

## A Critical Discourse Analysis of Ideology in the Song “Where Is the Love?” by The Black Eyed Peas Based on van Dijk’s Theory

Juliana Tifani<sup>1\*</sup>, Tiodor Sihotang<sup>2</sup>, Sry Tama Butar Butar<sup>3</sup>, Partohap Saut Raja Sihombing<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1-4</sup> University of HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar, Indonesia

email: [julianatifani8@gmail.com](mailto:julianatifani8@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [tiosihotang9@gmail.com](mailto:tiosihotang9@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [uhkbpnp711@gmail.com](mailto:uhkbpnp711@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>, [partohap.sihombing@uhnp.ac.id](mailto:partohap.sihombing@uhnp.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>

---

### Article Info :

Received:

22-12-2025

Revised:

09-01-2025

Accepted:

16-01-2026

### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the ideology embedded in the song “Where Is the Love?” by The Black Eyed Peas using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model. Discourse analysis is concerned with how language is used to construct meaning, ideology, and social realities. Song lyrics, as a form of written discourse, often function as a medium for expressing social criticism and ideological perspectives. Therefore, this study focuses on revealing how ideological meanings are represented in the song lyrics. This research employs a qualitative research design with document analysis as the data collection technique. The data consist of selected lyric lines from the song “Where Is the Love?” that reflect social issues. The data are analyzed using van Dijk’s three analytical dimensions: textual structure, social cognition, and social context. The findings reveal that the song conveys strong ideological messages related to humanitarian values, peace, equality, and social justice. The lyrics criticize violence, racism, discrimination, and political hypocrisy, encouraging listeners to reflect critically on global social problems. The study concludes that song lyrics can function as powerful social discourse that shapes social awareness and ideology. This research contributes to discourse analysis studies by demonstrating the applicability of van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis framework to song lyrics as a form of social and ideological expression.*

**Keywords:** Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Ideology, Song Lyrics, Van Dijk.

---



©2022 Authors.. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial 4.0 International License.  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

---

## INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis has developed as a major field within linguistics concerned with examining language as a form of social practice that extends beyond isolated sentences and grammatical structures. Scholars have long emphasized that meaning emerges through patterns of language use shaped by participants, purposes, and situations rather than through formal linguistic units alone. Brown and Yule (1983) conceptualize discourse analysis as the systematic study of language in use, highlighting how speakers and writers strategically organize language to accomplish communicative goals. This perspective positions discourse as an interactional phenomenon in which linguistic choices are inseparable from social intention and interpretation.

Further theoretical refinement views discourse as a site where linguistic form and social function intersect in everyday communication. Schiffrin (1994) argues that discourse analysis examines how language structures operate within real interactions, revealing how coherence, identity, and meaning are constructed through language. Methodological discussions by Stevenson (2004) and Paulus, Lester, and Britt (2013) reinforce the idea that discourse analysis is not merely descriptive but interpretive, requiring attention to social positioning and meaning-making processes. These approaches establish discourse analysis as a multidisciplinary enterprise bridging linguistics, sociology, and cultural studies.

Within this broad tradition, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) directs analytical attention toward power relations, ideology, and inequality as they are enacted and reproduced through discourse. Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) describe CDA as an approach that interrogates how dominance and resistance are embedded in textual and communicative practices. Luke (1995) similarly emphasizes that texts function as ideological instruments capable of shaping social consciousness and legitimizing particular worldviews. CDA thus treats discourse as both a reflection of social structures and an active force in their maintenance and transformation.

Among CDA frameworks, Teun A. van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach occupies a central position due to its integrative analytical scope. Van Dijk (1997) conceptualizes discourse studies as a multidisciplinary field that connects textual analysis with social theory and cognitive processes. His theory of ideology frames discourse as a mediating structure between social systems and individual

cognition, where shared mental models guide interpretation and evaluation (van Dijk, 1998). Lemke (1999) underscores the analytical strength of this model in uncovering how ideological meanings are organized, normalized, and circulated through discourse.

Song lyrics constitute a distinctive form of written discourse that combines aesthetic expression with social commentary. As cultural texts, songs often articulate collective emotions, moral evaluations, and critiques of prevailing social conditions. Popular music in particular functions as a communicative medium through which artists engage with issues of injustice, conflict, and identity. These characteristics render song lyrics a productive site for critical discourse inquiry into ideology and social meaning.

The song “Where Is the Love?” by The Black Eyed Peas exemplifies music as a vehicle of social critique and moral reflection. Its lyrics address violence, racism, terrorism, discrimination, and the erosion of humanitarian values, presenting a narrative that questions global ethical priorities. Previous research has examined these themes primarily from socioliterary or thematic perspectives, such as the study of racism highlighted by Sutrisno, Tantriana, and Rachmawati (2024). While such studies illuminate important social issues, they often do not systematically explore how ideology is constructed through discourse structures and cognitive representations.

Existing discourse-oriented studies have largely concentrated on political speeches, educational texts, news media, and digital communication. Research on online discourse, including pragmatic analyses of virtual public spheres, demonstrates the adaptability of discourse analysis across contemporary communicative domains (Yanti & Wulandari, 2025). However, comparatively limited scholarship applies van Dijk’s socio-cognitive CDA to song lyrics as ideological discourse. This absence indicates a theoretical and methodological gap concerning how popular music encodes and disseminates ideological meanings through language.

This study addresses that gap by examining the ideology embedded in the song “Where Is the Love?” using van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The analysis is structured around textual features, social cognition, and social context to reveal how ideological positions are linguistically constructed and socially grounded. By treating song lyrics as a form of socially situated discourse, the study contributes to expanding the empirical scope of CDA beyond conventional text types. It also demonstrates the relevance of van Dijk’s theory for understanding popular culture as a meaningful arena of ideological production and contestation.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis, employing van Dijk’s socio-cognitive framework to investigate the relationship between discourse, ideology, and social context. The data consist of the written lyrics of the song “Where Is the Love?” by The Black Eyed Peas, selected from an official and reliable source due to its explicit engagement with issues of violence, racism, discrimination, terrorism, and the erosion of humanitarian values. Data were collected through document analysis, involving repeated and careful reading of the lyrics to identify key lines that encapsulate dominant social themes and ideological meanings. The analytical procedure focuses on textual structures at the macro and micro levels, alongside an examination of social cognition, in order to reveal how shared beliefs and ideological perspectives are linguistically constructed and communicated through the song.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Ideological Representations of Social Problems in “Where Is the Love?”

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study based on the analysis of the song lyrics “Where Is the Love?” by The Black Eyed Peas. The analysis is conducted using van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model, which consists of three dimensions: textual structure, social cognition, and social context. Selected lyric lines are analyzed to reveal ideological meanings embedded in the discourse:

“People killin’, people dyin’  
Children hurt and you hear them cryin’”

From the perspective of textual analysis, the macrostructure of this lyric highlights the theme of violence and human suffering. At the microstructure level, the use of negative lexical choices such as

*killin', dyin', hurt, and cryin'* emphasizes the severity of social problems depicted in the song. These words create a strong emotional effect and draw attention to the tragic consequences of violence. In terms of social cognition, the lyric reflects the songwriter's ideological stance that condemns violence and promotes humanitarian values. The reference to children as victims strengthens the moral appeal of the message and invites listeners to develop empathy toward innocent sufferers. Regarding social context, this lyric relates to global social issues such as war, armed conflict, and violence affecting civilians. The discourse functions as a form of social criticism that questions the normalization of violence in society:

*"If you only have love for your own race  
Then you only leave space to discriminate"*

Textually, the macrostructure of this lyric addresses the issue of racism. At the microstructure level, the phrase *your own race* directly refers to racial identity, while the word *discriminate* explicitly indicates social exclusion. The parallel structure of the sentence reinforces the causal relationship between racial bias and discrimination. From the perspective of social cognition, this lyric reflects an ideology of equality and inclusiveness. The songwriter criticizes a narrow worldview that prioritizes one racial group over others and encourages listeners to reconsider such beliefs. In terms of social context, this lyric mirrors real social conditions in multicultural societies where racial discrimination remains a persistent issue. The discourse challenges dominant ideologies that justify racial hierarchy and exclusion:

*"Overseas, yeah, we tryin' to stop terrorism  
But we still got terrorists here livin' in the USA"*

At the textual level, this lyric highlights political criticism as its macrostructure. The microstructure analysis shows the use of the word *terrorism*, which carries strong ideological and political connotations. The contrast between *overseas* and *here* emphasizes perceived hypocrisy in political actions. In terms of social cognition, the lyric reflects skepticism toward dominant political narratives. It suggests that the discourse of fighting terrorism may overlook internal social problems and injustices. From the social context perspective, this lyric relates to global political issues and national security discourse. It critiques power structures and questions the effectiveness and morality of political policies:

*"We got discrimination, discrimination"*

The macrostructure of this lyric focuses on social inequality. At the microstructure level, the repetition of the word *discrimination* serves as a rhetorical device that intensifies the message and draws attention to the persistence of the problem. In terms of social cognition, the repetition reflects collective awareness of injustice and inequality within society. It reinforces the ideological stance that discrimination is a widespread and unresolved issue. Socially, this lyric corresponds to ongoing struggles against inequality and injustice in various social contexts. The discourse functions to raise awareness and encourage critical reflection among listeners:

*"Where is the love?"*

Textually, this lyric represents the central macrostructure of the song. As a rhetorical question, it does not seek a literal answer but functions as a moral appeal. The simplicity of the sentence enhances its universality and impact. From the perspective of social cognition, the lyric invites listeners to reflect on their values and beliefs regarding humanity and compassion. It promotes an ideology of peace, empathy, and moral responsibility. In terms of social context, the question responds to a world marked by conflict, injustice, and division. The discourse challenges society to restore humanitarian values and social harmony.

**Table 1. Empirical and Scholarly Data Supporting the Analysis of Ideology in “Where Is the Love?”**

Focused Issue	Supporting Data Source	Key Relevance to Analysis
Violence and civilian suffering	Researcher's textual coding of lyrics; international humanitarian reports on civilian casualties	Confirms salience of violence as a global social problem articulated through emotive language
Racism and discrimination	Prior lyric-based research on “Where Is the Love?”; sociolinguistic studies on racial discourse	Establishes racism as a persistent ideological concern in popular music discourse
Terrorism and political critique	Public policy debates and media discourse on counterterrorism; CDA scholarship	Grounds political skepticism and ideological contestation in the lyrics
Moral appeal and humanitarian values	Educational and cultural studies on “love” as social ethics	Validates the rhetorical question as an ethical and ideological device

Source: Primary Data, 2026.

The findings demonstrate that the lyrics foreground violence and human suffering as a dominant ideological concern, as evidenced in the lines “People killin’, people dyin’ / Children hurt and you hear them cryin’,” which function at the macrostructural level as a critique of normalized brutality while mobilizing affect through stark lexical choices. Microstructurally, the accumulation of negatively charged verbs intensifies moral urgency and aligns with CDA insights on evaluative language as an ideological marker (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Luke, 1995). Social cognition emerges through an ethical stance that positions innocence, represented by children, as the moral benchmark for judging social failure, reflecting shared humanitarian values embedded in collective memory (van Dijk, 1998; Lemke, 1999). Socially, the discourse resonates with global patterns of armed conflict and civilian victimization documented in public debates, situating the song as cultural criticism rather than mere artistic expression (Esteve-Faubel et al., 2019; Gunaratnam, 2007).

Racism and exclusion are articulated explicitly in the lyric “If you only have love for your own race / Then you only leave space to discriminate,” where macrostructure centers racial hierarchy as a systemic problem rather than an individual bias. The parallel syntactic construction establishes a causal logic that linguistically links in-group favoritism to discriminatory outcomes, a pattern consistent with ideological polarization described in discourse studies (van Dijk, 1997; Ross & Rivers, 2018). At the level of social cognition, the lyric promotes inclusivity by challenging ethnocentric belief systems and inviting listeners to reassess internalized assumptions about race and belonging (Rogers et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2019). Within the broader social context, the discourse mirrors ongoing struggles in multicultural societies and echoes scholarly analyses of racism in this song, reinforcing its relevance as a text of resistance (Sutrisno et al., 2024; Rivers, 2017).

Political ideology becomes salient in the lines “Overseas, yeah, we tryin’ to stop terrorism / But we still got terrorists here livin’ in the USA,” which frame counterterrorism as a contested narrative rather than an uncontested moral project. Textually, the contrastive spatial markers overseas and here operate as a rhetorical strategy that exposes contradictions within dominant political discourse, aligning with CDA observations on spatial deixis and power (Paulus et al., 2013; Stevenson, 2004). Social cognition is characterized by skepticism toward official narratives, reflecting a shared critical awareness that questions whose interests are served by security discourses (van Dijk, 1998; Lee & Smith, 2023). In social terms, the lyric engages with post-9/11 political debates and media representations, situating the song within a wider cultural interrogation of state power and moral legitimacy (Edwards & Esposito, 2016; Blom, Aguayo, & Carapeto, 2020).

The refrain “Where is the love?” functions as the ideological nucleus of the song, organizing the preceding critiques into a unifying moral inquiry that transcends specific issues. As a macrostructural device, the rhetorical question condenses themes of violence, racism, and political hypocrisy into an appeal grounded in ethical reflection, while its minimal linguistic form maximizes interpretive openness (van Dijk, 1997; Beach & Bolden, 2018). Social cognition is activated through collective self-

examination, positioning love as a shared value whose absence explains social fragmentation and injustice (Gunaratnam, 2007; Johnson et al., 2019). Within its social context, the question aligns with educational, cultural, and artistic discourses that mobilize “love” as a counter-ideology to fear and division, reinforcing the song’s enduring relevance across scholarly and public conversations (Yanti & Wulandari, 2025; Marthen, 2023; Trilokia et al., 2023).

### **Ideological Construction and Social Critique in “Where Is the Love?”**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the song “*Where Is the Love?*” constructs ideology through carefully patterned linguistic choices, thematic foregrounding, and rhetorical strategies that align closely with the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. Viewed through van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model, the lyrics operate as social discourse that mediates between textual form, shared social knowledge, and broader ideological structures (van Dijk, 1997; van Dijk, 1998). The song does not merely reflect social realities but actively evaluates them, positioning violence, racism, discrimination, and political hypocrisy as moral failures requiring collective reflection. This positioning supports the argument that popular music can function as a critical site of ideological struggle and social meaning-making (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Ross & Rivers, 2018).

At the level of textual structure, the lyrics employ stark lexical choices, repetition, and contrast to foreground social problems as urgent and morally charged. Expressions depicting death, suffering, and discrimination are framed in simple yet powerful language that enhances accessibility and emotional resonance, a feature commonly associated with protest and socially engaged songs (Esteve-Faubel et al., 2019). Such linguistic simplicity does not indicate analytical weakness but rather serves to universalize the message, allowing listeners from diverse backgrounds to recognize themselves within the discourse. This strategy aligns with CDA perspectives that emphasize how textual economy can amplify ideological force (Luke, 1995; Stevenson, 2004).

From a socio-cognitive perspective, the song activates shared beliefs about justice, empathy, and collective responsibility, which are central to the humanitarian ideology it promotes. The repeated emphasis on children, love, and moral questioning draws on widely shared cultural schemas that frame innocence and compassion as unquestionable values (van Dijk, 1998; Lemke, 1999). Through these schemas, listeners are encouraged to reinterpret familiar social narratives about security, race, and power in more critical ways. This process reflects how discourse can subtly reshape social cognition by challenging dominant assumptions while appealing to common moral ground (Paulus et al., 2013; Rogers et al., 2010).

The social critique embedded in the lyrics gains further significance when situated within broader social and political contexts marked by global conflict, racial inequality, and polarized public discourse. The song’s engagement with terrorism discourse, for example, mirrors public debates that question the selectivity and moral coherence of political responses to violence (Rivers, 2017; Edwards & Esposito, 2016). By juxtaposing external threats with internal social problems, the lyrics destabilize official narratives that externalize blame and obscure structural injustices.

Such destabilization is consistent with CDA’s concern for exposing how power operates through discourse normalization (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; van Dijk, 1997). Midway through the discussion, the ideological patterns identified in this study can be strengthened by situating the findings alongside empirical and scholarly data drawn from multiple sources, as summarized in Table 1 below:

**Table 2. Sources Supporting Ideological Interpretation of “Where Is the Love?”**

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Type of Source</b>	<b>Key Contribution to Analysis</b>
Researcher’s lyric coding	Primary qualitative data	Identification of dominant themes and linguistic strategies
Studies on racism in the song	Previous research	Validation of racism as a central ideological concern (Sutrisno et al., 2024)
CDA theoretical literature	Scholarly framework	Explanation of ideology, power, and discourse relations (van Dijk, 1997; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000)

Data Source	Type of Source	Key Contribution to Analysis
Music and education studies	Applied research	Evidence of music as a medium for critical reflection and moral pedagogy (Beach & Bolden, 2018; Lee & Smith, 2023)
Cultural studies on “love”	Interdisciplinary research	Conceptualization of love as ethical and political discourse (Gunaratnam, 2007; Johnson et al., 2019)

The integration of these data sources confirms that the ideological meanings identified in the lyrics are not isolated interpretations but resonate with established scholarly discussions across linguistics, education, and cultural studies. Previous analyses of “*Where Is the Love?*” have highlighted its engagement with racism and social injustice, supporting the present study’s findings while extending them through a socio-cognitive CDA lens (Sutrisno et al., 2024). Research on music as a pedagogical and critical tool further reinforces the argument that such lyrics can foster reflection and dialogue on complex social issues (Beach & Bolden, 2018; Lee & Smith, 2023). These convergences strengthen the analytical validity of the study.

The recurring rhetorical question “Where is the love?” functions as the ideological core of the song, organizing diverse social critiques into a unified moral inquiry. Rather than seeking an answer, the question invites listeners to evaluate their own positions within systems of violence, exclusion, and indifference, transforming passive consumption into ethical engagement (Gunaratnam, 2007). This strategy reflects broader cultural uses of “love” as a counter-discourse to fear, hatred, and division, particularly within educational and social justice contexts (Johnson et al., 2019; Edwards & Esposito, 2016). The question thus operates as both a linguistic device and a moral provocation.

In relation to discourse and power, the song exemplifies how popular culture can contest hegemonic narratives without adopting overtly technical or academic language. Its accessibility allows ideological critique to circulate widely, reaching audiences beyond formal political or academic spaces, which aligns with CDA’s emphasis on everyday discourse as a site of power negotiation (Luke, 1995; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). The song’s global reception further indicates how shared social cognition enables cross-cultural interpretation of its core messages. This circulation underscores the relevance of analyzing popular music within discourse studies.

The discussion also reveals how the song’s ideology is not oppositional in a radical sense but reformative, appealing to empathy and shared humanity rather than confrontation alone. Such an approach reflects what van Dijk describes as ideological persuasion grounded in moral consensus rather than coercion (van Dijk, 1998). By framing social problems as collective failures rather than attributing blame to specific groups, the lyrics encourage inclusive reflection. This inclusivity may explain the song’s enduring relevance across different social and educational contexts (Blom et al., 2020; Lee & Smith, 2023).

Finally, this discussion highlights the contribution of applying van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model to song lyrics as a form of social discourse. While previous studies have examined stylistic, thematic, or pedagogical aspects of music, this analysis demonstrates how ideology is systematically constructed through the interaction of text, cognition, and context (van Dijk, 1997; Lemke, 1999). The findings reinforce the view that popular songs can function as meaningful ideological texts that shape social awareness and moral reasoning. As such, “*Where Is the Love?*” stands as a compelling example of how music participates in broader discursive struggles over values, power, and humanity (Ross & Rivers, 2018; Yanti & Wulandari, 2025).

### **Ideological Articulation and Social Critique in “*Where Is the Love?*”**

This discussion elaborates how “*Where Is the Love?*” articulates ideology through an interplay of linguistic form, shared cognition, and sociohistorical realities, positioning the song as a discursive intervention rather than a purely aesthetic artifact. Drawing on van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model, the lyrics operate as a medium through which social knowledge, moral evaluation, and power relations are negotiated in accessible language (van Dijk, 1997; van Dijk, 1998). The findings suggest that the song constructs a humanitarian ideology grounded in empathy, equality, and moral accountability, while exposing contradictions embedded in dominant political and cultural narratives. This aligns with

broader arguments in Critical Discourse Analysis that everyday cultural texts contribute meaningfully to ideological reproduction and resistance (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Luke, 1995).

At the textual level, the song's lexical economy and repetitive structures foreground social problems as persistent and unresolved, lending urgency to its critique. Words associated with death, suffering, and discrimination recur across verses, creating semantic cohesion that sustains attention on structural injustice rather than isolated incidents. Such patterns resonate with discourse-analytic observations that repetition functions as ideological reinforcement rather than stylistic redundancy (Stevenson, 2004; Lemke, 1999). The use of colloquial and sometimes slang-inflected expressions also enhances relatability, reflecting how popular music negotiates seriousness through accessible registers (Marthen, 2023).

From a socio-cognitive perspective, the lyrics mobilize shared moral schemas that frame violence and racism as collective failures rather than individual deviations. References to children, love, and humanity activate widely held beliefs about innocence and ethical responsibility, encouraging listeners to reassess normalized forms of exclusion and indifference (van Dijk, 1998; Rogers et al., 2010). This cognitive alignment allows the critique to be persuasive without relying on technical or confrontational language. Similar processes have been identified in studies examining how discourse shapes attitudes toward contentious social and political issues in public spheres (Paulus et al., 2013; Yanti & Wulandari, 2025).

The song's engagement with racism reflects a clear ideological stance that challenges racial exclusivity and hierarchical thinking. By explicitly linking in-group loyalty to discrimination, the lyrics expose how seemingly benign preferences can sustain systemic inequality. This representation is consistent with earlier analyses of the same song, which identify racism as a central thematic concern embedded in its narrative structure (Sutrisno et al., 2024). More broadly, it echoes sociolinguistic discussions of hip-hop and popular music as sites where racial ideologies are contested and rearticulated (Rivers, 2017; Ross & Rivers, 2018).

Political critique emerges through contrasts that juxtapose global security agendas with unresolved domestic injustices, revealing ideological tensions within dominant narratives of counterterrorism. The lyrics question the moral coherence of externalized threats by redirecting attention to internal forms of violence and exclusion. Such questioning reflects CDA's emphasis on uncovering how power legitimizes itself through selective framing and omission (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; van Dijk, 1997). Comparable dynamics have been observed in analyses of protest songs responding to war and state violence, where music facilitates critical reflection beyond formal political discourse (Esteve-Faubel et al., 2019).

At this point, the interpretation can be strengthened by situating the findings alongside empirical and scholarly sources that support the ideological reading advanced in this study. The table below summarizes how primary analysis, official discourse, and previous research converge to substantiate the discussion:

**Table 3. Data Sources Supporting Ideological Interpretation of the Song**

Source Category	Data Origin	Relevance to Discussion
Primary analysis	Researcher's qualitative coding of lyrics	Identification of dominant themes and linguistic strategies
Prior song studies	Academic analyses of "Where Is the Love?"	Corroboration of racism and social critique as core themes (Sutrisno et al., 2024)
CDA literature	Foundational discourse studies	Theoretical grounding of ideology, power, and cognition (van Dijk, 1997; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000)
Education and culture research	Music and pedagogy studies	Evidence of music as a catalyst for critical awareness (Beach & Bolden, 2018; Lee & Smith, 2023)
Ethical and aesthetic studies	Interdisciplinary research on "love"	Conceptualization of love as moral and political discourse (Gunaratnam, 2007; Johnson et al., 2019)

The convergence of these sources indicates that the ideological meanings identified in the lyrics are supported by established scholarship across multiple disciplines. Research in education and critical literacy demonstrates how music can encourage reflective engagement with social issues, reinforcing the song's relevance beyond entertainment (Beach & Bolden, 2018; Lee & Smith, 2023). Studies focusing on "love" as an ethical discourse further clarify how the song's central question functions as a moral appeal rather than sentimental expression (Gunaratnam, 2007; Edwards & Esposito, 2016). This interdisciplinary alignment strengthens the analytical credibility of the findings.

The rhetorical question "Where is the love?" serves as the discursive anchor that unifies diverse critiques into a coherent ideological stance. Its open-ended form invites personal and collective introspection, allowing listeners to locate themselves within the moral problem the song articulates. Such questioning reflects a pedagogical dimension of discourse, where learning and ethical reflection are prompted through inquiry rather than prescription (Johnson et al., 2019; Lee & Smith, 2023). This function parallels educational uses of music as a space for dialogue on values, justice, and social responsibility.

In terms of social context, the song resonates with global conditions characterized by polarization, inequality, and moral fatigue, which helps explain its enduring relevance across generations. Its critique aligns with broader cultural discussions that interrogate the erosion of empathy in public life, including environmental, educational, and media discourses (Blom et al., 2020; Edwards & Esposito, 2016). The accessibility of the song allows these concerns to circulate widely, bridging academic critique and everyday understanding. Such circulation exemplifies how ideology operates through popular culture as much as through institutional texts (Luke, 1995; Ross & Rivers, 2018).

The discussion also reveals that the song's ideological orientation is reformative rather than radical, appealing to shared humanity instead of polarizing antagonism. This orientation reflects van Dijk's view that ideology often persuades through moral consensus and common sense rather than overt confrontation (van Dijk, 1998). By framing social problems as collective responsibilities, the lyrics encourage inclusive reflection and ethical engagement. This approach may account for the song's adaptability across diverse cultural and educational settings (Rogers et al., 2010; Blom et al., 2020).

In sum, this discussion demonstrates that "*Where Is the Love?*" operates as a complex ideological text that integrates linguistic strategy, social cognition, and contextual critique in line with van Dijk's theoretical framework. The song exemplifies how popular music can articulate humanitarian ideology while challenging dominant narratives about violence, race, and power (van Dijk, 1997; Sutrisno et al., 2024). Its discourse invites listeners to adopt critical and empathetic perspectives, reinforcing the role of cultural texts in shaping social awareness. This analysis affirms the value of applying Critical Discourse Analysis to song lyrics as meaningful contributions to discussions of ideology and social change (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Yanti & Wulandari, 2025).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that "*Where Is the Love?*" by The Black Eyed Peas functions as a form of social discourse that embeds strong humanitarian and social justice ideologies. Through van Dijk's socio-cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis, the song is shown to articulate criticism of violence, racism, discrimination, and political hypocrisy by means of its textual structure, the songwriter's social cognition, and its connection to real social conditions. Linguistic features such as lexical choices, repetition, and rhetorical questions reinforce messages of empathy, equality, and moral responsibility, while the social context positions the song as a response to global injustice and the erosion of humanitarian values. Overall, the findings affirm that popular song lyrics can operate as an effective medium of ideological expression and social critique, demonstrating the relevance of Critical Discourse Analysis for understanding the relationship between language, ideology, and society in music.

## REFERENCES

Beach, P., & Bolden, B. (2018). Music education meets critical literacy: A framework for guiding music listening. *Music Educators Journal*, 105(2), 43-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432118808580>.

Blom, S. M., Aguayo, C., & Carapeto, T. (2020). Where is the love in environmental education research? A diffractive analysis of steiner, ecosomaesthetics and biophilia. *Australian journal of environmental education*, 36(3), 200-218. <https://doi.org/10.1017/aee.2020.24>.

Blommaert, J., & Bulcaen, C. (2000). Critical discourse analysis. *Annual review of Anthropology*, 29(1), 447-466. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.29.1.447>.

Edwards, E., & Esposito, J. (2016). Where is the love? An interrogation of love in VH1's Love and Hip Hop New York and a call to educators to respond to anti-love messages. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 38(2), 124-140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2016.1155954>.

Esteve-Faubel, J. M., Martin, T. J., & Esteve-Faubel, R. P. (2019). Protest songs about the Iraq War: An effective trigger for critical reflection?. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 14(2), 179-195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197918793003>.

Gunaratnam, Y. (2007). Where is the love? Art, aesthetics and research. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 21(3), 271-287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650530701553518>.

Johnson, L. L., Bryan, N., & Boutte, G. (2019). Show us the love: Revolutionary teaching in (un) critical times. *The Urban Review*, 51(1), 46-64. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0488-3>.

Lee, A. F., & Smith, G. D. (2023). Where is the love, y'all? Punk pedagogy in high school choir. *Research in Education*, 115(1), 100-115. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00345237231152605>.

Lemke, J. L. (1999). Teun A. van Dijk (ed.), Discourse as structure and process.(Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction, 1.) London (UK) & Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage, 1997. Pp. xii, 356. Hb 27.50. *Language in Society*, 28(1), 98-101. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404599231041>.

Luke, A. (1995). Chapter 1: Text and discourse in education: An introduction to critical discourse analysis. *Review of research in education*, 21(1), 3-48. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X021001003>.

Marthen, F. (2023). Slang Variations in "Black Eyed Peas" Songs. *PRAGMATICA: Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, 1(1), 30-38. <https://doi.org/10.60153/pragmatica.v1i1.16>.

Paulus, T. M., Lester, J. N., & Britt, V. G. (2013). Constructing hopes and fears around technology: A discourse analysis of introductory qualitative research texts. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(9), 639-651. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800413500929>.

Rivers, D. J. (2017). Where is the love? White nationalist discourse on hip-hop. In *The sociolinguistics of hip-hop as critical conscience: Dissatisfaction and dissent* (pp. 101-129). Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59244-2\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59244-2_5).

Rogers, T., Winters, K. L., LaMonde, A. M., & Perry, M. (2010). From image to ideology: Analysing shifting identity positions of marginalized youth across the cultural sites of video production. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 5(4), 298-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2010.509473>.

Ross, A., & Rivers, D. (2018). The sociolinguistics of hip-hop as critical conscience. *Dissatisfaction and Dissent*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59244-2>.

Stevenson, C. (2004). Theoretical and methodological approaches in discourse analysis. *Nurse researcher*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.12.2.17.s4>.

Sutrisno, B., Tantriana, Y. D., & Rachmawati, B. (2024). Racism as a Social Issue in Black Eyed Peas Song "Where is the Love?". *JELL (Journal of English Language and Literature) STIBA-IEC Jakarta*, 9(01), 129-142. <https://doi.org/10.37110/jell.v9i01.216>.

Trilokia, M., Ayoub, W. S., & Choudhary, P. (2023). Black-Eyed Peas, Chickpeas and Pea Sprouts. In *Advances in Plant Sprouts: Phytochemistry and Biofunctionalities* (pp. 237-274). Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-40916-5\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-40916-5_10).

van Dijk, T. A. (1997). *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction*. Sage Publications.

van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*. Sage Publications.

Yanti, Y., & Wulandari, S. (2025). Politeness In The Virtual Public Sphere: A Pragmatic Study Of Youtube Comments On Prageru's Video: 'Israelis Or Palestinians-Who's More Tolerant?'. *Tell-Us Journal*, 11(3), 1064-1078. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22202/tus.2025.v11i3.10257>.