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A Rhetorical Analysis of Campaign Songs in Modern Elections

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A Rhetorical Analysis of Campaign Songs in Modern Elections

Lottie Elizabeth Peterson

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

A Rhetorical Analysis of Campaign Songs in Modern Elections

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Since the U.S. presidential election of 1800, candidates have selected campaign songs to underscore their political platforms. The literature on politics and music suggests that in modern campaigns, the significance of music rests not in the song itself but in the artist behind the song and the image associated with that particular artist. This analysis sought to convey how the very process of selecting a campaign song is a profound rhetorical act, and that songs chosen even in modern elections have a specific meaning and purpose tied to the political contexts in which they are embedded.

Using an adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective, which analyzes whether the musical score and lyrics of a single song form a congruent or incongruent relationship, this study analyzed the official campaign songs for both Republican and Democratic candidates for the 1972-2016 elections. The adaptation provided the opportunity to examine the intersection of music, rhetoric and politics, and explore evolving patterns and trends in campaign music.

The primary findings of this research indicated that both Republican and Democratic candidates have predominantly made use of congruity in their campaign songs, with that congruity only increasing over time — a surprising result considering congruity can often diminish listener appeal. The song analyses also indicated that in general, Republican candidates tend to utilize songs that are positive and patriotic in nature, while their Democratic opponents incorporate songs that offer a critique of the nation. Additionally, findings also revealed a transition that began taking place in the 1970s to hit full stride in the 21st century, as campaign songs shifted from being a direct endorsement of candidates to focusing on universal themes that could appeal to both sides of the political spectrum.

Keywords: congruity, incongruity, virtual time, virtual experience, campaign song, rhetoric

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

When presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders won his home state of Vermont on March 1, 2016, he closed out his rally by leading his supporters in a sing-along of Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land." The Democratic candidate carried this song with him from state to state while on a quest to achieve the presidential vote. Guthrie's tune also served as an official campaign song 28 years earlier, but for a more surprising candidate — Republican nominee George H. W. Bush. While Sanders and Bush represent contrasting political platforms, it is clear that both candidates recognized the power of Guthrie's protest song to garner support and create unity for their respective causes. They recognized the potential the song has to influence and possibly persuade their constituents.

Similarly, in the 2008 U.S. primaries, Hillary Clinton, who was also a contender for the Democratic nomination in the 2016 election, ran under the musical banner of Celine Dion's "You and I," Bachman-Turner Overdrive's "Takin' Care of Business," Dolly Parton's "9 to 5" and Tom Petty's "American Girl." From the titles alone, an overarching theme of Clinton's platform can be determined, and it is clear that these songs were purposeful, conscious selections meant to persuade an audience. In other words, Clinton was using these songs to label and essentially market herself as a hardworking woman with American values who could solve problems and get things done.

Although theories and ideas pertaining to rhetoric have evolved over time, the definition of the term has continually been rooted in elements of persuasion (Brummett, 1994). Dating back to the philosophies of the ancient Greeks, Aristotle's book *Rhetoric*, which defined the term as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (as cited in

Brummett, 1994, p. 58), has been foundational to all subsequent rhetorical theory. But Brummett argued that in the context of the ancient Greeks and ideas of Aristotle, only the texts of public speeches were perceived as having rhetorical functions. Today, many rhetorical theorists recognize and understand the breadth of the range of cultural artifacts to include a variety of nontraditional subjects such as conversation and music (Foss, 1989; Brummett, 1994). In the 20th century, Kenneth Burke defined rhetoric as “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols” (as cited in Brummett, 1994, p. 65). While this definition is still tied to language, it is more widely applicable to incorporate other means by which persuasion can be achieved.

As evident with the modern campaign songs mentioned earlier, the selection of such songs seems to be part of a rhetorical act in which specific music is chosen because of the ability it has to subtly affect listeners as they hum along to the tune and, in turn, receive a message tied to a specific candidate or political context. Rhetorical studies of music, although few, have shown the strong connection between music and persuasion — persuasion that may subconsciously take place among members of an audience as they sing along with the lyrics and tap their feet to the rhythm (Kizer, 1983).

Much of the literature on campaign music seems to suggest that in the 20th century — and especially once the television became a staple in the home — music moved from the forefront to the background of political campaigns, with greater emphasis instead placed on speeches and image (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). However, as seen with Guthrie’s protest song as well as Clinton’s campaign song selections, music still serves as a form of persuasion for political candidates. Speaking of music’s importance in campaigning, John Sherman, a senator from Ohio during the Civil War era, stated, “Songs go deeper, spread farther, and stay longer than

speeches.” Sherman also expressed that “One good campaign song is equal to a hundred speeches” (Pickens, 1981). This implies that although campaign songs weighed more heavily in campaigns of the 19th and early 20th century (Schoening & Kasper, 2012), campaign songs chosen even in modern elections still hold value with candidates and their constituents and are still worthy of study.

Justification

Songs have served political purposes throughout different eras and societies, and the intertwining of music and politics has been on the American timeline since the country’s origin. In his book, *Music and Politics*, John Street (2011) wrote that music has always been considered a facilitator of political expression. The issue with music simply being considered a facilitator is that it diminishes the power music alone has in sparking inspiration to enhance the community. Instead, Street contended that rather than being viewed as a vehicle for political expression, music should be viewed *as* political expression. Music should be viewed as embodying and personifying political values (Street, 2011).

If music personifies political values, then it is important that campaign songs be closely examined and studied. Mattern (1998) wrote that “music reveals constituent elements such as beliefs, assumptions, and commitments that define the character and shape the community” (p.15). The implication here is that music is communication, and the songs candidates choose for their platforms can reveal attitudes and beliefs that may not necessarily emerge from speeches or other forms of campaigning. Similarly, Schoening and Kasper (2012) argued that music can be used to achieve public recognition and even sway a person’s vote. This influencing power of music comes to play when “U.S. Presidential Election candidates choose campaign theme songs that have proven popularity with the voting public, especially the target audience they are

attempting to connect with” (p. 221). This statement conveys not only that music can facilitate a bond between a candidate and a desired electorate, but also that the very songs used in campaigns are part of a profound rhetorical act.

Music as Rhetoric

Music is “one of the most difficult media to approach rhetorically” (Rasmussen, 1994, p. 150), in part, due to its combination of linguistic and nonlinguistic symbols. Although lyrics and music together create the impression of a song, it is typically the lyrics that receive the critical attention (Gonzalez & Makay, 1983). Despite this imbalance and the challenges that accompany studying music rhetorically, there are a handful of seminal communicative articles that address the subject (Irvine & Kirkpatrick, 1972; LeCoat, 1976; Rasmussen, 1994; Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). These studies reinforce the rhetorical nature of music, and thus strengthen my argument that political campaign music should be valued and examined because of the rhetorical possibilities that music in general has to offer. For example, music can possess a greater unifying power than other forms of campaigning because it has the ability to transcend language, cultural and socioeconomic barriers. Music has the power to bring people from various backgrounds together and create for them a collective experience (Ramet, 1994). Philosopher Susanne Langer (1953) elaborates on this universality of music in her book, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art*:

The tonal structures we call “music” bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling — forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses ... Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life. (p. 27)

Building on Langer’s philosophy, Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) argue that “music symbolizes emotion through rhythmic patterns of intensity and release ... intensity patterns symbolize ‘the

shocks and instabilities' [of everyday life], whereas release patterns represent the 'resolutions' experienced in human living" (2001, p. 398).

LeCoat (1976) also touches on this emotive power of music, writing that it was during the 17th-century Baroque era that "the accurate representation of human passions became a concern in all the arts" (p. 164). He addresses in his essay that the building of a melody relates to the appeal of emotions, but also that music by nature is filled with pathos because each aspect of any musical work is the result of the composer's specific artistic choices. For instance, the composer may choose to insert a particularly high pitch at a specific moment in the song to create a "stirring up of the listener's affections" (p. 164). Similarly, Irvine and Kirkpatrick (1972), in their discussion of music's rhetoric, mention that a change in tone or a change in chords can in turn evoke changes in listeners' moods.

In addition to its emotional appeal, music's rhetorical potential can also be found on somewhat of a more cognitive level. Irvine and Kirkpatrick (1972) argue that music plays "a key role in the development and maintenance of attitudes and values" (p. 272). In their justification for the rhetorical study of music, the scholars enumerate five assumptions that music as a form of rhetoric possesses:

- The artist manipulates a symbol system — composed of sound, rhythm and lyrics — to react to and modify dominant philosophical, political, religious and aesthetic values of both general and specific audiences.
- Musical form operates independently to generate rhetorical impact by getting the listener to modify his or her current judgments.

- Musical form changes the rhetorical message from its original discursive state, and the transformed message has a more diverse, intense appeal because the musical form “involves and stimulates the body.”
- The credibility of the artist influences the level of interaction between audience and message.

Finally, in this seminal work, the authors posit that since music is typically considered a form of entertainment, it is protected from any societal or cultural restraints. Consequently, when one listens to a message that is embedded in music, he or she will be less likely to argue against that message. While one of Irvine and Kirkpatrick’s (1972) assumptions involves the credibility and influence an artist can have on a message — a factor I do not dispute — in conveying the significance of the actual modern campaign song, my analysis emphasizes the rhetorical power musical form has in transforming a message into a more intense appeal that listeners will be more likely to receive since the message is embedded in a form of entertainment. This provides powerful implications for the significance of music in the political realm.

Having an awareness of the songs candidates choose to represent their platforms — as well as an understanding as to how the music and lyrics function together within the song — can assist constituents in making sense of the messages embedded in the campaign songs.

Furthermore, viewing music as embodying political values enriches a candidate’s platform by providing additional channels of political expression. This would suggest that even though music may not be as predominant a feature in campaigns as it was in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when studied and considered, songs in modern campaigns create an additional layer of representation for political candidates, as well as provide further meaning for their constituents on both an emotional and cognitive level.

Aims of the Current Study

Schoening and Kasper (2012) wrote that beginning in 1972, entire pop songs were inserted into the political realm as campaign songs — a stark contrast from the 19th century when songs were written specifically for elections and candidates. This trend serves as a popular appeal technique, according to the authors, and thus the music becomes more about the artist and the persona of that artist rather than the candidate. The authors further contended that the songs chosen in modern elections typically have a “hook” or a “one-line wonder” that is supposed to represent a snapshot of the candidate and his or her platform. While the emphasis of the song is in the “hook,” the authors wrote that examining the rest of a campaign song’s lyrics can reveal “secondary benefits” for a candidate, including slight attacks on an opponent, messages about a candidate’s platform, or other statements echoing sentiments of enthusiasm and optimism for a candidate. Since the very art of selecting a campaign song is a rhetorical act, my research examines these songs through a rhetorical lens, studying how the specific modern campaign songs selected serve as persuasive communication for candidates and the constituents they represent. The aim of the analysis is to examine the campaign songs for Republican and Democratic candidates throughout four decades — from the election of 1972 when popular songs became the campaign trend to the most recent election of 2016.

This analysis was completed using an adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) “Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective, which analyzes the lyrics, the musical score, and how the two interact with one another. Because this typology is typically used to examine one song, it was modified to fit my purpose of examining an entire body of political campaign songs. With this modification, the song analyses extended beyond the interaction of lyrics and music to also consider the interaction between politician and campaign song. According to this rhetorical

perspective, in studying these interactions, a certain amount of congruity or incongruity is manifested, and the rhetorical power of a song rests in this matter of congruity and incongruity.

This matter has rhetorical significance as consequences emerge in relation to whether a song follows patterns that are predominantly congruent or incongruent. A song is congruent when the emotional messages of the music and the conceptual message of the lyrics are aligned and reinforce one another. This alignment tends to make the overall message more poignant, according to Sellnow and Sellnow (2001). But while a congruent message makes for a clearer message, this can sometimes lead to reducing listener appeal as the message becomes more obvious and, therefore, less interesting (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001).

Research questions. The questions guiding this analysis were:

RQ1: Using an adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective, how are the rhetorical tools of congruity and incongruity being used in modern campaign songs?

RQ2: Based on the adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective, have modern campaign songs become more congruent or less congruent over time?

RQ3: What is the rhetorical function of modern campaign songs?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, music should be viewed as embodying and personifying political values (Street, 2011). What Street called the "embodiment of fundamental values and principles" can be seen in music as far back as during times of slavery. In his book on African-American history, Lawrence Levine wrote that music was an integral part of slave life, explaining that for slaves, songs functioned as representations of communal values as well as opportunities to transcend restrictions of their environment (Levine, 1993). These songs relied heavily on African musical traditions, incorporating rhythm, call-and-response patterns, and drum beats. Levine

stated that because slaves were almost always in the presence of their overseers, they learned to disguise the true meaning of their songs, hiding politically challenging content behind seemingly harmless words. While on the surface, slave songs seemed to serve as merely a recreational purpose, further exploration of the songs would find coded messages about plans to escape, directions for how to head north on the Underground Railroad, and soulful commentary and lamentations about life under slavery (Levine, 1993). Commenting on Negro spirituals, W.E.B. DuBois stated, “These songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world. They are the music of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world,” (as cited in Kizer, 1983, p. 4). Hymns served as symbolic expressions of protest, being phrased in such a way that it would go unnoticed as protest by the white establishment. For slaves, music — lyrics, specifically — served as an expression of abolitionist sentiment as well as a potential means to be liberated from unfathomable oppression.

Rhetoric of the Protest Song

Music as a major form of political expression was also strongly evident in the protests of the 1950s and early 1960s. Similar to Irvine and Kirkpatrick’s (1972) assumptions about music as a form of rhetoric, an essay in *Popular Music and Society* written by Elizabeth Kizer even more specifically touched on the rhetorical functions of the protest song, enumerating five of its components:

- They are expressions of discontent or dissent that imply or assert a need for a change.
- They may represent the attitudes of one individual or a collection of individuals, such as members of a special interest group.

- They may be adapted by and utilized as ideological statements of a social movement, whether originally written for that purpose or not, and then the original composer no longer dominates as the message source.
- They may inspire the creation of other rhetorical messages.
- They may serve to stimulate thought, reinforce, or modify attitudes. (Kizer, 1983, p. 4)

All five of these elements were certainly present in slave songs, as well as in the folk music of the mid-1900s. One can see the adaptation of the protest song as an ideological statement in the presidential election of 1988 as well as in the 2016 primaries with the inclusion of songwriter Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land." Guthrie received very little attention from scholars despite his creativity and talent as a folk artist (Reuss, 1970). According to Reuss, Guthrie's strength as a songwriter rested in his role as spokesman for various groups of people, again highlighting the rhetorical nature of the protest song. Guthrie incorporated in his music the language, expressions and ideas of specific groups of people, and this created "his ability to communicate the life, feelings, attitude and culture of his people from the inside" (Reuss, 1970, p. 274). Guthrie's ability to convey the struggles, satisfactions and overall life of a people has ties to philosopher Susanne Langer's theory on music as an aesthetic symbol (1953) and by extension, Sellow and Sellnow's rhetorical perspective (2001), which argued that through the combination of poetic lyrics and musical form, an artist can create an "illusion of life" for listeners, although it is an illusion influenced by the artist's perspective. Through his music, Guthrie was able to evoke an "illusion of life" for his listeners, serving as "a unique distillation of the cultural experiences of several groups ... at once a mirror in which they saw themselves and their most articulate and able chronicler" (Reuss, 1970, p. 275).

As seen with Guthrie's songwriting, the folk music popular to the mid-1900s alluded to society's pervasive discontent and anxiety in a postwar era. Mikal Gilmore, a contributor to *Rolling Stone* magazine, wrote that under the influence of such artists as Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary, folk music was turning more politically explicit, becoming increasingly identified with civil rights and pacifism (Gilmore, 1990). Writing of the folk era, Gilmore contended that political hope was best embodied in Bob Dylan who "sang in a voice young with anger and old with knowledge" (Gilmore, 1990). Despite folk music's societal and political ideals, Gilmore argued that this music tradition was largely of the past and that the rising generation had not yet found a proper musical form to effectively communicate political unrest. In 1964, Bob Dylan sang "The Times They Are a-Changin'," and American society would soon experience a response to this change (Gilmore, 1990). On February 7, 1964, four British lads stepped off a plane that had brought them to New York's JFK airport. Dressed in clean, well - pressed suits, and donning shaggy haircuts, it would have been unfathomable to anticipate at that very moment just the amount of cultural and political significance these men would embody through their music. However, one thing at that time could not be denied: Beatlemania had arrived in America.

As reflected in the rhetorical components of the protest song (Kizer, 1983), the Beatles were considered (at least by their fans) to be legitimate political authorities making legitimate political statements. Although the band members did become increasingly aware of political issues as they rose in fame and were placed more in the spotlight and on television, Lennon stated on many occasions that they were by no means political activists. However, in an interview issued to Lennon in 1966, he was asked if there was anything about the country (America) he would like to change. Lennon's immediate response was "the tax problem" and

that he would like to “reduce it drastically.” Later that year George Harrison’s “Taxman” was released, and while inspiration behind the song actually stemmed from the progressive tax enacted by the British Labour government, the song’s meaning transformed for its American listeners into an expression of resentment toward their own taxation issues (Platoff, 2005).

A few years later, on April 9, 1969, approximately 300 Harvard students united themselves under the banner of the Beatles’ song “Revolution.” As the lyrics echoed throughout the hall, the students walked into the university president’s office and staged a sit-in. Several demands were made — including an end to the ROTC and lowering the rents on college housing — but what served to be most impressionable was the empowering force of hundreds of students passionately singing, “We all want to change the world.” While Harvard’s administration viewed the students’ demands as trivial and weak, “Revolution” provided a powerful charge that continues today to be a symbol of political activism (Isserman, 1993). This moment in history alludes to the rhetorical nature of the protest song, especially in a song’s power to represent the attitudes of a group of people as well as the potential it has to be adapted and utilized as an ideological statement — even if that was not the composer’s original intent.

According to Kizer (1983), the rhetorical impact of the protest song — and music in general as other rhetorical theories have shown — is felt when the lyrics and music are considered together. She wrote, “Protest lyrics and their music line have a synergistic effect; they complement each other to produce a sum greater than their parts” (p. 7). This effect comes about as the auditor becomes increasingly familiar with a tune and can anticipate what is to follow. This response can often lead to the auditor participating in the singing of lyrics while simultaneously keeping time with the music. In the case of the protest song, the melody that

accompanies the lyrics is comparable to the delivery of a speech, signifying the close connection between music and persuasion (Kizer, 1983).

Folk artists such as Guthrie and Dylan as well as The Beatles provided popular appeal for disgruntled, frustrated youth. These musicians also served as vehicles of political expression and activism that otherwise may never have been reached for this demographic. Schoening and Kasper (2012) added to this discussion of popular appeal, mentioning how musicians of this era began to frequent the political realm. It was, in fact, the election of 1972 when the predominant and current trend of inserting entire pop songs as campaign songs began. Running against the incumbent Richard Nixon, Democratic candidate George McGovern pulled resources from the folk era, using Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" without any lyric changes or alterations as his official campaign song. It is interesting to note that by the time of this election, the voting age had been lowered from 21 to 18, so the incorporation of popular music was mostly likely seen as a means of appealing to a new and large demographic of younger people (Schoening & Kasper, 2012).

This paradigm shift, so to speak, would imply that by this point, music incorporated in politics got its power more from the musician than the actual lyrics or music. This can also be seen in more recent campaigns with the inclusion of Bruce Springsteen in the elections of 1984, 2004, 2008, and 2012. Cowie and Boehm (2006) wrote that the "working-class Springsteen [is] for many Americans a white hard-body hero whose masculinity confirm[s] the values of patriarchy and patriotism" (p. 353). By bringing Springsteen into the political realm, candidates can then, in a sense, represent the values of "The Boss" and use his persona to further their own campaign. However, as presented in this literature, music is a unique form of rhetoric that is filled with elements of pathos and persuasion. Because of music's rhetorical components as well

as its transcendent power (Ramet, 1994), campaign music should not be overlooked. While the persona of a specific artist plays a crucial role in the appeal of music, such associations often overshadow campaign songs and the purposes they serve in their respective political contexts. Furthermore, campaign music should not be overlooked because rhetorical studies of music have shown the strong connection between music and persuasion — persuasion that may subconsciously take place among members of an audience as they sing along with the lyrics and tap their feet to the rhythm (Kizer, 1983).

A History of Campaign Music

Long before political campaigns' popular appeal trend, the power of music in campaigns derived from the actual song rather than the musician. For years, presidential campaigns have used theme songs to set the tone, underscore the candidate's message and frame a candidate's personality (Harpine, 2004). The election of 1800 marked the first time campaign songs were used, although how they were incorporated was significantly different from future uses of songs in presidential elections. Campaign songs during this time were used to raise approval for the president with the purpose of "arous[ing] mass enthusiasm at the expense of reason" (Miles, 1990). Generally written post-election or for the inauguration, these songs only briefly mentioned names, and instead, were more about the country and its people rather than the candidate. These songs can be viewed as "patriotic rallying cries" (Schoening & Kasper, 2012).

This phase lasted until 1840, with the election of William Henry Harrison. It is argued that this election set the tone for all elections to come (Schimler, 2002), marking the first campaign when songs played a truly significant role. "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," Harrison's campaign song, has been seen as really bringing music to the forefront in elections, establishing the power of singing as a campaign device (Silber, 1971). The song is even considered to have

“[sung] Harrison into the presidency” with its catchy melody and continual use of candidates’ names (Schoening & Kasper, 2012, p. 46). Prior to this election, a candidate would only be mentioned in a song once or twice. From this point on, in addition to taking songs that were already familiar and popular, campaign songs began inserting a candidate’s name repeatedly throughout the verses. This technique of using a popular tune and inserting a candidate’s name remained a political campaign music staple up through the 1970s.

With the country on the brink of a civil war in the 1850s and 1860s, campaign music during this time stood apart from previous eras because of its emphasis on the predominant political issue of the time — slavery. Pickens (1981) wrote that during this antebellum period up through the beginning of a new century, campaign songs were written to reflect the ideologies of political parties. This emphasis on incorporating party platform values in campaign songs seems to indicate a trend of valuing political congruity; it also shows the significant place these songs had in campaigns with their carefully constructed words that directly added to a candidate’s political stance and representation. The election of 1856, pitting Zachary Buchanan against John Fremont, included music that was especially bold and assertive with its “race baiting strategy” (Schoening & Kasper, 2012, p. 63). For every reference to “free men” in Fremont’s songs, Buchanan matched that with the phrase “nigger-worshippers” in his own campaign music. This race baiting strategy seemed to be effective as Buchanan won over 45% of the popular vote and 58% of the electoral vote (Schoening & Kasper, 2012, p. 63).

Campaign songs during the mid-1800s were politically specific and dealt with issues of slavery, war, soldiers and freedom. Because of the emphasis on such subjects, songs of the era either focused on the candidate or on brave men sacrificing their lives on the battlefield in the name of freedom (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). It was not until the 1920s, through the efforts of

the suffrage movement, that nationwide establishment and acknowledgement of women's right to vote changed campaign songs to become more accommodating to women. Although campaign song lyrics after 1920 did not always emphasize the political involvement of women in an overt way, the norm after this year was for lyrics to use gender-neutral terms (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). This is the case with many of the songs used in modern elections, including George W. Bush's use of Billy Ray Cyrus' "We the People" and Barack Obama's incorporation of Bruce Springsteen's "We Take Care of Our Own."

The 1920s also served as a significant era (although one less rewarding) for campaign music due to the advent of the radio. With a candidate's voice now audible within the homes of American citizens, there was less of a need for songs to be brought into the campaign. Schoening and Kasper (2012) stated, "The 1920s would serve as the start for the fall of the popularity of the long tradition of campaign music" (p. 97). However, the authors also contended that music still did play a role, but that it needed to be more "focused and serve more specific purposes" (p.98).

According to Roberts, Hammond and Sulfaro (2012), the advent of both the radio and television reduced the need for songs as a mobilization tool as they were during the singing elections of the 19th century and early 1900s. With the television becoming a staple in American homes, campaign music experienced a shift as it went from being in the forefront to serving as the backdrop to television ads discussing issues and candidates. Instead of long narrative-like ballads describing candidates and all of their accomplishments, the norm for music in the 1950s and 1960s came to be short, catchy jingles that repeated a candidate's name approximately 30 times in 60 seconds. This can be seen with Dwight Eisenhower's "I Like Ike" and John F. Kennedy's iconic jingle, "Kennedy for Me."

The frequent use of jingles during this era further reinforced the notion that the importance of campaign music in politics was subsiding. In her rhetorical study of advertising music, Linda Scott (1990) contended that there exists an underlying theory in which music serves as an affective background component that although causes the viewer to have some attachment to the product, does so without really connecting with the viewer on a cognitive level, thus leading to a lower involvement. Much of this research has its roots in the Elaboration Likelihood Model that Petty and Cacioppo developed in 1986. Applying this theory to the political campaign jingles common to the era, it would appear that candidates sought to develop higher involvement within their constituents through other forms of campaigning, with campaign music becoming more of a peripheral tool.

Although it is believed that campaign music began to take on a less important role with its shift to the background of campaign advertisements (Schoening & Kasper, 2012), literature on music's role in advertising does indicate that even with just a single exposure, music can subtly influence and condition consumer behavior whether that behavior is making a purchase (Gorn, 1982); or lingering longer at a restaurant or store (Milliman, 1982; Milliman, 1986). Milliman (1986) described music as an atmospheric variable that can be controlled and used to create either an "approach" or an "avoidance" atmosphere for consumers (p. 286). While music is only a background component to a consumer's overall experience, these studies convey how it can still end up playing a part in a person's decision. Furthermore, Scott (1990) contended in her textual analysis of eight advertisements that despite the prevailing theory that music has only an affective dimension in advertising, music can in fact help to create meaning for viewers and listeners. Research has not been conducted specifically examining the jingles used in political campaigns, but I would contend that the findings of the aforementioned studies on music in

advertising have some relevance to the jingles used in campaign ads, and, therefore, indicate that even when merely a background feature, music could have a greater influence on an individual's preference toward a candidate more than he or she may be aware.

Furthermore, the advent of television detracted from the rhetorical potential of a campaign song by instead creating an emphasis on image. Considered the first modern election with its televised debates, the 1960 election once again led to a transformation in how music is used in presidential campaigns (Donaldson, 2007). This election marked one of the first times a celebrity's alliance with a candidate was truly a driving force in an election, and, consequently, a general shift can be seen after this election in which songs that are already established, popular, and have ties to certain musicians are chosen as campaign songs. In this regard, it could be argued that it is no longer about singing one's way to the presidential spotlight; instead, it is about seeing the images or personas of the various musicians with whom candidates choose to align.

As previously stated, the only lyrics in modern campaign songs that are generally given any attention are the "one-line wonders" (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). With emphasis on the hook, lyrics before or after the hook are not necessarily meant to be stretched and applied to a candidate's campaign. A compelling example of this can be found in Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S. A." With its first use in Ronald Reagan's 1984 campaign, this song has been used continually in political rallies, pumping people up with its bold, powerful melody and accompanying patriotic chant, "Born in the U.S.A!" Being classified as one of the most "pro-American" tunes, closely examining this song brings to the surface images of a working class man who has recently returned from war, only to find himself isolated from society, the government, and his family. Cowie and Boehm (2006) argued that the song is a critique of

working class politics. Despite its contradictory nature, “Born in the U.S.A” has served to bolster a candidate’s campaign with its seemingly patriotic “one-line wonder.”

The incongruity between melody and lyrics that is evident in Springsteen’s song is the essence of Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) rhetorical perspective that called for “analyzing systematically music as communication” (p. 339). It should be noted that their rhetorical work is an expansion of philosopher Susanne Langer’s theory on music as an aesthetic symbol (1953). In Sellnow and Sellnow’s perspective, titled the “Illusion of Life,” the authors contended “music communicates as an aesthetic symbol by creating an illusion of life for listeners through the dynamic interaction between virtual experience (lyrics) and virtual time (music)” (p. 339). Essentially, the study of music and its communicative functions is not fruitful unless both lyrics and music are considered.

Much of the literature suggested that beginning around the mid-20th century, songs in politics were not as much about the music or lyrics as they were the personas of the various campaign song artists (Cowie & Boehm, 2006; Donaldson, 2007; Schoening & Kasper, 2012). With the advent of the radio and television, songs began to serve as the backdrop to a candidate’s platform. However, Schoening and Kasper (2012) wrote that, “while the amount of music decreased over this period, the importance of that music within the elections remained high, and in certain respects, increased” (p. 137). The authors also posited that a look at the rest of a song’s lyrics could reveal secondary benefits for a candidate, including slight attacks on an opponent, messages about a candidate’s platform, or other statements echoing sentiments of enthusiasm and optimism for a candidate.

In addition to the vitality of lyrics — which communicates messages and ideas — music plays just as much of an important role (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). Returning again to the

“Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective, it was suggested that lyrics provide conceptual content while music creates the emotional content. Several rhetorical theories of music touched on the emotive power of musical form (Langer, 1953; Irvine & Kirkpatrick, 1972; LeCoat, 1976; Ramet, 1994; Rasmussen, 1994; Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001) as well as the conceptual power of musical lyrics (Irvine & Kirkpatrick, 1972; Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). According to the “Illusion of Life” perspective, however, both form and lyrics must be examined in order to capture the essence of any song.

While music in campaigns might not be as crucial in the sense that they sing a candidate all the way to the presidency — as in the case with William Harrison in 1840 — music in modern elections can be crucial to a candidate’s success because it can still be used to market a candidate and reveal to the population what he or she represents. While speeches serve as the predominant means of conveying a message or political platform, music, too, serves as political expression (Street, 2011). Rhetorical theories of music revealed how music can resonate with the listener both emotionally and conceptually. Consequently, campaign songs should be given greater attention as the interactions between lyrics and music, and campaign song and candidate, can provide means of communication for candidates and their constituents.

Chapter 3: Method

The “Illusion of Life” Rhetorical Perspective

Based on the literature, it is apparent that lyrics and music in campaign songs were most emphasized throughout the 19th century. Lyrics during this era contained specific information about a candidate and his credentials, as well as information particular to that time period. With the advent of the radio and television, music’s role began to shift to the background, and by the 1970s, songs were only being noted for their hook or “one-line wonder” (Schoening & Kasper,

2012). This research will explore beyond the “one-line wonder,” examining the song’s lyrics in their entirety, while also studying how those lyrics interact with the music of the text.

The “Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective is foundational to the method that will be used to study these campaign songs. This perspective, which is an extension of Susanne Langer’s theory of music as aesthetic symbolism (1953), argued that music functions rhetorically by creating an illusion of life for listeners; music is a representation of life experiences and feelings influenced by the artist’s perspective (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). An example of this illusion of life was mentioned earlier in the discussion of Woody Guthrie’s ability to express through his music the attitudes, feelings, and culture of a people (Reuss, 1970). According to this perspective, the illusion of life is formed through the interaction between virtual experience (lyrics) and virtual time (music).

Sellnow and Sellnow’s rhetorical perspective (2001) offers a systematic approach to a field that has been grossly understudied. The “Illusion of Life” perspective is the authors’ answer to Irvine and Kirkpatrick’s (1972) call for rhetoricians to develop critical models to allow for analysis of music’s role in rhetorical exchange. The “Illusion of Life” is a beneficial methodological approach because it increases understanding about how discursive linguistic symbols and non-discursive aesthetic symbols work together to communicate and persuade in music (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). The goal of this perspective is threefold: a) the lyrics must be analyzed to discover the conceptual messages; b) the musical score must be studied to determine the intensity and release patterns (Langer, 1953) offered and the emotional essence it conveys; c) the relationship between lyrics and music must be explored since they impart a message that is both conceptual and emotional. In other words, the critic must determine what is being argued based on the congruent or incongruent interaction between lyrics and music.

According to this rhetorical perspective, the relationship between lyrics and music can be either one of congruity or incongruity (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). The authors draw from the philosophy of rhetoric theorist Kenneth Burke, espousing his theory titled “perspective by incongruity” (Burke, 1954). According to Burke, incongruity occurs when one extends “the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and [applies] it to another” (p. 89). From this explanation, it would appear that in modern elections, incongruity serves as a predominant rhetorical tool for politicians since many of the songs selected for campaigns are already written and have their own established and expected place in society. In essence, achieving novelty through campaign music emerges from using older or established songs in new and inventive ways that, according to Burke’s perspective by incongruity, would allow constituents to potentially adopt new perspectives as the songs are defamiliarized. While a congruent relationship reinforces and makes the message of the song clearer, an incongruent relationship can transform the meaning of a song (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). This is certainly the case with “Born in the U.S.A”—a song that is simultaneously a critique of post-war society and a supportive, patriotic cry. The “Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective ultimately argued that the patterns of congruity or incongruity that evolve from the interaction of music and lyrics is what gives music its rhetorical form and power.

In my reading of Sellnow and Sellnow’s “Illusion of Life,” the most compelling rhetorical tool is this matter of congruity and incongruity. Because this method is more suited for the examination of a single song, I have adapted it to fit my purpose of studying a body of text that includes a wide range of songs. Furthermore, because the songs I am studying are embedded in a political context, it would be fruitful to examine any congruities and incongruities that may exist in the interaction between music and politics. Consequently, rather than focusing solely on

the level of congruity or incongruity between music and lyrics — as suggested by Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) — I expanded this concept to examine the level of congruity or incongruity that exists between a political candidate and his or her campaign song, as well as how the songs compare with each other when examined as an entire body of text. Comparing and contrasting all of the campaign songs led to determining whether there were any deviations from the norm within a certain time period — incongruity — or if campaign songs have come to adopt a standard form that fulfills certain expectations.

Using this rhetorical perspective, I conducted an analysis of United States presidential election campaign songs beginning in 1972 up to the most recent election of Donald Trump in 2016. The year 1972 is a significant starting point because it was at this point songs were brought into the political realm without any changing or alteration of the lyrics, thus signifying greater emphasis on the musician rather than the actual lyric or music of the song. Schoening and Kasper (2012) consider the 1972 election the “bridge to the pop era” (p. 147), thus making this transitional period an effective starting point for this analysis. While Franklin Roosevelt did incorporate “Happy Days are Here Again” in his 1932 platform, this was uncharacteristic of the time and would not become a major theme until forty years later with the election of 1972 (Schoening & Kasper, 2012).

Although there is an anomaly here and there, such as Bob Dole’s use of Sam and Dave’s “Soul Man” (the song was altered to “Dole Man”) in the election of 1996, songs were mainly left unchanged after this point, and this certainly remains to be the case in today’s elections as well. The campaign songs listed at the end of this chapter do reveal that the elections of 1976 and 1980 continued to make use of traditional campaign songs, but by this era, that was becoming a less

common method for selecting songs to represent a political platform (Schoening & Kasper, 2012).

Sample characteristics. Every campaign song includes what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) call virtual experience (lyrics) and virtual time (music). The authors define virtual experience as “the story, or narrative, of a work” (p. 399). In her book on rhetorical criticism, Sonja Foss (1989) explains that although stories are the primary focus of narrative analysis, narrative form is not limited to traditional structures, but can also be applied to forms including “conversation with friends, comic strips, painting, songs, or dance” (p. 229). Since this form of research can apply to less traditional structures, rhetorical criticism was applied in order to study modern campaign songs: how the songs function rhetorically, examining the various interactions between music, lyrics, song and candidate, and determining if there has been an overall trend of congruity or incongruity in campaign music.

As Foss (1989) mentioned, music falls under the category of less traditional subjects for narrative or rhetorical criticism, with stories serving as the primary focus for this type of research. Consequently, very little has been done in blending rhetorical analysis and musical forms. The literature review covered seminal articles in the field of communication that examine music rhetorically, as well as many studies analyzing the rhetoric of music in advertisements. My research contributes to this handful of studies, using a rhetorical perspective to examine a musical form that has not been rhetorically studied.

“Illusion of Life” Rhetorical Scheme of Categories

Virtual experience. In defining virtual experience, Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) wrote that it can be situated in either the poetic or dramatic illusion and can stress either a comic or tragic rhythm. A poetic illusion tends to be reflective in nature, with the author’s perspective and lyrics

looking backward into the past and recounting events that have already occurred and cannot be altered. This type of illusion tends to have a tone of finality and contains no real feelings of suspense. As a result, this illusion models what Langer (1953) would call a release pattern. In contrast, virtual experience that is situated in a dramatic illusion tends to be speculative in nature, looking toward the future. In this illusion, the outcome of circumstances is uncertain, and there is a strong presence of suspense and a dire need for resolution. This models what Langer (1953) would call a pattern of intensity.

A song that stresses a comic rhythm contains lyrics portraying a protagonist who beats the odds and maintains balance and stability in life: A comic rhythm represents patterns of intensity and the overall tone is one of optimism. The antithesis of this would be a song that predominantly exudes a tragic rhythm. In this context, the overall tone is one of pessimism and the protagonist is one who has made many sacrifices and is coping with his or her predetermined fate, thus representing release patterns.

Virtual time. Music as an aesthetic symbol represents the intensity-release patterns of human living (Langer, 1953). In analyzing virtual time — the musical score — of any given song, Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) outline five components that should be considered: rhythmic structure, harmonic structure, melodic structure, phrasing, and instrumentation.

Rhythmic structure. Examining the rhythm includes listening to a song's tempo. A fast-paced song would typically represent more intensity; a slower song would convey more of a release pattern. Also under the umbrella of rhythmic structure is meter: Is the meter fairly consistent throughout the song (indicating patterns of release), or does it frequently transition into different time signatures? Finally, under rhythmic structure there is the beat. Is it regular and predictable, or is it syncopated or irregular?

Harmonic structure. Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) define harmonic structure as the “vertical analysis of intervals and chords” (p. 404). Are the chords euphonic and do they resonate to the average listener’s ear or is there more of a dissonance and sense of longing and resolution in them?

Melodic structure. Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) stated that a melody could be either conjunct or disjunct. In a smooth, conjunct melody the notes move in a step-like, orderly fashion. In contrast, a disjunct melody is more sporadic and any note can be sung at any given moment — it is less predictable and tends to have a longing for a resolution or release. Melodic lines can also represent patterns of intensity if they are constantly ascending and reaching for the tonic note, or a sense of resolution. Melodies that contain notes that are held out for long periods of time tend to exemplify a pattern of release.

Phrasing. Among the many elements that could be examined under the category of phrasing include: articulation, dynamics, and the way certain parts of the song may speed up or slow down, signifying intensity and release, respectively. Articulation involves examining whether the notes are staccato and accented — patterns of intensity — or smooth and connected — patterns of release. Studying the dynamics of a song includes listening for crescendos and decrescendos. Typically, songs that are softer evoke feelings of release. Songs that increase in speed represent patterns of intensity while music that is slower or gradually slows down embodies a release pattern.

Instrumentation. According to this perspective, music that includes a greater number of instruments — especially brass, electric guitars or percussion — tends to convey emotions of intensity while acoustic guitars and other string instruments as well as woodwinds (flute, oboe, etc.) tend to be more transparent and resolved.

While each component should be considered in relation to each other, the rhetorical exercise lies in determining what elements are most dominant when the piece is heard as a whole (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). Ultimately, this rhetorical framework analyzes the interaction of virtual experience elements and virtual time elements to determine whether a song is congruent or incongruent. Because my adaptation of this rhetorical perspective involves examining different forms of congruities and incongruities that extended beyond the music, my analysis of the music-lyrics interaction is not as in-depth as the one Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) offer. While I do consider the various virtual experience and virtual time elements in every song, I do not mark the absence or presence of each individual element within a song or describe in detail how the songs make use of all those elements since my end goal is not just to determine musical congruity or incongruity. Instead, in my more qualitative analysis of the music-lyrics interaction, I discuss what elements are the significant facilitators in creating a clear musical congruity or incongruity and then explore beyond the musical scope to study how a modern campaign song interacts with its respective political context. The virtual experience and virtual time elements were provided in this section to offer background and clarity on what was considered when studying the musical interaction of a song.

Congruity and Incongruity

The significance of this congruity and incongruity matter rests in the fact that there are consequences in relation to whether a song follows patterns that are predominantly congruent or incongruent. A song is congruent when the emotional messages of the music and the conceptual message of the lyrics are aligned and reinforce one another. This alignment tends to make the overall message more poignant. Kizer (1983) reiterates this view in her research on the rhetoric of the protest song, arguing that “the tune must match the words in tone and interface with the

verbal message to achieve the maximum psychological and physiological responses from the listener” (p. 9). Although a congruent message makes for a clearer message, this can sometimes lead to less listener appeal (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). Researchers in other fields have supported this point, showing that incongruent advertising elicits greater recall than congruent advertising (Hollander & Jacoby, 1973; Houston, Childers, & Heckler, 1987). In her research, Hung (2000) revealed that music in congruent ads (ads where the verbal and visual components match one another) lead to a clearer message for viewers because context has been reinforced to communicate meanings. However, music in incongruent ads helps create an alternative context that can be meaningful to the viewer to communicate and make sense of the ad message.

According to Sellnow and Sellnow (2001), a song that is congruent combines comic lyrical messages with intensity musical patterns and tragic lyrical messages with release musical patterns. Furthermore, comic lyrics situated in a dramatic illusion with intensity musical patterns and tragic lyrics situated in a poetic illusion with release musical patterns make for the most poignant messages. A song is incongruent if the emotional messages and conceptual messages of the music contradict each other. This incongruity tends to transform the meaning in some way, and, according to Sellnow and Sellnow (2001), this can lead to greater listener appeal. When a song’s meaning is transformed, what could have been construed from lyrics alone often bows to the power of an emotional message derived from the music. The authors suggest that incongruity might be a more effective strategy when attempting to recruit more members to a social movement — something that political candidates might consider when campaigning. Essentially, the “rhetorical significance of musical messages lies in the degree of congruity or incongruity that exists between virtual experience and virtual time” (p. 412). The critic must then interpret

what rhetorical effect congruent or incongruent lyrics and music may have on particular audiences.

“Illusion of Life” Adaptation

Rather than focusing solely on the level of congruity or incongruity between music and lyrics — as suggested by Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) — I expanded this rhetorical perspective to examine the level of congruity or incongruity that exists between a political candidate and his or her campaign song. These were the steps used to complete my analysis:

- Listen to the modern campaign song at least once all the way through
- Listen again, this time studying the lyrics (virtual experience) to determine whether the song has a poetic or dramatic illusion, or a comic or tragic rhythm
- Listen to the song a third time, specifically honing in on the musical (virtual time) elements to determine whether the song predominantly exudes patterns of intensity or release
- Based on interaction between music and lyrics, determine whether the modern campaign song is musically incongruent or congruent
- After determining a modern campaign song’s musical congruity/incongruity, study the respective candidate’s platform to discover the main issues and themes of the election cycle
- Return to the modern campaign song, looking for words and phrases that could tie into the candidate’s platform and political context
- Determine whether the modern campaign song’s messages and themes support or contradict the candidate it is representing

- Consider the modern campaign song's musical style: Is it more rooted in country or rock?
- Based on interaction between the song's themes and musical style, determine whether a modern campaign song is politically incongruent or congruent when tied to a specific candidate

Using this adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective, my research will answer the following three questions:

RQ1: Using an adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective, how are the rhetorical tools of congruity and incongruity used in modern campaign songs?

RQ2: Based on an adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective, have modern campaign songs become more congruent or less congruent over time?

RQ3: What is the rhetorical function of modern campaign songs?

Songs studied. Defining the official campaign song in modern elections can present a challenge because the 2000 election marked the start of an era in which multiple songs were used in campaigns (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). At this time, candidates began using a variety of songs to convey different messages in an effort to target certain demographics as they traveled along the campaign trail. However, for purposes of this thesis, the official campaign song has been identified by what was played at the Republican or Democratic National Convention. Studying the official campaign song for Republican and Democratic candidates in elections from 1972-2016 leads to a study of 24 songs:

Presidential Candidate	Election Year	Political Party	Campaign Song
Richard Nixon	1972	Republican	“Nixon Now”
George McGovern	1972	Democrat	“Bridge Over Troubled Water” (Simon and Garfunkel)
Gerald Ford	1976	Republican	“I’m Feeling Good about America”
Jimmy Carter	1976	Democrat	“Why not the Best?”
Ronald Reagan	1980	Republican	“California, Here I Come”
Jimmy Carter	1980	Democrat	Not available
Ronald Reagan	1984	Republican	“Born in the U.S.A”
Walter Mondale	1984	Democrat	“Gonna Fly Now”
George H. W. Bush	1988	Republican	“This Land is Your Land” (Woody Guthrie)
Michael Dukakis	1988	Democrat	“America” (Neil Diamond)
George H. W. Bush	1992	Republican	“This Land is Your Land” (Woody Guthrie)
Bill Clinton	1992	Democrat	“Don’t Stop” (Fleetwood Mac)
Bob Dole	1996	Republican	“Dole Man” (Sam Moore)
Bill Clinton	1996	Democrat	“Beginnings” (Chicago)
George W. Bush	2000	Republican	“We the People” (Billy Ray Cyrus)
Al Gore	2000	Democrat	“Let the Day Begin” (The Call)
George W. Bush	2004	Republican	“Only in America” (Brooks and Dunn)
John Kerry	2004	Democrat	“Beautiful Day” (U2)
John McCain	2008	Republican	“Raisin’ McCain”
Barack Obama	2008	Democrat	“Only in America” (Brooks and Dunn)
Mitt Romney	2012	Republican	“Born Free” (Kid Rock)
Barack Obama	2012	Democrat	“We Take Care of our Own” (Springsteen)
Donald Trump	2016	Republican	“You Can’t Always Get What You Want” (Rolling Stones)
Hillary Clinton	2016	Democrat	“Fight Song” (Rachel Platten)

Chapter 4: Analysis of the Text

The following analyses of campaign songs spanning a period of more than four decades represents an adaptation and expansion of Sellnow and Sellnow’s “Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective. This section examines not only how each campaign song works musically, but also how each campaign song works in its specific political context.

1972 (Richard Nixon, Republican): “Nixon Now”

Musically and politically congruent. The 1972 presidential election makes a great case for how the very act of choosing a campaign song is a rhetorical move. Just as McGovern’s

choice to incorporate Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water" into his platform reached out to a younger demographic that reflected a radically shifting popular culture, Nixon's choice of the jingle-esque "Nixon Now" hearkened back to the campaign song tactics of the 1950s and '60s and seemed to appeal to those that valued tradition. In the song's short span of 2 minutes and 12 seconds, Nixon's name is repeated 22 times — a move common in earlier campaign songs such as "I Like Ike."

The opening lyrics of "Nixon Now" place the song in a forward-thinking, dramatic illusion. Following the upbeat, brassy introduction, these lyrics are sung: "Reaching out to find a way/to make tomorrow a brighter day/ making dreams reality/more than ever Nixon now for you and me." This opening establishes that although the future is uncertain, there is an abundance of hope that solutions will be found — solutions that can be achieved through the election of Nixon, according to the song. This optimistic tone reflects what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would consider a comic rhythm. The buoyancy continues into the second verse: "Lead you now across the sea/making friends where foes used to be/ giving all to humanity/more than ever Nixon now for you and me." The remaining lyrics of the song repeat the chorus that capitalizes on the phrase "Nixon now." While this could get tiresome, the virtual time elements of the song make it more compelling. A key change occurs after the song's two main verses, modulating the melody into a higher key before the resounding chorus is sung. Another key change takes place before the chorus is repeated, bringing the song to an even higher key. This melodic climbing — which parallels the lyrical climbing for a solution — reflects what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would consider a pattern of intensity. The brass instrumentation also contributes to this intensity. And even though "Nixon Now" has a cheesiness that would fit right in with *The Partridge Family*, having the singing alternate between men and women also helps to create a sense of urgency —

perhaps indicating that the problems facing the country are bigger than one person or one group. According to the “Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective, songs such as “Nixon Now” that align patterns of intensity with a dramatic illusion and comic lyrics are extremely congruent and make for the most clear and poignant messages.

Despite its general ambiguity, “Nixon Now” also expresses political congruity. While the majority of the song focuses on the repetitive chorus that revolves around the candidate’s name, there are two verses that although vague do offer a reflection of Nixon and his political platform. The second verse includes the lyric, “Lead you now across the sea/making friends where foes used to be.” This draws a connection to Nixon’s emphasis on foreign policy and diplomacy — a focus especially telling when examining both the Republican and Democratic Party platforms for the ‘72 election. While foreign policy is the first issue discussed on the Republican platform, it is not brought up until more than two-thirds through the Democratic platform, as the eighth issue to be addressed. More specifically, the lyric is also certainly referencing Nixon’s historic visits to China and Russia earlier in ‘72 to help mend strained relations and ease the hostility during the Cold War. With its focus — albeit brief — on foreign affairs, “Nixon Now” ties in politically to the Republican candidate and his platform. Furthermore, the optimistic spirit of “Nixon Now” is matched in Nixon’s forward-thinking platform:

The choice is between going forward from dramatic achievements to predictable new achievements, or turning back toward a nightmarish time in which the torch of free America was virtually snuffed out in a storm of violence and protest. (Republican Party platform preamble, 1972)

The preamble later stated that “a new spirit, buoyant and confident, is on the rise in our land,” reflecting “Nixon Now’s” enthusiastic opening about “reaching out to find a way/to make

tomorrow a brighter day.” And finally, while the candidate’s use of “Nixon Now” could be viewed as the antithesis of forward thinking as it brings to mind campaign songs of an earlier era, “Nixon Now” serves to reflect the candidate’s more conservative and traditional values.

1972 (George McGovern, Democrat): “Bridge Over Troubled Water”

Musically and politically congruent. Simon and Garfunkel’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water” takes listeners on a journey with its musical layers and complexities. While the song’s beginning features the simple arrangement of piano and a soft, gentle voice — qualities that typically embody release patterns — the song’s instrumentation and vocal strength continually build. The voice gains more confidence in the second verse, matched by a louder, more robust piano accompaniment. Near the end of the second verse, we hear a clashing of cymbals to welcome in the most triumphant-sounding and lyrically optimistic verse with lines including: “Your time has come to shine/all your dreams are on their way/see how they shine/oh if you need a friend/I’m sailing right behind/ like a bridge over troubled water/I will ease your mind.”

This forward-moving message — a message perhaps embodied in the lyrics’ imagery of a sailing boat — creates a stark contrast to earlier lyrics of the song that speak of inevitable tragedy: “When you’re weary, feeling small/when tears are in your eyes/I’ll dry them all. . . .” “When times get rough and friends just can’t be found/like a bridge over troubled water/I will lay me down.” Comparing these lyrics reveals a shift from “when” to “if”; the first verse speaks of a time “*when* friends just can’t be found,” while the third verse states, “*if* you need a friend.” This is a transformation of hope, reflected in the intensity of the third verse.

Contributing to this third and final verse are Simon and Garfunkel’s harmonies and the string ensemble. As the verse comes to a close and the final “bridge over troubled water” line is sung, the melody ascends and is drawn out along with the vibrant orchestra section. The piercing

strings conclude the song, offering a victorious cry over the feelings of weariness and loneliness expressed in earlier verses, although it should be acknowledged that the titular line does serve as an anchor of hope and comfort throughout. It is also important to note that both the lyrics and the music parallel the transformation from the depths of despair to the heights of hope, therefore making “Bridge Over Troubled Water” musically congruent and more poignant.

McGovern’s use of Simon and Garfunkel’s folk ballad “Bridge Over Troubled Water” seems to be a rhetorical move that simultaneously alludes to the trouble beginning to stem from the Watergate scandal and the continuing conflict in Vietnam while also appealing to a large demographic of young people, as the voting age had been lowered from 21 to 18 just a year earlier (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). The authors stated that “Bridge Over Troubled Water” served as a “bridge to the pop era,” shepherding in the campaign song tradition of utilizing pop songs verbatim in a platform (p. 147). On the surface, the greatest strength of using “Bridge Over Troubled Water” would appear to be its connection to pop/folk artists Simon and Garfunkel. In fact, McGovern capitalized on the duo’s newfound celebrity by inviting them to perform the song at a fundraising concert at Madison Square Garden on June 14, 1972 (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). Furthermore, McGovern’s image as the “anti-war, liberal candidate” (p. 148) would appear to be bolstered through this affiliation with artists that appeal to a younger demographic. However, what hasn’t been as much considered is why McGovern would specifically choose “Bridge Over Troubled Water”— a somewhat surprising choice considering its slower tempo — for his campaign song. Examining this song in the context of the 1972 presidential election makes one wonder if there was just as much power to be derived from the song itself as there was from the musicians behind it.

Although McGovern began using “Bridge Over Troubled Water” before the Watergate scandal occurred on June 17, 1972, the song’s title and use in the campaign takes on new meaning in the scandal’s aftermath. Accusations against Nixon were not yet prevalent during the campaign year — he was re-elected in a landslide victory, after all — but McGovern’s use of the song throughout the campaign could be seen as a subtle way of provoking images and thoughts of the Watergate scandal and the continuing struggles stemming from conflict in Vietnam in constituents’ minds, and in turn, causing them to reflect on the potential corruption and lack of governmental transparency. Thus, the lyrics, “like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down” and “like a bridge over troubled water, I will ease your mind” could serve as McGovern’s promises to lay everything out on the table and offer comfort to constituents through openness and transparency. The tone of skepticism also serves as a major theme in the Democratic Party platform for the 1972 election, with the opening line stating: “Skepticism and cynicism are widespread in America.”

Even though it wasn’t until August 1974 that Nixon’s part in the Watergate scandal would be revealed, McGovern’s use of Simon and Garfunkel’s folk ballad two years prior to the president’s resignation seems to reflect his awareness of troubling times as well as represent his “anti-war, liberal” political ideology (Schoening & Kasper, 2012, p. 148).

1976 (Gerald Ford, Republican): “I’m Feeling Good About America”

Musically and politically congruent. While campaign songs of the 1976 election harken back to the tradition of having songs specifically commissioned for candidates, the lyrics of these songs are more ambiguous — as seen later with Jimmy Carter’s “Why Not The Best,” where the strongest sentiment occurs near the end of the song with the weakly sung declaration, “We need Jimmy Carter!” Republican candidate Gerald Ford’s use of the original folk-style ballad “I’m

Feeling Good About America” is only slightly less ambiguous. According to Larson (2009), this heavy ambiguity in campaign music emerged because including politics in campaign songs was becoming a liability, leading “both candidates [to use] cautious language and a muted image in an effort to break ties with traditional Washington politics” (p. 16). Along this same line, Larson (2009) stated that by campaigning with songs in the country and folk genres, both Ford and Carter were continuing with the trend George McGovern used in 1972 of utilizing counterculture music — reflecting a move away from politics in an era when the majority of Americans had little confidence in the government because of issues such as Watergate.

Similar to “Why not the Best?” Ford’s campaign song was plain and simple, about a minute and a half long with only two verses. The first verse talks about a “change that’s come over America — a change that’s great to see: We’re going back to work again, it’s better than it used to be.” These opening lyrics set the song in a forward-thinking, dramatic illusion with a comic tone as positive changes have taken place and circumstances are changing for the better. The first verse concludes with the statement “I’m feeling good about America and I feel you ought to know.” Following a banjo and guitar interlude, the second verse carries on this sense of vague optimism, stating “I’m feeling good about America, it’s something great to see. I’m feeling good about Gerald Ford and I’m feeling good about me.”

The cheerful rhythm and short, bouncy articulation of the song match the optimistic spirit of the lyrics, making “I’m Feeling Good About America” musically congruent — a contrast to Carter’s musically incongruent “Why Not the Best?” Examining the party platforms for 1976 reveals that jobs and employment seemed to be the major issue of the election as it is the first topic both parties address. And although both Carter and Ford made use of ambiguity in their

campaign songs, Ford's song is slightly more direct as it actually does mention the issue of employment: "We're going back to work again, it's better than it used to be!"

Larson (2009) contended that neither Carter nor Ford's campaign songs reflect strong direction or leadership, instead seeking to espouse an overall tone of vague optimism. While that is certainly true, I would argue that Ford's campaign song is more directly connected to his platform as the lyrics suggest that the "great" change that has come over America is that people are returning to work — referencing one of the biggest concerns of the election cycle and offering political congruity. By drawing specific attention to an increase in employment, Ford's use of "I'm Feeling Good About America" aligns him with the change for the better and points out that scandals such as Watergate and the Vietnam War are in the past as the nation moves forward in hope.

1976 (Jimmy Carter, Democrat): "Why Not the Best?"

Musically incongruent and politically congruent. The 1976 election is a significant one in the history of campaign music because it marked the last year that both Republican and Democratic campaigns would commission originally composed music for their respective causes (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). Although "Why Not the Best" was written specifically for Jimmy Carter, the song differs from other songs written on behalf of candidates. While most songs written for candidates combine an upbeat, catchy melody with repetition of a candidate's name ("Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," "Nixon Now," "Raisin' McCain," etc.) "Why Not the Best" is a soft ballad that only references Carter's name three times. The ballad is written from the perspective of a person who has overheard Carter campaigning and is impressed with the candidate's "straight and simple" manner. The protagonist decides that Carter's "plan of action

[makes a lot of sense]” and comes to the conclusion that America “[needs] Jimmy Carter ... why settle for less ... why not the best?”

The lyrics of this ballad are situated in a dramatic illusion (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001), speculative in nature and looking forward to a future with Carter as president. An optimistic tone permeates the lyrics as the protagonist listens to Carter and comes to recognize that the candidate is the best option for America. However, the soft melodic line and instrumentation provide an incongruity to the lyrics. The lyrics tell of a protagonist who experiences change: “He spoke plain and simple and I began to see ... we need Jimmy Carter!” Yet, the dynamics, phrasing/articulation, and instrumentation do not reflect the protagonist’s transformation and instead remain soft and unchanging throughout the entire song. As a whole, the song’s quiet musical score seems to bow to its lyrical, narrative elements.

Although “Why Not the Best” differs from other songs written for candidates with its musical incongruity, the song does share similarities with its politically congruent form. As with songs such as “Nixon Now” and “Raisin’ McCain,” Carter’s campaign song includes vague references about the candidate and his qualifications. Returning briefly to the literature review, including political ideologies in campaign songs was a feature in the politics of the mid-1800s that began to fade in the 1920s with the advent of the radio (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). Instead of delving into any specifics, the protagonist simply says of Carter: “He laid out a plan of action — made a lot of sense!” and “He talked about the government and how it used to be ... that’s the way it ought to be right now.” These lines are heavily ambiguous and could truly refer to either political party candidate, but when connected to the phrase “We need Jimmy Carter!” the song becomes aligned with the candidate as an official endorsement of his politics. The simplicity of the music also matches the way Carter is described in the song, as having a “straight and simple”

manner. This aligns with Carter's background and humble roots as a peanut farmer, and the song's country music elements appeal to Carter's upbringing in the South.

1980 (Ronald Reagan, Republican): "California, Here I Come"

Musically and politically congruent. In similar fashion to Franklin Roosevelt's use of "Happy Days are Here Again" in 1932, Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan selected "California, Here I Come," a song written for a Broadway musical and recorded by artist Al Jolson in 1924. The use of "California, Here I Come" provides an example of how expanding Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) methodology to examine the interaction between song and candidate can provide additional insight. While the song is musically congruent with its strong, cheery horn section and forward-moving spirit: "Open up that Golden Gate, California, here I come," the greater interest lies in studying how the song served Reagan throughout his campaign.

On the surface, "California, Here I Come" seems like a peculiar choice for a campaign seeking office in the White House, but putting the song in context with the candidate makes the decision more understandable. Prior to becoming the Republican nominee for president, Reagan had served two terms as governor of California, and the song "California, Here I Come" played during speeches and rally appearances as he campaigned for that position in 1966 and 1970, according to historian Carl Anthony (2012). But before serving as governor from 1967-1975, Reagan rose to prominence as an actor on the Hollywood stage. Having the Broadway tune serve as his campaign song drew a connection not only to Reagan's political service in California, but also to his experiences as a performer in Hollywood.

While "California, Here I Come" does reflect Reagan in both the political and personal realms, it still remains an odd choice for the candidate to use as he was seeking office in

Washington, D.C. — especially with the lyrics “California, here I come, right back where I started from” and “my eyes turn westward knowing that’s the place that I love best of all.” Rather than acknowledge his eastward path to the Oval Office, the song reflects a joy to be returning to California. However, Anthony (2012) posited that by the 1980 presidential election, the candidate was so closely associated with the state of California that the song served more as a musical theme than it did a campaign song. But invoking the Western state in his campaign song could also be viewed as a rhetorical move on Reagan’s part, as by this time, the state had an appealing history — thanks to the gold rush — and had been associated with an abundance of opportunities. In his psychoanalytical research, William Niederland wrote of “the special position that California holds in the psychological, social, and cultural fabric of the history of North America, and, in fact, the civilized world” (Neiderland, 1971, p. 485). By attaching his campaign to a state historically rich with opportunity, Reagan was perhaps drawing a parallel to the success and opportunities of which his own candidacy could create.

Where campaign songs of the previous election cycle saw direct references to candidates’ names, Reagan’s song only alluded to him indirectly with his California affiliation. Larson (2009) wrote that while “up until the late 1970s, campaign music had still attempted to address, however minimally, the salient political issues ... [the] idea of reducing the amount of overtly political material in political campaign songs was exemplified by the campaigns of the 1980s” (p. 17). While the inclusion of politics in campaign songs in this election cycle was certainly not as prevalent as in previous cycles, Larson fails to acknowledge how a song itself can still reflect and represent a candidate. She goes as far to write, “after the 1980 campaign, no national candidate would use a campaign song that included a specific platform or even a reference to a candidate’s individual identity” (p. 18). As seen with songs such as “California, Here I Come”

and Michael Dukakis' use of Neil Diamond's "America" in 1988, songs can still reflect and represent a candidate's identity without specifically referencing a name or party platform.

Although unusual, Reagan's use of the Broadway show tune "California, Here I Come" brought a sense of familiarity to his platform — as those in the nation best knew him as a former California governor and Hollywood actor.

1980 (Jimmy Carter, Democrat): Campaign Song Not Accessible

My literature review addresses the issue that rhetorical studies of music remain on the margins in terms of the overall field of rhetorical research. That being said, rhetorical studies on campaign music remain even more entrenched in the margins. This was proven when I had a challenging time tracking down what campaign song Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter used for his 1980 reelection bid — a similar problem also occurred in determining Republican incumbent George H. W. Bush's campaign music for his reelection bid in 1992. There's a significant amount of information from Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign run that reveals how the candidate sought to be framed as a down-to-earth, peanut farmer from rural Georgia (see my analysis of Carter's official campaign song "Why Not the Best?"). Furthermore, in 1976, Carter also made use of a song titled "Ode to the Georgia Farmer," once more reinforcing his position as a Washington outsider. But any music Carter might have incorporated in his 1980 campaign run is much more challenging to find. In an effort to resolve this matter, I reached out to the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum in Atlanta, Georgia, but the archivists there were unable to provide me with any information pertaining to my research (J. Carter Library, personal communication, November 2017). This was surprising to me and increased my awareness of just how understudied the realm of campaign music is. In their book studying the history of campaign music, authors Schoening and Kasper (2012) also do not mention any information regarding

Carter's 1980 campaign — but they do also fail to mention opponent Ronald Reagan's use of "California, Here I Come." One would think that Carter did have music accompanying his appearances at rallies and other events, but the lack of available resources and information on this subject seem to suggest that Carter did not have a strong association with a particular song as he did in the previous election cycle, and most certainly nothing as binding as Reagan and his theme song "California, Here We Come."

1984 (Ronald Reagan, Republican): "Born in the U.S.A"

Musically and politically incongruent. Bruce Springsteen's hit song "Born in the U.S.A" from his 1984 album bearing the same name is not only one of Springsteen's most misunderstood songs, but also a highly misinterpreted campaign song — even being considered one of the most misunderstood political campaign songs in history (Cellania, 2012). The song's gross misinterpretation and subsequent entrance into the political realm is the product of superficial listening that allows little to no room for critical thoughts and conclusions. The song was released during the height of Reagan's reelection campaign, in August of 1984. Columnist George Will for *The Washington Post* saw Springsteen perform the song in concert and wrote in his column a few weeks later that despite the song's lyrics of "chronicle despair," the tune was one of "cheerful affirmation" (as cited in Bird, 1994, p. 44). This review advocates the importance of Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) "Illusion of Life" perspective calling for the rhetorical study of music through the interaction of lyrics and music, and it also reveals the problems that can abound when the auditor allows one to overshadow the other — in this particular case, music over lyrics. Just two weeks after this review, the Reagan administration appropriated Springsteen's song for the candidate's campaign. Unaware that Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A" record "contemplates life in America rather than celebrates it" (Rauch, 1988, p.

29), Reagan alluded to the “message of hope” for America’s future that could be found in Springsteen’s songs in a speech given in the musician’s home state of New Jersey (Bird, 1994, p. 44). A close examination of the lyrics conveys why Reagan’s statement could not be further off.

Despite what Will called the “cheerful affirmation” of the repeated chorus throughout the song (as cited in Bird, 1994, p. 44), a deeper look at the lyrics depicts those words shrouded in clouds of irony. When removed from isolation and examined within the song’s context, the seemingly patriotic chant actually follows stanzas that paint a dark picture of the hardships Vietnam veterans faced upon returning home. The song’s beginning tells of a boy who was “born down in a dead man’s town” where one can “end up like a dog that’s been beat too much.” This difficult childhood of fighting and abuse transitions into a troubled adolescence as the man gets involved in “a little hometown jam” and ends up avoiding a sentence by “put[ting] a rifle in [his] hand” and “[going] off to a foreign land to go and kill the yellow man.” However, all of the benefits he is told he will receive upon his return home are merely empty promises. When the veteran attempts to get a job at the refinery, the “hiring man” says that if it were up to him, he could work there; yet, when he takes this problem up with the Department of Veterans Affairs, he simply gets told: “Son, don’t you understand.”

The song portrays further post-war disillusionment as the veteran tells of losing his brother in the war, his only remaining connection being a picture of his brother in the arms of “a woman he loved in Saigon.” Now jobless and without family, the veteran’s heartbreaking story comes to an unsettling conclusion as he ends up in the very place he sought to avoid all along — “down in the shadow of the penitentiary.” As a result, he has “nowhere to run” and “nowhere to go.” That he chants “born in the U.S.A” in between the details of his tragic narrative makes the

seemingly patriotic declaration more of a bitter commentary on how America has fallen so short of the promises and ideals it proclaims to uphold.

The musical framework Springsteen uses to share this message about the poor treatment Vietnam veterans received is what causes significant musical incongruity to come into play. Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) assert that incongruity occurs when the emotional concept (music) of a song does not align with the conceptual content (lyrics). The song's instrumentation includes a variety of instruments: synthesizer, drums, guitar, and bass — instruments that do not contribute to the tragic tone set by the lyrics. Rather, the combination of the instruments with Springsteen's brash articulation of the melody creates an overall tone of triumph that supersedes the message of the lyrics. In some instances, the loud and intense music even drowns out the lyrics, thus making the repeated "born in the U.S.A." phrase even more triumphant, and therefore, misunderstood. Springsteen's manager, Jon Landau, was aware of this issue and thought the song should even be removed from the album, stating: "To me ['Born in the U.S.A'] was a dead song. ... Clearly the words and the music didn't go together" (as cited in Hillstrom & Hillstrom, 1998, p. 47).

However, when considered as a conscious, rhetorical move, perhaps this incongruity draws a connection between the music and lyrics, offering a commentary — maybe even a metaphor — that relates to American society. Just as a superficial listening of Springsteen's song might cause one to view it as a tune of "cheerful affirmation," on the surface, American culture is triumphant and proud of the ideals it promotes, yet, when one really digs in and discovers the individual stories that weave the tapestry of American society, it becomes clear that there still remains a long way to go before these ideals are realized.

Ronald Reagan was not unaware of these issues plaguing society at the time of his run for reelection. In fact, a small portion of the 1984 Republican platform stated:

We are addressing the unique readjustment problems of Vietnam veterans by expanding the store-front readjustment counseling program, extending vocational training and job placement assistance, and targeting research toward understanding delayed stress reaction in combat veterans. . . . Veterans have earned their benefits; these must not be taken away.

(Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 1984)

This statement touches on some of the very struggles integrated throughout Springsteen's narrative, "Born in the U.S.A." Although the Reagan administration was aware of the readjustment issues many Vietnam veterans were enduring, it was not aware that these issues were the essence of Springsteen's song. Instead, Reagan invoked Springsteen in a speech and brought the artist's song into his campaign because of the "message of hope" embodied in his music (Bird, 1994). The opening of the 1984 Republican Party platform stated that "today [members of the Republican Party] declare ourselves the party of hope — not for some, but for all" (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 1984). The Reagan administration's use of this song as a representation of hope that can be fulfilled through his candidacy is a tremendous political incongruity; however, if the administration had been aware of the song's real message and used it to address the issues of which Springsteen sings, then Reagan's use of the song could have shifted to one more politically congruent. Instead, the administration's use of a song that decries the tragic effects of war while simultaneously promising to "prudently [increase] defense resources and military strength" (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 1984) creates undeniable irony.

1984 (Walter Mondale, Democrat): “Gonna Fly Now”

Musically and politically congruent. He might not have been a small-town boxer going up against a heavyweight champion, but Walter Mondale was an underdog candidate running against the incumbent Ronald Reagan, who held a relatively high approval rating of 58% going into the 1984 presidential election (Newport, Jones, & Saad, 2004). The 1984 election marked the first time both candidates used unaltered popular tunes as their campaign songs (Schoening & Kasper, 2012), and for his campaign, Mondale selected “Gonna Fly Now,” best known as the theme song from the 1976 film *Rocky*. Just as Reagan’s use of “California, Here We Come” was considered to be more of a theme song than a campaign song (Anthony, 2012), “Gonna Fly Now” — a song nearly three minutes long with only thirty words — also served as a theme for Mondale. Not only was the song popular, peaking at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in 1977, but with its horn fanfare and smattering of inspirational lyrics it also conjured images of victory and triumph. In fact, in an interview highlighting Bill Conti, composer of “Gonna Fly Now,” he stated: “There’s something that is evoked with that type of music. It’s the idea of someone winning the game or the battle” (Bozung, 2015). At a later point in the interview, Conti parallels Susanne Langer’s idea of intensity and release patterns (1953), stating that the music for “Gonna Fly Now” is “so tense because it’s looking for resolution. It becomes exciting because of that. It’s dramatic and that’s what you want in music” (Bozung, 2015).

Indeed, the music certainly reflects what Langer, and by extension Sellnow and Sellnow (2001), would call patterns of intensity. The strong horn presence plays the familiar theme twice before any lyrics are sung — starting at about 50 seconds into the song. That the lyrics don’t come into play until around a minute into the song indicates that the triumphant-sounding music plays the greater role here, with the lyrics merely serving to underscore the heroic score. As the

brass fanfare builds in intensity, with a drum beat and a guitar solo added in for good measure, a chorus chants the motivational phrases “Trying hard now,” “Getting strong now, “Gonna fly now” and “Flying high now.” The final ten seconds of the song have the word “fly” repeated three times, each time the pitch ascending a fifth above the previous one. It’s an ascension that matches the song’s overall theme of rising above all of the doubts and uncertainties to stand victorious.

While Mondale was certainly drawing on the popularity of “Gonna Fly Now” — at this point in time, three *Rocky* films had already been released — the biggest draw in using this song would be its evocation of the ultimate underdog story, the very situation Mondale himself was in during the 1984 election. Even though Mondale might have been the frontrunner for the Democratic Party in 1984, he would be running against the incumbent Reagan, who although began 1983 with a 35% job approval rating — the worst of his administration — by 1984, had job approval ratings that were consistently above the 50% line that is a symbolic standard for an incumbent president seeking re-election (Newport, Jones, & Saad, 2004). In the end, Reagan ended up carrying 49 of the 50 states, earning a grand total of 525 electoral votes to Mondale’s 13 electoral votes. By tying himself to the *Rocky* theme song “Gonna Fly Now,” Mondale was drawing a connection to the beloved small-town boxer and perhaps positioning his own campaign against Reagan as a parallel to the film’s rag-to-riches, underdog story.

1988 (George H. W. Bush, Republican): “This Land is Your Land”

Musically and politically incongruent. “This Land is Your Land” provides a great illustration of the benefits in adapting Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) rhetorical perspective to examine congruities and incongruities beyond the interaction between musical form and text. While there are patterns of incongruity between the music and lyrics, the more compelling

incongruity is found in the interaction between candidate and song. The decision to have “This Land is Your Land” as the official campaign song for George H. W. Bush is one loaded with political irony. Written by folk artist Woody Guthrie, the song is a musical tribute to the progressive form of political activism the artist endorsed. In fact, Guthrie wrote in a 1941 journal entry:

When the Rich will give their goods into [sic] the poor. I believe in this way. I just can't believe in any other way. This is the Christian way and it is already on a big part of the earth and it will come. To own everything in common. That's what the Bible says.

Common means all of us. This is pure old 'commonism.' (as cited in Briley, 2007, p.10)

The views espoused in the above entry can in many ways be considered the antithesis to the political views promoted by Republican candidate Bush in the 1988 election. The Republican Party platform for 1988 is written with a tone of unwavering optimism, including such phrases as “optimistic expansion” and “opportunity for all.” Guthrie incorporates this same comic rhythm in his own lyrics, depicting the life of a protagonist as he walks along a “ribbon of highway,” surrounded by “endless skyway” and a “golden valley.” As the song continues, the protagonist mentions that he has seen the “sparkling sands” of America’s “diamond deserts.” Each of these verses ends with the resounding and reinforcing line: “This land was made for you and me.” All of these vivid phrases and their connection to “you and me” allude to the abstract concepts of abundance, equality and opportunity; concepts also upheld in the Republican Party’s official platform. Yet, there comes a moment in the song that although subtle, creates a distinct division between Republican candidate Bush and his campaign song.

The fourth verse of the tune carries on in tone and word just as the ones that precede it, however, this time the protagonist makes a political statement and it is one that is in extreme opposition to Bush and his campaign. As the protagonist in Guthrie's song continues walking, he eventually reaches a sign declaring a part of the land "private property." Continuing on with his optimistic and comic tone, the protagonist's response to this potential obstacle is: "But on the backside it didn't say nothing. This land was made for you and me." This response seems to be a reference to Guthrie's thoughts on 'commonism' (Briley, 2007) and highlights the underlying left-wing political principles attached to the lyrics. When compared to the following statement taken from a portion of Bush's 1988 political platform, the incongruity could not be more drastic: "We believe the right of private property is the cornerstone of liberty ... private ownership is best for our communities" (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 1988). One component of Bush's platform was to advance private ownership over natural resources — an idea that stands in direct opposition to the statement, "This land was made for you and me."

The political incongruity between Bush and his campaign song is further reinforced when examining how the music interacts with the lyrics. The melody is the same for each verse, so there is much predictability in the song's trajectory for the auditor. This relates to Kizer (1983) and her discussion of the rhetoric in a protest song. She mentioned the importance of familiarity in a protest song since the melody is the sonic equivalent to the delivery of a speech. Therefore, key to a protest song's meaningful and successful delivery is creating the ability for the auditor to simultaneously sing the words and tap his or her foot to the beat. Guthrie accomplishes this with his song, using a consistent rhythm and melody to keep his listeners engaged. In addition, the acoustic element of the tune provides an incongruity; the soft dynamics and light instrumentation create a relaxed tone that somewhat contradicts the opportunistic nature of the

lyrics. “This Land is Your Land” consists of incongruities that are both political and musical. In expanding my study to look beyond the musical form and text, an additional (and I would argue more compelling) incongruity is found between candidate and song. This incongruity raises the question as to whether the use of the song is a conscious rhetorical move or a result of being unaware of the political principles underlying Guthrie’s song.

1988 (Michael Dukakis, Democrat): “America”

Musically and politically congruent. Neil Diamond’s “America” outlines a positive interpretation of immigration to the United States. The song’s lyrics are situated in a dramatic illusion with its depiction of immigrants moving forward on boats and planes to “[come] to America.” They optimistically embark on this journey, choosing to “hang on to a dream” and move toward a “new and shiny place” rather than looking back on their pasts. This optimism is the driving force of their actions as they have “a dream to take them [to America].” The intense musical patterns perfectly match the dramatic and comic lyrics, thus making the overall message of Diamond’s song extremely poignant (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). The song’s musical form bears similarities to the structure of a symphonic piece in style and instrumentation. “America” begins with an orchestral overture that introduces the predominant musical motif that is sung and played throughout the entire song. As the orchestra builds in intensity, the bass then comes in and establishes the song’s upbeat tone and rhythm. The melody is powerful and Diamond’s voice bombastic as he repeatedly shouts the triumphant phrase, “They’re coming to America!” The journey of the immigrants in the song ends in a new beginning as they approach America “today!” This arrival to their new American home introduces a new melody and lyric: “My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing!” Diamond’s incorporation of this classic patriotic hymn increases the intensity of the song, and that lyric intertwined with the triumphant

“today!” culminates in a powerful ending — a dynamic arrangement that matches the pride and patriotism of Diamond’s lyrics.

The extreme musical congruity of the song that makes it so powerful and patriotic is especially interesting when compared to Reagan’s use of “Born in the U.S.A” in the previous election cycle. The Reagan administration attempted to use Springsteen’s song for its patriotism and “message of hope” — a message that is more the central feature of Diamond’s song than it is Springsteen’s. Both songs make use of triumphant sounding melodies with loud and bold instrumentation, and have a presumably optimistic and repeated phrase to accompany those melodies. Both songs have also become patriotic emblems, although it is only Diamond’s song that truly falls under that category. The Reagan administration of 1984 attempted to situate “Born in the U.S.A” in the same musically congruent framework that Diamond’s “America” perfectly fits, but a close reading of both songs reveals that the returning veteran has lost the hope that is the driving force of those entering his country for the first time.

Although nothing specific about immigration is mentioned in the Democratic Party platform for the 1988 election year, Dukakis’s use of the song does touch on his own immigrant roots. The candidate was born to Greek parents who immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. In this light, Dukakis’s use of this song is both an acknowledgement and statement that he would not be in his current position as presidential nominee for America had it not been for his parents and their own journey to America. Dukakis’s personal connection to the plight of immigrants, and having his own success story as the Democratic candidate in the presidential election, reinforces the overall message of “America” — that immigrants can take their hopes and dreams to America, a land where they are free to pursue those dreams. This idea is further enhanced by the song’s inclusion of the line, “My country ‘tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of

thee I sing.” The use of “America” as a campaign song in the 1988 election appears to mark the entrance of the American Dream as a significant message in campaign music, as the ideal becomes an increasingly prominent theme in campaign songs, especially throughout the elections of the 21st century with songs such as “Only in America” and “We the People.”

1992 (George H. W. Bush, Republican): Campaign Song Confusion

Musically and politically incongruent. As mentioned in my literature review, only a handful of seminal articles address the rhetorical and communicative powers of music — and the literature specifically addressing campaign music is even smaller. While information regarding George H. W. Bush’s campaign music for the election of 1988 is readily available, tracking down songs the incumbent Bush included in his 1992 reelection bid is not as accessible. Because of this issue, I reached out to the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Texas, to resolve the matter. Upon my request, archivist John P. Blair conducted a search of the library’s textual records and was not able to find the information. He then forwarded my inquiry on to the library’s audio visual archivist “in an effort to learn if we do have this information, if indeed President Bush used a campaign song in 1992” (J.P. Blair, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

I was shocked by this response for a couple of reasons: One, campaign music has been at the intersection of music and politics throughout most campaigns in the history of United States presidential elections. Why would Bush be an exception in 1992 and not have a campaign song — especially when his opponent Bill Clinton was drawing a great deal of emphasis to his campaign song, Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop,” tying it to the overall theme and slogan of his campaign? Second, I was thrown off by the part of Blair’s response that stated “*if* [emphasis added] indeed President Bush used a campaign song in 1992.” For me, this response heightened

my awareness that the literature pertaining to the body of campaign music is extremely overlooked and not at all well known, if archivists in the candidate's own presidential library are not only unaware of Bush's use of campaign music but are also unable to yield the requested information upon conducting research.

In their book examining the history of presidential campaign music, Schoening and Kasper (2012) do very briefly touch on the election of 1992, but even at least part of their information is incorrect. The authors cite a September 1998 article from *Spin* magazine stating that in an effort to show the "kinder, gentler" candidate, Bush had attempted to use Bobby McFerrin's upbeat a capella tune, "Don't Worry, Be Happy" (Letkemann, 1998). But the song, which was released in 1988, was actually briefly included in Bush's presidential campaign for that same year — not the election of 1992. General searches online, including a 1991 *New York Times* article (Holland, 1991) and an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine (Chao, 2015) note that Bush's use of the song for his 1988 campaign sparked controversy with McFerrin, who was opposed to Bush's politics and, therefore, unhappy with the candidate's use of the song in his campaign. McFerrin issued a cease and desist to Bush, who ended up ultimately making his official campaign song for 1988 "This Land is Your Land," as discussed and analyzed earlier.

Authors Schoening and Kasper (2012) wrote that for his reelection bid in 1992, the incumbent Bush continued using "This Land is Your Land" as a campaign song. After some extensive digging, I was able to confirm this via an article on the interactive campaign music website Trax on the Trail (Kennedy, 2016), which contended that the song served as a central theme in both the elections of 1988 and 1992 for George H. W. Bush. If this is the case, such a move is an unprecedented one, as candidates generally tend to use different songs to attract different demographics. And while Bill Clinton might have been associated with Fleetwood

Mac's song "Don't Stop" well past his 1992 election (the song has since stuck with him in subsequent speeches at future Democratic National Conventions), he still opted for a different — although similar in style — song for his reelection bid in 1996. Although a candidate using the same campaign song in back to back elections can be viewed as an incongruity when looking at other incumbents' changing song selections, the choice proves to be a bit odd and lacking in energy when compared to Clinton's use of the dynamic "Don't Stop." Perhaps the move was rhetorical, with Bush trying to establish a position of familiarity by once again using "This Land is Your Land," or trying to invoke the idea of stability — using the same campaign song to indicate that he's the same person people elected four years prior — but the fact that it is significantly challenging to find information pertaining to Bush's campaign music in the 1992 election proves that the move, conscious or not, didn't really serve to boost his campaign.

1992 (Bill Clinton, Democrat): "Don't Stop"

Musically and politically congruent. From the title alone, it's clear that the Fleetwood Mac hit "Don't Stop" embodies what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would consider to be a forward-thinking, dramatic illusion with a comic (optimistic) rhythm. The lyrics serve as the antithesis to a reflective, poetic illusion, especially with the resounding chorus: "Don't stop thinking about tomorrow/don't stop, it'll soon be here/ It'll be here better than before/yesterday's gone, yesterday's gone!" In addition to this spirited chorus, the song's three verses also carry this positive tone, the opening verse encouraging listeners who might be feeling down to "open your eyes and look at the day, you'll see things in a different way!"

The song's cheerful outlook continues into the second verse, asking listeners to "think about times to come and not about the things that you've done." The vocals, primarily expressed through short and accented notes, punctuate the song and offer patterns of intensity (Langer,

1953) that are enhanced by the song's upbeat rhythm and powerful drums. That "Don't Stop" fades out with the phrase "Don't you look back" further reinforces the song's forward thinking and optimistic outlook. Applying the "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective (Sellnow & Sellnow 2001), songs such as this Fleetwood Mac hit create the most clear and poignant messages because of their musical congruity.

In similar fashion to Ronald Reagan's use of "California, Here We Come" — a number he was personally fond of — as a theme song for his 1980 campaign, Bill Clinton became inseparable from Fleetwood Mac's "Don't Stop" during the 1992 election. Historian Carl Anthony (2012) wrote, "All across the United States that summer, whether candidate Clinton was appearing at an outdoor rally or in a hotel ballroom, arriving by limousine or his famous campaign bus, anyone within hearing range heard 'Don't Stop' all over again."

Clinton's association with "Don't Stop" was so strong that he later ended up reuniting Fleetwood Mac for a performance of the song at his inauguration ball in 1993 — the band hadn't shared a stage since 1982. According to Anthony, the song continued to serve Clinton well past his 1992 election run: At the 2000 Democratic National Convention, the former president concluded his speech stating, "Keep putting people first. Keep building those bridges. And don't stop thinking about tomorrow!" (Anthony, 2012). Even in 2011, at a 1992 presidential campaign reunion, Clinton reflected on the importance of the song and how after hearing only the first 30 seconds of it, he knew it needed to be his campaign song if he were ever to run for president (C-SPAN video). With its message about using the present moment to create future change for the better, the song, which charted No. 3 in 1977, had just as much significance and meaning 15 years later for Bill Clinton and his presidential campaign, which he called "the revolution of 1992" (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 1992).

1996 (Bob Dole, Republican): “Dole Man”

Musically congruent and politically incongruent. Bob Dole’s use of “Dole Man” throughout his campaign harkened back to the early days of campaign music when songs were commissioned or popular songs rewritten to support a political candidate. During the summer of 1996, Sam Moore, a member of the rock n’ roll duo Sam and Dave, re-recorded a 1967 hit song that the duo had made popular, titled “Soul Man.” Moore, who was a Bob Dole supporter, adapted the song for use in Dole’s campaign, keeping the same underlying sound and melody but adding a few new lyrics. In the process, the song’s namesake and chief refrain of “I’m a soul man” became “I’m a Dole man.”

According to Schoening and Kasper (2012), two versions of the song were used throughout Dole’s campaign. Like most songs written or adapted for a candidate, the first version included specific references and qualifications pertaining to the candidate: “Got where he got/the hard way/Make America better/each and every day/so voters/don’t you fret/he quit the senate/to be president.” Kansan Bob Dole served as the Republican leader of the United States Senate from 1985-1996, when he then shifted his focus to the Oval Office. The lyrics, paired with the song’s upbeat tempo and strong brass presence served to be an energetic reinforcement and endorsement of Dole’s capability and experience that made him suitable for the presidency

According to the website Pop History Dig (pophistorydig.com), a forum that focuses on contemporary culture and popular history, at least one version of “Dole Man” that Sam Moore recorded spoofed Dole’s age — something that was somewhat of an issue as Dole was 73 years old at the time of the campaign (Doyle, 2009). Dole’s use of “Dole Man” throughout his campaign served to be incongruent for a couple of reasons: One, Dole appears to use self-degradation tactics and humor to connect with constituents. Even the refrain of “I’m a dole man”

can end up sounding like “I’m a dull man” — especially when heavily repeated as it is throughout the song. Second, the song stems from the Motown music tradition— music that Democratic candidate Barack Obama would make great use of during his 2008 campaign run. Using a song harkening back to the African-American soul music of the 1960s served as an incongruity to Kansan Bob Dole’s conservative heritage. His use of the song could also be seen as a tactic to appeal to the younger demographic — a group with which he could have been perceived as being out of touch during the 1996 election. In this light, the Republican candidate’s use of “Dole Man” was a clever tactic to reach out to demographics with which he might normally have a hard time connecting. In addition, the song could be seen as fitting in context of Dole’s slogan for the 1996 election: “The Better Man. For a Better America.” However, there appears to be an odd blending of mockery and support for the candidate within the lyrics, creating an overall sense of confusion and lack of clarity in the song’s message. Dole was eventually asked to stop using the song, and then resorted to the misunderstood “Born in the U.S.A” before finally settling on the country song “American Boy” by Eddie Rabbitt, but it was “Dole Man” that served as the candidate’s main campaign song and the song with which he was most associated.

1996 (Bill Clinton, Democrat): “Beginnings”

Musically and politically congruent. In his 1996 bid for reelection, Bill Clinton kept close to the music traditions of his previous campaign in 1992. While the latter saw the energetic use of Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop,” the subsequent election brought into the fold “Beginnings” by jazz/rock band Chicago. Both bands formed in 1967 and had major success throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Furthermore, the strong horn section for which Chicago was known, and specifically, the heavy brass presence of “Beginnings,” could be seen as a tactic to recall to constituents’

minds the image of Clinton performing the saxophone during the 1992 election cycle — an unprecedented move that worked to bridge the gap between politicians and their constituents.

Throughout “Beginnings,” the instrumentation provides the song’s main drive, with the soft yet optimistic lyrics simply reinforcing the cheerful and powerful music. After an instrumental introduction consisting of a rapidly moving bass line and bombastic brass chords establishes the song’s up-tempo nature, lyrics then follow that indicate the song is written from a romantic perspective. The opening lyrics confess: “When I’m with you, it doesn’t matter where we are or what we’re doing, I’m with you, that’s what matters.” While it is a bit odd to apply a love song to a campaign (although Barack Obama did the same thing in 2008 with his use of Stevie Wonder’s “Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I’m Yours”), some of the lyrics can still make sense in the context of Clinton seeking reelection. For instance, the song’s next line mentions how “time passes much too quickly when we’re together laughing.” Such a lyric could be read as implicating that Clinton’s first term as president was a seamless and successful transition that flew by — although it is admittedly difficult to find another reading of the lyrics, “When I kiss you, I feel a thousand different feelings, a plethora of chills all over my body.”

After this point, the song’s chief refrains of “Only the beginning of what I want to feel forever” and “Only just the start” begin to repeat, with a healthy dose of horns inserted throughout. The song is nearly eight minutes long, and an instrumental featuring a bombastic horn section begins shortly after the four-minute mark. At about five minutes into the song, the phrase “only the beginning” is sung over and over, and at the 6 minutes and 30 second mark, the lyrics fade out and allow for a conga-drum-style solo to dominate the song’s final minute and a half. The dance-inducing music drives home the optimistic message that it’s only just the beginning — in the context of Clinton’s campaign, driving home the idea that his job as

president doesn't have to be over after a first term; that the 1996 election could make the changes of his first term just the beginning of what the candidate had to offer.

During his 1996 reelection run, Clinton invoked the phrase "building bridges to the 21st century," because, if re-elected, his presidency would be the one to usher in the new millennium (Roberts, Hammond & Sulfaro, 2012). In this light, "Beginnings" proves to be an effectively congruent campaign song as it reflects the start of a new era. In fact, the very first line of the 1996 Democratic Party platform stated: "In 1996, America will choose the president who will lead us from the millennium which saw the birth of our nation, and into a future that has all the potential to be even greater than our magnificent past" (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 1996). This message reinforces the optimistic idea that "it's only the beginning." A later part of the platform's preamble stated:

Today's Democratic Party stands proudly on the record of the last four years. We are living in an age of enormous possibility, and we are working to make sure that all Americans can make the most of it. America is moving in the right direction. (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 1996)

As he was presiding over a period of prosperity in the United States, it would make sense for Clinton to capitalize on this optimism by using a campaign song that proclaims such happiness is "only the beginning" if given the chance to serve a second term as president.

2000 (George W. Bush, Republican): "We the People"

Musically congruent and subtle political incongruity. At the turn of the century, campaign music in presidential elections underwent a significant transformation as both candidates began using multiple theme songs throughout the campaign season (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). The authors wrote that in previous elections, no more than one candidate at a time engaged in this

practice, and that typically a major party candidate refrained from employing the tactic. But just as the advent of radio and television in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively, sparked a change in campaign music — producing more jingle-oriented tunes — the technological advancements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries allowed for compact discs and music files to be played with greater ease, facilitating and expanding the trend of incorporating popular music in campaigns that began with George McGovern’s use of “Bridge Over Troubled Water” in 1972.

While Republican candidate George W. Bush used three songs regularly throughout his campaign — Tom Petty’s “I Won’t Back Down,” Van Halen’s “Right Now” and “We the People” by Billy Ray Cyrus — it was the country-rock anthem “We the People” that served to represent Bush’s main campaign song and played after his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). Cyrus offered the song to both Bush’s and Al Gore’s campaigns during the summer of 2000, so while the lyrics to “We the People” do not specifically reference the candidate — as seen with most songs in the era of popular music in campaigns — the song and its continual reference to the preamble of the U.S. Constitution espouses values that would seem to resonate well with the American public. It is also significant that Cyrus, a longtime Democrat, offered the song to both candidates for use, perhaps recognizing campaign music’s potential to bridge partisan gaps in an effort to focus on citizens collectively. Just as the constitution serves as the supreme law of the United States and the backbone of government, “We the People” outlines the backbone of the country — the people who get up everyday and make the country move forward in progress.

Against the backdrop of rousing guitar licks and a heavy drumbeat, the opening verse gives credit to the farmers who wake up in the morning at five, the truckers who drive throughout the night and the factory workers who build with pride. It’s these people who “in

every city in every town make the world go round.” The fist-pumping chorus then follows, emphatically expressing gratitude to the people who keep the country going: “We the people move it/We the people know/We the people/ We run the country/We the people prove it/We’re the heart and soul/We the people/We are the country.”

The second verse continues recognizing the backbone of the country: the salesmen, waitresses, middle managers, soldiers, firefighters and police officers who often work overtime. “We the People” shows how disparate groups collectively form a nation, that while people might spend the bulk of their days in different ways, at the end of the day, all of these workers keep the country moving forward. Whether they are living in a rural or urban setting, people are waking up every single morning to go to work and contribute their skills to the building of the nation.

Following this verse, about halfway through the song, is a recitation of the preamble to the U.S. Constitution, driving home the patriotic message of “We the People” and serving to reinforce the importance of the people who make up the country. The song concludes with the resounding chorus and ends with the phrase: “We the people — we are the country.” Every time the chorus kicks off in the song, a group of people can be heard chanting the words, thus augmenting the conceptual content with emotional weight. The combination of powerful vocals, heavy instrumentation and optimistic lyrics that paint a picture of citizens throughout the country creates a musically congruent, working people's anthem.

In the song “We the People,” every word, phrase and line is an appeal to the working class — a group that Bush won over in the 2000 presidential election, according to an article titled “Who Lost the Working Class?” in the magazine *The Nation* (Levison, 2001). While working-class references tend to fall more in line with the Democratic Party (recording artist Billy Ray Cyrus himself was a longtime Democrat and actually performed at Bill Clinton’s

inaugural ball in 1997, according to a *Washington Times* article written by David Boyer in November 2000), the country-rock flavor and lyrics of “We the People” reflected former governor Bush’s Texas roots and his own experience in the oil industry. But themes from “We the People” were also woven into the candidate’s campaign, showing how selecting a campaign song is a highly rhetorical move that continues to have relevance in modern elections.

In the Republican Party platform for 2000 (Woolley & Peters), Bush stated, “Governments don't create wealth. Wealth is created by Americans — by creativity and enterprise and risk-taking. The great engine of wealth has become the human mind — creating value out of genius.” This quote embodies the forward-moving, human-driven message of Bush’s campaign song “We the People.” One of Bush’s key slogans in the 2000 election was “compassionate conservatism,” the philosophy of using traditionally conservative techniques to improve the general welfare of society. Much of this philosophy includes addressing and solving social issues via nongovernmental outlets. This slogan framed Bush as more centrist than other Republican candidates, thus helping to bridge the gap between the working class and the Republican Party. A look at the party’s platform for 2000 also revealed several statements that fortify the message of Bush’s campaign song, “We the People.” The preamble of the party’s platform stated that the platform “reflects the views of countless Americans all across [the] country who believe in prosperity with a purpose” and that Bush “is a leader who brings people together” (Woolley & Peters). These references to Bush’s strong connection to and awareness of citizens throughout the country go hand-in-hand with the song “We the People” and the message it perpetuates.

2000 (Al Gore, Democrat): “Let the Day Begin”

Musically and politically congruent. In contrast to Bush’s selection of a country-rock anthem, Al Gore selected more rock-oriented songs for his campaign, including Bachman-Turner Overdrive’s “You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet” and a lesser-known song titled “Let the Day Begin” by the ‘80s rock band The Call. The literature on music genres and politics suggests that Gore’s selection of these songs could be seen as an attempt to target and attract a younger demographic (Lull, 1987; Schoening & Kasper, 2012). While both songs were mainstays throughout Gore’s campaign, it was “Let the Day Begin” that served as the Democratic candidate’s main campaign song (Schoening & Kasper, 2012) and actually bore resemblance to his opponent’s campaign song. In similar fashion to Bush’s campaign song “We the People,” repeated parallelism permeates the verses of “Let the Day Begin.” Just as “We the People” outlines groups of citizens moving the country forward in progress, including farmers, truckers and factory workers, “Let the Day Begin” also draws attention to members of the working class. For example, the second verse highlights the following groups: “Here’s to the teachers in the crowded rooms,” “Here’s to the workers in the fields,” “Here’s to the preachers of the sacred word” and “Here’s to the drivers at the wheel.” Akin to “We the People,” Gore’s campaign song outlines disparate groups of people that form a whole — a nation.

After every verse — or sometimes every other verse — the phrase “Let the day begin” is sung. The titular phrase alludes to the optimistic ideas of a fresh start and a blank slate, ideas that are immediately enhanced by the opening lyrics: “Here's to the babies in a brand new world/ Here's to the beauty of the stars/ Here's to the travelers on the open road/Here's to the dreamers in the bars.” This first verse sets the tone for a forward-moving, positive song that is intensified by the rock-driven beat. The juxtaposition of all these different groups of people with this main

phrase implies that the day cannot begin and move forward without the sacrifices and dedication of citizens throughout the country: the doctors, soldiers, preachers, workers, drivers, teachers and many more.

In the context of the 2000 presidential election, the specific reference to teachers is especially compelling as one of the primary issues of the election cycle was education reform. While both Bush and Gore heavily addressed issues surrounding public education in their respective platforms, Gore specifically aimed to reform “America's crumbling schools and crowded classrooms” (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 2000), creating a greater poignancy to the opening line of “Let the Day Begin’s” second verse: “Here’s to the teachers in the crowded rooms.” A later section in Gore’s platform, titled “Investing in Our Schools,” further addresses this issue:

We cannot expect our children to learn all that they need to know in classrooms that are overcrowded, with teachers that are overburdened, and with textbooks and technology that are out-of-date. We need to invest in our schools and our children's futures. (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 2000)

As Gore made education a top domestic priority and campaigned for teachers to have smaller classes, his campaign song served to provide what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would call secondary benefits as some of the song’s lyrics reinforced issues represented in the Democratic Party’s platform.

While “We the People” and “Let the Day Begin” match candidates Bush and Gore respectively, the similarities between the two songs: the use of parallelism, continual references to the sacrifices of citizens and overall appeal to the working class raise the question as to whether or not either song could have provided congruity for each candidate. Similar ideas and

concepts tie these two songs together, although “Let the Day Begin” is more passive, a dedication and tribute to the sacrifices of citizens while “We the People” is active, encouraging citizens to roll up their sleeves and keep the country moving forward. However, the fact that country music tends to align more with conservative values (Schoening & Kasper, 2012) and “Let the Day Begin” does allude to specific aspects of Gore’s platform maximizes the congruity between each candidate and his campaign song.

2004 (George W. Bush, Republican) and 2008 (Barack Obama, Democrat): “Only in America”

Musically and politically congruent for Bush. “Only in America” as a campaign song for both a Republican and Democratic presidential candidate illustrates the rhetorical nature of music and its ability to transcend political, cultural and socioeconomic barriers (Ramet, 1994). In fact, a *CNN* article described the Brooks and Dunn song as a “bipartisan standard in recent presidential campaigns” (Greene, 2012), and Kix Brooks was even quoted as saying that “the song was never Republican or Democrat. I think that politicians of both parties get that” (as cited in Greene, 2012). Although “Only in America” has certainly made a statement about the power of music, my adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow’s musical framework suggests that incongruity most likely does exist — for instance, if the song matches the Republican candidate, can it match the Democratic candidate? This issue was illustrated previously through both a Republican and Democratic candidate’s use of Woody Guthrie’s “This Land Is Your Land.” My earlier analysis discussed how the song better aligned with Democratic Bernie Sanders’ campaign in 2016 than it did Republican George H. W. Bush’s campaign in 1988 — although perhaps the incongruity served to aid Bush senior in his campaign by increasing listener appeal (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001).

First examining George W. Bush's use of "Only in America" in the 2004 election, there proves to be a strong congruity — both musically and politically. Musically speaking, Bush did not stray far from his previous election, incorporating a distinctly country-rock sound through the use of duo Brooks and Dunn's "Only in America." In some ways, this song could be viewed as the antithesis to "Born in the U.S.A." While Bruce Springsteen's song, which was used by Ronald Reagan in the 1984 election, has a triumphant sounding and seemingly patriotic chorus, the lyrics throughout prove to make that chorus a bittersweet statement on how the country has fallen short of its ideals. In contrast, the verses and chorus of "Only in America" all serve to reinforce the opportunistic ideal of the American Dream. The opening lyric, "Sun comin' up over New York City" — a line especially poignant as the 2004 election marked the first election since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 — signifies a fresh start and that the day is anyone's to conquer. Similar to "We the People" and "Let the Day Begin," "Only in America" also makes use of parallelism to paint the people of the country, but does so by focusing on individuals instead of collectives. The song tells us that "One kid dreams of fame and fortune/One kid helps pay the rent/One could end up going to prison/One just might be president." When tied to the anthemic chorus proclaiming how "Only in America ... we dream as big as we want to. We all get a chance, everybody gets to dance," the overall message of the song is how opportunity for all is available through the ideal of the American Dream — the idea that no matter what race or social status, anyone has the opportunity to rise and be successful.

The third — and final — verse in the song continues the narrative of the individual, this time taking us to the other side of the country where the sun is setting in the West. There are newlyweds in the back of a limousine, a welder's son and a banker's daughter, who moved out West to be a singer in a band and an actress, respectively. Before once more kicking off into the

chorus, the song says, “They might just go back to Oklahoma and talk about the stars they could have been.” While the juxtaposition of this lyric with the rousing chorus could be read as ironic, the emphasis here is that these individuals, children of the working class, had the chance to go out and strive for their dreams — even if those dreams were not fulfilled. Following this verse, the chorus repeats three times, the song transposing upward before the final chorus, reflecting a pattern of intensity (Langer, 1953). Indeed, the insistent electric guitar accompaniment, upbeat tempo, harmonies and key modulation all serve to reinforce the song’s opportunistic message.

When looking at the pairing of “Only in America” with Bush in the 2004 election, there exists a strong political congruity. The song is similar to Bush’s use of “We the People” in 2000, being less about the candidate and instead focusing on the people who make up the country. Schoening and Kasper (2012) argued that the song is another example of a campaign simply making use of a “one-line wonder” (pg. 193), but the very opening line of the song indicates otherwise. Although Brooks and Dunn wrote the song shortly before the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the song took on greater meaning after the tragedy, especially with the line referencing the “sun comin’ up over New York City,” reflecting a sense of healing and renewal. Combating terrorism was one of the biggest issues of the 2004 election and the driving force of Bush’s platform, as the 9/11 attacks are the primary focus of the introduction and preamble to the 2004 Republican Party platform (Woolley & Peters). The opening of “Only in America” establishes an immediate connection with Bush, who was president during the attacks, and complements his platform in 2004.

It should also be noted that Brooks and Dunn were actual supporters of the Republican Party as opposed to Billy Ray Cyrus, a longtime Democrat, who recorded the song “We the People” that Bush incorporated in his 2000 campaign. Although my focus remains on how the

actual campaign song — not the song artist’s persona — can reinforce a candidate’s message and platform — it is worth acknowledging to show the extreme level of congruity. Furthermore, Schoening and Kasper (2012) argued that country music tends to reflect more conservative values and that one of Bush’s main campaign strategies in 2004 was to energize his conservative base rather than woo independent voters. A *Washington Post* article from 2004 addresses Bush’s reelection strategy:

Although age-old campaign rules dictate that the general-election candidate must emphasize moderate "swing" voters and political independents, Bush strategists are predicting that this election, more than previous ones, will be determined by the turnout of each side's partisans. Although not discounting swing voters, Bush is placing unusual emphasis so far on rallying the faithful. (Milbank & Allen, 2004)

This strategy marks a significant shift from the strategy Bush utilized in 2000, to frame himself as a more centrist candidate with appeals to the working class — the very group that earned him the election victory in 2000. *The George W. Bush Legacy*, a book published in 2008, reiterates this point, stating that “compared to every recent president, George W. Bush drew a much greater portion of his electoral support from his conservative base than from the swing-vote center” (Campbell, Rockman, & Rudalevige, 2008, p. 33). The book also notes that in the 2000 election, Bush received 52% of his vote from conservative Republicans and 35% from moderates. In the 2004 election, 59% of Bush’s vote came from his conservative base, with only a third stemming from centrists — the very position he took as a “compassionate conservative” in the 2000 election. Bush’s use of “Only in America” in 2004 tightly aligned with his campaign message of restoring hope and promoting patriotism in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks as well as his campaign strategy of highly appealing to his conservative base.

Obama's use of "Only in America" in 2008.

Musically congruent with some political incongruity. Throughout the general election of 2008, presidential hopeful Barack Obama made use of a plethora of music. One of the songs most associated with his campaign was Stevie Wonders' "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours." A song stemming from the Motown tradition, in the context of the 2008 presidential election, the immediate message of Wonders' song was that Obama was ready to serve the people as president of the United States. Although the lyrics clearly reveal that it's a love song, "Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I'm Yours" has both a sound and a meaning that can be tied to Obama's 2008 campaign. A soulful, doo-wop feeling permeates the song — a sound Republican candidate Bob Dole sought to invoke in his 1996 campaign with the parodic "Dole Man." In addition to the Stevie Wonder song, many of the candidate's campaign songs incorporated the rich African-American musical traditions of Motown and R&B. For instance, in his campaign, Obama also made use of Jackie Wilson's "Higher and Higher" and Aretha Franklin's "Think." Using these songs rooted deep in African-American musical traditions can be viewed as a strategy by Obama to draw attention to his race and that, if successful, he would be breaking race barriers in being the first black president in United States history. Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton also applied a similar tactic to the primaries of 2008 and her campaign in 2016 by primarily using songs that were written and sung by women.

But it was Brooks and Dunn's "Only in America," a song strongly associated with George W. Bush in 2004 that closed out the Democratic National Convention in 2008. In a 2008 *Rolling Stone* magazine article, song co-writer Kix Brooks, a staunch Republican, stated that it "seems ironic that the same song Bush used at the Republican Convention last election would be used by Obama and the Democrats now. Very flattering to know our song crossed parties and

potentially inspires all Americans” (as cited in Kreps, 2008). As my analysis of Bush’s use of the song proved, “Only in America,” a song that is musically congruent, was an extremely congruent fit for the Republican candidate. But in looking at the interaction of the song with Democratic candidate Obama, there also prove to be some congruities at play.

As discussed earlier, the message of “Only in America” centers on the American Dream, an ideal that appears to have been the focus of the Democratic Party’s platform in 2008. The opening of the platform stated:

We believe that every American, whatever their background or station in life, should have the chance to get a good education, to work at a good job with good wages, to raise and provide for a family, to live in safe surroundings, and to retire with dignity and security. (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 2008)

This statement encapsulates the essence of the American Dream and what it stands for, and because the Democratic Party’s platform later stated, “the American Dream is at risk,” the very first issue the platform discussed is “Renewing the American Dream.”

That “Only in America” has come to be considered a “bipartisan standard in recent presidential campaigns” (Greene, 2012) is also significant for Obama’s campaign, as part of his platform stated that “a great nation now demands that its leaders abandon the politics of partisan division and find creative solutions to promote the common good,” (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 2008). Furthermore, Obama’s race can be seen as intertwining with the song’s message, where “only in America” can a black man rise through the ranks and build himself up to become the leader of a country.

While the overall themes of “Only in America” are present throughout the Democratic Party platform for 2008, Obama’s use of the song does offer constituents a taste of incongruity

— Kix Brooks did call the candidate’s use of the song “ironic,” after all (as cited in Kreps, 2008). For instance, Obama’s use of “Only in America” marked the first time in the 21st century that a Democratic candidate in the presidential election made prominent use of country music in his platform — a feat especially compelling since by this point, candidates were using multiple songs in their campaigns to appeal to different demographics. While Obama predominantly made use of congruity through incorporating music of the Motown and R&B traditions, his inclusion of the country-rock anthem “Only in America” provided a stark contrast and incongruity by comparison. Use of the song could also be seen as a means of attracting members of the conservative base that played such a large role in the election of George W. Bush in 2004, thus tying into Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) argument that an incongruent song can increase listener appeal.

2004 (John Kerry, Democrat): “Beautiful Day”

Musically and politically congruent: Of the songs included in Democratic candidate John Kerry’s bid for the presidency were “No Surrender” by Bruce Springsteen, Creedence Clearwater Revival’s “Fortunate Son” and “Beautiful Day” by U2. Of these three, the song most associated with Kerry’s campaign was “Beautiful Day” (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). The song was certainly well perceived as it earned a Grammy Award in 2001 for best song of the year. Kerry’s use of “Beautiful Day” is an especially curious choice when compared to his opponent Bush’s use of “Only in America.” While “Only in America” illuminates the idea of social mobility propelled by the American Dream, “Beautiful Day” refers to people who “are out of luck ... not moving anywhere.” And while “Only in America” has an obvious upbeat message that permeates the song, U2’s “Beautiful Day” is subtler in its optimism. The song paints a

picture of people who are downtrodden for various reasons but then, through the chorus, reminds the listener that it is still “a beautiful day ... don’t let it get away.”

In some ways, this style is similar to “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” used by Democratic candidate George McGovern in 1972, offering listeners hope when they might feel in despair — that despite less than ideal situations, “a beautiful day” still exists. However, compared to the upbeat chorus, the verses are relatively soft and quiet. At times, the lyrics are unintelligible, blurred under the electric piano and string synthesizer mix until the chorus breaks out shouting “It’s a beautiful day,” thus emphasizing the overall theme of putting the past behind you and moving forward in life. The lack of vocal clarity in the verses when compared to the chorus is also reminiscent of “Born in the U.S.A.” In the case of Springsteen, it appears this tactic served to disguise his true intent so that what is actually a condemnation of how America has fallen short of its promises is actually misconstrued as a patriotic anthem. In contrast, the muddled, downtrodden lyrics of “Beautiful Day” seem to be stifled so that the positive message of the chorus can truly stand out and inspire listeners.

Through the chorus, the listener is encouraged to take advantage of the day and to not let a less than ideal situation keep him or her from seizing any opportunities the day may have to offer. Later verses in the song serve to remind the listener of beautiful things: “See the world in green and blue. ... See the canyons broken by cloud. ... See the bird with a leaf in her mouth, after the flood all the colors came out.” According to Schoening and Kasper (2012), writer Bono stated that the song was about “a man who has lost everything, but finds joy in what he still has” (p. 192).

In context of the 2004 election, the positive message of the song also reaches an electorate whose morale had been beaten on account of the country fighting wars on two fronts

(Schoening & Kasper, 2012). As the first election since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, it makes sense that hope would be a predominant theme in the 2004 election. While Bush's use of "Only in America" begins with the line "Sun comin' up over New York City" that symbolizes a sense of healing, Kerry's use of "Beautiful Day" seems to acknowledge that the country is still picking up the pieces from that tragedy. The beginning of the Democratic Party platform for 2004 stated:

For the first time in generations, we have been attacked on our own shores. Our brave men and women in uniform are still in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war against terror. Our alliances are frayed, our credibility in doubt. (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 2004)

Yet, the preamble of the platform continued, "We affirm our faith in the greatness of America." This passage from the Democratic Party's platform mirrors the narrative of "Beautiful Day" — that while situations are far from ideal, there are many things for which to be grateful, arguably the focus of "Only in America."

While the dominant issues of the 2004 election pertained to combating terrorism and strengthening the military, another emphasis of the Democratic Party platform was protecting the environment. As mentioned earlier, a verse toward the end of "Beautiful Day" encourages the listener to "See the world in green and blue/See China right in front of you/See the canyons broken by cloud. . . . See the Bedouin fires at night/See the oil fields at first light." Schoening and Kasper (2012) contended that the line about seeing the world in green and blue can be seen as a representation of Kerry's environmental platform, but I would argue that this entire verse, with continual reference to the word "see," embodies the candidate's platform striving for better air quality and an overall cleaner and improved environment.

Overall, song choices of the 2004 election indicate that both Bush and Kerry were focusing on hope and seeking to inspire their constituents after an unimaginable tragedy. Similar to Democratic candidate Al Gore's use of "Let the Day Begin" in 2000, Kerry invoked this message through the rock style typically associated with Democratic candidates, just as Bush invoked his message through a style that would appeal to his conservative base.

2008 (John McCain, Republican): "Raisin' McCain"

Musically and politically congruent: "Raisin' McCain" can be considered an outlier when compared to the other campaign songs used in the 21st century. The song was written specifically for John McCain's candidacy in the 2008 election and is thus an acknowledgement and application of the original use of songs in political campaign history. Prior to "Raisin' McCain," the last use of a campaign song making specific reference to a candidate was in 1996 with Bob Dole's "Dole Man," but even that song was an appropriation of the Sam and Dave song "Soul Man." When compared with the other campaign songs of this era, "Raisin' McCain" certainly stands out as an incongruity. Similar to the 1840 campaign song "Tippecanoe and Tyler Too," McCain's song makes use of a catchy melody that continually sings a candidate's name. In fact, in the song's seven verses McCain's name is mentioned 11 times, and only two of the verses relate to his personal experiences and credentials. This signifies that the essence and purpose of the song is to create general enthusiasm and support for McCain.

The song's general enthusiasm for McCain can be found in the chorus that is repeated five-and-a-half times during the song's 2 minutes and 30 seconds: "We're all just raisin' McCain/everywhere across the USA/you can get on the train or get out of the way/we're all just raisin' McCain." The music matches these comic, optimistic lyrics in tone with its upbeat melody and country-rock style and rhythm. The song's third and fourth verses tell of McCain's

credibility for president, specifically referencing his service in the Vietnam War: “Well he got shot down in a Vietnam town fighting for the red white and blue.” The following lyrics reference McCain’s time as a prisoner of war, when he was held captive by people that “[thought] they could break him in two.” The song then speaks of the strength McCain showed while held as a prisoner of war and ends the fourth verse with the passionate exclamation: “Now we’ve got a real man with an American plan, we’re going to put him in the big White House!”

The verses pertaining to McCain’s service in Vietnam carry on the comic, optimistic tone of the chorus with their depiction of a man who cannot be beat or broken down. The song is set in what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would call a dramatic illusion since the lyrics are looking to a future where McCain is “in the big White House.” The catchy, upbeat melody and rock n’ roll rhythms and instrumentation all work together to reinforce the song’s conceptual message that McCain should be president, thus making the song congruent. Furthermore, according to Sellnow and Sellnow (2001), songs that are situated in a dramatic illusion with comic lyrics and intense musical patterns create the most poignant messages. The authors also contended that such congruent songs with a high level of poignancy could limit listening appeal. This case could certainly be made for “Raisin’ McCain,” which from the title alone reveals why it might have limited appeal. The lines “you can get on the train or get out of the way/we’re all just raisin’ McCain” signify that the song would most likely only appeal to members of the Republican Party, and even more specifically, McCain supporters.

Because of the song’s heavy repetition that encourages listeners to either hop aboard the McCain train or just get out the way, “Raisin’ McCain” is an unusual choice for a campaign song in this time period, being extremely divisive and somewhat imperialistic in nature in its efforts to encourage everyone to “raise McCain.” With its details about McCain’s qualifications for

president, the song harkens back to an earlier campaign song tradition where the songs served more explicitly in the candidate's interest, as seen with "Nixon Now" and Jimmy Carter's "Why Not the Best?" Similar to "Why Not the Best," which speaks of Carter's plan of action that "made a lot of sense," "Raisin' McCain" makes reference to the fact that McCain has "an American plan," but there is no elaboration on what this plan may possibly entail. This again refers to how campaign songs in earlier periods were more concerned with "arous[ing] mass enthusiasm at the expense of reason" (Miles, 1990). Since the song is more of a rallying cry for McCain than anything else, the tune is also politically congruent in the sense that it supports and promotes the candidate and speaks of his credibility and strengths. Furthermore, Schoening and Kasper (2012) wrote that "country music tends to be more associated with Republican and conservative political views" (p.181), thus reinforcing the notion that "Raisin' McCain" is not only musically congruent with its poignant message, but also politically congruent in its representation of the candidate.

2008 (Barack Obama, Democrat): "Only in America"

This analysis was discussed earlier in the chapter in conjunction with Republican candidate George W. Bush's use of the song in 2004. While "Only in America's" overall theme of the American Dream is present throughout the Democratic Party's 2008 platform, Obama's use of the song did present subtle incongruity as it marked the first time in the 21st century that a Democratic candidate in the presidential election made prominent use of country music in his platform. Use of the song could be seen as a means of attracting members of the conservative base that played such a large role in the election of George W. Bush in 2004, thus tying into Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) argument that an incongruent song can increase listener appeal.

2012 (Mitt Romney, Republican): “Born Free”

Musically congruent with some political incongruity: As mentioned earlier, the beginning of the 21st century saw both major party candidates incorporating multiple songs into their campaigns. In his 2012 bid for reelection, Obama campaigned alongside a diverse and expansive Spotify playlist that included 41 songs — 17 of which were from the 21st century, according to recent research in the *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (Blankenship & Renard, 2017). In contrast, Republican opponent Mitt Romney only selected four songs for his campaign — the main one being “Born Free” by Kid Rock.

“Born Free” is a patriotic tribute that embodies the idea of the American Dream — a concept that Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis used in his 1988 campaign song, “America,” and one that has become especially prevalent in campaign songs of the 21st century. Although references to the American Dream are not as explicit as in other campaign songs, the opening verse of “Born Free” establishes the song’s optimistic tone, portraying a person who is “Fast, on a rough road riding/ high through the mountains climbing/twisting, turning further from home.” The following lines continue the narrative, proclaiming, “Young, like a new moon rising ... wandering out into the great unknown.” This opening creates the premise that the future is not decided and that limitless possibilities abound. The second verse furthers this idea, again using scenic imagery to promote opportunity: “Free, like a river raging ... chasing dreams and racing father time.” All of the verses and the imagery can be read as supporting the concept of the American Dream — the idea that people in the country can strike out on their own, achieve anything they set their minds to and succeed. Being juxtaposed with “born free,” the titular phrase that weaves in between each verse, pays homage to the country that allows everyone — no matter what their standing — the opportunity to rise because they are

“born free.” This cheerful outlook is furthered by Kid Rock’s raspy voice that gives the Southern rock ballad an additional kick and flavor of soul. Combined, the music — instrumentation, rhythms and vocals — and forward-moving lyrics create a catchy and congruent song conducive to the optimistic spirit of rolling down the windows, letting your hair blow in the wind and taking on the open road.

Despite its patriotic and enthusiastic message, the song, which is the title track from Kid Rock’s 2010 album, as Republican candidate Mitt Romney’s official campaign song does on the surface seem to be an odd pairing — a rapper-turned-rocker-turned-country-artist aligned with a conservative candidate. However, both Romney and Kid Rock were raised in Michigan and have strong ties to Detroit, thus creating a bond between the two that was further strengthened through the musician’s affiliation with the Republican Party. Notwithstanding these ties, my research strives to show how a song itself connects with the candidate and his or her campaign. Research reveals that “Born Free” as a whole does reflect the essence of Romney’s campaign; doing so through a musical style that could communicate with constituents the candidate was struggling to reach.

In a *Zeteo Journal* article discussing popular music on the contemporary campaign trail, the author contended that in the 2012 election, one of Romney’s strengths was communicating with business people and investment-savvy conservatives, but that he was not as adept at communicating his vision of the future to the working class (Patch, 2014). Mitt Romney’s use of rapper-rocker-country artist Kid Rock’s song “Born Free” can be seen as a campaign strategy to appeal to a demographic to which he was not connecting. Indeed, Patch (2014) contended that “Born Free” “provided the grit and everyman touch that Romney lacked.” Furthermore, Romney’s selection of “Born Free” is significant because it marks the first time in the 21st

century that a Republican presidential candidate used an official campaign song that was not purely country — creating an incongruity by comparison. The song is classified under the style of Southern rock, which provides a blend of country and rock that could potentially appeal to both conservatives and perhaps a more progressive, younger generation (Schoening & Kasper, 2012).

The slogan for Romney's 2012 campaign was "Believe in America." This theme is heavily reflected in the song "Born Free" and throughout the Republican Party platform for the election year. The platform's preamble stated that it outlines "our vision for a stronger and freer America" (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 2012). In conjunction with this theme, Romney's platform was teeming with references to the American Dream — a dream at risk because of "a big government entitlement society" that was not promoting Americans to work hard, dream big and achieve their goals (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 2012). The song "Born Free" is a cry to the free-roaming individual and anti-authoritarian in nature with the lyric, "You can knock me down and watch me bleed, but you can't keep no chains on me!" In the context of being a part of Romney's campaign song, this line could be read as a reflection of the candidate's desire for lessening regulations and making government "smarter and smaller" (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 2012).

Another interesting point to note about the song "Born Free" is the reference to God near the song's conclusion: "And I will vow to the shining seas and celebrate God's grace on me." While various campaign songs in previous elections have occasionally referenced God — namely Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." that was sometimes used by Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush and sung at various inaugurations, this appears to be the first time that God is mentioned in an official campaign song — at least in this era of using popular music in

campaigns. A small section of the Republican Party platform for 2012 addresses respecting the American flag and confronts the concern about the phrase “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance: “We condemn decisions by activist judges to deny children the opportunity to say the Pledge of Allegiance in its entirety, including ‘under God,’ in public schools and encourage states to promote the pledge” (Woolley & Peters, Republican Party platform for 2012). While certainly not a major part of the song, the reference to God could be seen as a subtle way of conveying to the general public that the potential first Mormon president of the United States had Christian principles at the heart of his beliefs, working to bridge the gap between Romney and those who might not be familiar with the Mormon faith. “Born Free” proved to be a smart song selection for Romney’s campaign, as it reflected his campaign theme and platform and offered just enough amount of incongruity in its style to appeal to a demographic that he otherwise might not have been able to reach.

2012 (Barack Obama, Democrat): “We Take Care of Our Own”

Musically incongruent and politically congruent: As mentioned earlier, Democratic candidate Barack Obama made use of multiple songs on his campaign trail, culminating in a grand total of 41 songs on his Spotify campaign playlist (Blankenship & Renard, 2017). But it was Bruce Springsteen’s song “We Take Care of Our Own” that played extensively throughout the election cycle and followed Obama’s speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2012. Springsteen recorded the song in 2011, but the interaction of the song’s lyrics and music reveals that the artist did not deviate much from his work nearly three decades earlier. In typical Springsteen fashion (as proven by his song “Born in the U.S.A.”), the up-tempo rock chorus that chants “Wherever this flag’s flown, we take care of our own,” seems to actually offer an ironic

statement — a statement that suggests the country has fallen far from this ideal of helping and lifting up one another.

The first verse of the song speaks of a protagonist who's "been stumblin' on good hearts turned to stone. The road of good intentions has gone dry as bone." The second verse continues this tone of discouragement, stating that "from Chicago to New Orleans ... from the shotgun shack to the Superdome, there ain't no help, the Calvary stayed home. There ain't no one hearing the bugle blown." These lyrics referencing New Orleans and the Superdome harken back to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, when thousands of citizens were left stranded in New Orleans — under the watch of George W. Bush. When juxtaposed with the chorus that says "We take care of our own," a bitter irony is created as the song's verses reveal that people seem to be doing the very opposite of that. But the juxtaposition of the verse referencing Hurricane Katrina and the chorus also suggests that it is through Obama's administration that the American people get taken care of.

In the final verse, the song's protagonist asks: "Where's the hearts that run over with mercy? ... Where's the promise, from sea to shining sea?" As discussed earlier, while the harsh lyrics in "Born in the U.S.A." are shrouded by the intense and overpowering music, Springsteen's voice is clear throughout most of "We Take Care of Our Own," sung against the backdrop of synthesizers and an electric guitar that is reminiscent of Springsteen songs such as "Dancing in the Dark" and "Glory Days." Consequently, the song is not as likely to be as misconstrued as "Born in the U.S.A.," but at times, the lyrics do seem muffled when compared to the catchy, easy-to-sing-along-to chorus. And while "Born in the U.S.A." speaks of the disillusionment Vietnam veterans experienced upon returning home from war, "We Take Care of

Our Own” reminds listeners of how people were neglected in the aftermath of a natural disaster and serves as a wake-up call for citizens to rise up, show mercy and help one another.

The message of “We Take Care of Our Own” provides a stark contrast to the message of Romney’s campaign song for the same election year. While nearing the end of “Born Free” is the line, “And I will vow to the shining sea” — an enthusiastic tribute to America and its land of promise — Springsteen’s song questions the brotherhood of America, stating, “Where’s the promise, from sea to shining sea?” While “Born Free” is driven by a tone of optimism, “We Take Care of Our Own” is filled with despair as it offers societal criticism and points a finger at times people have been let down. However, as the final verse asks listeners questions including, “Where’s the hearts that run over with mercy?” and “Where’s the promise, from sea to shining sea?” examining the song in the context of the 2012 election would suggest that the answer to these questions lies in Democratic candidate Obama’s administration.

Furthermore, the phrase “we take care of our own” can be viewed as mirroring Obama’s vision of expanding government programs such as healthcare and financial reform legislation in an effort to further accommodate the plights of citizens (Woolley & Peters, Democratic Party platform for 2012). This also provides a striking contrast to Romney’s campaign song “Born Free” that focuses on the individual’s free-roaming journey and seems to encourage less authority and regulation. The song’s title also suggests more of a focus on domestic rather than international affairs — something that reflects the Democratic candidate as his foreign policy strategies were often viewed as restrained and minimalistic (Cohen, 2015; Daalder, 2016). In reading through the Democratic Party platform for 2012, issues pertaining to global affairs are not mentioned until approximately two-thirds through the document, indicating that international affairs were not top priority for the Democratic candidate. Even though Bruce Springsteen’s song

“We Take Care Of Our Own” offers a musical incongruity in similar vein to his 1984 hit “Born in the U.S.A.,” the song seemed to be a good fit for Obama’s Democratic platform as the candidate sought to maintain and increase governmental reform that would help out those in need.

2016 (Donald Trump, Republican): “You Can’t Always Get What You Want”

Musically incongruent and politically congruent: After the considerably divided Republican National Convention of 2016 ran its course, it was not Donald Trump’s acceptance speech that most people took to various media outlets to discuss: It was the Rolling Stones’ hit from 1969 playing after the speech that seemed to trigger conversations centered on confusion, comedy, and even contemplation. In fact, according to an article in *Entertainment Weekly*, Google trends noted that in the wake of Trump using “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” as his campaign song, there was a 550% spike in searches on the song (Rosen, 2016). The song had played at numerous campaign events, at the Republican National Convention, and, despite the Rolling Stones’ request for Trump to stop using the song, after Trump made his presidential victory speech in November 2016. Other songs Trump made prominent use of ranged from 1980s hair band Twisted Sister’s defiant number “We’re Not Gonna Take It” all the way to the patriotic song “God Bless the U.S.A.” According to authors Blankenship and Renard (2017), most of the songs Trump used in his campaign spanned from 1924-1989, completely bypassing the music of the 1990s and most of the 21st century. Furthermore, the authors stated that prior to his nomination as the Republican candidate, Trump only used four songs as campaign mainstays, expanding his playlist only after he had secured the nomination. The writers contended that in recent campaigns, a major increase in the number and variety of songs can be seen once a candidate has officially been nominated.

As a campaign song, “You Can’t Always Get What You Want” raises many questions. The title, which is repeated three times in each chorus, works on multiple levels. Various social media outlets mocked Trump for using the song, ultimately calling it a provocative move as it not only disregarded Mick Jagger’s request to stop being used, but also served as a smug hook — akin to a parent scolding a child — to all of the people who decried the candidate’s rise to the presidency. But putting this aside, in a nutshell, the song’s chief refrain suggests that while Trump might not have been the president for which many were hoping and wanting, he was the president the country needed to get things back on the right track. Although in general, classic rock songs tend to be associated with Democratic candidates (Schoening & Kasper, 2012), the matter-of-fact pragmatism of the chorus: “You can’t always get what you want, but if you try sometimes you just might find you get what you need!” matches Trump’s blunt, “tell-it-like-it-is” mannerisms. And while the song’s chorus does offer a tone of hopeful pragmatism, its role as a campaign song does certainly stand out as an incongruity when compared to most songs of 21st-century campaigns that were more patriotic in nature.

The first minute of the seven-and-a-half-minute song delivers the song’s overall premise, a choir singing over and over that “you can’t always get what you want” before delivering the hook that “if you try sometimes, you just might find, you get what you need.” A soft horn solo then introduces the song’s first verse and its subsequent chorus that features Mick Jagger’s strong vocals. As the chorus comes to an end, the tempo picks up with instrumentation and a catchy beat that sets the tone for the rest of the song. The irregular beat and constantly changing voices and instrumentation reflect patterns of intensity (Langer, 1953). However, while hope does shine through the song’s chorus, the verses throughout speak of disillusionment. The second verse states, “I went down to the demonstration/to get my fair share of abuse/singing,

we're going to vent our frustration/if we don't we're going to blow a 50-amp fuse." The frustration expressed here seemed to play a theme in Trump's campaign as he spoke out about a corrupt and rigged government that needed to return to its original greatness. This theme of frustration is also apparent in Trump's selection of Twisted Sister's angry-ridden song "We're Not Gonna Take It" as a part of his campaign.

The final verse of "You Can't Always Get What You Want" continues the song's disillusioned tone: "I saw her today at the reception/in her glass was a bleeding man/she was practiced at the art of deception/well I could tell by her blood-stained hands." The bleak verses are a clear-cut contrast from the more hopeful, albeit pragmatic, chorus. The final minute of the song features a chorus with a melodic line that is constantly ascending, reaching higher and higher, signifying a need for resolution and embodying patterns of intensity (Langer, 1953).

2016 (Hillary Clinton, Democrat): "Fight Song"

Musically and politically congruent: Similar to Hillary Clinton's use of campaign songs during the 2008 primaries, in which she selected songs with a strong female voice (a rare feature in the history of political campaign music, even in the modern era of using popular music), Clinton once again utilized this tactic, employing popular songs such as Rachel Platten's "Fight Song," Katy Perry's "Roar" and Sara Bareilles' "Brave" as campaign songs. It's interesting to note that these three songs all deal with the overarching theme of overcoming fear and letting your voice be heard. But in keeping with the trend of the 21st century, Clinton in total had a campaign music playlist of 30 songs — 22 of which were songs from the 21st century (Blankenship & Renard, 2017). For the purposes of my research, I analyze "Fight Song," as it was this popular hit from 2015 that appeared at most of the candidate's rallies and played as she accepted her party's nomination at the Democratic National Convention.

From the combination of the song's title and its militaristic beat, it doesn't take long to realize "Fight Song" perfectly fits the mold for what Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) would consider a song of extreme congruity. The song begins softly, with a light piano accompaniment, referencing the power one person has to make a difference — "I might only have one match, but I can make an explosion." The singer's vocals build in intensity — reflecting the protagonist's journey from doubt to confidence — reaching a bridge that expresses vulnerability before diving into the anthemic climax:

This is my fight song/take back my life song/prove I'm alright song/my power's turned
on/starting right now I'll be strong/ I'll play my fight song/and I don't really care if
nobody else believes/cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me.

This optimistic outlook is the outcome of the song's protagonist finally overcoming her fear after holding back and keeping her voice silent for a significant amount of time: "All those things I didn't say. ... I will scream them loud tonight!" The chorus also indicates that the protagonist is no longer going to let anyone keep her from achieving her dreams, that nothing and no one can deter her from moving forward. "Fight Song" concludes with the line, "Cause I've still got a lot of fight left in me," signifying that the protagonist is going to continue fighting for her life and striving to beat the odds for the foreseeable future.

In an interview with *LA Times*, songwriter Platten mentioned she wrote the song about her struggles in the music industry, as "a reminder of my own strength and not to give up after trying to fight for my dreams for 12 years." When asked about candidate Hillary Clinton's use of the song, Platten responded:

I was so proud to see that it was taking on a new life. And I love that the song helped her. I feel like she's a fighter, and I love that she got to take those words and make them feel like her own. (Wood, 2016)

Indeed, a parallel between Platten's original intent behind the song and Clinton's intent in the context of the election can be drawn. The Democratic candidate had appeared eight years earlier as a potential candidate in the primaries, her voice ultimately being silenced by the party's nomination of Barack Obama. However, Clinton's reemergence onto the election scene seemed to suggest that she was still chasing her dreams, moving forward and fighting for the spot at the Oval Office.

In addition, Clinton's use of "Fight Song" also works in conjunction with one of her campaign slogans, "Fighting for Us." Throughout the election cycle, the candidate struggled to come up with a slogan that summed up her message and purpose, in all testing out a total of 85 different slogans — in stark contrast to opponent Donald Trump, who seemed to have settled on "Make America Great Again" from Day One (Flegenheimer, 2016). Indeed, many of these 85 slogans share similar themes of fighting for something: the future, fairness, and families, to name a few. In the end, Clinton's campaign selected the slogan "Stronger Together," which appears throughout the Democratic Party's platform for 2016 (Woolley & Peters) and in some ways, contradicts "Fight Song" since the tune depicts the strength of one person fighting the odds and moving forward at all costs — even if no one believes her. In this light, the song is a bit alienating, and perhaps a song such as "We the People" might have served to be a better fit as it mentions all of the people who work together to build up the country and make it strong. However, there's nothing subtle about "Fight Song." That the triumphant sounding song features

a powerful female voice offers an obvious and strong congruity to Clinton’s platform — which in the end, might have served to lessen listener appeal (Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001).

Chapter 5: Findings

At the heart of my song analyses was determining how Republican and Democratic candidates have utilized the rhetorical tools of congruity and incongruity — based on Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) “Illusion of Life” rhetorical perspective — in campaign music. My adaptation of the methodology allowed me to extend my analysis beyond these rhetorical tools to also uncover any overall themes and patterns in campaign music that have emerged over time. This section will address these trends after discussing the three research questions that guided this analysis.

Year/Candidate	Political Party	Song	Musically congruent?	Did the song match the candidate?
1972/Richard Nixon	Republican	“Nixon Now”	Yes	Yes
1972/George McGovern	Democrat	“Bridge Over Troubled Water”	Yes	Yes
1976/ Gerald Ford	Republican	“I’m Feeling Good About America”	Yes	Yes
1976/Jimmy Carter	Democrat	“Why Not the Best?”	No	Yes
1980/Ronald Reagan	Republican	“California, Here I Come”	Yes	Yes
1980/Jimmy Carter	Democrat	N/A	N/A	N/A
1984/Ronald Reagan	Republican	“Born in the U.S.A.”	No	No
1984/Walter Mondale	Democrat	“Gonna Fly Now”	Yes	Yes
1988/George H. W. Bush	Republican	“This Land is Your Land”	No	No

1988/Michael Dukakis	Democrat	“America”	Yes	Yes
1992/George H. W. Bush	Republican	“This Land is Your Land”	No	No
1992/Bill Clinton	Democrat	“Don’t Stop”	Yes	Yes
1996/Bob Dole	Republican	“Dole Man”	Yes	No
1996/Bill Clinton	Democrat	“Beginnings”	Yes	Yes
2000/George W. Bush	Republican	“We the People”	Yes	Yes and No
2000/Al Gore	Democrat	“Let the Day Begin”	Yes	Yes
2004/George W. Bush	Republican	“Only in America”	Yes	Yes
2004/John Kerry	Democrat	“Beautiful Day”	Yes	Yes
2008/John McCain	Republican	“Raisin’ McCain”	Yes	Yes

2008/Barack Obama	Democrat	“Only in America”	Yes	Yes and No
2012/Mitt Romney	Republican	“Born Free”	Yes	Yes and No
2012/Barack Obama	Democrat	We Take Care of Our Own”	No	Yes
2016/Donald Trump	Republican	“You Can’t Always Get What You Want”	No	Yes
2016/Hillary Clinton	Democrat	“Fight Song”	Yes	Yes

Research Question 1: Using an Adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow’s “Illusion of Life”

Rhetorical Perspective, How are the Rhetorical Tools of Congruity and Incongruity used in Modern Campaign Songs?

The chart above is provided to offer a brief summary of the song analyses and to depict overall trends in congruity and incongruity in campaign songs over time. The nature of my

analysis was not to quantify my results but to indicate general trends and patterns in campaign songs. Although my study included 24 campaign songs, the lack of information and resources concerning campaign music led to a study of 23 songs. My rhetorical analysis revealed that from 1972-2016, candidates predominantly made use of congruity in their campaign songs, with 17 of the 23 songs being musically congruent, according to Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" perspective. Furthermore, 18 songs served to match their respective candidates in some shape or form — although as indicated by the chart, a few of these 18 songs did possess some subtle candidate incongruity as well. It is also interesting to note that in the handful of times when one candidate's song did incorporate incongruity —either musically or politically — the opposing candidate was using a song of extreme congruity, and it was typically the candidate attached to the incongruent song that ended up winning the election. The two exceptions to this are George H. W. Bush's recycled use of "This Land is Your Land" in the 1992 election (a choice constituents might have perceived as stale since the song had been used in the 1988 election) and Bob Dole's use of "Dole Man" in 1996 (a choice perhaps too bizarre to make sense of).

Of course, the nature of my study is not to draw a causal relationship between the incongruity of a campaign song and the respective candidate's election outcome, but the results do indicate that more often than not, when incongruity in some form was present, that rhetorical tool seemed to benefit and boost the candidate. This can be seen with George W. Bush's use of "We the People," that although matched the candidate and his campaign, offered a subtle incongruity as working class references have typically been associated with the Democratic Party (Cowie & Boehm, 2006), and Barack Obama's use of "Only in America" that offered subtle incongruity though its country style that tends to align more with conservative values (Lull, 1987; Schoening & Kasper, 2012).

This finding reinforces a primary premise of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" perspective that a song of extreme musical congruity — comic lyrics with intensity patterns or tragic lyrics with release patterns (Langer, 1953) — can often lessen listener appeal while a song that is incongruent tends to transform meaning in some way and increase listener appeal. Although George W. Bush used the congruent "Only in America" in his 2004 reelection bid, as discussed in that specific song analysis, the candidate's key strategy was to strengthen his conservative base, so in that particular case, the congruity worked for Bush's purposes. But Barack Obama's use of the same song in 2008 offered up an effective incongruity to reach and appeal to that same conservative base to which Bush won over in the previous election cycle. In contrast, songs such as Hillary Clinton's use of "Fight Song" in 2016 and especially John McCain's use of "Raisin' McCain" in 2008 can be viewed as more divisive in nature, in turn limiting listener appeal and narrowing the candidates' reach. While McCain's use of "Raisin' McCain" can be viewed as an incongruity for its time period, as most campaign songs of the era had ceased referencing candidates and were more universal in nature, the congruent and poignant message of "Raisin' McCain" proved to be the song's dominant rhetorical tool.

In their discussion of musical incongruity, authors Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) draw from the philosophy of rhetoric theorist Kenneth Burke, embracing his theory titled "perspective by incongruity" (Burke, 1954). According to Burke, incongruity occurs when one extends "the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and [applies] it to another" (p. 89). From this explanation, it would appear that in modern elections, incongruity serves as a dominant rhetorical tool for politicians since many of the songs selected for campaigns are already written and have their own established and expected places in society. Yet, surprisingly, my analysis revealed that congruity served to be the dominant rhetorical tool,

as most of the songs used by candidates were either musically congruent or served to reflect and embody various principles from their respective platforms.

Research Question 2: Based on an Adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" Rhetorical Perspective, Have Modern Campaign Songs Become More Congruent or Less Congruent Over Time?

With only a couple of exceptions, from 1996 onward, campaign songs have remained predominantly musically congruent with only subtle political incongruities. In essence, over time, campaign songs have increased in congruity. Considering Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) admonition that congruity can lessen listener appeal, it seems that candidates should actually be selecting songs to push the trajectory in the opposite direction. However, a reason why campaign songs turned away from jingles and other forms of songs with continual name dropping beginning in the 1970s could be because of the high congruity and narrower listener appeal as such songs served to openly endorse and promote a specific candidate. As noted in the song analyses, songs such as "Dole Man" and "Raisin' McCain" were anomalies for their time as campaign songs had started turning to songs with universal themes that could appeal to both sides of the political spectrum. A relatively early sign of this trend was Michael Dukakis' use of Neil Diamond's "America" in 1988, but especially since the 2000 election year, campaign songs have experienced a significant shift to focus less on the candidate and more on the American citizens and ideals such as the American Dream, in turn, becoming optimistic anthems for constituents.

This current structure of a campaign song harkens back to the original use of campaign music from the beginning of the American timeline, as campaign songs then were generally written post-election or for the inauguration and only briefly mentioned names, instead being

more about the country and uniting its citizens. These songs were viewed as patriotic rallying cries, according to Schoening and Kasper (2012). As seen with the repeated use of “Only in America” and songs including “We the People,” “Let the Day Begin,” “We Take Care of Our Own” and “Born Free” in the 21st century, patriotic rallying cries — usually musically congruent — have become the common structure of a modern campaign song for both Democratic and Republican candidates.

It appears that the modern campaign song has reverted back to how campaign songs were originally used from the beginning of the American timeline until around 1840. While a few campaign songs prior to the singing election of 1840 did make use of a candidate’s name once or twice, the general purpose of these songs was to promote unity. Beginning with George Washington’s presidency in 1789, Schoening and Kasper (2012) wrote that “the focus on keeping the new union together made the use of politically charged campaign songs seem rather inappropriate during Washington’s two campaigns” (p. 32). As mentioned in my literature review, one of music’s greatest strengths is its unifying power: the ability it has to transcend language, cultural and socioeconomic barriers, bringing people from various backgrounds together and creating for them a collective experience (Ramet, 1994). Campaign music — especially in the more recent campaigns of the 21st century — capitalizes on this emotive power by mentioning people from all walks of life who form the backbone of the country and are united by a desire to move the country forward in progress.

Research Question 3: What is the Rhetorical Function of Modern Campaign Songs?

In their study of music as rhetoric, scholars Irvine and Kirkpatrick (1972) argued that music as a language of persuasion derives power from the fact that musical form changes the rhetorical message from its original discursive state, transforming it into a message that has a

more diverse and intense appeal since music “involves and stimulates the body.” (p. 272). The authors further posited that since music is typically considered a form of entertainment, it is protected from any societal or cultural restraints, causing one who listens to a message embedded in music to be less likely to argue against that message. This rhetorical potential transfers over into the realm of campaign music, as candidates in the modern campaign era have typically selected songs that appeal to a wide range of people — encompassing a target demographic that otherwise might not be met through speeches and other forms of campaigning. Examples of this can be seen with George W. Bush’s use of “We the People” in 2000, a song that had strong appeal to the working class demographic that Bush was seeking to win over throughout his campaign, and Democratic candidate Barack Obama’s use of “Only in America” in 2008 that appealed to a conservative base. In appealing to a wide range of people, campaign music in the modern era offers a service that other forms of campaigning often do not — filling and bridging partisan gaps.

In order to appeal to a wide range of people, campaign songs with a goal to unify tend to be more vague and generic in nature, and authors Schoening and Kasper (2012) contended that this transition from candidate-heavy and issue-driven campaign songs to what they would call “patriotic rallying cries” (p. 40) reduces most campaign songs today to a “one-line wonder.” And while most modern campaign songs do certainly revolve around a main line or central idea — such as “We the People” and “Only in America” — my analysis revealed that there are still many aspects of modern campaign songs that refute this premise.

For instance, “Sun comin’ up over New York City,” the opening line of the song “Only in America,” which George W. Bush adopted in his platform, takes on a powerful and poignant meaning when studied in the context of the 2004 election as a nation was healing and striving to

move forward after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The same applies to John Kerry's campaign song in 2004, "Beautiful Day," that encouraged constituents to see the good and continue to have hope, even in the far-from-ideal circumstances brought about by 9/11. Analyzing "Beautiful Day" also showed how the song more specifically related to Kerry's platform with its references to a clean and improved environment. Going back even further to 1972, the first election studied in this analysis, George McGovern's use of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" can be viewed as incorporating a rhetorical tool conceptualized by Aristotle called an enthymeme. According to rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer (1959), Aristotle considered the enthymeme, an argument where one premise is not explicitly stated, "the substance of rhetorical persuasion" (p. 399). In this form of a syllogism, the audience comes to a conclusion and supplies the unstated assumption. As mentioned in my analysis of the song, authors Schoening and Kasper (2012) viewed McGovern's use of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" to primarily be a tactic to appeal to a large demographic of young people, as the voting age had been lowered from 21 to 18 just a year earlier. However, when considering the rhetorical possibilities of the candidate's song choice — which is slower and musically more complex than most campaign songs — the song becomes a subtle way of provoking images and thoughts in listeners' minds of the despair stemming from the Vietnam War and the even more recent Watergate scandal.

Indeed, although McGovern began using "Bridge Over Troubled Water" before the Watergate scandal occurred on June 17, 1972, the song's title and use in the campaign take on new meaning in the scandal's aftermath, facilitating the audience to supply the premise that in contrast to the potential corruption and lack of transparency in current government affairs, McGovern would serve as a bridge over that troubled water — a gate to hope and honesty.

It is important to note that in all of these instances, what is being identified are messages the campaign songs communicate to a group of constituents. In her book expounding on the “Illusion of Life” perspective, Deanna Sellnow (2010) wrote, “when we consider music as rhetoric, we examine the messages it communicates to identifiable audiences, rather than the various individual meanings you and I might have of it” (p. 116). In the case of modern campaign music, the rhetorical move candidates seem to be making is to select songs that are already established and have their own meanings and to then transform those meanings in some way by attaching the songs to the political realm. As mentioned earlier, this move relates to rhetoric Kenneth Burke’s “perspective by incongruity,” however, in most cases, when applied to a candidate’s campaign, a song takes on additional profound meaning in its new political context and offers reinforcement to a candidate’s platform — a congruity by incongruity.

Ranging from 1972’s “Nixon Now” to 2016’s “Fight Song,” the campaign songs selected all signify how music can reveal attitudes and beliefs that may not necessarily emerge from speeches or other forms of campaigning (Mattern, 1998). As mentioned earlier, music transforms the rhetorical message into a more intense and stimulating appeal that, being couched in entertainment, makes one more likely to accept that appeal (Irvine & Kirkpatrick, 1972). However, in the case of extremely congruent songs, including the imperialistic nature of “Raisin’ McCain” and Hillary Clinton’s overbearing “Fight Song,” such songs can turn voters away with their narrow reach and limited appeal.

In speaking of the influencing power of campaign music, Schoening and Kasper (2012) argued that music can be used to achieve public recognition and even sway a person’s vote, especially when “U.S. presidential election candidates choose campaign theme songs that have proven popularity with the voting public, especially the target audience they are attempting to

connect with” (p. 221). This statement reinforces the notion that incongruity in campaign music — even in its subtlest form — can be a significant boost as candidates strive to reach a wider audience and gain a larger support system. This statement also conveys not only that music can facilitate a bond between a candidate and a desired electorate, but that the very songs used in campaigns are part of a profound rhetorical act.

Chapter 6: Discussion

As illustrated from the three research questions addressed above, overall, campaign songs for both Republican and Democratic candidates have become more congruent over time — especially since the 21st century. In the handful of times that incongruity was incorporated as a rhetorical tool, it is interesting to note that only one of the candidates in a respective campaign utilized such incongruity. In other words, when one candidate’s campaign song made use of incongruity, the opposing candidate had a song of extreme congruity, but never did both candidates in a respective election cycle integrate incongruity in their campaign music. This means that the occasional use of incongruity was spread relatively evenly across both Republican and Democratic candidates, with both political parties using congruity in abundance.

Republican and Democratic Candidates’ Campaign Songs

Comparing official campaign song choices of both Republican and Democratic candidates also revealed that in general, Republican candidates tend to have songs that are more patriotic and positive while Democratic candidates bring to the surface songs that offer a critique of the nation. This can be seen with the very first election in this popular campaign music era that pitted Richard Nixon against George McGovern in 1972. Nixon made use of the enthusiastic “Nixon Now,” which boasted of the candidates’ accomplishments overseas and how he’d already “made a difference” during his first term as president through his diplomacy and

charity. The song then exclaims, “Mister America, Nixon Now!” informing constituents that Nixon is the one to keep America’s success alive and well. In contrast, McGovern’s use of “Bridge Over Troubled Water” alluded to the trouble beginning to stem from the Watergate scandal as well as the conflicts brought about by the Vietnam War. Within the context of the 1972 election, the song can be viewed as a cry for governmental transparency.

This divide between the nature of Republican and Democratic campaign songs carried over into the 1976 election, with Gerald Ford optimistically promoting his continuing candidacy with the buoyant “I’m Feeling Good About America,” while Jimmy Carter’s first-person narrative ballad, “Why Not the Best?” reflected on the government “and how it used to be,” and argued “that’s the way it ought to be — right now.” It is also worth mentioning that although “Born in the U.S.A.” is an indictment of American society that fits more in line with the themes of Democratic candidates’ campaign songs, Reagan’s intentions in using the song in his 1984 campaign was grounded in what he perceived to be the song’s patriotism and message of hope. However, after the 1976 election cycle, this pattern in campaign music was not as notable until the 21st century, when the focus of music began to shift from the candidate to the constituents — simultaneously honoring those that form the backbone of the country while critiquing the systems that govern them.

When examining the primary campaign songs of the 21st century, the distinction between the nature of Republican and Democratic candidates’ campaign songs still existed, however, there were also some significant commonalities. With the exception of the 2008 election where both candidates used a country song as their official campaign song, Republicans and Democrats within each election have established themselves on drastically different places along the music spectrum. However, it is interesting to note how different — or similar — these two parties have

been in relation to the messages presented in the various campaign songs. In the 2000 election, both Republican and Democratic candidates seemed to be appealing to the working class demographic with songs such as “We the People” and “Let the Day Begin.” Both of these songs mentioned a wide variety of people performing various occupations, working together to make the country achieve its greatest potential. In the election of 2004, there existed a greater difference between Republican and Democratic candidates: “Only in America” praised the country’s freedom and opportunities while “Beautiful Day” referred to people who have not been able to take advantage of such opportunities, and consequently, needed a helping hand. This contrast is also similar to the election of 2012 where Romney’s song “Born Free” was essentially a patriotic tribute and Obama’s “We Take Care of Our Own” served as a wake-up call for citizens to rise up and help one another.

As discussed earlier, Obama used “Only in America” in the 2008 election, following Bush’s use of the song in the previous election cycle of 2004. While this can certainly be viewed as a strategic campaign move on his part with its subtle incongruity, Obama’s incorporation of “Only in America” can also be seen as a symbol that Republicans and Democrats might share more in common than meets the eye. Even though Republican candidates tend to have songs that are more patriotic and positive while Democratic candidates bring to the surface songs that offer a critique of the nation, both parties ultimately have the same concern — the wellbeing of the nation and its people.

Implications for Practice

Considering Sellnow and Sellnow’s (2001) argument that a musically congruent song can lessen listener appeal, it is interesting that most candidates tend to place already established songs in a new context — incongruity — and bend and shape them into congruity. The song

analyses provided in this research indicated that the handful of times incongruity was used, that rhetorical tool appeared to offer a boost for the candidate. Consequently, it would appear that candidates should actually be selecting songs to push the trajectory in the opposite direction, as Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) also suggest that incongruity might be a more effective strategy when attempting to recruit more members to a social movement — a goal all candidates have in mind when campaigning.

For greater rhetorical effect, candidates might consider a campaign song that is musically incongruent but still reflects their platform — such as Jimmy Carter’s “Why Not the Best?” in 1976 and Barack Obama’s use of “We Take Care of Our Own” in 2012 — or a song that is musically congruent and matches a candidate’s platform, but through musical style, appeals to a different demographic. A great instance of this is Obama’s use of “Only in America” in 2008. Even though the song is highly congruent musically speaking and even reflects values of the American Dream mentioned in the candidate’s platform, the song’s country-style would better resonate with conservative constituents (Lull, 1987; Schoening & Kasper, 2012), thus offering a subtle incongruity. In addition, Obama’s use of “Only in America” offered an additional incongruity as George W. Bush had used the song in the previous election cycle.

Contribution to the Study of Music

Music is “one of the most difficult media to approach rhetorically” (Rasmussen, 1994, p. 150), and as a result, only a handful of seminal articles explore the complexities of the subject (Irvine & Kirkpatrick, 1972; LeCoat, 1976; Rasmussen, 1994; Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001). But as my research indicated, the study of political campaign music is even more entrenched in these margins, as even presidential libraries were unable to help me obtain information and resources regarding Jimmy Carter’s campaign music in 1980 and George H. W. Bush’s campaign song in

1992. In addition, scholars such as Schoening and Kasper (2012) cited incorrect information concerning George H. W. Bush's campaign song in his 1992 reelection bid. Despite these inconsistencies, much of the literature on campaign music does suggest that in the 20th century — and especially once the television became a staple in the home — music moved from the forefront to the background of political campaigns, with greater emphasis instead placed on speeches and image (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). According to Roberts, Hammond and Sulfaro (2012), the advent of both the radio and television reduced the need for songs as a mobilization tool as they were during the singing elections of the 19th century and early 1900s.

Furthermore, much of the literature suggests that beginning around the mid-20th century, songs in politics were not as much about the music or lyrics as they were the personas of the various artists with which the songs were associated (Cowie & Boehm, 2006; Donaldson, 2007; Schoening & Kasper, 2012). This point can be seen through McGovern's use of Simon and Garfunkel in 1972 or the frequent invocation of Bruce Springsteen — beginning in 1984 to his latest inclusion in the 2012 election — who embodies the ideals of the working class, according to Cowie and Boehm (2006). However, through this analysis that examines the intersection of the lyrics, music, and a campaign song's interaction with the political context in which it is being used, it becomes clear that specific songs are used for specific purposes, with the artist style and persona merely serving as additional boosts for candidates. While campaign songs might have weighed more heavily in campaigns of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Schoening & Kasper, 2012), this analysis indicates that campaign songs chosen even in modern elections still hold value with candidates, have a rhetorical purpose and message for constituents and, therefore, are worthy of study.

Contribution to Methodology

As rhetorical scholar Sonja Foss (1989) mentioned, music falls under the category of less traditional subjects for narrative or rhetorical criticism. Consequently, very little has been done in blending rhetorical analysis and musical forms. The literature review covered seminal articles in the field of communication that examine music rhetorically, as well as many studies analyzing the rhetoric of music in advertisements. My desire to push the study of campaign music out of the margins and uncover the rhetorical potential and possibilities such music has to offer led to an adaptation of Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective. My adaptation and subsequent research contributes to the handful of studies, using a rhetorical perspective to examine a body of music that has not been rhetorically studied.

Because the "Illusion of Life" method is more suited for the examination of a single song, I adapted it to fit my purpose of studying a body of text that includes a wide range of songs. Furthermore, because the songs I studied were embedded in a political context, it was fruitful to examine any congruities and incongruities that existed in the interaction between music and politics. In my reading of the "Illusion of Life," the most compelling rhetorical tool was this matter of congruity and incongruity. I expanded this concept to examine the level of congruity or incongruity that exists between a political candidate and his or her campaign song, and I also examined the interaction between the campaign songs of opposing candidates in each election. Comparing and contrasting the wide body of campaign songs also led to determining whether there were any deviations from the norm within a certain time period, or if campaign songs have come to adopt a standard form that fulfills certain expectations.

This adaptation of the "Illusion of Life" transformed the perspective into more of a qualitative meta-rhetorical analysis, providing a model for larger bodies of text that gave me the

flexibility to examine the congruities and incongruities of an individual song, how the songs within a specific campaign interacted with each other, how a campaign song interacted with the time period and candidate with which it was associated, and how the overall structure of a campaign song has evolved throughout modern elections since 1972. Such an adaptation provided the opportunity to examine the intersection of music, rhetoric and politics, and explore evolving patterns and trends in campaign music.

Patterns in Campaign Music

As addressed earlier in this chapter, a shift in the structure of campaign music occurred at the start of the 21st century, as songs became less about the candidate and more about citizens. This shift applies to both Republican and Democratic candidates as they began to emphasize values of unity, equality and the American Dream through their respective campaign songs.

Rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer (1968) argued that rhetoric is situational, writing, “rhetorical discourse comes into existence as a response to situation, in the same sense that an answer comes into existence in response to a question, or a solution in response to a problem” (p. 5). Since much of this analysis focused on how selecting political campaign songs is a rhetorical act, it would appear that some event or a series of events was at the root of this campaign music shift in the 21st century. Referring back to the first song of this analysis, “Bridge Over Troubled Water” ushered in a new era of campaign music, moving in a new direction with the inclusion of popular music. However, the Simon and Garfunkel song, which can certainly be viewed as a response to the voting age being lowered to 18 just the year before the 1972 election, still emphasized the candidate and not his constituents as it focused on the role McGovern could play as a “bridge over troubled water.” Despite the 1972 election shepherding in popular music, many subsequent campaign songs continued to remain rooted in earlier traditions of campaign music, such as the

jingle-esque “Nixon Now” in 1972, Jimmy Carter’s “Why Not the Best” in 1976 and Gerald Ford’s “I’m Feeling Good About America” during that same election year. Even entering the 1980s, candidate Ronald Reagan chose “California, Here We Come,” a song that can be viewed as a personal theme song for the candidate, as did Bill Clinton in 1992 with Fleetwood Mac’s “Don’t Stop.” In 1996, candidate Bob Dole brought back the self-referential aspect of campaign music with his parodic “Dole Man,” and so did John McCain in 2008 — although an extreme anomaly of its time. But beginning in 2000, generally speaking, a significant shift took place in campaign music as the emphasis in songs centered on the people who make up the country, not the person seeking to be its leader.

As a result of this shift, campaign songs in the 21st century often communicate messages through the second person voice — “We the people, we are the country” and “we take care of our own,” or, on a broader scale, communicate the experiences of individuals or groups of people in the country to which citizens can understand and relate — a tactic employed in songs such as “Only in America,” “Let the Day Begin,” “Beautiful Day” and “Born Free.” Speaking of “the rhetorical situation,” Bitzer (1968) wrote that “typically the questions which trigger theories of rhetoric focus upon the orator's method or upon the discourse itself, rather than upon the situation which invites the orator's application of his method and the creation of discourse” (p. 2). In other words, rarely does the critic consider what prompts a type of rhetorical discourse or a change in that discourse. As mentioned in my song analyses of “Only in America” and “Beautiful Day” in the 2004 election — the first election after the 9/11 terrorist attacks — those attacks seemed to prompt the campaign songs for that election year, songs which boasted positive messages of hope in an effort to reach an electorate whose morale had been beaten. However, while Bush’s use of “Only in America” served to symbolize a sense of healing,

Kerry's use of "Beautiful Day" seemed to acknowledge that the country was still picking up the pieces from the tragedy.

As seen with the election of 2004, rhetorical discourse stems from a specific demand or need (Bitzer, 1968). But on a larger scale, campaign music in the 21st century shifted from being a direct advertisement and endorsement of a candidate to songs more ambiguous and neutral in nature. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that this move harkened back to the original use of campaign music from the time of Washington and into the early 1800s, when the overall purpose of campaign music was to promote unity. Schoening and Kasper (2012) wrote that as a new nation, it was important to maintain focus on keeping the union together, thus deeming politically charged campaign songs inappropriate at the time. While the campaign songs of the early 1970s still specifically referenced candidates — "Nixon Now," "Why Not the Best?" — the references were becoming more ambiguous in nature as politics in campaign songs was becoming a liability (Larson, 2009).

A shift that began taking place in the 1970s hit full stride in the 21st century as campaign songs shifted to focusing on the citizens rather than the candidates. Perhaps our return to this original approach to campaign music suggests that today's political climate — with the advent of greater technology in the 21st century — has created an environment too divisive for songs such as "Nixon Now" and Jimmy Carter's "Why Not the Best?" For instance, how would such songs under the name of Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump fare today? Consequently, rather than selecting campaign songs that explicitly promote and advertise their cause, candidates tend to select songs that steer voters away from polarizing subjects in an effort to find and encourage common ground while, at the same time, touch on aspects of their respective platforms in subtle, yet effective, ways. Admittedly, the campaign songs of the last election cycle were more divisive

in nature, with Clinton's use of "Fight Song" exuding an alienating, "get out of my way" attitude, and Trump's use of "You Can't Always Get What You Want" emitting a voice similar to that of a parent scolding or chiding a child. Only time will tell if music in this latest election cycle will stand as an anomaly when compared to future elections, or if 2016 marks the start of a new path for campaign music.

Limitations

Sellnow and Sellnow's (2001) "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective is meant for examining and analyzing a single text — not an entire body of songs as my analysis does. This rhetorical study of campaign music in modern elections uses a rhetorical method in a way it is not intended to be used, however, through the adaptation — which transforms the study into more of a qualitative meta-analysis — a unique insight into the intersection of music, rhetoric and politics is offered, thus contributing research to a vastly understudied field.

Suggestions for Future Research

Beginning with the 2000 election, both Republican and Democratic candidates began incorporating multiple songs into their respective campaigns due to the proliferation of popular music and technological advancements that facilitated the playing of such music (Schoening & Kasper, 2012). Now, in an era where social media, iTunes and playlists are ubiquitous, the number of songs attached to a campaign has exponentially increased. For instance, Democratic candidate Barack Obama made use of multiple songs on his campaign trail, culminating in a grand total of 41 songs on his Spotify campaign playlist, and in the 2016 election cycle, Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton had a campaign music playlist of 30 songs (Blankenship & Renard, 2017). Future research in this field might apply Sellnow and Sellnow's "Illusion of Life" rhetorical perspective to all — or at least a handful — of additional campaign songs used in the

21st century to provide a more comprehensive picture of how these wider bodies of campaign music fit into their respective political contexts.

It is also interesting to note that in the last few election cycles, Democratic candidates have incorporated more songs into their campaigns than Republican candidates (Blankenship & Renard, 2017). This establishes an interesting distinction in how candidates representing the two political parties opt to use campaign music in their platforms. Future research might delve into additional studying of the two political parties in an effort to uncover even more differences and similarities that may exist in the opposing candidates' respective use of campaign music.

Overall, this rhetorical analysis provided a comprehensive study of official campaign songs selected by Republican and Democratic candidates in the modern campaign era, examining not only how those songs served candidates and their constituents, but also how those songs were choice selections for their respective political contexts.

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