Soul shakedown: The politics of soul music

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SOUL SHAKEDOWN: THE POLITICS
OF SOUL MUSIC

by

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Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
1999

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Political Science
Department of Political Science
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2005
The Thesis prepared by

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Entitled

Soul Shakedown: The Politics of Soul Music

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Political Science

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ABSTRACT

Soul Shakedown: The Politics of Soul Music

by

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This thesis demonstrates the value of the 'hegemonic' theory of politics as a basis for the discussion of the importance of commercially popular music in the political socialization process. The theoretical foundations of popular music studies are considered, the existing literature on popular soul music is reviewed, and an analysis of the lyrics of primarily popular soul songs from 1965 to 1975 is presented. The content analysis suggests that the conception of the black man as described by the whites served a hegemonic function in the culture of African-Americans. However, popular soul music lyrics of the 1960s and 1970s vocalized in opposition to this dominant belief system, celebrating the culture of African-Americans through themes of freedom, pride, and power.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 POLITICS AND SOUL MUSIC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Soul Music is Political Too</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem of Defining Soul Music</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Next Phase</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 A PHILOSOPHICAL SHUFFLE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Music as Passionate Communication</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adorno and Gramsci on Popular Music</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 REVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High and Low Culture Discussions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hegemonic and Counter-Hegemonic Discussions</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4 THE MOVEMENT AND SOUL WORDS OF FREEDOM, PRIDE, AND POWER</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights and Popular Soul Music to 1963</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Movements in Popular Soul Music Lyrics, 1963-1975</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes on Popularity and Black/White Markets</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Song Has Been Sung</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Cashbox Singles and Black Singles Charts Highs and Total Weeks by Artist</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCOGRAPHY</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following thesis would not have been possible without the guidance and support of a knowledgeable and patient committee. Their continued confidence granted me the freedom to explore the subject matter, while their insight and suggestions allowed for the development of a broader understanding of music's fundamental political importance in American society. To all of them, I am deeply indebted.

I would also like to thank my friends and family, particularly Kent, Holly, and my brother, Robert. Throughout the process, their assistance and love has given me the power to succeed.

Finally, I am forever grateful to my mother and father, who have given me opportunities, encouraged me to face challenges, and inspired me to believe and achieve. It is to them that this thesis is dedicated.

All efforts have been made to research, and comply with, existing copyright laws.
CHAPTER 1

POLITICS AND SOUL MUSIC

Popular music, as a cultural phenomenon within society, has received increasingly more attention and analysis over the past fifty years by musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and cultural theorists (predominately from the fields of journalism, communications, history, and sociology). Many have written accounts of the historical development and sociopolitical importance of "soul" music from its advent around 1954 through its commercial decline in the 1970s, while political scientists have for the most part remained absent from the discussion.

1 For the purposes of this paper, the terms "popular" and "commercial" will be used interchangeably. The issue of nomenclature and the associated debates, however, will be addressed further in Chapters Two and Three.

2 While the definition of soul music has been expanded over time to include artists prior to and following the period from 1954 to 1975, the term did not become widely used in reference to these vocal styles until the 1960s. Charles Keil, for example, states: "[t]he current concept of soul began to take shape a year or two after the Supreme Court decision of 1954..." Keil, Urban Blues, 165. In the years that followed, the concept entered popular culture, taking hold. This may best be illustrated by Billboard Magazine's change in its use of nomenclature to describe black music during the 1960s. In August of 1969, Rhythm and Blues,
Indeed, political scientists have largely restricted their studies of popular music to more explicit forms of political variables. For example, issues such as the continuing dispute surrounding the free access consumers have to the intellectual property of musicians (their songs) on the Internet tends to be analyzed by political scientists in terms of its political effect in regard to policy or law. The role of the policymaker and that of the music business and musicians might be assessed in terms of the congressional hearings, or further, as these matters relate to judicial law. As a final illustration of this, I would acknowledge the willingness of political scientists to engage in discussions regarding the censorship of music as it relates to the First Amendment right to free speech. Political scientists, to put it simply, have restricted their studies to those overtly political aspects of society.

What is largely avoided by political scientists, however, involves the more subtle aspects of society that affect political circumstances and events over time. The reason for this avoidance, I believe, may be attributed both to which was used to refer to the African-American taste culture, was changed to Soul by the editors. See Hoare, *The Soul Book*, 10.
the difficulty in assessing the extent to which these types of political underpinnings affect American politics and the overall low degree of importance attributed to these forms of political activity. For example, the development of socialization theory supported the notion that popular culture plays only a secondary function in the development of American political thought and the formation of political ideas and values within society.

Nonetheless, American popular culture reflects and interacts with the political milieu and events within our society. It communicates the ideas, passions, and concerns of the people within that culture which then feed back into the political system. In short, music socializes citizens, shaping their political attitudes. As such, the investigation into the role of popular music provides

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3 Indeed, attempting to research the political importance of soul music from the 1960s and 1970s has provided a daunting subject of analysis for this thesis. Many months have been spent gathering song lyrics and searching record stores. Moreover, the research is not wholly explained through simple codification and quantification: One must consider the lyrics within a broader context, both theoretically and socially.

4 The primary agents of political socialization are said to be the family, school, etc., while media are a secondary agent. Further, political scientists largely confine their considerations to the news media, avoiding discussions of entertainment media as a significant source of political instruction.

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insight into the dynamic relationship of society and government.

Popular Soul Music is Political Too

It has been stated of American music that:

[Popular music and the industry it supports have been extensively researched by sociologists, psychologists and journalists, as well as by Marxist historians and aestheticians seeking evidence either of the collapse of capitalism or of its continuing malign power; it has been researched as commodity, as industry, as business, as racket, as provider of role models for young people, as corruptor of young morals, as opium of the people, as magic ceremony, as counter-culture, as career, as educational problem and as educational challenge.]

Though many genres of music might be chosen as the object of analysis, I have chosen to look at the lyrics of "soul" songs as they parallel the integrationist and separatist movements of the 1960s leading into the 1970s. Thus, one may ask, why soul music? To begin, popular soul music provides an interesting subject of analysis. It is widely agreed upon that soul as a commercially successful and stylistic development in American music emerged as a new development in the Rhythm and Blues style of music shortly after the 1954 Supreme Court decision in Brown vs. The Board of Education. Moreover, the transformation of soul

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5 Christopher Small, Music of the Common Tongue, 378.
6 It should be emphasized that simply acknowledging the overlap of events should not be construed as an argument
music into the sub-genre of funk, and its subsequent popular demise, though not as clearly marked on a timetable, is said to have occurred during the 1970s. Changes within the social and political structure of America, in particular the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements paralleled these shifts. Thus, this provides a nicely specified period of time within which to investigate the lyrical expression of freedom and pride in soul music as it relates to the milieu and events.

The second reason for analyzing soul music as opposed to folk, jazz, bluegrass, etc... lies in the popularity of the style. Soul music, in its popularity, offers a unique perspective from which to view the politics of this racially tumultuous era (1950s-1970s). Popular music both reflected the political milieu and provided a glimpse into the political concerns of the era. In this sense, popular

for causality. Thus, it may be that both the emergence of soul music and the Brown ruling were separate, parallel occurrences reflective of a shift in the racial attitudes of American society.

While some may suggest that one cannot merely link popularity with any measure of increased effect, and this thesis should not be construed as making such an argument, the popularity of political soul songs undeniably represents a wider audience (in terms of numbers). Though this may not be an indicator of increased effect, it does suggest that the artists expressed ideas that either concerned a greater number of individuals or resonated with the musician. This issue of popular culture's political
political soul music serves a counter-hegemonic function in American society.

Indeed, soul music may be defined as a form of political music. According to the Politics of Rock Music:

Being political... means that one group (certain political elites) feels threatened by perceived implications of rock music for society. Being political... also means that certain rock artists take stands on issues in their songs in an attempt to (1) recruit people for a specific social movement, (2) support a certain world view, and/or (3) fulfill an expressive function. In short, if an artist attempts to propagandize in his songs, then the artist is considered to be acting in a political fashion.®

The popularity of a new brand of music with distinctly black musical origins (though not only the province of African-Americans)® intersects with protest music it a time significance will be further addressed in the next two chapters.

® Upon researching the popular soul music of the era, it becomes evident: 1) Black and white musicians/composers often collaborated and, 2) Soul musicians were of both a black and white variety, i.e. the Righteous Brothers and Everly Brothers are often placed within the category of “blue-eyed” soul. However, since the study must be limited, and I have already reviewed approximately 150 songs, blue-eyed soul artists have not been selected for inclusion in this analysis. Blue-eyed soul, within The All Music Guide to Rock typology, is classified within the Stax/Volt sub-genre (the Memphis sound). Erlewine, et. al., 896. This paper focuses, instead, on the African-American soul artists that spanned the decades and transformed the sweet soul into funk. While collaboration between races does impact a discussion of soul music generally, the lyrics, as will be demonstrated, communicated the messages of the racial movements, whether
in which African-Americans struggled for political gains in terms of equality under the law and representation in government. Further, the form of political participation in which most African-Americans engaged, at that time, rested outside the traditional mechanisms for affecting governmental change, e.g. social movements. With regard to the discussion of soul music, Michael Haralambos nicely summed up how music serves a political function in society when he stated:

In many ways a singer may be likened to a political representative. His position depends upon the support of the people, they pay his salary and to some extent influence what he has to say... This comparison is particularly apt with reference to the black community, which until recently has had little political representation and almost no public voice... In a very real sense the singer is a chosen representative of the people.\(^{10}\)

Music allows for alternative formulations of values and ideals in society and the reflection and interaction of those values with political events and social attitudes (and changes) offer political scientists an indication of

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complied by whites or blacks. Additionally, one of the chosen artists, Sly and the Family Stone, represents a racially integrated band. It is equally noteworthy to remind the reader that "soul" did utilize the distinct African-American style of music as its basis. Moreover, the very term "soul," as a term understood within the black community harkens back to W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 series of essays titled *The Souls of Black Folk*. Finally, Charles Keil, in 1966, wrote that soul is "the ability to communicate something of the Negro experience." Keil, 43.\(^{10}\) Haralambos, *Right On,* 107.
the various schisms and segments in society. In this way, the political importance of the fostering of alternative ideals within such groups becomes known.

Briefly, I would like to close this section by addressing the conclusions of one important recent analyst who writes specifically about music's role in American politics. R. Serge Denisoff discusses various musical genres in terms of their effect on socio-political movements, concluding sarcastically:

[I]f the power and quality of song were social determinants of political power then the Blackman would have overcome decades ago;... it should be by now blatantly clear that the 'brainwashing' thesis is not a persuasive one. Nonetheless, song is a definite form of propaganda. All songs propagate a message, both intellectually and sensually.\(^{11}\)

Denisoff argues that the effectiveness of music depends upon both a given social movement's efforts and the level of awareness of consciousness on the part of listeners. In sum, Denisoff concludes that "propaganda songs might be used as suggestive indicators of the organizational and ideological orientations of social movements. However, the overall results of songs as tools of mobilization are difficult... to ascertain."\(^{12}\)

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\(^{11}\) Denisoff, *Sing a Song of Social Significance*, viii.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 79. Denisoff has stated that soul music may be classified as a form of "covert protest." Ibid., 185.
In sum, it is within the context of the perspective that popular soul music was a politically counter-hegemonic music, though limited in its ability to effectively prompt and guarantee particular responses and actions, that the selected soul songs from the 1960s and 1970s will be assessed.

The Problem of Defining Soul Music

In The Concept of Law, H.L.A. Hart discusses the problem of language:

Definition, as the word suggests, is primarily a matter of drawing lines or distinguishing between one kind of thing and another, which language marks off by a separate word. The need for such a drawing of lines is often felt by those who are perfectly at home with the day-to-day use of the word in question, but cannot state or explain the distinctions which, they sense, divide one kind of thing from another.\(^\text{13}\)

Hart’s discussion of this difficulty as it relates to the use of the term law closely resembles many of the comments surrounding the continued attempts to define soul music. As one author stated when referring to the definition of soul: "... the notion that is put across is reminiscent of a remark credited to Louis Armstrong to the effect that if

\(^{13}\) Hart, The Concept of Law, 13.
you have to ask what jazz is all about, you’re never going
to know."\textsuperscript{14}

This problem of definition may best be illustrated by the
analysis and conclusions made by Charles Keil in his
ethnomusicological approach to discovering the
distinguishing aspects of soul music. Keil uses interviews
and comments from a radio public comment phone line to
define soul. While he spends fourteen pages defining the
seventeen distinguishing characteristics of soul music,
Keil then goes on to admit that:

\begin{quote}
[t]he foregoing list of elements or connotations—the
ideas people have about soul— is neither systematic nor
complete and does not really lend itself to summary
generalizations or terminological pronouncements, if only
because “soul” is best defined in action.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Though Keil’s own analysis suggests, and it has been
stated of soul that, “[m]ore than any other genre of the
rock era, soul is a wide-ranging and immensely diverse
style,”\textsuperscript{16} it is useful for analytical purposes to establish
boundaries. Certain groups and musicians from the mid
1950s through the 1970s are widely acknowledged as soul
singers.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, while the soul music style may not be

\textsuperscript{14} Hoare, 156.
\textsuperscript{15} Keil, 181.
\textsuperscript{16} Erlewine, et.al., 887.
\textsuperscript{17} For example, James Brown is considered “Soul Brother #1”
while Aretha Franklin has been dubbed the “Queen of Soul.”
It should be noted that songs in and of themselves are not
easily defined and its distinguishing characteristics not readily identifiable, we may still classify certain music from that time period as soul or not soul according to the widespread agreement within popular society and academic and musical circles as to its style.

To this end, and in an attempt to allow others the opportunity to expand and/or replicate the following analysis, I have chosen *The All Music Guide to Rock* as the primary indicator by which musicians may be classified as "soul" performers. The typology established within this broad sourcebook mirrors those of other general music references.\textsuperscript{16} This source identified soul as a synthesis of the pop, rhythm and blues, and gospel genres of music. Moreover, the editors identified ten sub-genres of soul:

1) Early soul performers, 2) Chicago Soul, 3) Stax/Volt, 4) New York soul, 5) Atlantic, 6) Motown, 7) Early Funk, 8) Philly soul, 9) 70s Memphis soul/Hi Records, and 10) Disco and Dance/Pop.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{16} For example, Paymer, *Facts Behind the Songs*, 277-278.

\textsuperscript{19} Soul music, to a certain extent, can be discussed in relation to its geographic origins, i.e. Memphis, Detroit,
The Next Phase

As previously stated, my aim in this thesis is to explore the political commentary and messages of popular soul songs as they express the ideas and themes of the 1960s movements for civil rights and black nationalism from 1965, by engaging in an analysis of the lyrics of primarily popular soul songs. Given the continued disagreement regarding the function of popular music as a political variable, Chapter Two will offer a brief discussion of the underlying political philosophies with regard to popular music, followed in Chapter Three of the literature review by an application of those philosophies to the current discussions (predominately sociologists and ethnomusicologists).

The concentration of Chapter Four's lyrical analysis will be primarily confined to songs performed by Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Curtis Mayfield and the Impressions, Sly and the Family Stone, The O'Jay's, Temptations, Marvin Gaye, Isaac Hayes, Edwinn Starr, and Nina Simone. All of Philadelphia, etc... This analysis incorporates artists from all of the regions.

Denisoff has stated that soul music may be classified as a form of "covert protest." Denisoff, Sing a Song of Social Significance, 185.

Though the lyrics of popular soul songs from 1954-1965 were researched, most of the more explicitly racially political tunes did not emerge until after 1965 as will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

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the musical artists that are the subject of the following analysis were chosen because they achieved at least some measure of popular commercial success. Though commercial success was not considered a requirement for this study, again, it provided an interesting point for cross-analysis. One discovers racially political song titles and lyrics become more frequent throughout the decade of 1965 to 1975. At the same time, in looking at the popular artists of the era, one discovers that some of the chosen songs did not achieve commercial success. Finally, as might be expected, the following analysis will further suggest that popular political soul songs relating to the civil rights and black nationalist movements achieved more commercial success with the black audience than the white.

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22 It also provided an easier subject to research in the sense that lyrics and music from 40 years prior are not easily obtained.

23 Commercial success, for the purposes of this paper, is defined by chart success as listed in the Cashbox Black Contemporary Singles Charts and the Cashbox Singles Charts, both compiled by George Albert and Frank Hoffmann.
CHAPTER 2

A PHILOSOPHICAL SHUFFLE

While a discussion of the political themes of popular soul and funk songs from 1965 to 1975 in itself is warranted, it is, nonetheless useful to address the music within a broader philosophical context. In so doing, the general importance of popular political Rhythm and Blues may be better understood when discussing the existing literature on soul music.

Philosophical discussions of music as a political variable have progressed since ancient times. These older conceptions of music often discussed its political importance in terms of its explicit and determinative influence on the character of citizens while modern assessments (from the Frankfurt School) suggest the role of music as a latent tool used by the dominant class to suppress the masses through the creation of standardized products. Finally, alternative considerations, extensions, and critiques of Marxist philosophy have provided support for arguments that music can function as a counter-
hegemonic force (in opposition to the elites) within society. Each of these perspectives will be addressed before applying them to the present discussion of popular soul music's political significance.

Popular Music as Passionate Communication

The political relevance of music in terms of its use as a socializing agent to gain stability and direction in society has been suggested since ancient times. Indeed, Plato and Aristotle both addressed the political role of music in society in terms of its socializing potential. For the purposes of this paper, only Plato's writings will be used to illustrate the potential political function of music as a tool of communication since Aristotle's understanding was largely informed by, and closely related to, that of his mentor's.²⁴

In Socrates' conception (as presented in Books III, IV, and X of The Republic), music's power to socialize citizens stems from its use as a form of passionate communication. For him, alterations in musical form result in corresponding changes in the structure of political

²⁴ For a discussion of Aristotle's position regarding the importance of music and poetry in political society, see Lord, Education and Culture in the Political Thought of Aristotle, 35. See also, Noebel, Rhythm, Riots and Revolution, 19-20.
society. In this regard, Socrates states that "the ways of poetry and music are not changed anywhere without change in the most important laws of the city..."\textsuperscript{25}

In examining the elements of "justice," Socrates argues that music should be utilized to nurture certain qualities of the soul, in particular virtue, which are desired in a society.\textsuperscript{26} Regarding:

The decisive importance of education in poetry and music [Socrates states]: rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul and take the strongest hold there, bringing that grace of body and mind which is only to be found in one who is brought up in the right way.\textsuperscript{27}

Socrates, then, views music as an element which affects and produces the character of individuals in a given society. As such, he believes that music may be utilized in the production of the quality and character of citizens within a society. One author summed up his position by stating that for Socrates, "[t]he virtues govern the passions, so the way to develop the virtues is to channel and refine the passions, a task that requires the aid of music because music resonates with the passions on the deepest level."\textsuperscript{28}

For Socrates, the identification of music as a political tool used to complement formal education, however, also

\textsuperscript{25} Grube, Plato's Republic, 90.
\textsuperscript{26} Cornford, The Republic of Plato, 114-117 and 332-340.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 90.
\textsuperscript{28} Martha Bayles, "Body and Soul," 37.
suggests that poets (and musicians) should be closely monitored because of their potential to corrupt a just society. Indeed, Socrates discusses this concern with the poets and musicians as corrupters of morals and youth in Books II, III, and X of The Republic, where he speaks of the baseness of those who cater to the passions, or passionate component of humanity. For Socrates, pandering to the emotional part of the being is undesirable and detrimental because the passions are furthest removed from reason and truth (the aim of a just society). As a result, he is highly skeptical of any new innovations in the field of music and suggests that controlling (i.e. censoring) the form and dissemination of music is essential to maintaining a just society. In his estimation, societies should take notice of music's tendencies and act accordingly to foster or deter the particular passions certain types of music evoke, which in turn, produces political action on the part of citizens. In fact, Socrates offers a prescription for the acceptable types of harmonic modes and instruments that would foster reason rather than "the pleasures of drink, sex, and food..." 

29 Holloway, All Shook Up, 122.
30 Grube, 59, 389e. For more on this, see Holloway, 23-44.
Though numerous recent theorists subscribing to the Platonic philosophy of music have applied his ideas to a discussion of rock (and soul) music in an attempt to discover the types of music that produce a "just society" in the 21st century (which will be considered in the following chapter), the limitations for its theoretical use will also be demonstrated. For now it is enough to state that the significance of Socrates' understanding to this discussion lies in the more general assertion that musical structure corresponds to the development of "good citizens" and may, therefore, be considered an important socializing agent: Music either excites or calms the passions, with the latter desired for the development of reason in a just society. Moreover, the ancients recognized the political importance of music, founding it upon the idea of the passionate basis of communication.31

31 Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) also suggested the notion of music as a passionate basis of communication. Rousseau began his political writings with his Discourse on the Arts and Sciences in which he argues that the arts corrupted the morals of the youth. He later portrayed the history of societies in terms of the continuous decay of the realities of freedom, making a distinction between the moral passions and physical forces within both the individual and the community and stressing the need for the cultivation of the passions. While Plato advocated the soothing of the passions in order to promote reason, Rousseau believed the passions should be stirred. See, Holloway, 75. Author John Scott states that for Rousseau, "[m]usic and language play an essential part in the
Adorno and Gramsci on Popular Music

While we have considered the ancient philosophic foundations for the concept of music as the passionate basis of communication, the modern theories will also be considered since they offer alternative approaches from which to explain popular soul music's political importance.

The modern philosophic ideas of Karl Marx have been used by analysts to explain just about any aspect of American society, including music. His ideas regarding the bourgeois, the proletariat, and the determinative influence the capitalist economic system has on all cultural happenings have been critiqued and expanded upon by contemporary philosophers in attempt to define the political function of music. Strict (or what some call vulgar) Marxists view music as a simple reflection of the capitalist tendencies of American society. Marx, himself stated in *The German Ideology* (1846), that “...[t]he legislator’s role as a molder of his ‘people.’ Rousseau explains that the legislator cannot reason with the people... Nor can he legitimately force them to unify. 'Since the legislator is therefore unable to use either force or reasoning, he must necessarily have recourse to another order of authority, which can win over without violence and persuade without convincing' (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract with Geneva Manuscript and Political Economy*, ed. Roger D. Masters trans. Judith R. Masters. New York: St. Martin’s II.7 [1978, 69]).” Scott, “Rousseau and the Melodious Language of Freedom,” 824-825.
production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life."\(^{32}\) For strict Marxists, then, music is a product for consumption pursued as a means of gaining profit and has no effect other than the perpetuation of capitalist economic tendencies and structure.

Though this is an extreme interpretation of the applications of Marxist theory, many strands of theorists espousing broader conceptions of Marxist tenets exist, two of which will be addressed in this article. For example, most classify Theodor Adorno as a Marxist critic but some view his work as fundamentally Marxist at the core but refined to account for the political realities within societies. Indeed, many theorists supporting the notion that music serves a covert socializing function in political society utilize core Marxist ideas from which they expound. This will be exemplified in the consideration of Antonio Gramsci, also classified as a Marxist.

Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), a leading theorist of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, offered a slightly distinct theory on the function of music in society that

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\(^{32}\) Marx, *The German Ideology*, 486.
derived from Weber's concept of rationalization, a Hegelian interpretation of the ideological and economic ideas of Karl Marx, and the psychoanalytical ideas of Sigmund Freud.\(^3\)

In order to account for the fact that the masses did not rise up and revolt against the elites (as Marx had predicted), but still maintain the idea that economic conditions influence social relations, Adorno introduced Weber's concept of rationalism. Both the events and changes within music and American politics are still conceived within the capitalist economic system and he classifies music as a product of the culture industry that is determinatively influenced by the capitalist profit motivations of the elites, the owners of industry. As a consequence, popular music in American society, in his conception, is the equivalent of the culture industry itself, existing solely to entertain and preoccupy listeners: Audiences passively consume music that serves as commodity rather than art.\(^4\) Finally, this "uncritical" form of music becomes increasingly standardized and simplified, familiar but not thought-provoking. In summing up Adorno's position, Brian Longhurst states:

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\(^3\) For an overview of Adorno's theory of music, see Paddison, Adorno, Modernism, and Mass Culture.

\(^4\) Adorno, Introduction to the Sociology of Music, 29.
Industrial production in capitalist societies gives rise to a standardized product, which is used in superficial ways by the audience . . . Such a system reinforces the domination of society by those who control the industrial apparatus; the capitalist or bourgeois class, as the vast majority of the population are passive and falsely happy owing to their manipulation by the culture industry, which feeds them products which they think that they want.\(^{35}\)

As will be discussed in the literature review, sociologists subscribing to the Frankfurt School theory of music have distinguished between "uncritical" music, which communicates truth, and mass music, which becomes nothing more than a product of industry, void of meaning. It will be suggested that this approach to popular music does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of commercialized music's political importance. Further, the divisions between the two types of music (art and popular) are constantly being revised and disputed, encountering criticisms similar to that of the canon debate.\(^{36}\)

The third and final source of recent discussion surrounding the political importance of the various

\(^{35}\) Longhurst, Popular Music & Society, 8-10.

\(^{36}\) The canon debate refers to the continued disagreement regarding the types of literature and music that are deemed worthy of scholarly study and merit widespread dissemination in society. Typically, commercially popular forms of communication are considered less important than the "classics." It is important to recognize that Adorno's theory has been revised over the years to allow for a broader conception of what constitutes "critical" music. This will be discussed further in the following Chapter.
cultural aspects of society derives from the work of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist theorist. Though Gramsci does not explicitly consider the political function of music, his notion of hegemony as a source of the continued subjugation of the masses, and thus a political tool, allows us to conceive of what he might have suggested was the particular political purpose of music.

While Gramsci is classified within the Marxist strand of theorists, his political philosophy recognizes the significance of politics as an autonomous activity. Marx, on the other hand, did not espouse a separate philosophy of politics, finding it to be merely an extension of the economic conditions associated with the capitalist system. As a result of Gramsci's pursuit for a theory of society in terms of its autonomous political dimension, Gramsci provided a means for understanding and explaining the fundamental political importance of popular culture in a capitalist society.

To begin, Gramsci believes that citizens are not governed by force or the sword of the magistrate alone, but also by ideas and the supporting ideologies of the dominant culture. Gramsci, himself, states in this regard:

[w]hat we can do for the moment . . . is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is the ensemble of organisms
commonly called 'private', and that of 'political society' or 'the State'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the State and 'juridicial' government.\(^{37}\)

In other words, "hegemony" serves as a political fence that constrains the culture of society within its boundaries, which is exercised through cultural mechanisms, e.g. schools, television, literature, and music. Moreover, this hegemonic metaphorical fence is controlled by the ruling class in society. "Direct domination," on the other hand, describes the political system that incorporates laws, police, and the courts. Rarely does the government need to use direct domination (coercive force) to achieve compliance since the masses believe the very ideals of the elite class to be their own. Gary Jones, in this regard, stated:

> Consequently, any class aspiring to supremacy will always attempt to secure a hegemonic position, i.e., to gain political legitimacy by weaving its own cultural outlook deeply into the social fabric; and once the world view of the group has trickled down and solidified into 'common sense' its position or supremacy is secure.\(^{38}\)

The relevance of Gramsci's political philosophy to modern interpretations of music's function lies in the uses to which it has been put by cultural theorists of the 20th century.

\(^{37}\) Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 12.  
century. In conceiving of two levels of society, Gramsci's theory allows for the existence and propagation of alternative ideas which function as counter-hegemonic tools in cultural struggles. Thus, in Gramsci's view, music may act as either a socializing agent supportive of the dominant class/group in society or music may work as a mode of disseminating and espousing ideas that oppose the dominant class/group and their political ideas, ideals, and intentions.

One discovers, upon consideration of American popular music, that the content of the music often expresses capitalist values. For example, profit, liberty, the American dream, and individualism are often themes of American popular music. Moreover, such music acts to reinforce the existing ideals and class divisions in society. At times, however, one also finds alternative values and ideas being presented through the outlets of 'civil society.' When this occurs, these counter-hegemonic ideas clash with those of the dominant class, providing a perspective from which to view cultural struggle.

Though the preceding philosophical digression was lengthy, as stated previously, it was necessary because the use of the ancient philosophies espoused by Plato and the modern theoretical conceptions of political society
presented by Adorno and Gramsci underpin recent examinations of music as a political variable by ethnomusicologists and cultural theorists. Having discussed some of these more general thoughts regarding the political function of music, an overview of authors that have specifically addressed soul music of the 1960s and 1970s will be offered before analyzing the lyrics of selected popular soul songs.
CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF THE EXISTING LITERATURE

The stylistic development of soul music has received a substantial amount of attention by historians, ethnomusicologists, and sociologists. Its evolution, as a sub-genre of popular music and/or rock and roll music, has been documented in terms of various forms of analysis including interviews, biographies, and analysis of magazine articles from the time period. The political importance of soul music has largely been considered by these analysts within the more general discussion of the historical development of that style. While historical context cannot be ignored when assessing the political value of soul music (recognizing that soul music did not occur in a vacuum), one may nonetheless focus their research intentions solely upon certain political aspects of that development. In this regard, the forthcoming lyrical analysis will contribute to the existing literature on the politically consequential racially counter-hegemonic values and ideas.
Before moving to this analysis, however, let us review the writings on popular soul music.

Drawing upon the discussion from Chapter Two, we may identify two approaches to an assessment of analysts writing specifically about soul music: 1.) Utilizing the discussion of the philosophical foundations in Chapter Two, we may address which philosophies, assumptions, and ideas the authors primarily rely upon for their starting points or conclusions regarding soul's political function, or 2.) Analysts of soul music may be assessed according to the type of analysis used to discover that music's political import (i.e., historical assessments, biographical sketches, lyrical analyses). These will be interwoven, rather than considered separately, within the following review. The debate regarding the characteristics of "refined" music will first be discussed, followed by an assessment of socio-political historiographies and the application of Gramsci's hegemonic theory of politics to American popular soul music.

High and Low Culture Discussions

One of the enduring debates stems from both the Socratic and Frankfurt School theories on popular music. While this, at first glance, appears unlikely, since the two
schools of thought are in opposition, they encounter similar criticisms in their attempts to understand the effects of American popular music on political society. Both view popular music as fundamental to the maintenance of a stable political regime, though Platonic theorists believe that soul music works to destabilize it while Frankfurt School theorists conclude that such music maintains the capitalist class system. However, both result in conclusions that popular music is aesthetically deficient. Christopher Small is one of many theorists who have identified the faulty presumption inherent in the conclusions resulting from the application of these perspectives. Small takes issue with the notion that commercial music is an aesthetic void, stating:

"The assumption that there is a necessary opposition [between art and popular music], commonly made by highbrow critics (and especially by Marxist critics, of whom Theodor Adorno was the worst but by no means the only offender), is based on a[n]... assumption which equates popular taste with debased taste, portraying 'the masses' as bemused victims of the ruthless publicity machines of record companies and others, and zeroing in unerringly on all that is worst in their products."

George Lipsitz has even suggested that the distinctions between art and mass culture are made by the elite to

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39 Small, 408. Small also claims that artists do not necessarily compromise when engaging in the production of commercial music. As he exemplifies, artists and record industry producers create a commercialized product for varied, sometimes opposing, reasons.
further subjugate the masses, stating that "culture became a rationalization for oppressive social hierarchies, an explanation and legitimation for the unjust inequalities of opportunity and condition in society." Thus, both the Socratic and Frankfurt School applications are often criticized for being elitist. The Frankfurt School theorists are further faulted for suggesting that consumers are passive. Let us now consider the criticisms of these theories separately.

The primary conclusion of Platonic theorists is that American popular soul music from the 1960s and 1970s, in its direct appeal to the raw emotions, exemplifies the antithesis of the types of music that nurture reason and moderation. Robert Pattison, for example, believes that "rock is the quintessence of vulgarity. It’s crude, loud, and tasteless." However, the critiques of this

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40 Lipsitz, High Culture and Hierarchy, 521.
41 Indeed, the difference between the rhythms of African music and traditional European music are apparent. See Middleton, Studying Popular Music for a discussion of the James Brown’s use particular vocal patterns. Soul music’s topical themes also would likely be used to support such a claim since love and sexuality are common subjects. Moreover, soul music was considered harder in the sense that realistic adult relationships (as opposed to boy/girl love) were discussed, as were invitations to engage in the pleasures of life.
42 Noebel, 19.
43 Pattison, The Triumph of Vulgarity, 4. Soul is categorized within the rock style. For a detailed
theoretical perspective are numerous; two of which will be addressed here.

To begin, "high" and "low" cultural objects, it has been argued, may be seen as arbitrary delineations stemming from varying ideologies and cultural perspectives. In the case of Socrates, his own cultural perspective and predilections, it has been suggested, may have influenced his discussions. For example, one author has characterized Socrates as a "nativist reactionary" in the sense that he was responding to the stylistic changes occurring in the music during the time of his writings, and that his musical prescriptions must be understood in light of his resistance to these new forms.

Moreover, the application of the ancient musical modes is quite difficult to achieve with any sort of accuracy, as our musical structure greatly differs from those of the ancient times. As Bayles notes, "[o]ur scales, not to mention our scientific laws, have changed quite a lot in the last 24 centuries... Scholars speculate endlessly about the nature of ancient Greek music..."

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44 For a discussion of the historically determinative character of "high" art, see Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow.
45 Linton, Politics of Music, 57.
46 Bayles, 38.
Since Adorno, as stated previously, reduces popular music
to nothing more than a commodity, he encounters similar
criticisms as that of the ancients when attempting discuss
American political culture. Further, critics have also
found fault with the notion of passive consumption.

Adorno wrote extensively on jazz music during the 1960s.
He concluded that jazz may be classified as an uncritical
form of music (as opposed to art). Most criticisms of his
writings on the subject suggest that he too was bound by
his own cultural perceptions and experiences. Max
Paddison, for example, concludes that “Adorno’s work on
jazz and popular music is undoubtedly marred by the fact
that he himself detested such music.”

Critics of the Frankfurt School have also asserted that
the idea of passive consumption does not allow for an
adequate understanding of the various segments within
society. Middleton, for example, states that “what is
missed is that alongside an increase in centralized control
has been persistent dissent; domination - social, economic

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47 Paddison, 90-96. Adorno believes jazz music to be the
quintessential example of “uncritical” music.
48 Ibid., 112.
and ideological - has been maintained only through struggle."  

It is important, in this respect, to recognize that Adorno’s theory has been revised over the years to allow for a broader conception of what constitutes “critical” music. For example, numerous writers have devised the notion of “taste-publics,” which qualifies the significance of commercialized music. In other words, many now recognize that some forms of popular music function as “critical” or authentic music. Nonetheless, the very nomenclature has been characterized by confusion and disagreement.

In sum, while aesthetic considerations of music provide general support for the claim that soul music from the 1960s and 1970s acts as a political mode of passionate communication, it is not necessary to place a value judgment on the quality of the music. The preceding discussion has demonstrated that some, arguing from a passionate theory of communication, have concluded that American popular music plays a fundamental role in the socialization process, though one that is fundamental to

49 Middleton, Studying Popular Music, 37 (italics in original). For a discussion of these issues see, Small.  
50 A good example of this adaptation is presented by Charlie Gillett in his historical analysis of the rock and roll music industry, The Sound of the City.
politics but obstructs the pursuit of a "just" society. Others, employing Adorno's critical theory, have suggested that commercialized music both reflects and equates to the capitalist economic system, thereby limiting its importance as an object of political study in its own right. However, both perspectives are criticized for reverting to artificial delineations between "high" and "low" cultural objects. Moreover, the dispute regarding the motivations for selecting particular forms of music further complicates any such endeavor. Thus, the application of both the ancient philosophy of passionate communication and the critical theory put forth by the Frankfurt School are limited and any attempt to reasonably apply either the Socratic conception of "refined" music or Adorno's description of "critical" music is marred by the foregoing difficulties. It is for all of these reasons that the Gramscian notion of hegemony provides a better foundation from which to discuss soul music.

Hegemonic and Counter-Hegemonic Discussions

The assessment of the political role of popular soul music has been amended as time has elapsed and the volume of research on the subject has expanded. Moreover, the discussion of soul music as a political variable has become
more explicit and directed as further research has elucidated the complexity and disagreement surrounding its political function.

Many sociological discussions of soul music have relied upon interviews and historical documents as their source of analysis. While some have confined their studies to a consideration of the historical development of the music, others have attempted to inject the history with an increased understanding of the music's socio-political relevance. Moreover, sociologists and historiographers continue to dispute the function of popular soul music as a hegemonic or a counter-hegemonic tool. In other words, while some analysts have concluded that soul music served a counter-hegemonic function in American political society, others believe there to be room for understanding it as both a counter-hegemonic and hegemonic apparatus.

Arnold Shaw produced an historical analysis of soul music. His work is representative of the arguments made by

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51 Gerri Hirshey, in Nowhere to Run, relies on interviews of leading soul musicians to tell the story of soul. She intentionally presents the history of soul in terms of the musicians who performed it, though she does not offer a broad theoretical perspective from which to view that music's political significance. Countless other histories and biographies concerning the musicians, the industry, and the music exist; however, the following discussion will be restricted to those that may be understood within a more general theory of hegemony.
those analysts suggesting that popular soul music from 1965-1975 served a counter-hegemonic function. In The World of Soul, Shaw presents biographical sketches of numerous soul musicians in an attempt to trace the historical development of soul from its roots in the blues tradition.\textsuperscript{52} While his purpose is to offer the history of soul, Shaw also recognizes the political context of soul. He contends that soul music did act counter to the dominant ideological foundations of American society because historically, soul music paralleled the political progression of race relations. Moreover, for Shaw, soul music is the "possession" rather than "expression" of African-Americans, emerging from the changing direction of the Civil Rights Movement.

Portia Maultsby, in her article "Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture," agrees with Shaw, stating:

\textbf{[S]ongs performed by these musicians captured the new spirit, attitudes, and values and convictions of blacks that later altered the social, political and economic structures of American society. Soul music, in the 1960s, served as a vehicle for self-awareness, protest and social change.}\textsuperscript{53}

In sum, both believe that soul music equates to black nationalism.

\textsuperscript{52} Shaw, The World of Soul.
\textsuperscript{53} Maultsby, "Soul Music," 51.
Peter Gurlanick, in *Sweet Soul Music*, also largely relies upon interviews to tell the history of soul. However, his conclusions run counter to those of Shaw and Maultsby. Gurlanick concludes that soul music does not necessarily equate to black power (as he originally assumed). For him, soul music both reinforces existing social relations and allows for a new development within the African-American segment of society, that of black power.\(^5\)

These opposing conclusions regarding soul’s political significance often stem from the way in which individual writers distinguish between the integrationist and separatist values of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. Those that view the music as an integration of the industry, and the black and white cultures, or sometimes more specifically a co-opting of the black sounds by white producers and subsequent reintroduction to the white and black masses, tend to believe that the music acted hegemonically, while those that contend the music served a counter-hegemonic function cite the increased rhythmic pulse and other stylistic shifts and their correlation to the rise in black nationalism among the African-American community.

In an attempt to address this disagreement, Brian Ward, in his comprehensive socio-political analysis of popular rhythm and blues music, *Just My Soul Responding*, applies the ideas of hegemony and counter-hegemony more explicitly and develops them more thoroughly than most sociologists and historians.\(^{55}\) Ward concludes that the story of popular rhythm and blues music from the 1960s and 1970s reveals the shortcomings of either the supposition that the music is an absolute representation of the "counter-hegemonic power of black popular culture," or the contention that it is simply "a succession of profitable commodities whose main function is to reinforce and perpetuate existing configurations of social, sexual, political, and economic power."\(^{56}\) Though the 600-page history consists of a detailed application of these opposing ideas to the industry, performers, and music, to simplify his study we may generally say that Ward distinguishes between the racial, gender, and economic functions of soul music: Racially, the music served to counter the dominant ideology while, economically and with regard to gender, the conclusions are mixed: The music worked to reinforce the existing belief system at certain

\(^{55}\) Ward utilizes numerous sources, including biographies, journal articles, congressional documents, and other historical records.

points, and conflicted with it at others. For example, while Ward recognizes the music’s importance in terms of the economic strides made by the African-American community in terms of ownership of industry, Ward also contends that the early white ownership whitened the soul sound and black record owners exploited artists as much as whites: The rise of the black capitalist had begun. However, Ward concurs with the numerous analysts of soul music when he ultimately closes the book by remarking:

"The real strength of black-oriented radio and Rhythm and Blues music was its ability to dramatize and celebrate shared aspects of the black experience and, at its best, to give shape and form to barely apprehended hopes, dreams and aspirations... Rhythm and Blues frequently transcended the racial politics and economics of their production to help promote a revived sense of black identity, pride, solidarity and common consciousness."^58

Moreover, Ward recognizes the significance of the lyrics of soul songs from the 1960s and 1970s. He states:

This growing thirst for more engaged social commentary in soul eventually resulted in a proliferation of such songs in the late 1960s. But even prior to this shift, soul - and Rhythm and Blues more generally - displayed a distinctive set of lyrical concerns and perspectives, deployed a set of stock motifs and phrases, and expressed itself in unmistakably black musical voices which had a peculiar currency in the black community. Rhythm and Blues often worked to express the black experience in ways only dimly understood by white fans and subsequent

^57 Ibid., 349 and 417-450. He further suggests that black soul artists largely avoided direct association with the Civil Rights Movement until it became almost obligatory. ^58 Ibid., 449.
commentators, thereby encouraging the national sense of black pride and identity which bloomed in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{59}

In sum, while Ward claims that the popular soul music from 1954 to 1975 requires a complex reading of history in relation to the various aspects of society, he nonetheless acknowledges the music's lyrical contribution to the Civil Rights and its offshoot, the Black Nationalist Movements from 1965-1975. Further, he understands that the music did become increasingly overt in its political statements, wherein the messages of equality, pride, and power became more pronounced.

Thus, while disputes regarding the music's political function continue to be waged, there nonetheless exists some agreement with regard to the significance of the lyrics. Ward's analysis is useful to this discussion in the sense that he concurs with the multiple other analysts who identify the increased political titles and words of popular soul music as a counter-hegemonic mode of communication which increasingly advocated pride, community, and power. Further, his research provides support for the notion that the music often communicated

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 204.
ideas common to both the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, that of pride.  

In conclusion, while any reading of music must consider the various forces and circumstances of history, politics, economics, gender, culture, and religion, as stated at the outset of the Chapter, one may also confine their studies to those more political aspects. The following lyrical analysis, in its exploration of the words of overtly racial political tunes, will supplement the existing histories and social readings that largely assess the music in relation to the industry. It is an attempt to discover the changing nature of black consciousness throughout the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements as it was communicated through popular song.

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60 Detailed considerations of the sexual and economic politics of the era are important to recognize, and indeed, Ward provides a persuasive historical analysis in support of the hegemonic strands reflected in the music, artists, and industry. However, this analysis has been restricted to a study of the lyrics in relation to the racial politics of the era and as the preceding discussion has demonstrated, Ward fundamentally agrees with the proposition that the lyrics serve counter-hegemonic functions.
CHAPTER 4

THE MOVEMENT AND SOUL WORDS OF FREEDOM, PRIDE, AND POWER

Stevie Wonder, in his 1976 tribute to Duke Ellington, "Sir Duke," declared:

Music is a world within itself
With a language we all understand
With an equal opportunity
For all to sing, dance and clap their hands.  

His words speak to the power of music to eliminate barriers of race. Nonetheless, the increased consumption of "black" music by whites during the 1950s and 1960s highlights the irony of the whites' greater appreciation of the musical culture of African-Americans while many continued to maintain preconceptions of white superiority. Farah Jasmine Griffin, in her introduction to the reprinted edition of W.E.B. DuBois' The Souls of Black Folk, describes DuBois' notion of "double consciousness" as the internal conflict within African-Americans, who possess both a national and racial identity, the former being continually glorified while the latter is openly abhorred. She elaborates upon the concept, concluding that "[i]t also

\[61\] Wonder, "Sir Duke."
refers to the ability of black Americans to see themselves only through the eyes of white Americans, to measure their intelligence, beauty, and sense of self-worth by standards set by others." In short, the conception of the black man as described by the whites served a hegemonic function in the culture of African-Americans. However, popular soul music lyrics of the 1960s and 1970s began to vocalize a denial of this dominant belief system, celebrating the culture of African-Americans. As will be discussed below, the music increasingly countered the notion that blacks were lazy and, intellectually and morally inferior. In sum, themes of pride, black beauty, and black power recurred in the titles and words of popular soul songs from the period of 1965-1975. In the following pages, the songs are discussed in terms of their relation to, and expression of, the events and shifts within the Civil Rights Movement. As such, they are not considered chronologically but are categorized.

62 Du Bois, xvi.
63 The term "African-American" gained currency during this time period. Blacks believed that the terms "negro" and "colored" were the creation of whites, and in order to truly strip the power of whites over their culture, African-Americans needed to define themselves. Colburn and Pozzetta, "Race, Ethnicity, and the Evolution of Political Legitimacy," 124.
Civil Rights and Popular Soul Music to 1963

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, like the music of the time, finds its roots in much earlier beginnings. The quest by African-Americans for equal treatment dates back to the Civil War, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and the rise of Jim Crow following the 1896 Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson declaring "separate but equal" accommodations constitutional. Similarly, the popular soul music of the 1960s and 1970s finds its roots in the culture of slavery and the black church, the sounds of blues and gospel. Both converge, with the Civil Rights Movement entering mass society, taking the form of a national social movement, and soul music being distributed through the mass media, increasingly accepted by whites in its unadulterated form.

64 In fact, Congress passed a Civil Rights Act in the 1870s which outlawed discrimination in public accommodations, only for sections of it to be subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, rendering it without force (Civil Rights Cases 100 U.S. 3 (1883)). In short, the struggle for civil rights was lengthy and often

65 Haralambos, 99-104.

66 Prior to this period, African-American rhythm and blues music was "covered" by white artists and subsequently redistributed for the white market. Moreover, the covers of original black music tended to whiten the sound. For example, Pat Boone's rendition of "Tutti Frutti" in the 1950s, which was originally performed by Little Richard, was the popular version of the song within the white community. While Little Richard used a strong rhythmic pulse and excited vocal styling, Boone ultimately produced
Until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision, the Civil Rights Movement was largely a series of regional efforts. Following the declaration in *Brown* that "separate" educational facilities are "inherently unequal," the Movement altered in form and direction, becoming a national movement that advocated nonviolent protest as a means of desegregating public accommodations and establishing legislation to combat legal inequalities.

By late 1955, Rosa Parks' refusal to move to the back of a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama sparked new activities by protesters. Martin Luther King, Jr., the founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) emerged as the most prominent leader during this era of the Civil Rights Movement. King advocated the use of nonviolent demonstrations according to the principle of civil disobedience, and further, encouraged the cooperation

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a crooner-style rendition of the tune. Throughout the latter half of the decade, however, black artists gained increased acceptance by white consumers. This is exemplified by the chart popularity of African-American musicians. See, Gillett, 236.

67 The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund spearheaded the legal attack on the "separate but equal" doctrine. It is noteworthy to mention, in this respect, that the NAACP won a series of decisions regarding segregation in graduate schools prior to *Brown*, however none had as far reaching an impact on everyday Americans as *Brown*. 

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among the races. In 1960, the Movement’s efforts were further promoted by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was established to organize black college students throughout the nation.

During this early period of the Civil Rights Movement, from roughly 1954-1963, the dreams of freedom and legal equality were largely expressed, lyrically, through adaptations of spiritual songs and folk songs rather than popular soul tunes.\(^{68}\) Indeed, the anthem of the Movement was an adaptation of the spiritual, “We Shall Overcome.” Alternatively, popular African-American soul artists typically sang about conventional themes of love or other aspects of life.\(^{69}\) In one sense, the music encouraged cooperation between blacks and whites, much as King preached. For example, white and blacks collaborated in the production of popular music.\(^{70}\) However, in another way, the popular African-American songs, in their musical traditions of the church and field hollers, countered one aspect of white hegemony even while avoiding overtly political statements: That of cultural superiority in

\(^{68}\) Members of the SNCC, Guy and Candie Carawan produced two compilations of the lyrics and music to the songs of the civil rights movement, one published in 1963 and the other in 1968. Carawan, Sing for Freedom.

\(^{69}\) Soul music is well known to concentrate on stories of love and relationships.

\(^{70}\) Gurlanick, 10.
For example, Ray Charles altered the gospel hymn, "This Little Light of Mine" to pen the rhythm and blues hit, "This Little Girl of Mine." In so doing, Charles was one of the early artists to introduce white America to the sounds of the black church, secularized though it was. Moreover, increasing numbers of whites enjoyed and appreciated the musical styling of black artists. In fact, *Billboard Magazine* did away with separate popular and rhythm and blues charts in December 1963, finding that the convergence of the markets eliminated the need for the latter.

The Movements in Popular Soul Music Lyrics, 1963-1975

While the early Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1963 emphasized non-violent protest and cooperation among the races, and the lyrics of popular soul music largely reflected the idea of 'going along to get along,' consisting of mostly novelty and sentimental songs, divisions within the African-American community that existed, but were downplayed or muted for a time, began to

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71 See, Neal, "Black Art and Liberation."
72 Some individuals within the African-American community were angered by the alteration of the traditional gospel hymn.
73 Gillett, 233. *Billboard* reestablished the separate charts shortly thereafter as a result of the reemergence of the divergent consumer tendencies.
resurface. Popular soul music began to express the concerns of the African-American community with greater musical intensity. Further, statements of freedom, equality, pride, and power became more lyrically explicit. Songs of both general unity, promoting the philosophy of Martin Luther King Jr., and black power, drawing on the teachings of Malcolm X, increasingly found their way into the popular lyrics of soul songs. Moreover, popular soul songs often presented themes that were experienced and interpreted by the listener in such a manner as to support the path to equality with which they agreed. The common thread that runs through the music is the promotion of the African-American identity as a culture of pride, one that is contrary to the hegemonic conception of white superiority.

Until the mid-1960s, activities based on the philosophy of nonviolent resistance espoused by King, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, the Woolworth lunch-counter and other sit-ins, the Freedom Rides of 1961, and additional efforts worked to unify the various segments of the African-American community in its common goal for legal equality and an end to segregation. The concepts of brotherhood, unity, and equality are common among the popular soul songs of the period and were often expressed
in terms of the “train” to freedom and similar images encouraging integration.\textsuperscript{74} Such popular hits include the O’Jays “Love Train;” “People Got to Be Free,” “Love City” and “Everyday People” by Sly and the Family Stone; “Think” by Aretha Franklin; “If You’re Ready (Come Go with Me) by the Staple Singers; “Wake Up Everybody” by Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes; “Unite the World” by The Temptations; “Friendship Train” by Gladys Knight and the Pips; “Why Can’t We Live Together” by Timmy Thomas; and “People Get Ready” and “Never Too Much Love” by the Impressions. The imagery was clear: The train to freedom was the Civil Rights Movement and all were called to unite and join. Moreover, the need for blacks and whites to unite is explicit.

The Impressions, in “People Get Ready” exclaim, “People get ready for the train to Freedom”\textsuperscript{75} and further:

Don’t want no ‘Toms’ or any sorry Negroes Comin’ to me saying they won’t go. Everybody wants freedom.\textsuperscript{76}

The music of the Impressions was often closely related with the Civil Rights Movement. They were dubbed the “movement fellows” by members of SNCC, who thought that

\textsuperscript{74} The imagery of the “train” as a symbol of freedom dates back to the “underground railroad” that carried slaves in the South to freedom in the North.
\textsuperscript{75} Impressions, “People Get Ready.”
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
their songs “really speak to the situation a lot of us find ourselves in.” At times, songs by the group were incorporated into the repertoire of music for the Movement. One such example is “Never Too Much Love.” The Impressions offer a more explicit statement of freedom, preaching:

I gotta fight for my freedom and fight for it now
Join with the movement and we’ll show you how.

The song even experienced adaptations by Movement protesters:

They say the Movement is a nonviolent thing
Led by people like Martin Luther King,
I want my freedom, and I want it now.

More generally, some popular soul songs encouraged cooperation among the races, as Gladys Knight and the Pips did in “Friendship Train:”

We’ve got to learn to live with each other
No matter what the race, creed or color.

Timmy Thomas also produced a tune advocating unity in “Why Can’t We Live Together,” singing:

No matter, no matter what colour
You are still my brother.

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77 Carawan, 290.
78 Ibid.
79 Impressions, “Never Too Much Love.”
80 Carawan, 290.
81 Gladys Knight and the Pips, “Friendship Train.”
82 Thomas, “Why Can’t We Live Together.”
In sum, the early philosophy of the Civil Rights Movement continued into the late 1960s and early 1970s in the lyrics of such songs that evoked images of oneness, love, and integration of the races.\textsuperscript{83} However, these songs represent only one aspect of the Movement, and throughout this tumultuous era new themes and images also emerged, reflecting the strains within the Civil Rights Movement itself.

The 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom may be viewed as both the culmination of cooperation as well as the initial indication of the schisms within the Movement's leadership that were to cause a fundamental shift in the direction of the Civil Rights Movement, one that led to the rise of the Black Power Movement and black nationalism.

Upon reviewing the history of the Civil Rights Movement, one discovers that the various schisms present from 1963 until its formal split in 1966 increased the tensions between the leading organizational leaders (SCLC and SNCC) concerning the appropriate approach and goals for the attainment of equality.\textsuperscript{84} Though African-Americans achieved significant legal gains, the lot of the average black man

\textsuperscript{83} For example, the O'Jays "Love Train" did not hit the charts until 1973.
\textsuperscript{84} Colburn and Pozzetta, 121-122.
remained unchanged and systemic discrimination continued.®®
David Colburn and George Pozzetta have noted, in this
regard, that "[t]he appeal of Marcus Garvey in the 1920s...
and Malcolm X in the 1960s, as well as many others,
demonstrated that black Americans had long sought something
more than just legal equality in American society."®®
Moreover, marchers continually encountered police and white
authority figures who brutally and violently confronted
peaceful protesters.®® Nina Simone wrote and performed
"Mississippi Goddamn" in 1964 as a reaction to the murders
of four children in Alabama and NAACP worker Medgar Evers.®®
Offering a seething narration and commentary on the
mistreatment of non-violent protesters by white authorities
in the South and the lack of progress toward freedom,
Simone cries:

Don’t tell me, I’ll tell you, me and my people just about
due...
Picket lines, school boycott, try to say it’s a Communist
plot.
All I want is equality for my sisters, my brothers, my
people, and me.®®

®® Ward, 339-341.
®® Colburn and Pozzetta, 120.
®® Bull Connor is infamous for his use of fire hoses and
other violent methods for dispersing marchers.
®® Simone, I Put a Spell on You, 90.
®® Simone, "Mississippi Goddamn." While not a chart hit,
Simone states in her autobiography that it “sold well,
extcept in the south.” Further she recalls that the song
“brought the place down... wherever [she] sang it.”
Simone, I Put a Spell on You, 90.
She accuses Alabama and Tennessee of similar actions, and sings of the irony of the white establishment, in its continued counsel that change must take place gradually. In this regard, Simone sings about how the blacks were "too slow" in the eyes of Uncle Tom ("lazy" and "rotten") yet those in power continued to encourage gradual progress toward equality in terms of "desegregation, mass participation," and "unification." In short, after a decade of non-violent struggle, de jure equality did not translate into de facto equality as many had hoped. As Simone's song indicates, anger was mounting within the African-American community.

By 1965, the tensions within the Civil Rights Movement mounted to a point of eruption. Urban ghettos, for example, experienced an increase in confrontations: Harlem in 1964, Watts in 1965, and Chicago in 1966 were just a few of the cities in which riots were becoming more frequent and more violent. During the march from Selma to Montgomery in protest of the continued disenfranchisement and violence in Southern states and the inequity of slum life in the ghettos of the urban North, SNCC leader, 

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90 Simone, "Mississippi Goddamn."
91 Issues of housing, educational access, poverty, and unemployment continued in both the South and ghetto neighborhoods of the North.  

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Stokely Carmichael, verbalized the shift in the focus of the Movement: Along this march, Carmichael introduced the new rallying cry of the Movement, "Black Power," which advocated black determination of identity and organizational solutions apart from white leadership.

The *New York Times*, in July of 1967, discussed the alternative definitions of Black Power, concluding:

Many believe the slogan means only that Negroes should take pride in their race and organize themselves for political and economic action. Others view it as an antiwhite rallying cry. Still others see it as a sort of para-military slogan that leads to riots and rebellion... the very ambiguity of the phrase is its major strength as a rallying cry for Negroes.\(^\text{92}\)

Essentially, King still maintained that white-black cooperation remained the most useful way to achieve political success, while SNCC leaders believed that whites had served their purpose in assisting to establish legal equalities through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but that their usefulness to the achievement of full equality by African-Americans had been outlived. Thus, Carmichael promoted the reinvigoration of an all-black organizational movement.

In 1969, Nina Simone recognized the shift within the Civil Rights Movement. In an upbeat rhythm and blues style song, "Revolution," Simone sings:

\(^{92}\) Quoted in Safire, *Safire's Political Dictionary*, 58.
Now we've gotta Revolution
'cause I see the face of things to come
The Constitution... It's gonna have to bend.\textsuperscript{93}

Simone also suggests that whites overreact when they claim that black nationalism advocates racism on the part of blacks, commenting "They'll say I'm preaching hate."\textsuperscript{94}

The ambiguity of the use of this term, and by extension, the proper route to equality, became a key theme among popular soul songs from 1965-1975. In other words, members subscribing to either King's philosophy or that of black nationalism were often able to find support for their convictions within the lyrics of the same songs. However, a few themes are common throughout the era.

Numerous more general songs of disillusionment and dissatisfaction concerning the progress of race relations speckle the\textsuperscript{95} Cashbox charts from the period of 1965 to 1975. Some offer descriptions of the sad state of American society while others encourage protesters to "Keep on Pushing."\textsuperscript{95}

Among the popular soul songs that describe the chaotic state of the Movement and the associated violence, the continuing tension between and among the races, and the increasing dissatisfaction with the lack of progress toward

\textsuperscript{93} Simone, "Revolution."
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{95} Impressions, "Keep on Pushing."
de facto equality and the persistence of black ghetto poverty are “Ball of Confusion (That’s What the World is Today),” “Ain’t No Justice,” “Smiling Faces Sometimes,” and “1990” by the Temptations; “Inner City Blues” and “What’s Going On” by Marvin Gaye; “The World is a Ghetto” by War; “Why? (The King of Love Is Dead)” and “Old Jim Crow” by Nina Simone; “Visions,” “Big Brother” and “Village Ghetto Land” by Stevie Wonder; “Cannot Find a Way,” “We Got to Have Peace,” and “(Don’t Worry) If There’s a Hell Below, We’re All Going to Go” by Curtis Mayfield; “I Don’t Know Satisfaction” by Sly and the Family Stone, “I’ll Take You There” by the Staple Singers; “Living for the City” performed by both Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles; and “Back Stabbers” by the O’Jays.

As stated, disillusionment with regard to the progress of the Movement, and the general status of societal relations, became a common lyrical trend during the decade from 1965–1975. The Temptations considered the tensions of the era

96 The phrase “smilin’ faces” recurred in some songs. For example, the O’Jays refer to the phrase in “Back Stabbers,” as do the Staple Singers in “I’ll Take You There.” The Temptations even titled a song “Smiling Faces Sometimes.” The notion alludes to the lies perpetrated by whites while they smile in your face. In this regard, the lies referred to broken promises of equality and change.

97 Gaye originally wrote this song about the Vietnam War but the words resonated with the African-American community as well.
in "Ball of Confusion (That’s What the World Is Today)," offering a cynical description of the state of society. In the rap style soul song, they refer to the numerous issues facing the nation, saying "the only person talking about love thy brother is the preacher."

Curtis Mayfield expressed concerns about more particular aspects of the Movement, including the breakdown of the cooperation between races and within the African-American segment.

In "Cannot Find a Way," Mayfield describes the great gap between economic and racial classes, singing:

the white and black, rich and poor
find we’re all standing in the same old shoes.®®

In "(Don’t Worry) If There’s a Hell Below, We’re All Going to Go," Mayfield comments on the problems of drugs, education, and pollution in America. In the soulful funk tune Mayfield exclaims:

"Blacks and the crackers... They’re all political actors...
And Nixon talking ‘bout don’t worry
Everyone, including blacks, saying don’t worry.®®

Mayfield also challenges the African-American community to embrace all hues of blackness in "We People Who Are Darker Than Blue." Encouraging blacks to unite, he declares:

®® Mayfield, "Cannot Find A Way."
®® Mayfield, "(Don’t Worry) If There’s a Hell Below, We’re All Going to Go."
This ain't no time for segregating
I'm talkin' 'bout Brown and Yellow too.\textsuperscript{100}

Finally, Nina Simone more specifically addressed the lack of progress toward an equal society in "Old Jim Crow."

Recognizing that segregation was still entrenched in America, she questions:

Old Jim Crow don't you know
It's all over know.\textsuperscript{101}

The persisting problems associated with ghetto life, including drugs, poverty, crime, and violence, were also common themes among popular soul songs, particularly within Stevie Wonder's releases. Often, the songs identify the failure of the governmental leaders to improve the situation. In "Living for the City," for example, Stevie Wonder tells the story of a ghetto boy from Mississippi who cannot find a job because blacks continue to endure discrimination. He claims, "he tried to vote but to him there's no solution." Again, in "Village Ghetto Land," Wonder poses the question, "tell me, would you be happy in Village Ghetto Land?"\textsuperscript{102} He further claims that "politicians laugh and drink, drunk to all demands."\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} Mayfield, "We People Who Are Darker Than Blue."
\textsuperscript{101} Simone, "Old Jim Crow."
\textsuperscript{102} Wonder, "Village Ghetto Land."
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
Finally, Wonder uses George Orwell’s®®^ concept of “Big Brother” as the title of yet another ghetto-themed song. The allusion to Orwell’s concept is evoked throughout the tune, wherein Wonder claims that politicians enter the ghettos only during campaigns. He sings softly but with certain sarcasm:

I’ll change if you vote me in as the pres,  
The President of your soul.\textsuperscript{105}

Though a rather upbeat song musically speaking, Wonder’s conclusions about the state of society are grim:

You’ve killed all our leaders...  
You’ll cause your own country to fall.\textsuperscript{106}

While the foregoing popular soul songs illustrate the increased disillusionment and dissatisfaction associated with the progress of race relations, numerous others remained optimistic, encouraging African-Americans to continue their efforts for equality. Such songs include: “Keep on Pushing,” “Move on Up,” “We’re Rolling On (Part One),” “Keep on Keeping on,” “Choice of Colors,” “I Plan to

\textsuperscript{104} Orwell wrote the fiction book \textit{1984}, in which the dominant party maintains power by exercising total control over both the thoughts and actions of the masses.  

\textsuperscript{105} Wonder, “Big Brother.”

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid. Clearly, this is a reference to the assassination of the numerous Civil Rights leaders, including Malcolm X in 1965 and Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Nina Simone eulogized King in “Why? (The King of Love Is Dead).” The song progresses, both with regard to the music and the message, moving from somber to hopeful, yet fearful of the future.
Stay a Believer," and "This is My Country" by Curtis Mayfield and/or The Impressions; "A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke; "Stand," "You Can Make It If You Try," and "Underdog" by Sly and the Family Stone; "Am I Black Enough For You" by Billy Paul; and "Get Up, Get Into It, Get Involved by James Brown."

"Keep On Pushing," by the Impressions, was one of the earliest of these types of songs, skyrocketing to number 1 on the Cashbox Black Singles Charts in 1964. The song was so popular among Movement workers that it was adopted as another marching song. Singing in the tradition of gospel soul with harmonic vocals, the group declares:

I’ll reach the higher goal
I know that I can make it
With just a little bit of soul.

As race relations continued to stagnate, the Impressions released additional songs encouraging African-Americans not to "stop until we reach the mountaintop, an explicit reference to the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr.. Similarly, the group exclaims "but we shall overcome I believe someday" in "Choice of Colors."

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107 Carawan, 308-309.
108 Impressions, "Keep On Pushing."
109 Impressions, "We’re Rolling On (Part One)."
110 Impressions, "Choice of Colors."
Other artists promoted the continuation of the Movement toward equality as well. Sam Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come,” released in 1965, described the reality of the struggle and expressed faith in the future:

Yes it’s been an uphill journey...
But I believe, I believe...\(^{111}\)

Though not released until 1969, “Stand,” by Sly and the Family Stone advanced a similar sentiment:

There’s a midget standing tall
And the giant beside him about to fall. \(^{112}\)

In this case, the midget is the African-American community at only 20 million people, while the giant is the other 180 million whites.

The most explicit promotion of a continued African-American struggle for freedom was Billy Paul’s “Am I Black Enough For You.” The fast-paced soul song uses traditional horn instrumentation, combined with a funk rhythm, to urge blacks to remain optimistic. Paul uses repetition of the first stanza, increasing numerically from one to eight, to evoke feelings of urgency and confidence:

We’re gonna move on up one by one
We ain’t gonna stop until the work is done...
This whole world’s gonna be brand new. \(^{113}\)

\(^{111}\) Cooke, “A Change Is Gonna Come.”
\(^{112}\) Sly and the Family Stone, “Stand.”
\(^{113}\) Paul, “Am I Black Enough for You.”
The foregoing general songs of disillusionment and dissatisfaction concerning the progress of race relations, and those advocating perseverance on the part of African-Americans, allowed room for interpretation. However, the theme that spans the decade, acting as a current that runs throughout many of the aforementioned songs and countless others, is one of pride in the African-American culture and the greatness and beauty of blacks. Moreover, as time progressed, pride became a more prominent theme among musicians.

As early as 1963, the Impressions were singing "I'm So Proud." Though originally written as a love song, the lyrics were vague, and the title words resonated with African-Americans who were searching for an identity outside of that which was conceived by whites. In fact, it was yet another of the popular hits adopted by the Civil Rights Movement and used during marches.\(^{114}\) In "Keep on Pushing," the Impressions claim "I've got my pride to tear down walls."\(^{115}\) Yet again, in 1967, the Impressions released an optimistic Southern soul song that countered the dominant racial belief system, "We're a Winner." The group advises:

\(^{114}\) Carawan, 290.
\(^{115}\) Impressions, "Keep on Pushing."
Never let anybody say boy you can’t make it
’Cause a feeble mind is in your way.\textsuperscript{116}

Numerous other songs from 1965-1975 communicated more
general themes of encouragement, respect, and cultural
vitality, with the concept of black pride at their core.
For example, songs drawing on African musical traditions,
or celebrating African cultural heritage include “Thank
You” and “Africa Talks to You” by Sly and the Family Stone,
“Ngiculela - Es Una Historia - I am Singing” by Stevie
Wonder and “Ungena Za Ulimengu (Unite the World)” by The
Temptations.

Beauty was also a recurring subject. For example, Curtis
Mayfield declares that:

Peace you will find
Into this steeple of beautiful people.\textsuperscript{117}

He celebrates the beauty and greatness of blacks and their
culture in other songs as well, including “The Makings of
You,” “Soul Music,” and “Beautiful Brother of Mine,” in
which Mayfield invokes the notions of pride, power, love,
beauty, and respect. He observes that the African-American
community is now:

Respecting what black is now for...
Improving black pride is now true
With love, respect, and pride
Success will be on our side.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{116} Impressions, “We’re a Winner.”
\textsuperscript{117} Mayfield, “Move on Up.”
The beauty of the black woman was also celebrated in songs such as "Ebony Eyes" by Stevie Wonder, "Wildflower" by the O'Jays, and "To Be Young, Gifted, and Black" by Nina Simone.

Finally, themes of black power and soul power became more frequent within popular soul songs near the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s. While the word "power" was increasingly present within the lyrics of the later popular soul songs, the meaning remained open to interpretation. James Brown released "Soul Power," in which the title words are repeated throughout the song as if it were a mantra. Some artists were more direct, exhibiting increasing disdain and anger. The Isley Brothers, for example, claim "We've gotta fight the powers that be," while the Chi-Lites observe:

They know we're not satisfied so we begin to holler Makin' us a promise and throwin' a few more dollars. They advocate that the government "Give More Power to the People," because the masses are fundamentally deprived while "there's some people up there hoggin' everything."

By 1968, the topic of "black pride" was becoming closely associated with the call for "Black Power," though it did

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118 Mayfield, "Beautiful Brother of Mine."
119 Isley Brothers, "Fight the Power (Parts 1 & 2)."
120 Chi-Lites, "Give More Power to the People."
121 Ibid.
not necessarily equate to black nationalism in the minds of all African-Americans. Even Martin Luther King Jr. was using the slogan "Black is beautiful" in his speeches by 1967.\textsuperscript{122} Colburn and Pozzetta describe the various segments within the black community in relation to their beliefs about the Movements and government, stating:

\begin{quote}
[Most black moderates rejected ethnicity outright as socially and politically dangerous. Others saw value in the symbols and pageantry of the nationalist movement and perceived African American ethnicity as an effective way to maintain a sense of group pride and unity in the movement's aftermath, but they did not support a political and economic restructuring of American society. Still others embraced this new ethnic identity as a way to revamp the U.S. political and economic process, which they regarded as being fundamentally at odds with the needs of the black community.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

Thus, the African-American community experienced internal divisions regarding the principles of the Black Power Movement, but the concept of pride unified the community against the hegemonic notion of superiority.

Interestingly, the continued ambiguity surrounding the notions of pride and power prompted a dialogue, to some extent, among musicians. James Brown released what was to become the anthem of black nationalism, "Say It Loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud" in 1968, though it too was rather enigmatic lyrically with regard to a prescription for

\textsuperscript{122} Safire, 56.  
\textsuperscript{123} Colburn and Pozzetta, 126.
action and definition of power. Throughout the song, Brown repeats the chorus of the title words and expresses the need for determination in order to achieve equality, declaring:

We'd rather die on our feet
Than keep livin' on our knees.\textsuperscript{124}

However ambiguous the phrase was, numerous artists expressed the same sentiment of pride, including Sly and the Family Stone in "(I Don't Know) Satisfaction."\textsuperscript{125} They exclaim:

Bigger crowd, feelin' proud
And all of a sudden I'm singin' loud.\textsuperscript{126}

The Temptations also invoked the phrase in the closing verse of the song "Message from a Black Man," wherein they question the basis of racism and caution listeners that the struggle will continue until equality is achieved. Finally, Curtis Mayfield, in an eloquent narration on the divisiveness within the black community, addresses the meaning of black pride. Mayfield questioned the shift in the Civil Rights Movement toward that of Black Power. As the title suggests, in "Mighty Mighty (Spade and Whitey)" Mayfield admonishes those that pursue black nationalism at the cost of unity singing:

\textsuperscript{124} Brown, "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud."
\textsuperscript{125} Sly and the Family Stone, "(I Don't Know) Satisfaction."
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
Your black and white power
Is gonna be a crumbling tower.\textsuperscript{127}

Moreover, Mayfield closes the tune by declaring, "I'm black and I'm proud like the brothers too."\textsuperscript{128}

In sum, the message of pride flowed through both the integrationist and separatist philosophies of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, respectively, though the themes of unity within the songs were more closely associated with the philosophy of Martin Luther King Jr., while those relating to ideas about power drew from the teachings of Malcolm X and the SNCC.

Notes on Popularity and Black/White Markets

After considering dozens of songs, the preceding analysis has demonstrated the ways in which the lyrics of popular soul songs from 1965 to 1975 expressed the concerns and reflected the shifts between, and divisions among, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. Moreover, songs containing racially political phrases and narrations did not begin to emerge in the popular markets until roughly 1963, with the Impressions "I'm So Proud." However, we also noted earlier that the intersection of protest and popularity may provide an interesting viewpoint from which

\textsuperscript{127} Mayfield, "Mighty Mighty (Spade and Whitey)."
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.
to assess the commercial side of political music in relation to the black and white taste-publics. Upon reviewing Table 1, located in the Appendix, one quickly draws the conclusion that the popular soul songs performed better in black commercial markets than in whites. Only four of the selected songs fared better in the white markets, "Superbad" by James Brown, "Dancin' in the Streets" by Martha and the Vandellas, "Everybody is a Star" by Sly and the Family Stone, and "I've Been Trying" by the Impressions. As was noted earlier, Billboard quickly returned the Rhythm and Blues Charts as a market indicator of the black community's musical preferences after consolidating the Pop and Rhythm and Blues Charts in 1963. The consumer trends, coupled with Billboard's reintroduction of a separate African-American music chart, suggest that the political soul music spoke to the African-American community on a deeper level than that of the whites, offering expressions and ideas which communicated the black experience during the Civil Rights era. Indeed, the rise of political popular soul music emerged at about the same time as the reemergence of separate markets.

As a final consideration, it is worthwhile to briefly address the impact of media control and censorship in regard to the question of popularity. While all of the
artists considered in the foregoing analysis achieved some measure of commercial success, some songs did not even make it onto the Cashbox Black Singles Charts. For example, though Nina Simone stated in her autobiography that sales of the single “Mississippi Goddamn” did well, with the exception of the South, the song nonetheless did not make the popular charts even though “[i]t brought the place down” wherever she went.\(^{129}\) Two explanations may provide some insight into this paradox. Nina herself states that distribution of the song was barred in the South, and a “dealer in South Carolina sent a whole crate of copies back to our office with each one snapped in half.”\(^{130}\) Secondly, the song was barred from radio as well as sales in the South.\(^{131}\) Thus, it is difficult to achieve commercial success in terms of chart popularity when you have been effectively censored from the mass media outlets. Though this is but one example, the censoring of soul music may have impacted the commercial popularity of particular songs. As a final illustration, Curtis Mayfield, on his Curtis Live! album, a recording of a live concert in New York, engages the audience prior to singing “We’re a

\(^{129}\) Simone, I Put a Spell on You,” 90.

\(^{130}\) Ibid.

\(^{131}\) Shaw, 248.
Winner." In his 'rap,' Mayfield discusses how numerous radio stations resisted playing the song on radio.

In sum, the racially political popular soul songs from 1965 to 1975 were increasingly charged with ideas and considerations of the Movement and associated events, becoming ever more popular among the black masses. Moreover, the impact of censorship on popularity affected at least two of the songs under consideration, and likely, more. Such an investigation into these impacts, though not a point of direct analysis in this paper, would provide further elucidation regarding the conclusions made here regarding the intersection of the popular and the political.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

"Poet" by Sly and the Family Stone:

My only weapon is my pen and the frame of mind I'm in.
I'm a songwriter, a poet.  

The Song Has Been Sung

In the foregoing Chapters of this thesis, the theoretical foundations of popular music studies have been considered, the existing literature on popular soul music has been addressed, and an analysis of the lyrics of primarily popular soul songs from 1965 to 1975 has been presented. In so doing, this thesis has attempted to demonstrate the value of the 'hegemonic' theory of politics as a basis for the discussion of the importance of commercially popular music to the political socialization process.

As illustrated in Chapter Two, both the Platonic philosophy of music, as it is applied by modern analysts, as well as the critical theory of music, which simplifies mass consumerism to a debased form of consumption for

\[132\] Sly and the Family Stone, "Poet."
escape, encounter similar criticisms of being elitist and culturally bound. The Gramscian notion of "hegemony," on the other hand, does not reduce mass consumerism to a theory of economic determinism, but instead allows room for an understanding of an autonomous political society. Moreover, the very concept of hegemony recognizes the significance of music, and other cultural objects such as literature and education, as significant contributors to the continued subjugation of the masses. In this sense, it returns to the fundamental understanding of music as a passionate basis for communication.

Following this overview of the philosophical and theoretical foundations which underpin the analyses of popular soul music in recent years, the literature review discussed the conflicting conclusions regarding soul music's hegemonic functions. While some authors believe the music acted counter-hegemonically, other argued that it worked to reinforce existing power relations. Upon reviewing the analyses, it was discovered that the term had often been broadly applied, which resulted in conflicting conclusions. As such, the lyrics of popular soul songs were considered on a number of levels, in terms of race, gender, economics and region in an attempt to find the common theme among the songs. The common strand running
throughout the popular soul songs was a theme of racial pride.

Within Chapter Four, a lyrical analysis was presented in order to exemplify the way in which popular soul music countered the hegemonic ideas of white supremacy and injected the sense of pride in the African-American community. Indeed, the very fact that the government resorted to coercive actions, or brute force, during the era of the Civil Rights Movement further supports this thesis, as the dominant classes resort to violence only when the domination of culture and values fails. This was exhibited both in terms of the Movement, and the violent confrontations between non-violent protesters and authority figures, and in terms of the censorship of the music.

While the music contained themes of unity, freedom and equality that related to the non-violent philosophy and cooperation between the races promoted by Martin Luther King Jr., other songs expressed disillusionment and dissatisfaction. Moreover, themes of power became more prominent within the lyrics during the later half of the 1960s. However, the analysis also exemplified the use of common references, including the need for self-worth, respect, dignity, beauty, and pride among African-American citizens. Such ideas were utilized by Civil Rights
Movement supporters and Black Power Movement advocates alike in support of their respective beliefs. In short, the ambiguity of black pride allowed it to resonate with the various segments within the African-American community, rather than further segmenting them through the illumination of the different philosophical approaches to the attainment of equality.

The dominant capitalist values of individualism and self-reliance, however, do appear at times in the lyrics of the music and actions of the performers. Many term it the rise of the "black capitalist," which interestingly, was coined by a Nixon speech-writer during his primary campaign for President in 1968. This analysis restricted itself to a consideration of the counter-hegemonic function of popular soul music in terms of race, but there is at least some support for Ward's argument that popular soul music often worked hegemonically in terms of economics. For example, James Brown's lyrics express ideas that, at times, promote the hegemonic ideal of the American capitalist society ("America is My Home"), while at others, calls those values into question ("Funky President (People It's Bad)").

Nonetheless, when reading the lyrics of the popular soul songs, one does find the commonality of pride that runs

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133 Safire, 57.
throughout them, as was exemplified in Chapter Four. This idea resonated with African-Americans and allowed for the development of an alternative to the mass culture ideal, that of a pluralist nation. Indeed, for decades, the phrase used to describe the American culture was the "melting pot." Today, many believe it more appropriate to use the analogy of the "mixed salad." In sum, the counter-hegemonic ideas of pride flew in the face of "Jim Crow," his earlier form, "Uncle Tom," and the continued claim that blacks were of lesser value than whites.

In conclusion, as an object of political socialization, music works at a number of cultural intersections, e.g. race, class, gender, region, religion, etc... It reflects but also allows listeners a language of expression and articulation. Moreover, music functions at a fundamental level in political society, that of culture. Such cultural values, expressed via popular modes of communication, including music, offer insight into the status and functioning of the dominant ideals of a society. Though musical lyrics cannot be considered apart from the structural elements of society, an investigation into the messages is warranted and necessary for a better understanding of both the divisions among the individuals
within the African-American community, and between the races. As Frith said:

In a culture in which few people make music but everyone makes conversation, access to songs is primarily through their words. If music gives lyrics their linguistic vitality, lyrics give songs their social use.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{134} Frith, Music for Pleasure, 123 (italics in original).
Table 1: Cashbox Singles and Black Singles Charts Highs and Total Weeks by Artist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Cashbox Singles</th>
<th>Cashbox Black Singles</th>
<th>Cashbox Singles Chart Weeks</th>
<th>Cashbox Black Singles Chart Weeks</th>
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Note: n.d. = no data available
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WONDER, STEVIE


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author, Ted Jelen, Ph.D.) a paper presented at the
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