture of integration and equality in the latter, the ones of the 88-92 period seem more critical and direct. I discuss now what the rap songs talked about in general before going to the analysis of transitivity in the next section.

From the album “Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop” by the Boogie Down Productions, I have selected three songs. “Bo! Bo! Bo!” is a narrative describing the relationship of the police and African-Americans, particularly the singer who is the protagonist of the story. The title suggests the sound of guns being fired and it is also suggested in the first verse of the song text that if a person is ‘black’, one has to be armed to defend her/himself. Discriminated by the police, the protagonist confronts the officers, kills one of them, and becomes a fugitive helped by fellow African-Americans. The song seems to criticise discrimination and suggests it possibly leads to physical violence.

Another song from the same album, “Who Protect Us From You?”, deals with a similar subject. Instead of narrating facts, the song text discusses the role and authority of the police and comments on the attitudes and judgements taken by its officers suggesting that they are discriminating.

The third song is called "You Must Learn" and it seems to criticise the educational system in the United States. It suggests that the way African-Americans are taught is mistaken and does not reflect their reality. It also suggests that subjects such as history should focus on topics that are relevant for African-American students.

Taken from another BDP album, "Edutainment", the song called "The Racist" tries to suggest that there are five different types of racist people. It tends to emphasise racism practised by European-Americans; however, it suggests that the prejudice African-Americans have against European-Americans do not let them see that a great number of the latter helped them strive for equal rights.

From the album "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back", Public Enemy recorded a song called "Party for your Right to Fight". The song is a call for African-Americans to revive the Black Panther Party which advocated that African-Americans should arm themselves to fight against elite domination and, most possibly due to that, was eventually extinguished by the FBI in the early 70s.

Similarly, the songs "Power to the People", "Brothers Gonna Work it Out" and "Fight the Power" from the album "Fear of a Black Planet" seem to suggest the return to the ideals of the black revolution and the Black Power movement of the late 60s. They suggest the need for African-Americans to be united in order to advance socially. Among all, the latter

seems to be the most critical, even naming and blaming famous European-Americans for being racists.

Two other songs from the same album, “Burn Hollywood Burn” and “Fear of a Black Planet” deal with other topics. The former, as the title reveals, suggests an attack on the Hollywood film industry which is blamed for being racist and giving discriminatory roles such as butlers, maids and prostitutes to African-American actors and actresses. The latter asks European-Americans a direct question: how would fathers behave if their daughter loved an African-American? Chuck D, the songwriter and singer, mentions that what the song is dealing with “... is the white man’s collective history of protecting his white woman from the black man. The genetic annihilation theory as proposed by white supremacy” (*in Fortnam, 1997*).

This outline of the topics of the song texts already points out, as mentioned before, to some similarities in their content to those in the songs from the previous period. The revival of the revolutionary ideals of the movements of the 60s and 70s in four of the songs might serve to emphasise that African-Americans need the feeling of affection and respect, at least among themselves, to fight oppression and discrimination.

### **5.3 The representation of reality**

As I have mentioned previously in Chapter 4, the analysis of the song texts through the lexicogrammatical system of transitivity (Halliday,

1994) allows the investigation of the mental picture of reality of African-Americans and their representation of experiences and the world.

For the analysis below I have used the same patterns of discussion of the previous chapter. The ten song texts for the 88-92 period are referred to in the examples through their number in the Appendix B, for instance S 11 (Sample 11). The verbs are classified into material, mental, relational and verbal processes and their respective participants are discussed in terms of position and reference, for instance, African-Americans in the position of Actors as in "... Black women playing lawyers..." in S 17.

The exploration of these verb processes and participants aims at revealing the linguistic choices used by African-American songwriters and whether they can be regarded as oppositional or not. This is done through the investigation of which verbs are related to African-Americans, which are related to European-Americans, which are related to both and their frequency and what all these can suggest.

### **5.3.1 Material Processes**

In the ten song texts of the 88-92 period there are 109 material processes. Of these, 49,55% are only used with African-American participants, 10,1% are only used with European-American participants, 18,35% are used with other general nouns or nominal groups (nouns and nominal groups which do not directly refer to African-Americans or

European-Americans) as participants, 12,85% are used either with African-Americans and European-Americans participants, 5,51% are used either with African-American participants and other generic nouns, 2,76% are used with all mentioned participants, and only one verb is used either with European-Americans and generic nouns as participants.

The most frequent material processes which have African-Americans in the participant position of Actors are *run* with six instances, *play* with 3 instances, and *break*, *throw*, *show*, and *get down* with two instances each. All the other verbs are used only once (see table 5.3.1.1 below for all material processes with African-American Actors). The following examples illustrate some of the occurrences above:

- S 11: ... ah boy you better watch where you **run**...; why were you **running** down the street...;  
 S 17: ...And black women in this profession as for **playing** a lawyer, out of the question...;  
 ... For what they **play** Aunt Jemima is the perfect term...;  
 S 19: ... My beloved let's **get down** to **business**/mental self defensive fitness...;

The verb *run* is the most frequent due to the narrative of the incident with the police in S 11. The two clauses are part of a clause complex where the main process is verbal, functioning as the direct quote of that process. However, the quotes suggest two possible readings for the verb *run*: in the first it implies that the action of running should be done somewhere else and in the second it implies running not as an exercise but probably going away from someone. The songwriter may want to suggest that the police has the biased assumption that when African-Americans run, they probably have done something wrong.

The same biased assumption is suggested in relation to African-American actresses in Hollywood in S17. They play servant roles and the song text suggests that they possibly are not allowed to have a better role.

In the other two samples there is a contrast in relation to the previous ones. The Actors *we*, and *my beloved* referring to African-Americans suggest that they need to stay together as a group and educate themselves in order to deal with their condition as a minority. This type of representation becomes common with other material processes being used to suggest that action has to be taken. There are some other examples below:

S 13: ...[Benjamin Banneker] a brilliant black man that **invented** the almanac...; ... Lewis Latterman **improved on** Edison...; ... Harriet Tubman **freed** the slaves at night...;

S 15: ... so [you] **get up**/time to get them back...;

S 18: ... [you] **get down** (party for your right)/huh, let's **get it on**...; ...Brothers gonna **work it out**...;

S 20: ... [You] **get on up**, **get into it**, get involved...;

In S 13 there are real examples of African-Americans that have done something outstanding which provides a reference to others, helping to build a higher self-esteem among African-Americans. The next samples bring the need for involvement in the community and for building a sense of collective effort for better conditions. It also suggests a renewal of the ideals of pride and unity which were part of the Black Power movement in the 60s. This is reinforced with other material process where African-Americans are actors:

S 18: ...We gonna **work** it one day/till we all get **paid**...; ...in 1995, you'll **twist** to this/as you **raise** your fist to the music...;

S 19: ... We got to **fight** the powers that be/let me hear you say/**fight** the power...; ... We got to **pump** the stuff to make us tough from the heart...; ... let's get this party **started** right/right on, c'mon...;

S 20: ... Hey oh people, people as we **continue on/come along**...; ... and we're ready to **roll** yo y'all got to tell me/are y'all ready to **go c'mon**...; ... [I] had to kick it like that as we **roll** as one...;

Table 5.3.1.1 below brings all the material processes which have only African-American as actors:

Material processes	Begin, break, bust, continue, come along, chase, cook, check, demonstrate, escape, find, free, fetch, get away, get down, get into, get on, get together, get up, hang out, include, invent, improve, jog, lay, load, move, pay, produce, pull, portray, play, roam, raise, run, show, swing, slap, sit, stay, stagger, stick, step, star, strike, sue, twist, tour, throw, turn, turn up, work, work out.
African-American as actors	I, you, we, they, three black women, those people, black women, black man, people, my wife, brothers, my beloved, a brilliant black man, Lewis Latterman, Harriet Tubman

Table 5.3.1.1

Although in a smaller number (11), there are also material processes which have only European-Americans as Actors. These processes are *bring up*, *die*, *end*, *grow*, *invade*, *kick*, *live*, *occur*, *poke*, *teach*, and *turn loose*. The following examples some of their occurrences:

S 14: ... here you have young men and women/**brought up** in the Great White Way opinion...; ... a large sum of white people **died** with blacks/trying hard to **fight** racial attacks...; ... the media wants you to think that no whites/really **fought** and **died** for Civil Rights...;

S 15: ... your so called government made this **occur**...;

S 16: ... I've been wondering why/people [are] **living** in fear of my shade...;

European-Americans are represented as being racist because of a white supremacist environment, as afraid of dark-skinned people, and of ending African-American movements (the Black Power movement in S 15).

However, in two instances some of them are represented as joining African-Americans in the struggle for civil rights movement and dying with them. In doing so, they contradict the general negative representation of European-Americans.

According to Van Dijk (1991), in discourse about ethnic affairs in the press, for instance, there are two strategies that are used in the representation of elites and minorities: the ‘positive self-presentation’ of the elites and the ‘negative other-presentation’ of minorities. Interestingly, in song texts written by African-Americans the tendency is to reallocate the elites and the minority, African-Americans. Their representation is mostly positive and European-Americans are, on the other hand, represented negatively. This happens more clearly when the Goal of the action is an African-American, as in the examples below:

S 11: ... he **hit me** in the face with his gun...;

S 12: ... If I hit I’ll be killed/but you **hit me** I can sue?...; ... I’ve watched you as you grew/**kill**ing blacks and calling it the law...; ... so do not kick my door and tie me up..;

S 13: ... I sit in your unknown class while you’re **fail**ing us...;

S 14: ... not knowing they’re racist they **invade** your spaces...;

These material processes represent violent actions and they suggest that these actions are ‘natural’ attitudes of European-Americans. They kill, hit, and invade suggesting the abuse of power common to dominant groups over subordinate ones.



The table below presents the material processes that are used only with European-American Actors:

Material Processes	Bring up, die, end, grow, invade, kick, live, occur, poke, turn loose
European-Americans as Actors	You, he, they, young men and women, white people, people

Table 5.3.1.2

General nouns or nominal groups can be found as Actors of material processes. The examples below illustrate some of their occurrences:

S 13: ... It seems to me that in a school that's *ebony/African history* should be **pumped up** steadily...; ... when one doesn't know about the other ones' culture/*ignorance* **swoops down** like a vulture...;

S 14: ... if black and white didn't argue the most/they could clearly see *the government's* **screwing** them both...;

S 15: ... *some force* **cut** the power and **emerged** from hell/it was your so called government that made this occur...; ... and it takes *a nation of millions* to **hold us back**...;

S 16: ... the law *say the mixing of race* **makes** the blood impure...;

S 19: ... *music* **hitting** your heart cause I know you got soul...; ... as *the rhythm* [is] designed to **bounce/what counts is that the rhymes** [are] designed to **fill** your mind/now that you've realized that *pride's* **arrived**...; ... *a work of art* to **revolutionize, make a change**...;

In S14 and S15 the government is represented negatively, acting upon both African-Americans and European-Americans. In the latter the government is made responsible for the demise of a movement, the Black Panther Party. In the former, political and economic decisions taken by the government are damaging for both groups. The material processes chosen depict this sort of power relations between the government and the people, specially African-Americans. It suggests that its decisions oppress and reinforce domination, and therefore the hegemony of the elites.

The material processes discussed above could possibly be classified in two distinct categories: the ones that suggest a negative attitude and which are mostly used with European-American participants; and the ones that suggest a positive attitude towards the African-American community and their identity.

Concerning Kizer's (1983) rhetoric classification of protest songs into deliberative and epideictic, it is also possible to say that in relation to European-Americans the verb choices of doing harm to others might be seen as a strategy of blaming or censuring those attitudes, thus suggesting an epideictic rhetoric. In relation to African-Americans, the choices reflect the deliberative rhetoric, which implies the concern for change, depicted through the possible involvement of the audience in the process of change.

The table below presents all the material processes found in the ten song texts of the 88-92 period:

<p>Arrive, begin, break, bust, bring up, build, burn, bounce, cater, continue, come along, chase, cook, check, come, cut, do, demonstrate, drive, die, escape, end, emerge, exploit, find, fight, fail, free, fetch, fall, fill, give, get down, go, get back, get away, get up, get into, get together, grow, go on, get on, go boom (explode), hang out, hit, hold, include, invent, improve, invade, jump, jog, kill, kick, lay, load, live, move, make change, occur, overthrown, pump, protect, produce, pull, portray, play, poke, prevent, roam, raise, run, rush, rip, ring out, roll, revolt, revolutionise, show, swing, slap, sit, sell, stay, stand, stagger, stick, step, star, strike, sue, start, stop, swoop down, screw, slow down, twist, tour, throw, turn up, turn, take, trap, teach, turn loose, use, work out, walk, work.</p>
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Table 5.3.1.3 Material processes

### 5.3.2 Mental Processes

As seen previously, the verb processes that can be considered mental processes are the ones related to perception, affection and cognition. Since they refer to our senses and how we perceive and understand the world around us, it might be said that they can reveal social beliefs and social values. In the analysis I explore then the social beliefs and values implied in the linguistic choices of the song texts.

There are 63 mental processes, of which 53,97% have African-Americans as Sensers. 23,81% of the processes have European-Americans as Sensers; 14,29% are used with nouns or nominal groups as Sensers (which do not refer to African-Americans and European-Americans); 3,18% are used either with African-Americans or European-Americans; 3,18% are used with Sensers which stand for both African-Americans and European-Americans; and 1,59% is used with all types of participants mentioned above.

The most frequent mental process, with 16 instances and used with all types of Sensers, is the verb *know*. Of these 16, 13 instances have African-Americans as Sensers. Below are some examples of this process:

S 13: ... cause you don't know that you ain't just a janitor...; ... but you won't know this you weren't shown...;

S 15: ...and we're out to get it/I know some of you ain't with it...;

S 17: ... make us all look bad like I know they had...;

S 18: ... to never tell a woman he can't bother/you can't say you don't know what I'm talking about...;

S 19: ... I know you got soul...; ... [you're] knowing what I know...; ... we're not the same/cause we don't know the game...; ... you gotta go for what you know...;

Most of the clauses with the process *know* suggest an interaction between singer/songwriter and audience. For instance, in S 13 the singer/songwriter is telling the listener that there are things that s/he has no knowledge about or that s/he does not perceive certain facts. The songwriter is seen as the one who knows such facts and therefore might be able to advise listeners or question those who still do not have the knowledge. Knowledge then is supposed to be shared among peers and provide a sort of bonding between the participants.

There are two instances where European-Americans are Sensers, one being a question addressed to them and the other being an assertion that they are racists:

S 14: ... not **knowing** [they don't know that] they're racist they invade your spaces...;  
S 16: ... you might not be amused/**but** did you **know** white comes from black...;

These instances seem to suggest that European-Americans are not able to perceive what goes on around them, and therefore they may have a biased view of the world.

African-Americans, on the other hand, are represented with other processes as those able to reason about the facts of life. Examples include:

S 13: ... in fact you'll start to **illuminate**, knowledge to others in a song...; ... I don't **accept** everything that you're telling us...;  
S 14: ... truth and understanding is what I **crave**...; ... we're not out to **exaggerate** or **diss** (disrespect in rap's slang) him/**but** show the symptoms and facts of racism...;  
S 16: ... All I **want** is peace and love...;  
S 18: ... 'cause we rumble/from our lower level/to **condition** your condition...; ... brothers that try to work it out/they get mad, revolt, **revise**, **realize**...;  
S 19: ... now that you've **realized** the pride's arrived...; ... what we **need** is awareness...;  
S 20: [Public Enemy is] **making sure** the brothers will never leave you alone...; ... we shall **overcome**...;

A common aspect present in the choices of mental processes with African-American Sensers seems to be the quest for understanding their own condition as a minority group, suggesting that the probable way out of oppression and discrimination is through knowledge of facts that are not learned at schools, but discussed within the community. This is further explored in the song “You Must Learn” (S 13) which criticises the educational system in the United States for not taking into account the reality of African-Americans, a probable reflection of the times of segregated schools in the 50s and the difficulty of de-segregation in the 60s.

The table below presents the mental processes that have African-Americans as Sensers.

Mental processes	Listen, miss, need, hear, realise, look, illuminate, think, check out, make sure, match, forget, diss (disrespect), exaggerate, feel, figure, understand, get knowledge, wonder, watch, smell, awake, rely, bother, bet, overcome, crave, believe, accept, condition, revise, realise
African-Americans as Sensers	I, you, he, we, they, niggers, every posse (gang), black men, black women, Public Enemy, civilised man.

Table 5.3.2.1

Mental processes with European-Americans as Sensers, other than the verb *know*, can be seen in the examples below:

S 12: ... you **judge** a man by the car he drives/or if his hat **match** his shoes...;

S 14: ... people that **fear** the African and **conjure up** new ways of trapping him...;

S 16: ... man, you ain't gotta **worry** 'bout a thing/'bout your daughter...; ... but supposing she said she **loved** me...; ...she's a woman I'm a man/but by the look on your face/see ya can't **stand** it...; ... would you still **love** her...;

These choices seem an attempt to reflect the beliefs European-Americans have towards African-Americans in the United States. Some probably would not like to see their daughter in love with an African-American, some try to trap them, and some judge them wrongly. This depiction of European-Americans seem to reinforce the belief that they are racists and do not accept African-Americans as equal to them. This is an assumption that has probably been naturalised in the United States, even though times have changed. The table below presents the mental processes only with European-American Sensers.

Mental processes	Learn, fear, conjure up, admit, run (control), worry, stand, calm down, love, choose, worship, judge, prove, set up, consider
European-Americans as Sensers	You, he, they, man, people, European

Table 5.3.2.2

Some nouns as Sensers seem to suggest that prejudice is pervasive in different domains of society, for instance, in the media, etc. The example below may illustrate such suggestion:

S 14: ... the media wants you to think that no whites really fought and died for civil rights...;

It is suggested that the school system and curricula does not favour African-American history, that the media manipulates information, and the

films show their prejudice through the roles portrayed by African-Americans. Moreover, songwriters seem to portray the idea that elite institutions are engaged in reinforcing the domination of the elites, and therefore European-American hegemony.

The table below presents all the mental processes found in the song texts.

Know, suppose, learn, fear, conjure up, admit, run (control), worry, stand, calm down, love, choose, worship, judge, prove, set up, want, see, consider, take shortcuts (learn less), listen, miss, need, hear, realise, sample a look (take a look), look, illuminate, think, check out, diss (disrespect), exaggerate, feel, figure, understand, get knowledge, wonder, watch, smell, awake, rely, bother, bet, overcome, crave, believe, accept, condition, revise, realise, dwell, make sure, seems, disagree, insult, match, forget, protect, fuck, respect, behave, allow, make analysis (analyse).
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Table 5.3.2.3

### 5.3.3 Relational Processes

The number of relational processes in the song texts are small if compared to the previous processes. There are 9 relational processes: *be*, *got(have)*, *make(become)*, *get(be/become)*, *mean*, *look like*, *appear*, *look(represent)*, and *have*. The most frequent of these is the process *be* with 62 occurrences. In 46,78% of them the Carrier/Identified participants are African-Americans; and in 22,59% they are European-Americans; the remaining instances have general nouns as Carrier/Identified.

The examples below show African-Americans, or nominal groups referring to them, in the participant position of Carrier/Identified of the process *be*:

S 11: ... the only way to deal with racism if you're [are] black...;

S 12: ... there was a time when a black man/couldn't be down wit'your crew...;

S 13: ... what do you mean when you say I'm [am] rebellious...;

S 15: ... to those that disagree it causes static/for the original Black Asiatic man/Cream of the earth/and was here first...;

S 16: ... What is pure? Who is pure?/Is it European state of being, I'm [am]not sure...;

S 18: ... they're [brothers are] super bad/small chance a smart brother's/gonna be a victim of his own circumstance...; ... brother to brother not another as sincere/teach a man how to be a father...;

S 19: ... our freedom of speech is freedom or death...; ...I'm [am] black and I'm [am] proud/I'm [am]ready and hyped...;

Similar to the instances in the previous chapter, some of the ones above seem also to emphasise the qualities of African-Americans and promote self-esteem among them. For instance, in sample 18 it is suggested that educated African-Americans are hardly deceived and that individuals are supposed to help each other. In sample 19 the use of the famous line from Brown's song reflects the continuous effort to maintain the African-American people aware of their identity and make them realise that it is only by praising their own values and beliefs that they can make themselves respected.

On the other hand, when European-Americans are the Carrier/Identified participants of the relational process *be* the focus seems to be on the mistaken values and beliefs they have. The instances below illustrate that point of view:



S 14: ... Not knowing they're [are] racist they invade your spaces/they say, "I'm [am] not a racist, I'm [am] not a bigot" ...;

S 16: ... excuse us for the news/you might not be amused/but did you know white comes from black/no need to be confused...;

S 17: ...Burn Hollywood burn I smell a riot going on/first they're [are] guilty now they're gone...;

S 19: ... Elvis was a hero to most/but he never meant shit to me you see/straight up racist that sucker was...;

European-Americans are considered racists, and there is even a specific reference to a very well known European-American singer, Elvis Presley. In the instance in sample 14 there is an example of what Van Dijk (1991) calls the strategy of denial, where the two clauses that are quotes of a verbal process depict European-Americans denying their racism.

In sample 16 the assumption stated by the African-American songwriter that 'white comes from black', suggests that European-Americans may not be satisfied to know that, an assumption that goes against the tendency of seeing themselves as superior to African-Americans, which, according to Van Dijk (1998), is a common feature in the elite discourse.

Six of the nine relational processes found in the data of this chapter are used only with African-Americans in the participant position of Carrier/Identified. They are the verbs *appear*, *have*, *got*, *look*, *look like*, and *make*. The following examples show some occurrences of these processes:

S 13: ... It's calm yet wild the style that I speak/just filled with facts and you will never **get** [be/become] weak in the heart...;

S 17: ... for all the years we **looked like** clowns...: ... many intelligent men seemed to look uncivilised...;

S 19: ... music hitting your heart cause I know you **got** soul...; ... we got to pump the stuff to **make** [become] us tough...; what we need is awareness, we can't **get** [be] careless...;

While the instances in sample 17 criticise the prejudice against African-Americans through the roles given to African-American actors and actresses in Hollywood films, the instances in samples 13 and 19 suggest that knowledge and education are possibly the most important factors through which they can conquer their desired rights.

In general, the relational processes found in the data for this chapter follow the same pattern of presentation of European-Americans and African-Americans seen previously. The former are negatively represented through their biased beliefs towards African-Americans. These, in turn, are positively represented through their positive attitudes and values to achieve a better social condition for themselves.

The table below presents all the relational processes found in the data for this chapter.

Relational Processes	Appear, be, have, got, get, look, look like, make, mean
African-Americans as Carrier/Identified	I, you, we, black man, black Asiatic man, black men, a smart brother, a man, Aunt Jemima, Papa, most of my heroes.
European-Americans as Carrier/Identified	I, you, he, she, they, Elvis, that sucker.

Table 5.3.3.1

#### 5.3.4 Verbal processes

In the song texts analysed in this chapter there are sixteen verbal processes. 56,25% of them are used only with African-Americans as Sayers,

while 25% are used only with European-Americans as Sayers. There are also three verbal processes that are used with African-Americans and/or European-Americans.

The most frequent verbal process is the verb *say* with twenty-three occurrences, followed by the verbs *tell* with four occurrences and *sing*, *question* and *speak*, with three occurrences each. African-Americans are Sayers of *say* in 60,87% of the instances, and European-Americans are Sayers in 34,79% of the instances. The examples below show some occurrences with African-Americans as Sayers of *say*:

S 11: ... I **said** Officer man I ain't do nothing...;

S12: ... but who protect us from you?/or should I **say** who are you protecting?...;

S 18: ... let's get it on/like we **said** before...; ... like I **said** before to live it low/life take you time, time you go slow...; ... You can't **say** you don't know what I'm talking about...;

S 19: ... Let me hear you **say**/Fight the power...; ... You **say** what is this?/My beloved let's get down to business...; ... What we got to **say**/Power to the people no delay...;

In the first two samples the Quoted participant of the verb *say* refers to the attitudes of the police as an institution and its members. There is a suggestion that the police shows its prejudice against African-Americans through the ways it approaches them, with the biased assumption that African-Americans seem to be constantly misbehaving. Real facts, such as the beating of Rodney King by the Los Angeles Police officers in 1992, reinforces that biased assumption and makes criticism inevitable (Gama, 1998).

On the other instances the focus returns to the call to action proposed by the songwriters/singers. Similar to a typical protest march, the singers

also call the audience to ‘fight the power’ and sing ‘power to the people’, thus involving the listeners in the resistance to oppression of dominant groups.

European-Americans as Sayers of the process *say*, on the other hand, are represented showing their prejudice towards African-Americans. Some of the instances can be seen below:

S 11: ...He **said**, ah boy you better watch where you run...; He **said** what’s that word you niggers use, ya frontin?...;

S 12: ... Every time you **say** “That’s illegal”/Doesn’t mean that that’s true...;

S 13: ... What do you mean when you **say** I’m rebellious...;

S 14: ... They **say**, “I’m not a racist, I’m not a bigot”...; ... They **say**, “Owning a business isn’t for the black man He don’t want that”...;

S 15: ... I don’t want you sister/but supposing she **said** she loved me/would you still love her...;

S 18: ... They **say** the brothers causing trouble...;

In these instances the tendency to depict European-Americans negatively can be confirmed once again. They are represented as Carrier of biased beliefs and attitudes, as considering African-Americans rebellious and trouble makers, and as being authoritarian, exercising their power over the dominated group.

The verbal processes that are used only with African-Americans as Sayers are *sing*, *speak*, *blame*, *ask*, *argue*, *kick* [say], *mutter*, *rumble*, and *talk*. Below there are some examples of these processes.

S 13: ... It’s calm yet wild the style that I **speak**/Just filled with facts and you’ll never get weak in the heart...;

S 14: ... You can’t **blame** the whole white race/For slavery, cos this ain’t the case...; ... If black and white didn’t **argue** the most/They could clearly see the government’s screwing them both...;

S 18: ... Hate to bust their bubble/‘Cause we **rumble**/From our lower level/To condition your condition...; ...Soon you’ll see what I’m **talking** about/‘Cause one day/The brothers gonna work it out...;

- S 19: ... Swinging while I'm singing/Giving whatcha getting...;  
 S 20: ... Power to the people/Had to kick [say] it like that as we roll as one...;

As can be seen in the instances above, the representation of African-Americans as Sayers depicts songwriters/singers as informants of their group, talking about facts that can help them become better informed, of things they do not learn in schools and are not found in books. It can be said that the objective is to make African-American people aware of important facts and provide them with a positive identity of what is to be African-American. The table below presents the verbal processes found in the data.

Verbal processes	Say, tell, question, call, dismiss, excuse, scream, sing, speak, blame, ask, argue, kick, mutter, rumble, talk.
African-Americans as Sayers	I, you, we, black man, Chuck, Rakim, Big Daddy Kane, a man.
European-Americans as Sayers	You, he, she, they, your authority, his partner

Table 5.3.4.1

Ice Cube, a famous rapper, comments on the need to create a positive identity of African-Americans and present European-Americans negatively:

Yeah, I think they make white look so good and so nice and so sweet. My wife had a son. When I met her, her son was three years old. And now he's like six, so now I can really break it down to him. I say, look, here's what they've done to us, and here's what they continue to do to us. We end up loving white more than we love ourselves. So you have to make that look unattractive. They got to be found guilty for the things that they done to nonwhites all over the world. So when you break it down to the kids like that, white people don't look so attractive. And then you start pumping love for yourself, and you slowly reverse the process. But you gotta damn near fight your body to love yourself around here because you see so many images of you not in a good light (*in Hooks*, 1994: 128).

What can be inferred from the analysis of the song texts presented here in this chapter and in Chapter 4 is that there are two main objectives that the oppositional discourse of African-Americans aims at fulfilling. The first and possibly the most important is the need to provide a positive identity which can make African-Americans proud of being 'black'. The second is to continuously criticise the actions and beliefs of European-Americans so that the attractiveness of being 'white' mentioned above by Ice Cube can be reversed.

African-American popular music seems important in the achievement of these objectives since it is an art form that can reach a great number of people and consequently have its social message spread widely. Nevertheless, the understanding of such message by the audience and their attitudes towards a possible social change cannot be discussed here. That would mean another research which goes beyond the scope of the present one.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINAL REMARKS**

The first objective of this research was to identify which elements could characterise the discourse in African-American popular music as being oppositional. To do that I have used Halliday's (1994) lexicogrammatical system of transitivity. The investigation of the verb processes and also the participants of these processes provided insightful ideas towards the configuration of the oppositional discourse of African-Americans. These are taken up in more detail below.

For the second objective the investigation focused on the relationship of discourse and the social beliefs and social structures that were part of the discourse of the song texts. The transitivity analysis was also helpful in the inference of the social beliefs of African-Americans and European-Americans, and Halliday's (1989) concepts of the context of situation and context of culture helped define the social structures involved in the discourse of African-Americans.

The concept of context of culture was also helpful for the investigation of the social, political and economic contexts where the song texts were created and their relationship could be inferred. On top of that, Fairclough's (1992) concept of hegemony helped to further examine these

political and economic issues in the light of a hegemonic dominance of European-Americans.

I intend now to discuss these objectives and the research questions presented in Chapter 1 matching them with the findings of the analysis conducted in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. I also intend to discuss the findings in relation to the definition and the rhetoric of protest music proposed by Cole (1971) and Kizer (1983), respectively.

Social protest, as defined by Cole, means “...disapproval of situations existing in society or of attitudes widely held or approval of attitudes not held-widely” (1971:391). In the data analysed in this thesis, it can be said that the song texts of African-American songwriters can be considered a social protest since they consistently disapprove the social situation which African-American people were inserted in and approve attitudes that aim at changing that social situation.

This social protest falls into the two rhetoric categories referred to by Kizer, namely, the deliberative and epideictic. When song texts reinforce the need for change and the values and ideals of the movements of the 60s, it is possible to place them into the deliberative category. When song texts criticise or blame European-Americans for their attitudes, they can fall into the epideictic category. Nevertheless, this division is not so easily applied to the songs. Actually, songs tend to present both types of rhetoric at the same time, moving from one into the other frequently.



Concerning the verb processes which are related to the African-Americans and the ones related to European-Americans, the choices seemed to reflect the rhetoric mentioned above. Generally, African-Americans were the main participants of verbs that focused on the positive attitudes of the group while European-Americans tended to be represented more with verbs that helped depict them as deviant. This tendency was found throughout the whole set of songs and helped determine the discourse as oppositional.

Consistent with that is the finding that African-Americans in the participant positions of Actor, Senser, Carrier/Identified, and Sayer were larger in number than European-Americans in the same positions. This helps reinforce the idea that in song texts written by African-Americans the tendency is to have more references to African-Americans than to European-Americans. If song texts are a site for them to openly express their points of view, then it seems sensible that they would have more representations of African-Americans than of European-Americans in the main participant positions. This is relevant if compared to the limited, and often negative, representation they have on elite discourses. The songs give them the voice they are generally denied in the mainstream media.

The comparison of song texts of the 68-72 period with the song texts of the 88-92 period shows that what is most relevant between these two periods is the similarities and differences in the topics of songs. In relation

to verb processes, in the 88-92 period the larger number of processes is due to much longer song texts, which are a characteristic of rap songs.

Topics and the general content of the songs analysed here show that there are four songs in the 88-92 period that focus on the same topics of the songs of the 68-72 period. As seen in Chapter 5, they are an attempt to bring back the ideals of the movements of the 60s. Apart from those, topics in the former period tend to be more closely linked to the social circumstances of the period. While in the 60s and 70s songs often focused in the prejudice against skin colour, in the 80s and 90s the topics discussed more openly the prejudice towards African-Americans by institutions such as the police, the film industry, and the school.

Another important difference between song texts of the two periods can be seen in the position adopted by songwriters regarding ethnic relations. In the first period the intention advocated is that of integration of African-Americans and European-Americans, the acceptance of each other regardless of colour. In the second period such focus on integration seems not present any longer, and what becomes relevant is the focus on the African-American community and the individual, since integration seems not to have worked out.

The construction of reality in the song texts helped reveal what social beliefs were represented in the discourse of African-American popular music for European-Americans as well as for African-Americans.

As could be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, the latter are represented positively, and their social beliefs are constructed towards an image of glorification of the values that are important for the well-being of the community as a whole. European-Americans, on the other hand, are negatively depicted as deviant and a threat for the objectives and interests of African-Americans.

It is mainly through their institutions that European-Americans are able to maintain hegemony and continuously avoid a possible reversal of the relations of power. Political and economic decisions taken by the government which supposedly should relieve African-Americans of the burden of segregation are sometimes used as a way to reinforce domination. In songs, African-Americans tend to blame the government for high taxes, inflation, and insecurity, which help create the social and financial difficulties they might have.

While in the 60s and 70s the Federal government of the United States managed to approve important Civil Rights Acts that helped diminish the prejudice against African-Americans, despite the effort of many people including State Governors who tried to prevent the Acts to be implemented, in the 80s and 90s advancements already gained seemed to go backwards and the government continuously avoided further responsibilities.

Song texts did seem to challenge the hegemony of elite institutions through the use of a discourse that consistently blamed the attitudes and decisions adopted by the government, for instance. The strategy of

censuring and blaming the other for the wrongs done helped establish the oppositional discourse and posed a threat for the dominance of the elite groups and their institutions.

Concluding, song texts analysed in this study serve as a site of resistance and offer new alternatives for the African-American community, thus confirming that they produced an oppositional discourse. They can also be considered an important site for the promotion of the African-American identity, values and beliefs. According to Hooks, "... black intellectuals, critical thinkers, cultural workers, and others can best serve diverse black communities by developing and practicing pedagogies of resistance that aim to share knowledge" (1992: 50).

Therefore, it is possible to say that it is through the dissemination of those values that a stronger African-American community can emerge, which might effectively oppose the dominant forces of the elite groups.

The analysis carried out here with song texts helped demonstrate that there is an important point in the study of discourse which cannot be avoided: the social perspective. It is through the investigation of the social dimensions of discourse that it can be possible to perceive how social relations, social identities are produced, reproduced, challenged and/or transformed. I hope the analysis done in this work has helped to shed light on the issues of racism and discrimination from the point of view of African-Americans.

### 6.1 Pedagogical implications

Issues of racism and discrimination do not seem to be a constant topic within the school setting, especially the classroom. Although textbooks might be an example of elite discourse which can emphasise discrimination, as seen in the introduction of this work, these are topics which seem to be avoided by teachers and students alike. In this country, Brazil, racism and discrimination tend to be portrayed as things of the past since it seems 'common-sense' that this is a country where the mixing of people of different ethnic origins are 'natural'.

Nevertheless, this assumption might disguise prejudices which might be taken as 'naturalised', with the consensus of both the elite groups and the minorities. The need for interpreting discourses which refer to issues of racism and discrimination seems to be important for raising the awareness of individuals. What may be seen as 'common-sense' can, on the other hand, be seen as a veiled way to reproduce discrimination.

The classroom is an important environment where critical awareness can be explored, and analysing together with students texts such as the ones in this work might help develop the students' perception of the social dimensions which are intrinsic in them. With the help of the teacher, relations of power and discrimination can be revealed and a better understanding of how the world is represented can be critically developed.

## 6.2 Suggestions for further research

Following the discussion of the previous section, an interesting topic for research would be the analysis of song texts of Brazilian rap. It would probably be insightful to investigate whether or not Brazilian rap songs have an oppositional discourse and whether or not they have representations of elite groups and minorities of this country, and what these representations can reveal. Such study could also be expanded with a possible audience research which would probably render valuable insights on the interaction of the audience with the song texts and artists.

Furthermore, an investigation of how African-Brazilians represent themselves in other discourses such as in the magazine *Raça*, which is aimed at the African-Brazilian middle-class, could also prove interesting. It seems that the analysis of the representation of minorities is a field that has yet to be fully explored in Brazil.

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## **APPENDIX A**

## SONGS FROM THE 68-72 PERIOD

### SAMPLE 1

#### **STAND!**

(Sly & The Family Stone, 1969)

Stand! In the end you'll still be you  
One that's done things you set out to do  
Stand! There's a cross for you to bear  
Things to go through if you're going anywhere  
Stand! For the things you know are right  
It's the truth that the truth makes them so uptight  
Stand! All the things you want are real  
You have you to complete and there is no deal  
Stand! You've been sitting much too long  
There's a permanent crease in your right and wrong  
Stand! There's a midget standing tall  
And the giant beside him about to fall  
Stand! They will try to make you crawl  
And they know what they're saying makes no sense at all  
Stand! Don't you know that you are free?  
Well, at least in your mind if you want to be

### SAMPLE 2

#### **EVERYDAY PEOPLE**

(Sly & The Family Stone, 1969)

Sometimes I'm right then I can be wrong  
My own beliefs are in my songs  
A butcher, a banker, a drummer and then  
Makes no difference what group I'm in  
I am everyday people  
Then it's the blue ones who can't accept  
The green ones for living with  
The black ones trying to be a skinny one  
Different strokes for different folks  
We gotta live together  
I am no better and neither are you  
We're all the same whatever we do  
You love you hate me  
You know me and then  
Still can't figure out the scene I'm in

I am everyday people  
Then it's the new man  
That doesn't like the short man  
For being such a rich one  
That will not help the poor one  
Different strokes for different folks  
We gotta live together  
There's a yellow one that won't  
Accept the black one  
That won't accept the red one  
That won't accept the white one  
Different strokes for different folks  
And so on and so on  
I am everyday people

### SAMPLE 3

#### **WHAT'S GOING ON**

(Marvin Gaye, 1971)

Mother, mother there's too many of you  
crying  
Brother, brother there's far too many of  
you dying  
You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today  
Father, father we don't need to escalate  
You see, war is not the answer  
For only love can conquer hate  
You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today  
Picket lines and picket signs  
Don't punish me with brutality

Talk to me so you can see  
What's going on  
Father, father everybody thinks we're  
wrong  
But who are they to judge us  
Simply because our hair is long  
You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some understanding here today  
Picket lines and picket signs  
Don't punish me with brutality  
Talk to me so you can see  
What's going on

### SAMPLE 4

#### **INNER CITY BLUES**

(Marvin Gaye, 1971)

Rockets, moon shots  
Spend it on the have nots  
Money, we make it  
Before we see it you take it  
Oh, make you wanna holler  
The way they do my life  
Makes me wanna holler  
This ain't living, this ain't living  
Inflation no chance  
To increase finance  
Bills pile up sky high  
Send that boy off to die  
Repeat 6 & 7

Hang ups, let downs  
Bad breaks, set backs  
Natural fact is  
I can't pay my taxes  
Oh, makes me wanna holler  
And throw up both my hands  
Crime is increasing  
Trigger happy policing  
Panic is spreading  
God knows where we're heading  
Oh, makes me wanna holler  
They don't understand

## SAMPLE 5

### **SAY IT LOUD – I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD**

(J. Brown, 1968)

Some people say we got a lot of malice  
Some say it's a lot of nerve  
I say we won't quit moving  
Until we get what we deserve  
We've been buked and we've scorned  
We've been treated bad, as sure as you've been borned  
But just as it takes two to make a pair  
We're not gonna quit until we get our share  
Say it loud – I'm black and I'm proud  
Now we demand a chance to do things for ourselves  
We're tired of beating our head against the wall  
And working for someone else  
We're people, we're just like the birds and the trees  
We'd rather die on our feet  
Than be living on our knees  
Say it loud - I'm black and I'm proud

## SAMPLE 6

### **MIGHTY MIGHTY (SPADE AND WHITEY)**

(Curtis Mayfield, 1971)

Everybody's talking  
About this country's state  
We get a new power every hour  
Just about in every Christian fate  
We're killing up our leaders  
It don't matter none  
Black or white  
And we all know it's wrong  
And we're gonna fight to make it right  
And mighty mighty spade and whitey  
Your black and white power  
Is gonna be a crumbling tower  
And we who stand divided

So God damn undecided  
Give this some thought  
In stupidity we've all been caught  
There really ain't no difference  
If you're cut you're gonna bleed  
Might I get a little bit deeper  
Human life is from the semen seed  
Now I'm gonna say it loud  
I'm just as proud as the brothers too  
And just like the rest  
I don't want no mess about  
Who's taking who

SAMPLE 7

**WE'RE A WINNER**  
(Curtis Mayfield, 1971)

We're a winner  
And never let anybody say  
Boy you can't make it cause  
A feeble mind is in your way  
No more tears do we cry  
And we have finally dried our eyes  
And we're movin' on up  
Lord have mercy  
We're movin' on up  
We're living proof  
In all's alert  
That we're true  
From the good black dirt  
And we're a winner  
And everybody knows it too  
We'll just keep on pushin'  
Like your leaders tell you to  
At last that blessed day has come  
I don't care  
Where you come from  
We're all movin' on up  
I don't mind leaving here  
To show the world  
We have no fear  
Cause we're a winner  
We're a winner  
And never let anybody say

Boy you can't make it cause  
A feeble mind is in your way  
No more tears do we cry  
The black boy done dried his eyes  
We're movin' on up  
Lord have mercy, we're movin' on up  
There'll be no more Uncle Tom  
At last that blessed day has come  
And we're a winner  
And everybody knows it too  
We'll just keep on pushin'  
Like Martin Luther King told us to  
And I don't mind leaving here  
To show the world we have no fear  
Cause we're movin' on up  
Lord have mercy  
We're movin' on up  
So people get ready  
I've got good news for you  
How we got over  
Like we're all supposed to do  
Let us all say amen  
And together we'll clap our hands  
Cause we're movin' on up  
Lord have mercy  
We're movin' on up

## SAMPLE 8

### **WE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DARKER THAN BLUE**

(C. Mayfield, 1971)

We people who are darker than blue  
Are we gonna stand around this town  
And let what others say come true  
We're just good for nothing they all  
figure  
A boyish grown up shiftless jigger  
Now we can hardly stand for that  
Or is that really where it's at  
We people who are darker than blue  
This ain't no time for segregating  
I'm talking about brown and yellow too  
Yellow girl can't you tell  
You're just the surface of our dark deep  
well  
If your mind could really see  
You'd know your color same as me  
Pardon me brother as you stand in your  
glory  
I know you won't mind if I tell the whole  
story  
Get yourself together, learn to know your  
sign  
Shall we commit our genocide before we  
check out our mind  
I know we've all got problems

That's why I'm here to say  
Keep peace with me and I with you  
Let me love in my own way  
Now I know we have great respect for  
the sister and mother  
It's even better yet  
But there's the joker in the street  
Loving one brother and killing the other  
When the time comes and we are really  
free  
There'll be no brothers left you see  
We people who are darker than blue  
Don't let us hang around this town  
And let what others say come true  
We're just good for nothing they all  
figure  
A boyish grown up shiftless jigger  
Now we can hardly stand for that  
Or is that really where it's at  
Pardon me brother, I know we've come a  
long long way  
Let us stop being so satisfied  
For tomorrow can be an even brighter  
day

## SAMPLE 9

### **CHOICE OF COLORS**

(The Impressions, 1969)

If you had a choice of color  
Which one would you chose my brothers  
If there was no day or night  
Which would you prefer to be right  
How long have you hated your white  
teacher  
Who told you, you love your black  
preacher  
Do you respect your brother's woman  
friend  
And share with black folks not of kin  
People must prove to the people

A better day is coming for you and for  
me  
With just a little bit more education  
And love for our nation  
Would make a better society  
Now some of us would cuss and make a  
fuss  
Than to bring about a little trust  
But we shall overcome our beliefs  
someday  
If you'll only listen to what I have to say

SAMPLE 10

**THIS IS MY COUNTRY**  
(The Impressions, 1968)

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  
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 must face us at last  
And I know you will give consideration  
Shall we perish unjust or live equal as a nation  
This is my country



## **APPENDIX B**

## SONGS FROM THE 88-92 PERIOD

### SAMPLE 11

#### **BO! BO! BO!**

(Boogie Down Productions, 1989)

Bo Bo Bo Clack Clack Clack Clack  
Clack

Get your street knowledge every posse  
know that come again

Bo Bo Bo Clack Clack Clack Clack  
Clack

The only way to deal with racism if  
you're black

Well, seven in the morning I woke up to  
jog

Rushed out the door to inhale the smog

As I ran, I began to wonder

Should I produce or should I tour this  
summer

Well just that second I heard stay where  
you are

Before I could stop I was hit by a cop car

I laid on the pavement like I was hurt

Then a redneck cop jumped out with a  
smirk

He said, ah boy you better watch where  
you run

as he poked my side with the barrel of  
his shotgun

I said Officer man I ain't do nothing

He said what's that word you niggers use,  
ya fronting?

Well ya fronting, so why were you  
running down the street?

At this time I had stood to my feet and  
said Wait a minute

And that's when he did it, he hit me in  
the face with his gun I wasn't  
with it so

On the ground was a bottle of Snapple, I  
broke the bottle in his fucking

Adam's apple

As he fell his partner called for backup  
well, I had the shotgun and

began to act up with that

Well I threw down the gun and began to  
run

I got back in no time and loaded the nine  
First I took two clips and then I took two  
more

I was out the window cause by now they  
were right at my door

I took three shots and then I laid

They rushed in shooting so I threw a  
quick grenade

It went boom like a supernova

Badges arms heads legs cops were all  
over

I jumped out the fire escape down to the  
street and I started to run you

know I couldn't feel my feet, I was weak,  
I said to myself Holy shit!

My shirt had filled with blood I didn't

know I got hit but there's no

time to stop no time to explain man I'm

in too deep with this everyday

ghetto pain

Black men are judged by their clothes

Black women are looked at as hoes

So I as one of these uppity niggers

Can only rely on the sound of a trigger  
going

Well I staggered down the street to an  
old bookstore

Called the Tree of Life (Yo D it ain't  
there no more)

But when it was boy I was lucky

Cause in the basement is where they

stuck me

When I awoke at the 14th hour

Three black women had gave me a quick  
shower

I stayed a while and escaped in a truck

Driven by two guys, Rakim and Chuck

What the fuck I asked as I laid there

How many guys do you drive a day

here? Chuck said many, Rakim said

plenty it's an everyday thing when

you're willing to sing a song...

## SAMPLE 12

### **WHO PROTECT US FROM YOU?**

(Boogie Down Productions, 1989)

(Fire! Come down fast...)

You were put here to protect us  
But who protects us from you?  
Every time you say "That's illegal"  
Doesn't mean that that's true (Uh-huh)  
Your authority's never questioned  
No-one questions you  
If I hit you I'll be killed  
But you hit me? I can sue (Order! Order!)  
Looking through my history book  
I've watched you as you grew  
Killing blacks and calling it the law  
(Bo! Bo! Bo!) And worshipping Jesus too  
There was a time when a black man  
Couldn't be down wit' your crew (Can I have a job please?)  
Now you want all the help you can get  
Scared? Well ain't that true (You goddamn right)  
You were put here to protect us  
But who protects us from you?  
Or should I say, who are you protecting?  
The rich? the poor? Who?  
It seems that when you walk the ghetto  
You walk wit' your own point of view (Look at that gold chain)  
You judge a man by the car he drives  
Or if his hat match his shoe (Yo, you looking kinda fresh)  
Well, back in the days of Sherlock Holmes  
A man was judged by a clue  
Now he's judged by if he's Spanish,  
Black, Italian or Jew  
So do not kick my door down and tie me up  
While my wife cooks the stew (You're under arrest!)  
'Cause you were put here to protect us  
But who protects us from you?

## SAMPLE 13

### YOU MUST LEARN

(Boogie Down Productions, 1989)

Just like I told you, you must learn

It's calm yet wild the style that I speak  
Just filled with facts and you will never  
get weak in the heart  
In fact you'll start to illuminate,  
knowledge to others in a song  
Let me demonstrate the force of  
knowledge,  
knowledge reigned supreme  
The ignorant is ripped to smithereens  
What do you mean when you say I'm  
rebellious  
'Cause I don't accept everything that  
you're telling us  
What are you selling us the creator  
dwelling us  
I sit in your unknown class while you're  
failing' us  
I failed your class 'cause I ain't with your  
reasoning  
You're trying make me you by seasoning  
Up my mind with see Jane run, see John  
walk in a hardcore New York  
It doesn't exist no way, no how  
It seems to me that in a school that's  
ebony  
African history should be pumped up  
steadily, but it's not  
and this has got to stop, See Spot run,  
run get Spot  
Insulting to a Black mentality, a Black  
way of life  
Or a jet Black family, so I include with  
one concern, that  
You must learn

Just like I told you, you must learn

I believe that if you're teaching history  
Filled with straight up facts no mystery  
Teach the student what needs to be  
taught  
'Cause Black and White kids both take  
shorts  
When one doesn't know about the other  
ones' culture  
Ignorance swoops down like a vulture  
'Cause you don't know that you ain't just  
a janitor  
No one told you about Benjamin  
Banneker  
A brilliant Black man that invented the  
almanac  
Can't you see where KRS is coming at  
With Elie Whitney, Holly Selozy, Grand  
Bill Woods  
made the walky-talky  
Lewis Latterman improved on Edison  
Charles Drew did a lot for medicine  
Garrett Morgan made the traffic lights  
Harriet Tubman freed the slaves at night  
Madame CJ Walker made a straightening  
comb  
But you won't know this is you weren't  
shown  
The point I'm getting at it it might be  
harsh  
'Cause we're just walking around  
brainwashed  
So what I'm saying is not to diss a man  
we need the 89 school system  
One that caters to a Black return because  
You must learn

## SAMPLE 14

### THE RACIST

(Boogie Down Productions, 1991)

I've been taught to respect my elders and  
behave  
Even if when they were young they sold  
slaves  
Truth and understanding is what I crave  
In the land of the thief, home of the slave  
Turn your page to a brief demonstration  
'Cause now in '90 it's strictly information  
I'm giving  
Teaching on a regular basis  
Today's lecture is about The Racist  
We're not out to exaggerate or diss him  
But show the symptoms and facts of  
racism  
Understand The Racist ain't equal  
There's about five different types of  
racist people  
First of the five different types of cases  
Is the individual brought up racist  
Here you have young men and women  
Brought up in the Great White Way  
opinion  
This opinion introduced by the parent  
To the civilised becomes transparent  
The civilised man could look through the  
faces  
Make the analysis and see The Racist  
Number two case which y'all must hear  
Is the individual racist out of fear  
Here you have people that fear the  
African  
And conjure up new ways of trapping  
him  
Number three is the unconscious racist  
Not knowing they're racist they invade  
your spaces

They say, "I'm not a racist, I'm not a  
bigot"  
Yet they allow it to go on and won't  
admit it  
Number four is the money racist  
The one that used the topics of sheer  
economics  
They say, "Owning a business isn't for  
the black man  
He don't want that", yet they went and  
took his land  
Damn, that's like a rock in a hard place  
You don't have your land yet this ain't  
your space  
America was built by every other race  
Except the European that runs this place  
What a waste, America's doomed  
To be overthrown by the righteous real  
soon  
But last but not least racial prejudice  
Is the black man speaking out of  
ignorance  
Whitey this and Ching-Chow that  
Is not how the intelligent man acts  
You can't blame the whole white race  
For slavery, 'cause this ain't the case  
A large sum of white people died with  
black  
Trying hard to fight racial attacks  
The media wants you to think that no  
whites  
Really fought and died for Civil Rights  
But once we have a true sense of history  
You'll see this too as a mystery  
If black and white didn't argue the most  
They could clearly see the government's  
screwing them both.

SAMPLE 15

**PARTY FOR YOUR RIGHT TO FIGHT**  
(Public Enemy, 1988)

Power, equality  
And we're out to get it  
I know some of you ain't with it  
This party started right in 66  
With a pro-Black radical mix  
Then at the hour of twelve  
Some force cut the power  
And emerged from hell  
It was your so called government  
That made this occur  
Like the grafted devils they were

J. Edgar Hoover, and he coulda proved to you  
He had King and X set up  
Also the party with Newton, Cleaver and Seale  
He ended, so get up  
Time to get em back  
( You got it )  
Get back on the track  
( You got it )  
Word from the honorable Elijah Muhammed  
Know who you are to be Black

To those that disagree it causes static  
For the original Black Asiatic man  
Cream of the earth  
And was here first  
And some devils prevent this from being known  
But you check out the books they own  
Even masons they know it  
But refuse to show it, yo  
But it's proven and fact  
And it takes a nation of millions to hold us back

SAMPLE 16

**FEAR OF A BLACK PLANET**  
(Public Enemy, 1990)

Man you ain't gotta  
Worry 'bout a thing  
'Bout your daughter  
Nah she ain't my type  
(But supposing she said she loved me)  
Are you afraid of the mix of Black and  
White  
We're livin' in a land where  
The law say the mixing of race  
Makes the blood impure  
She's a woman I'm a man  
But by the look on your face  
See ya can't stand it

Man calm your ass down, don't get mad  
I don't need your sistah  
(But supposing she said she loved me)  
Would you still love her  
Or would you dismiss her  
What is pure? Who is pure?  
Is it European state of being, I'm not sure  
If the whole world was to come  
Thru peace and love  
Then what would we made of?

Excuse us for the news  
You might not be amused  
But did you know white comes from  
Black  
No need to be confused

Excuse us for the news  
I question those accused  
Why is this fear of Black from White  
Influence who you choose?

Man c'mon now, I don't want your wife

Stop screamin' it's not the end of your  
life  
(But supposing she said she loved me)  
What's wrong with some color in your  
family tree  
I don't know

I'm just a rhyme sayer  
Skins protected 'gainst the ozone layers  
Breakdown 2001  
Might be best to be Black  
Or just Brown countdown

I've been wondering why  
Peoples livin' in fear  
Of my shade  
(Or my hi top fade)  
I'm not the one that's runnin'  
But they got me on the run  
Treat me like I have a gun  
All I got is genes and chromosomes  
Consider me Black to the bone  
All I want is peace and love  
On this planet  
(Ain't that how God planned it?)

Excuse us for the news  
You might not be amused  
But did you know White comes from  
Black  
No need to be confused

Excuse us for the news  
I question those accused  
Why is this fear of Black from White  
Influence who you choose?

SAMPLE 17

**BURN HOLLYWOOD BURN**

(Public Enemy, 1990)

Burn Hollywood burn I smell a riot  
Goin' on first they're guilty now they're  
gone  
Yeah I'll check out a movie  
But it'll take a Black one to move me  
Get me the hell away from this T.V.  
All this news and views are beneath me  
Cause all I hear about is shots ringin' out  
So I rather kick some slang out  
All right fellas let's go hand out  
Hollywood or would they not  
Make us all look bad like I know they  
had  
But some things I'll never forget yeah  
So step and fetch this shit  
For all the years we looked like clowns  
The joke is over smell the smoke from  
all around  
Burn Hollywood burn

Ice Cube is down with the P.E.  
Now every single b..ch wanna see me  
Big Daddy is smooth word to muther  
Let's check out a flick that exploits the  
color  
Roamin' through Hollywood late at night  
Red and blue lights what a common sight  
Pulled to the curb gettin' played like a  
sucker

Don't fight the power ... the muther  
fucker

As I walk the streets of Hollywood  
Boulevard  
Thinkin' how hard it was to those that  
starred  
In the movies portrayin' the roles  
Of butlers and maids slaves and hoes  
Many intelligent Black men seemed to  
look uncivilized  
When on the screen  
Like a guess I figure you to play some  
jigaboo  
On the plantation, what else can a nigger  
do  
And Black women in this profession  
As for playin' a lawyer, out of the  
question  
For what they play Aunt Jemima is the  
perfect term  
Even if now she got a perm  
So let's make our own movies like Spike  
Lee  
Cause the roles being offered don't strike  
me  
There's nothing that the Black man could  
use to earn  
Burn Hollywood burn



## SAMPLE 18

### **BROTHERS GONNA WORK IT OUT**

(Public Enemy, 1990)

Uh, your bad self  
Help me break this down from off the  
shelf  
Here's a music servin' you so use it  
Papa's got a brand new funk  
Get down (party for your right)  
Huh, let's get it on  
Like we said before  
They say the brothers causin' trouble  
Hate to bust their bubble  
'Cause we rumble  
From our lower level  
To condition your condition  
(We're gonna do a song)  
That you never heard before  
Make you all jump along to the  
education  
Brothers gonna work it out  
And stop chasin'  
Brothers, brothers gonna work it out

You got it...what it takes  
Go get it...where you want it?  
Come get it...get involved  
'Cause the brothers in the street are  
willing to work it out

So many of us in limbo  
How to get it on, it's quite simple  
3 stones from the sun  
We need a piece of this rock  
Our goal indestructible soul  
Answers to this quizzin'  
To the Brothers in the street  
Schools and the prisons  
History shouldn't be a mystery  
Our stories real history  
Not his story  
We gonna work it out one day  
Till we all get paid  
The right way in full, no bull  
Talkin', no walkin', drivin', arrivin' in  
style  
Soon you'll see what I'm talkin' about  
'Cause one day  
The brothers gonna work it out  
Brothers, brothers gonna work it out

You got it ... what it takes  
Go get it... where you want it?  
Come get it...get involved  
'Cause the brothers in the street  
Are willing to work it out  
Let's get it on... we are willin'  
Let's get it on, let's get it on ... we are  
willin'  
Let's get it on, let's get it on, let's get it on  
... we are willin'  
Now we are ready if you are ready

In 1995, you'll twist to this  
As you raise your fist to the music  
United we stand, yes divided we fall  
Together we can stand tall  
Brothers that try to work it out  
They get mad, revolt, revise, realize  
They're super bad  
Small chance a smart brother's  
Gonna be a victim of his own  
circumstance  
Sabotaged, Shellshocked, rocked and  
ruled  
Day in the life of a fool  
Like I said before to live it low  
Life take you time, time yo go slow  
Look here, not a thing to fear  
Brother to brother not another as sincere  
Teach a man how to be father  
To never tell a woman he can't bother  
You can't say you don't know  
What I'm talkin' about  
But one day ... brothers gonna work it  
out

You got it ... what it takes  
Go get it ... where you want it?  
Come get it ... get involved  
'Cause the brothers in the street  
Are willing to work it out

Let's get it on... we are willin'  
Let's get it on, let's get it on ... we are  
willin'  
Let's get it on, let's get it on, let's get it on  
... we are willin'  
Now we are ready if you are ready

## SAMPLE 19

### **FIGHT THE POWER**

(Public Enemy, 1990)

1989 the number another summer (get  
down)

Sound of the funky drummer  
Music hittin' your heart cause I know  
you got soul

(Brothers and sisters, hey)

Listen if you're missin' y'all

Swingin' while I'm singin'

Giving whatcha gettin'

Knowin' what I know

While the Black bands sweatin'

And the rhythm rhymes rollin'

Got to give us what we want

Gotta give us what we need

Our freedom of speech is freedom or  
death

We got to fight the powers that be

Lemme hear you say

Fight the power

As the rhythm designed to bounce

What counts is that the rhymes

Designed to fill your mind

Now that you've realized the prides  
arrived

We got to pump the stuff to make us  
tough

From the heart

It's a start, a work of art

To revolutionize make a change nothin's  
strange

People, people we are the same

No we're not the same

Cause we don't know the game

What we need is awareness, we can't get  
careless

You say what is this?

My beloved lets get down to business

Mental self defensive fitness

(Yo) bum rush the show

You gotta go for what you know

Make everybody see, in order to fight the  
powers that be

Lemme hear you say...

Fight the Power

Elvis was a hero to most

But he never meant shit to me you see

Straight up racist that sucker was

Simple and plain

Mother fuck him and John Wayne

Cause I'm Black and I'm proud

I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped

Most of my heroes don't appear on no  
stamps

Sample a look back you look and find

Nothing but rednecks for 400 years if  
you check

Don't worry be happy

Was a number one jam

Damn if I say it you can slap me right  
here

(Get it) lets get this party started right

Right on, c'mon

What we got to say

Power to the people no delay

To make everybody see

In order to fight the powers that be

SAMPLE 20

**POWER TO THE PEOPLE**

(Public Enemy, 1990)

And you thought the beat slowed down  
Power to the people  
Get on up, get into it, get involved  
Feel the bass as the cut revolves  
To the brothers wit the 808  
Like I said before P.E. got a brand new funk  
Turn it up, boom the trunk, yeah  
Internationally known on the microphone  
Makin' sure the brothers will never leave you alone  
To my sisters  
Sisters yes we missed ya  
Let's get it together make a nation  
You can bet on it, don't sleep on it  
'Cause the troops cold jeepin' it pumpin'  
(Power to the people)  
Turn us loose we shall overcome  
They say where you get that bass from  
Hey oh people, people as we continue on  
Come along, sing this song, are you ready for '91  
Rhythm nation pump that bass an  
We like to know from Chicago, New York and LA  
Are y'all ready, cause the plans in the jam  
And we're ready to roll yo y'all got to tell me  
Are y'all ready ready to go c'mon  
(Power to the people)  
Had to kick it like that as we roll as one  
One under the sun, to all the cities and the side  
Stateside and the whole wide  
There it is  
P-e-a-c-e 1991