Analyzing and Creating Playlists Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, PhD

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 Trax on the Trail

**Overview**

Over the past few electoral cycles, political candidates have capitalized on the popularity of playlist sites such as Spotify, circulating campaign playlists in hopes of forging a bond with voters, communicating their values and vision, and asserting their pop culture cred.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Discuss the ways presidential candidates use music to communicate with voting communities and evaluate the effectiveness of their music strategies.
2. Analyze a playlist from a recent campaign and examine the ways in which genre associations can be used to establish the candidate’s brand or presidential persona.
3. Create a new playlist for a potential candidate and articulate the reasons *why* your music effectively captures the candidate’s biography, platform and character traits.

**Before Class Preparation: Analyze a Playlist**

Please read the following *New York Times* article, focusing on the playlists of Pete Buttigieg and Cory Booker. Take notes on your responses to the questions below.

Astead W. Herndon, Gabriel Gianordoli, Umi Syam and on Caramanica, “What Does Campaign Rally Music

Say About a Candidate?” *New York Times*, August 19, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/19/us/politics/presidential-campaign-songs-playlists.html

1. Choose one song from either Pete Buttigieg OR Cory Booker’s playlist: What does the song communicate about the candidate? (See list of songs below.)
2. What musical characteristics of the song (melody, tempo, rhythm, instrumentation, vocal timbre, etc.) help to cement the candidate’s message and persona?
3. Take a look at your candidate’s playlist overall. Music can sometimes be used to establish or solidify a candidate’s brand. Come up with three adjectives/phrases that describe the candidate’s brand (as implied by this music). Why do you think candidates choose to communicate through the medium of song? Do you think music is louder than words?

**In Class Assignment: Creating a Playlist**

Before class begins, your professors will assign each of you to a group with 3-4 students.

1. Elizabeth Warren is running for president! She already has an established playlist for her primary campaign, but let’s pretend that her campaign strategist is offering us $20K to create a winning playlist for the general election. Where do we start?
2. Take a few moments to read Warren’s website, focusing in on issues and biography. Create a brief **outline** of her policy positions and her background. What is Warren trying to convey to the public through her website? www.elizabethwarren.com
3. Using your outline as a starting point, work with your team make a list of adjectives or phrases that best **describe** Elizabeth Warren. (Consider identity categories, profession, party affiliation, key policies, upbringing, character traits, etc.)

Examples of traits used to describe candidate in previous elections:

 Family values Former doctor Hometown boy

 Child of the 1960s LGBTQ friendly Italian roots

 Environmentalist Energetic Cosmopolitan

 Family Man Feminist Soft spoken

1. Compile a playlist of between 8-10 songs that you feel best capture Warren’s persona, message, communication style, policies, etc. Include the following information for each song: title, artist, and genre, in the title box, then add a link to the song on YouTube. Explain *why* you feel the song is a good choice, taking into consideration the lyrics, the sound of the music, the artist, the genre, the song’s use in other media, the songs connection with specific groups of people, etc.

 5. Be prepared to discuss/defend your choice of music for the candidate.

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| Cory Booker Playlist | Pete Buttigieg Playlist |
| Lovely Day Bill WithersHigh Hopes Panic! At the DiscoWhatever it Takes Imagine DragonsLa Gozadera Gente de ZonaLittle Talks Of Monsters and MenI Wanna Dance with Somebody Whitney HoustonSurvivor Destiny’s ChildDoo Wop (That Thing) Lauryn HillGood as Hell LizzoDog Days are Over Florence + MachineAll Night Big BoiEveryday People Sly and the Family Stone Celebration Kool and the GangLove on Top BeyoncéHigher Ground Stevie WonderMade in the USA Demi LovatoI’m Good The Mowgli’sIt’s Your Thing The Isley BrothersWaitin’ on a Sunny Day Bruce SpringsteenGlory (from Selma) CommonAmen Otis ReddingLove Train The O’Jays(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Jackie Wilson  Higher and HigherPump It Up Joe BuddenWake Up Everybody John LegendHope the High Road Jason Isbell and the  400 UnitLiving for the City Stevie WonderBorn Again Tomorrow Bon JoviMy Shot The RootsMi Gente Marc AnthonyTightrope Janelle MonaéLove Me Now John LegendThe Ties That Bind Bruce SpringsteenMorris Brown OutkastGot to Give It Up Marvin GayeSoar Christina AguileraFeeling Good Jennifer HudsonFire Time FliesFreedom (Homecoming Live) BeyoncéStand Up for Something Andra Day | High Hopes Panic! At the DiscoFeel It Still Portugal. The ManI’ll Be There Jess GlynneYou Make My Dreams Come Hall & Oates TrueAmerican Boy EstelleConfident Demi LovatoRebel Rebel David BowieVivir Mi Vida Marc AnthonyGood as Hell LizzoDog Days are Over Florence + The  MachineCut to the Feeling Carly Rae JepsenThink Aretha FranklinThe Distance CakeNever Going Back Again Fleetwood MacMove on Up Curtis MayfieldAin’t No Man The Avett BrothersCome Alive Years & Years with  Jess GlynneIt’s Your Thing The Isley BrothersAin’t No Stoppin’ Us Now McFadden &  Whitehead This Darius RuckerI’m So Free BeckFreedom ’90 George MichaelMy Next Thirty Years Time McGrawCountry Nation Brad PaisleyAmerican Crazy Brother OsborneEveryday People Joan Jett &The  BlackheartsYes We Can Can The Pointer SistersAmerican Pie Shea DiamondWon’t Get Fooled Again The WhoTweezer PhishUp Around the Bend Creedence Clearwater  Revival |