

**Missing the Mark?**  
**An Exploration of Targeted Campaign Advertising's Effect on Black Political Engagement**

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The use of targeted campaign advertising has increased with the hopes of mobilizing black Americans. Past scholarship tends to focus on the effectiveness of targeted appeals for Latinxs, women, and religious groups. In this paper, we examine how and in what ways racially targeted advertisements shape perceptions of candidates and the subsequent political mobilization of blacks? Further, how do blacks emotionally react to these advertisements? We posit that the inclusion of stereotypical appeals in targeted advertisements will heighten negative emotions for blacks and result in decreased evaluations for electoral candidates. To test this theory, we create original radio advertisements in a novel survey experiment with approximately 1,410 black respondents that varies the music and race of the candidate in the targeted appeal to assess its effect on affective and political evaluations. We find that negative emotional reactions moderate the effect of the targeted appeal on candidate evaluations and mobilization.

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During the 2016 presidential election campaign, Republican candidate Dr. Ben Carson released the “Freedom” radio advertisement. The ad begins with a hip-hop beat and a rapper by the name of Aspiring Mogul stating, “Vote and support Ben Carson, for our next president, it’d be awesome.” The ad then features comments made by Dr. Carson spliced over the refrain, which states, “Vote, Vote.” Campaign operatives for Carson argued that the radio advertisement used rap music “to awaken, appeal to and motivate the urban market, specifically catering to younger black voters” in hopes of garnering the support of 20 percent of the black vote (Oh 2015; Faulders 2015).<sup>1</sup> However, the response from the black community was overwhelmingly negative and moved Carson no closer to his 20 percent goal, as many believed the advertisement’s appeal was both pandering and condescending (Lapowsky 2015). What is not made clear in the public discourse is why blacks acted in ways counter to the expectations of Carson and his campaign staff. Although extant literature demonstrates that targeted appeals in campaign advertisements has increased over the last several election cycles (Hillygus and Shields 2008; Hersh and Schaffner 2013), what remains unclear is how effective these targeted appeals are for blacks. To address this overlooked aspect of the literature, we ask-how and in what ways might racially targeted advertisements shape blacks’ perceptions of candidates and their subsequent political behaviors and attitudes? Moreover, how might the potential variation in response to these targeted appeals be informed by the emotions the advertisements activate for blacks?

Contemporary research on strategic campaign communications provides an incomplete answer to these questions as the overwhelming majority tends to focus on assessing the persuasive,

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<sup>1</sup> Visit [https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/ben-carson-freedom--campaign-2016/2015/11/06/3bac7370-84aa-11e5-8bd2-680fff868306\\_video.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/ben-carson-freedom--campaign-2016/2015/11/06/3bac7370-84aa-11e5-8bd2-680fff868306_video.html) to hear Dr. Ben Carson’s “Freedom” ad.

emotional, and mobilizing effects of targeted advertisement on women, Latinxs, and various religious groups (Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Holman, Schneider, and Pondel 2015; Kam, Archer, and Geer 2017). In this sizable literature on targeted appeals, black political behavior has been largely neglected. We find the literature's omission of blacks' responsiveness to targeted appeals dissatisfying. Scholars and campaign operatives acknowledge that blacks are one of the key-voting blocs in the American electorate, and campaigns spend millions of dollars every election cycle courting the black vote (Henderson 2010; Martin 2016; Bradner 2017). Yet, scholars know very little regarding the electoral strategies politicians use to appeal to these voters. Beyond the importance of shared racial identity (Dawson 1994; Tate 1994; Dawson 2001; Block 2011; McClain et al. 2009), and the roles of canvassing (Wielhouwer 2000; Green 2004) and party official contact (Philpot, Shaw, and McGowan 2009) contemporary research gives us little insight to inform our understanding of how and why blacks responded negatively to Ben Carson's "Freedom" advertisement.

To be clear, Dr. Carson is not the only candidate to use targeted advertisements to appeal to the black community. Indeed, politicians along the political spectrum have relied on culturally specific advertisements in efforts to encourage black individuals to vote in certain ways. Without an understanding of how blacks relate and respond to these kinds of advertisements, scholars of race and politics as well as campaign and election experts are uninformed about what considerations these advertisements lead blacks to make, and what subsequent behavioral outcomes may occur. If targeted appeals are effective then candidates can simply divide their constituents into narrow subgroups and campaign on promises to provide particularized benefits to these subgroups to build winning coalitions (Hersh and Schaffner 2013).

We begin our investigation with a review of relevant literature on strategic campaign communications. We consider one key component of campaign advertisements that scholars and

political consultants deem the most critical because it establishes the tone of the advertisement: music. We argue that racially stereotypic musical appeals in targeted advertising can be harmful for candidate evaluations because they can activate negative emotional responses for blacks. The Carson advertisement is one example that clearly exemplifies this effect. We hypothesize that the race of the candidate should not alter this emotional activation because it is the racially stereotypic nature of the music that will influence the response. We test our framework using an original survey experiment with 1,410 self-identified blacks, where we create racially targeted radio advertisements that vary the targeted appeal by manipulating the music. This paper offers the first and more nuanced look at the effectiveness of strategic campaign communication appeals on mobilization and candidate evaluations in black politics.

### **Identity-Based Targeting in Campaign Ads**

Recent literature examines strategic campaign communication or the targeted appeals of candidates and their effects on persuasiveness and mobilization (Holbrook and McClurg 2005; Holman, Schneider, and Pondel 2015; Kam, Archer, and Geer 2017). Hillygus and Shields (2008) argue that over time candidates have shifted from using broad appeals to voters to those that emphasize tailored messages to voters based on voter characteristics. Through a series of survey experiments, Hersh and Schaffner (2013) find that targeted messages to Latinxs and Born-Again Christians in campaign advertisements generate support for a candidate among the intended group but that the candidate then loses support when the appeal is seen outside of the intended target group. Indeed, a large body of literature has been devoted to examining whether Spanish or English speaking advertisements are more effective in mobilizing Latinx voters (DeSipio and de la Garza 2002; DeFrancesco Soto and Merolla 2008; Abrajano and Panagopoulos 2011). In addition to Latinxs and religious groups, scholars also examine how appeals to gender identity shape evaluations

of candidates and attitudes towards policies (Holman, Schneider and Pondel 2015; Kam, Archer, and Geer 2017).

Holman, Schneider, and Pondel (2015) define these broad appeals to various social groups as identity-based targeting. These scholars argue that, “identity-based targeting is distinguished from issue-based targeting by the inclusion of symbolic appeals to a group that are designed to promote a sense of shared group identity or interests” (2). Holman et al. (2015) also describe the typology of an advertisement with an identity-based appeal as one that includes a “message, symbol, or photograph to clarify the group as a target; for example, naming that the candidate is in favor of the group, the inclusion of group members, or identifying that certain issue positions are in the interest of the group” (3). While this typology of identity-based advertisements seems all encompassing, it is limited as it only describes campaign ads that one might see on television.

For the purposes of this paper, we will be using the Holman et al. (2015) typology and broadening the definition to include radio advertisements targeted at the black electorate. As Geer and Geer (2003) mention, “We are a multimedia society” (84). If we are to understand the full functioning of campaign advertisements in the political arena, we need to examine the effectiveness of less studied forms of media like the radio. The campaign advertisements designed to target Blacks on the radio and online seem to bear the extremes of the Holman et al (2015) typology, being simultaneously less subtle and more overt about their targeted audience as they tend to include stereotypically black sounding voices<sup>2</sup> as the narrators or slight variations in the background music

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<sup>2</sup> Visit <http://www.businessinsider.com/dave-wilson-black-candidate-in-houston-white-2013-11> to

learn more about the campaign of Dave Wilson. Visit

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24vL\\_ucC\\_V0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24vL_ucC_V0) to hear Dave Wilson’s radio ad.

ranging from rap music to rhythm and blues.<sup>3</sup> In this paper, we focus exclusively on how variation in the background music of campaign advertisements shapes Blacks' emotional reactions, their attitudes about the candidate, and its effect on mobilization.

### **Music in Campaign Advertisements**

Political consultants recognize the critical role of music in campaign advertisements. Matthew Nicholl, Chair of Berklee College of Music's contemporary writing and production department and composer of multiple scores for political campaign advertisements, states, "Music might be the last element added to the commercials—but its job is critical, because it quickly establishes tone." Boston University Professor of Communication and political consultant Tobe Berkovitz says, "Just like music in a horror movie, political ad scores aim to evoke visceral, emotional responses. And they often do, even if the compositions are in the background and aren't the caliber of something by Hans Zimmer or John Williams" (Shea 2012).

Scholars in both political science and communications have examined how different types of music in campaigns shape evaluations of candidates and political engagement. Schoening and Kasper (2012) use a historical lens to reflect on how political candidates have used music in campaign advertisements and on the campaign trail. Perhaps the most groundbreaking work on components of campaign advertisements comes from Brader (2006), who finds that changing the music or imagery of advertisements results in drastically different reactions in voter decision-making. Reporting on 700 advertisements that aired during the 2012 presidential election, Ridout (2016) argues that musical styles in campaign ads are deployed strategically and work in conjunction with other elements of the advertisement like images to persuade voters to act in a certain way (2).

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<sup>3</sup> Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IbH8XnAEmZI> to hear Barack Obama's "We've GotYour Back" ad.

However, even these analyses of music in campaign advertisements miss the mark as they often code music on the binary or for music style (i.e. no music, ominous/tense, uplifting, sad/sorrowful, or other music) and not genre of music (i.e. classical, patriotic, pop, or rap). We argue that exposure to different genres of music in campaign advertisements will have an effect on how blacks evaluate candidates and participate in the political arena.

Rap music is one of the most hotly debated types of music discussed in research on black public opinion and political engagement. Research ranges from those who believe rap is an extraordinarily destructive force in politics because of its promotion of violence, misogyny, and anti-gay attitudes, (Cohen 1999) to those who believe it positively shapes blacks' political behavior, ideology, and policy opinions (Rose 1994; Dyson 2007). Contemporary findings surrounding the political implications of rap music suggest that blacks that listen to rap music are more likely to support a Black Nationalist ideology (Dawson 1994; Dawson 2001; Harris-Perry 2004; Bonnette 2015). While debates about the utility of rap music in African-American politics abound, what remains unanswered in this literature is the effectiveness of this type of music in campaign ads.

### **Emotional Reactions to Music in Advertisements**

This paper provides a framework through which we can understand how and why African Americans will respond to appeals that rely on stereotypes. We contend that the reason black voters were not swayed by Ben Carson's advertisement was because of his use of rap music, which is considered to be a stereotype of black culture (see Steele and Aronson 1995) as an appeal to the racial group. More importantly, however, we posit that the use of this stereotypical appeal led to negative emotions, such as shame and anger that informed black voters' political evaluations of Ben Carson as well as his ability to mobilize them.

Political campaign operatives use rap music in targeted advertisements for Blacks because they believe it might be effective for the political engagement of this demographic; we question the

assumption of this efficacy. Instead, we argue that one consideration made by black individuals when evaluating candidates using racially targeted advertisements is the kind of appeal used in the advertisement and whether that appeal uses stereotypic understandings of black Americans. We contend that identity-based targeting that relies on stereotypes to address and connect with black voters will be viewed negatively as blacks will perceive these advertisements to be pandering to the black community. The notion that all blacks listen to and enjoy rap music, and will, therefore appreciate advertisements that rely on that genre of music draws on racially insensitive assumptions that rely on tropes of the African American community. In an effort to reject that stereotype, *we hypothesize that, in contexts where the race of the candidate is unknown, blacks will have negative evaluations of radio advertisements that feature rap music (H1).*

Moreover, the negative responses from blacks are fueled by negative emotional reactions to the use of stereotypical material in targeted advertisements. Much like the reactions by blacks on Twitter in response to Ben Carson's "Freedom" advertisement, we expect blacks to convey emotions like shame or anger when exposed to advertisements that use rap music or other stereotypical appeals.<sup>4</sup> Shame is defined as "an all-consuming experience of the self as fundamentally flawed or defective" (Ferguson et al. 2007, 332). Our argument about the effect of stereotypical appeals on the emotional responses of blacks stems from an understanding that some individuals feel ashamed when they witness fellow identity group members engaging in behaviors that are seen as revealing a flawed social identity (Lickel, Schmader, and Spanovic 2007). These feelings of shame

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<sup>4</sup> On November 5-6, 2015, "#TweetYourReactionToTheBenCarsonRap" went viral on Twitter and encouraged individuals to express their feelings about the "Freedom" advertisement. See the following link for reactions:

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/TweetYourReactionToTheBenCarsonRap?src=hash>

are more pronounced amongst members of stigmatized racial groups when members of their in-group engage in behaviors that confirm negative stereotypes of the group. Drawing on this understanding of the relationship between emotions and stereotypical appeals, *we hypothesize that Blacks exposed to campaign advertisements that feature black candidates and rap music will experience increased levels of shame (H2a).*

Existing psychology literature argues that one of the action tendencies of shame is to distance oneself from the individual (or group) engaged in revealing a flawed social identity (Barrett 1995, 42; Lickel, Schmader, and Spanovic 2007). As much of the literature on emotions is focused on white individuals (Huddy, Feldman, Taber, and Lahav 2005; Brader 2006; Huddy and Khatib 2007; Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2010; Panagopoulos 2010; Valentino et al. 2011; Banks 2014; Albertson and Kushner Gadarian 2015), we know little about how black people's emotions inform their political evaluations and perceptions (Philpot, White, Wylie, and McGowan 2010; Simien 2015). Our argument, however, draws on this existing work and incorporates novel, burgeoning research done on black emotions into our examination of the impact of campaign appeals that rely on stereotypes. Indeed, Burge (2014) finds that when blacks experience shame as members of their racial group, they are more likely to distance themselves from the racial group as a whole. This distancing takes the form of less favorable evaluations of blacks and a weaker sense of connectedness to other blacks (Burge 2014). Moreover, black politicians are held to a higher standard amongst black voters because they are seen as representatives and gatekeepers for the community (Walters and Smith 1999). The use of stereotypes from group members who are perceived to represent the group in public spaces will make the desire to distance oneself from the group greater. Given these findings, we hypothesize that *Blacks will have less favorable evaluations of black candidates that use rap music in their campaign advertisements (H2b).*

Psychology researchers note that it is possible to experience vicarious shame and anger. Anger is defined as “a belief that we, or our friends, have been unfairly slighted, which causes in us both painful feelings and a desire or impulse for revenge” (Lazarus 1991). Anger is a negative emotion wherein blame for undesirable behavior and resulting undesirable events is directed at another person or group. Anger produces a desire to regain control, remove the obstruction, and if necessary, attack the source of injury (Cottam, Uhler, Mastors, and Preston 2010, 52). Lickel et al. (2007) state,

“In the intergroup literature, it is commonly found that individuals derogate in-group members particularly harshly when those individuals break the norms of the group....Anger is the likely candidate for the emotion that drives this social response, although the self-conscious feeling of shame that accompanies it might also promote efforts to distance one’s social identity from the offending group member” (357).

Much like our hypothesis about shame, we expect *that Blacks exposed to campaign advertisements that feature black candidates and rap music will experience increased levels of anger (H3a)*. Since the action tendencies for anger suggest that one has a desire or impulse for revenge, *we might also expect that Blacks exposed to campaign advertisements that feature black candidates and rap music to be less likely to engage in political behaviors that would lead to the election of that candidate (H3b)*.

As previously discussed black candidates are not the only ones that use these targeted advertisements. Indeed, white politicians from both sides of the aisle have used targeted advertising oriented at the black community. However, we contend that, based on literature about intergroup relations and expectations blacks have about in-group and outgroup members, blacks emotional responses will vary. The Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET) argues that emotional responses to group and social events depend on how the self is categorized (Mackie, Devos, and Smith 2000).

Furthermore emotional reactions are, in some way, based on the experience of in-group membership (Parkinson, Fischer, and Mansted 2015, 116), or may be informed about “an outgroup’s character and circumstances relative to the in-group or about the actions of the outgroup and its implications for the in-group” (Iyer and Leach 2009; 96). *We expect that blacks exposed to campaign advertisements that feature white candidates and rap music will experience increased levels of anger (H4a).* Again, the action tendencies for anger suggest that one has a desire or impulse for revenge so, *we expect that blacks exposed to campaign advertisements that feature white candidates and rap music to be less likely to engage in political behaviors that would lead to the election of that candidate (H4b).*

## **Method**

To test our theory and hypotheses, we utilize an experimental design because it allows us to hold confounding factors constant, and assess the direct effect of different stereotypic racial appeals in campaign advertisements on black political behavior (Arceneaux 2010). We recognize that the effectiveness of targeted advertising in mobilizing the group of interest is dependent on their exposure to the content. A primary avenue for targeted exposure is through indigenous media sources. Numerous scholars have demonstrated that not only are blacks consumers of intragroup media, but that information garnered from these sources has significant effects on their political views (Harris-Perry 2004; Dawson 2001; Cohen 1999; White 2007). Estimates from Nielsen indicate that approximately 31.3 million African-Americans listen to the radio each week and that blacks and Hispanics spend more time listening to the radio than any other group (Rhodan 2016). Political campaign operatives are keenly aware of these radio audiences (Douglas 2016; Rhodan 2016). Borrell Associates, an ad-tracking firm, said that of an estimated 11.7 billion that was spent on

campaigns in the 2016 election cycle, approximately 916.1 million went to radio (Douglas 2016).<sup>5</sup> Candidates often use advertisements on black radio networks to target the voting bloc (Douglas 2016; Rhodan 2016). With all this in mind, our experimental conditions are targeted radio advertisements that are similar to those that could be found on black radio networks.

We obtained a quota sample of approximately 1,410 self-identified black respondents from the Qualtrics Survey Company in May of 2017 to participate in our online experiment. After respondents consent to participate in the study, they answer a set of demographic questions including age, race, gender, and education. Following the pre-test demographic questions, respondents are randomly assigned to one of nine radio advertisement conditions. In the “No Music Ad” control condition, respondents listen to a campaign advertisement for a fictitious congressional candidate, James Thompson. The narrator in the radio advertisement describes Thompson’s qualities that make him a strong candidate for Congress. The narration is consistent with racially targeted advertising in which first person plural pronouns like “we” and “our” are used to prime a sense of collective/group identity.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, we intentionally removed any explicit policy related information from the advertisement to ensure that it is as vague as possible. This allows us to ensure that respondents are not influenced by specific policy mentions. Below is the text in the advertisement:

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<sup>5</sup> Although radio advertisements made up nearly 10% of campaign expenditures in the 2016 presidential election, few scholars in political science have examined the implications of radio advertisements (Overby and Barth 2006; Panagopolous and Green 2008) as the campaigning literature largely focuses on television advertisements.

<sup>6</sup> Barack Obama’s “We’ve Got Your Back” advertisement and Dr. Ben Carson’s “Freedom” advertisement.

*With all that's happening around us, we need James Thompson's voice of honesty and compassion in Congress. He supports legislation to ensure our community's future remains intact. He marches beside us, and fights on our behalf to make sure that we not only have we need to survive but to thrive. We need James Thompson for Congress.*

As participants in the “No Music” control are listening to the radio advertisement, a red, white and blue campaign flyer is presented on the screen, which reads: “Elect James Thompson to Congress.” The “Classical Ad” condition contains the same text as the control but plays a sample from the classical Americana composer Aaron Copland’s song, “Down a Country Lane,” in the background. The “Rap Ad” condition also matches the control, but a rap/hip-hop instrumental is played (See Table 1, row 1). Music from the “Rap Ad” is a sample from a hip-hop group in Atlanta called The Heroes. The two conditions and the control provide a conservative test of our musical appeals and isolate the effect of the music on candidate assessment without cueing the race of the candidate.

We test our hypotheses about the effect of the candidate’s race and stereotypic racial appeals with six additional conditions (See Table 1, row 2 & 3). We include a photo of the candidate, either black or white, in the same campaign flyer as previously described that is shown before respondents listen to the advertisement.<sup>7</sup> The black candidate and the white candidate will be shown in three different musical conditions (No Music Ad, Classical Ad, and Rap Ad). Although we are interested in radio advertisements, participants are shown flyers (some feature pictures of the candidate) to simulate real world politics as voters consume multiple types of campaign advertisements. This reality makes voters likely to not only hear radio advertisements from candidates who they have not seen but also likely to see pictures of the candidates in direct mailings that implore them to vote. In addition to the desire to mirror real political strategies, the flyers also serve the purpose of showing the race of the candidate in our experimental treatments to better understand if using stereotypic appeals is more effective than when respondents know the racial identity of the candidate.

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix for images of our fictitious candidates on the flyers.

**Table 1. 3 x 3 Experimental Conditions**

No Candidate Photo No Music Ad	No Candidate Photo Classical Ad	No Candidate Photo Rap Ad
Black Candidate Photo No Music Ad	Black Candidate Photo Classical Ad	Black Candidate Photo Rap Ad
White Candidate Photo No Music Ad	White Candidate Photo Classical Ad	White Candidate Photo Rap Ad

Following the experimental conditions, respondents answered a post-treatment survey with several key measures gauging their evaluations of the candidate and questions pertaining to political participation. Respondents then answered more demographic questions related to income, partisanship, and ideology. Our completed responses yielded approximately 157 Blacks per each condition. Our sample is evenly balanced in terms of gender, we have 704 males, 705 females, and one respondent that identifies as other. The average age of our respondent is 39 years old. Our average respondent has attended some college but has no degree and the average family income is \$40,000-\$49,999. We checked for balance in the experimental conditions by examining gender, linked fate, income, region, ideology, age, education and partisanship.<sup>8</sup>

*Dependent Variables*

Various measures in our post-treatment survey will be used to test our hypotheses. Our expectations are that the race of the candidate and stereotypic appeals (genre of music) in a campaign advertisement will result in negative reactions to the advertisement and negative evaluations of the candidate. To gauge evaluations of the advertisements, we simply ask respondents, “Did you like the advertisement? Yes or No.” We assess evaluations of James Thompson by using a feeling thermometer and scales that measure trustworthiness, the ability of James Thompson to represent one’s interests, and willingness to support the candidate. We use

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix for test statistics.

standard political mobilization questions from the American National Election Study to gauge whether individuals might persuade others to vote for James Thompson, display campaign paraphernalia, attend rallies or meetings on behalf of the candidate, and make a contribution to support the candidate.<sup>9</sup>

*Moderating Variables*

Our moderating variables, negative emotional responses to the advertisement, are assessed with measures of shame and anger. We use a modified version of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988) that gauges how angry or ashamed respondents feel about hearing the advertisement as a black person. It is our contention that the negative response will be activated and strengthened by the stereotypical appeal (rap music).

**Results**

*Main Effects- Targeted Appeals and Candidate Evaluations*

**Table 2. Mean Differences in Evaluations and Mobilization for Candidate Pooled Experimental Conditions**

	No Music Ad	Classical Ad	Rap Ad	Differences Across Experimental Condition		
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A-C)	(A-B)	(B-C)
<b>Evaluation of Advertisement</b> (0-1)	.65 (.02)	.61 (.02)	.52 (.02)	<b>.13**</b>	.04	<b>.09**</b>
<b>Willingness to Support</b> (0-1)	.55 (.01)	.53 (.01)	.51 (.01)	<b>.03*</b>	.02	.02
<b>Feeling Thermometer</b> (0-1)	.56 (.01)	.53 (.01)	.52 (.01)	<b>.04**</b>	.03 <sup>+</sup>	.01

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for exact question wording of our dependent variable measures.

<b>Perception of Candidate's Trustworthiness</b> (0-1)	.57 (.01)	.56 (.00)	.54 (.01)	<b>.03*</b>	.01	.02
<b>Perception of Candidate's Ability to Represent Interests</b> (0-1)	.56 (.01)	.54 (.01)	.53 (.01)	.03 <sup>+</sup>	.02	.01
<b>Mobilization Index</b> (0-1)	.30 (.02)	.27 (.02)	.28 (.02)	.03	.02	-.01
N	468	471	471			

Note: \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; + $p < .10$ . Significance tests are two-tailed and relative to the "No Music Ad" control.

Table 2 provides average differences in evaluations of and willingness to mobilize for James Thompson by pooled experimental conditions; that is, all of the respondents that received the classical music in the background, regardless of race, appear in the "Classical Ad" column, while all of those that had rap music in the background of the advertisement appear in the "Rap Ad" column. All of our dependent variables are rescaled from 0 to 1 for comparability. As we can see in Table 2, when compared to respondents that received no music, respondents in the rap condition, on average, have more negative evaluations of the rap advertisement ( $p < .01$ ). When compared to those in the conditions without music, we also find that respondents in the rap condition are far less willing to support James Thompson ( $p < .05$ ), believe that he is less trustworthy ( $p < .05$ ), and are also less likely to believe that the candidate would be able to represent their interests ( $p < .10$ ). The results presented in Table 2 make the relationship between targeted advertisements and the political attitudes and behaviors of blacks clear: candidates whose targeted advertisements rely on stereotypic appeals, which we operationalize as rap music, are punished (H1).

**Table 3. Mean Differences in Evaluations and Participation  
No Candidate Image Conditions**

	No Music Ad	Classical Ad	Rap Ad	Differences Across Experimental Condition		
				(A-B)	(A-C)	(B-C)
<b>Evaluation of Advertisement</b> (0-1)	.67 (.03)	.60 (.03)	.56 (.03)	.06	<b>.11*</b>	.04
<b>Willingness to Support</b> (0-1)	.54 (.02)	.52 (.02)	.53 (.02)	.02	.01	-.01
<b>Feeling Thermometer</b> (0-1)	.57 (.01)	.53 (.01)	.53 (.02)	.04 <sup>+</sup>	.04	.00
<b>Perception of Candidate's Trustworthiness</b> (0-1)	.55 (.02)	.54 (.02)	.55 (.02)	.01	.00	-.01
<b>Perception of Candidate's Ability to Represent Interests</b> (0-1)	.55 (.02)	.53 (.02)	.55 (.02)	.02	.00	-.02
<b>Mobilization Index</b> (0-1)	.29 (.03)	.27 (.03)	.29 (.03)	.02	.00	-.02
N	157	157	157			

Note: \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; +p<.10. Significance tests are two-tailed and relative to the “No Music Ad,” which serves as the relative control

Table 3 provides the average differences in evaluations across the music conditions that did not contain an image of a candidate. Put another way, the results in this table show us the responses from blacks Americans who hear a radio advertisement from a candidate whose race is not specified. This provides some insight into how black Americans respond to unknown candidates. We find that black respondents who were randomized into the condition without music are more likely to have favorable evaluations of the advertisement (p<.05) compared to those in the condition where rap

music underscores the narration. This result is consistent with our expectation (H1). Moreover, when compared to those in the condition with classical music, respondents in the condition without music are more likely to feel warmer towards the candidate ( $p < .10$ ). The findings in this table support the notion that candidates are better off not using stereotypic musical appeals to court black voters, and perhaps using campaign advertisements without music might lead to more favorable evaluations of the candidate.

**Table 4. Mean Differences in Evaluations and Mobilization  
White Candidate Conditions**

	<b>No Music</b>	<b>Classical</b>	<b>Rap</b>	<b>Differences Across</b>		
	<b>Ad</b>	<b>Ad</b>	<b>Ad</b>	<b>Experimental Condition</b>		
	(A)	(B)	(C)	(A-B)	(A-C)	(B-C)
<b>Evaluation of Advertisement</b> (0-1)	.58 (.02)	.54 (.03)	.48 (.03)	.04	<b>.10*</b>	.06
<b>Willingness to Support</b> (0-1)	.49 (.02)	.47 (.02)	.46 (.02)	.01	.03	.01
<b>Feeling Thermometer</b> (0-1)	.51 (.02)	.50 (.02)	.50 (.02)	.01	.01	.01
<b>Perception of Candidate's Trustworthiness</b> (0-1)	.52 (.02)	.53 (.02)	.50 (.02)	-.01	.02	.03
<b>Perception of Candidate's Ability to Represent Interests</b> (0-1)	.50 (.02)	.51 (.02)	.48 (.02)	-.01	.02	.03
<b>Mobilization Index</b> (0-1)	.21 (.02)	.24 (.02)	.25 (.02)	-.03	-.04	-.01
<b>N</b>	157	157	157			

Note: \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; + $p < .10$ . Significance tests are two-tailed and relative to the “No Music Ad,” which serves as the relative control

To understand which types of background music are most and least effective for black and white candidates, we turn to Tables 4 and 5, that focus exclusively on the advertisements with white candidates or the advertisements with black candidates. The findings for the white candidate in Table 4 yield some significant support for our expectation (H4b). When compared to the control group, respondents, on average, are less likely to have favorable evaluations of the rap ad ( $p < .05$ ). However, we find no other meaningful differences across the remaining evaluative measures and mobilization index. It is notable that affective evaluations of the white candidate and the white candidate’s advertisements are noticeably lower than the base levels for the advertisements with the black candidate or the advertisements with no image at all. These findings are affirmed by the work within the descriptive representation literature, which asserts that black individuals are more likely to vote for co-racial candidates because they believe that black politicians will help the black community more than their white counterparts (Mansbridge 1999; Tate 2004; Griffin and Flavin 2007; Stout 2015). This belief leads to stronger bonds of trust and feelings of political efficacy on the part of black individuals who are represented by black politicians. Furthermore, these results signal consistently high levels of distrust amongst black individuals towards white politicians, which is a hurdle that white candidates will have to overcome in their attempts to appeal to and mobilize black voters.

**Table 5. Mean Differences in Evaluations and Mobilization for Black Candidate Conditions**

No Music Ad	Classical Ad	Rap Ad	Differences Across Experimental Condition		
(A)	(B)	(C)	(A-B)	(A-C)	(B-C)

<b>Evaluation of Advertisement</b> (0-1)	.68 (.03)	.67 (.03)	.51 (.03)	.01	<b>.17**</b>	<b>.16**</b>
<b>Willingness to Support</b> (0-1)	.61 (.02)	.59 (.02)	.54 (.02)	.02	<b>.07**</b>	<b>.05<sup>+</sup></b>
<b>Feeling Thermometer</b>	.62 (.01)	.59 (.01)	.56 (.01)	.03	<b>.06**</b>	.03
<b>Perception of Candidate's Trustworthiness</b> (0-1)	.63 (.02)	.61 (.02)	.56 (.02)	.02	<b>.07**</b>	<b>.05*</b>
<b>Perception of Candidate's Ability to Represent Interests</b> (0-1)	.62 (.02)	.57 (.02)	.55 (.02)	<b>.05*</b>	<b>.07**</b>	.02
<b>Mobilization Index</b> (0-1)	.39 (.03)	.31 (.03)	.30 (.03)	<b>.08*</b>	<b>.09*</b>	.01
N	154	157	157			

Note: \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; +p<.10. Significance tests are two-tailed and relative to the “No Music Ad,” which serves as the relative control

While white candidates experience very little variation in their evaluations regardless of the musical appeals they employ, black candidates who use certain kinds of musical appeals are evaluated very differently. We find that when compared to the advertisement without any musical underscoring, respondents in the rap condition offer significantly less favorable evaluations of the advertisement across all of the outcome measures. For those participants randomized into the classical music condition, there are meaningful decreases in willingness to mobilize as well as perceptions that James Thompson has the capacity to represent their interests.

The broader implications gleaned from Table 5 reveal that black candidates are better off using no music in the background to appeal to black voters as respondents in the no music condition had the highest levels of favorability for the advertisement and the candidate. When using

rap music the black candidate suffers significant decreases in willingness to support, feeling thermometer ratings, trustworthiness and ability to represent interest. These results are supportive of our hypotheses, H2b and H3b. The findings for the mobilization index compel us to reach the conclusion that campaign operatives are better off leaving the “targeted” musical appeal out of the advertisement and black voters will be more likely to engage in mobilization that could potentially lead to a favorable outcome for the candidate.

Existing work on black political leadership explains how black politicians are held to higher standards by co-racial constituents because of their elevated status in the black community (Walters and Smith 1999). What is clear from the results presented in Table 5 is that, unlike their white counterparts, black candidates have more to lose from their usage of targeted appeals that use stereotypes. The higher evaluations of James Thompson when he was presented as black and used advertisements with no music shows the deference and inherent belief that some blacks have in same race candidates, while the steep drop off in affective evaluations shows the costs that deference has when certain political choices are made by black candidates. The use of a fictitious candidate makes the starkness of the results presented in Table 5 more apparent as respondents are given very little information about James Thompson and the evaluations and perceptions of him were still relatively severe. One might expect that the costs for using stereotypical appeals in advertisements may be higher for candidates who are known and well respected in the black community.

As argued earlier, we believe that, as with the negative response to Dr. Carson’s advertisement, the negative reactions given the black candidates are due to the effect the advertisements had on certain emotions. The next part of our analysis investigates how certain advertisements affect the emotions black individuals feel from ads with stereotypic appeals.

**Table 6. Emotional Responses to Advertisement by Experimental Condition for Black Candidate (Baseline= Control Condition)**

	<u>Emotional Response</u>	
	<b>(1) Shame</b>	<b>(2) Anger</b>
Classical Music Condition	-.02 (.03)	-.04 (.03)
Rap Music Condition	<b>.15**</b> <b>(.03)</b>	<b>.07**</b> <b>(.03)</b>
Constant	.21 <sup>+</sup> (.10)	.15 (.10)
R <sup>2</sup>	.12	.04
N	466	466

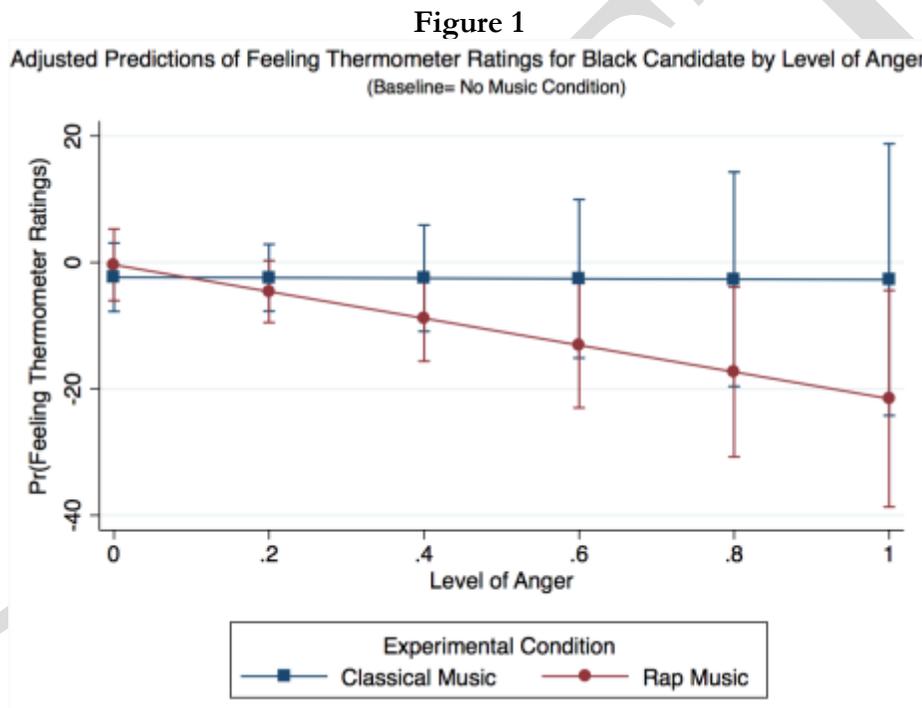
Note. Standard errors in parentheses. This model includes controls for linked fate, education, gender, income, partisan identification, ideology and residing in the South. Age is also included as a control. <sup>+</sup> p<.10; \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01

The results of our ordinary least squares regression are presented in Table 6. We tested two models to assess the direct effect of treatments on the emotional variables of interests, shame and anger, for the black candidate. Similar analyses were conducted for the white candidate, but the lack of variation did not lead to significant differences (see Appendix). As noted earlier, we expect to find that the stereotypic appeal (rap music) will activate and heighten negative emotions towards the advertisement (H2a and H3a). We can see in Model 1, *ceteris paribus*, the rap music condition activates shame, while the classical has no effect (H2a). Our findings in Model 2 show that the rap music condition causes an activation and heightened reports of anger (H3a). The differences in coefficients size in the rap music condition across the two emotions are notable as the coefficient is twice as large for feelings of shame relative to anger.

Thus far, we have shown that stereotypical appeals, which we operationalize as rap music, lead to less favorable evaluations of candidates. We have also shown that stereotypical appeals lead

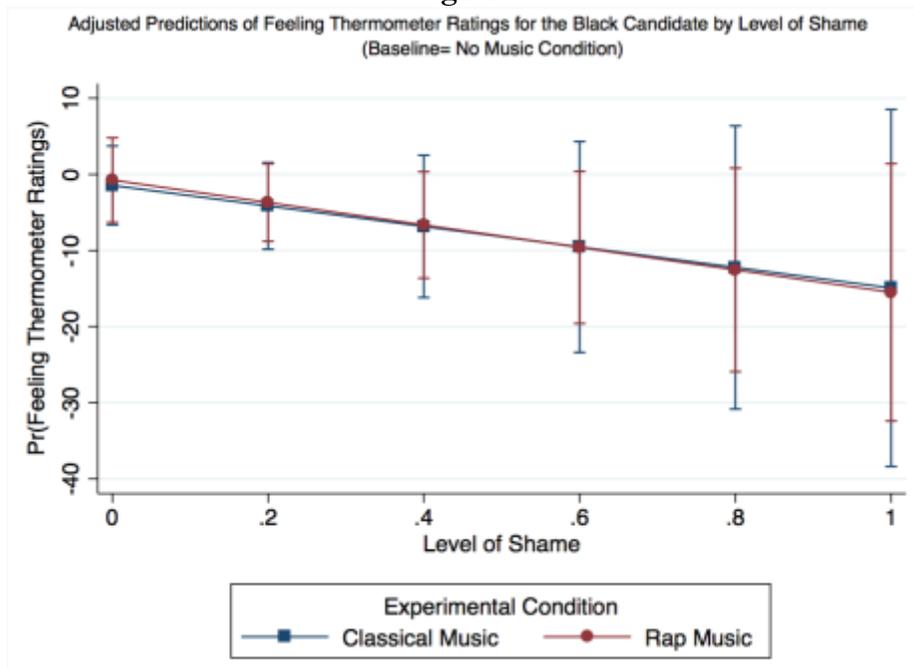
to an increase in negative emotions. Thus far these results do not tell us how the emotional responses moderate political outcomes. Based on our analysis, the white candidate showed a lower baseline evaluation across all conditions, but little variation between the conditions where classical and rap music was used relative to the advertisements where no music was played. As a result, we focus on the moderating effects that shame and anger have on the black candidate's evaluations and mobilization of respondents.<sup>10</sup>

*Moderating Effects of Anger and Shame*



<sup>10</sup> See Appendix for the moderating effects of shame and anger on white candidate evaluations and respondent's mobilization.

Figure 2



Note: Predicted probabilities derived from OLS regression model including controls for linked fate, income, south, ideology, age, education, gender, partisanship, and region. Significance is compared to the control with 95% confidence intervals.

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that the feeling thermometer ratings for the black candidate offer mixed support for our moderating hypotheses (H2a and H3a). Anger leads to a statistically significant decrease in ratings relative to the control ( $p \approx .03$ ) (H3a). Anger in the classical music condition remains level and does not alter a respondent's willingness to mobilize for James Thompson. Although the effect of shame on the Feeling Thermometer ratings is negative, it is not statistically different from the control. Black respondents' anger about the advertisement is the driving emotional mechanism for the decline in evaluations for James Thompson's feeling thermometer. Affective evaluations have been shown to offer a more complete assessment of candidates and provide insight into larger implications for politics (Lodge et al 1995). In this case, the feeling thermometer ratings offer some indication that black people dislike the black candidate due to the anger elicited by the stereotypic musical appeal (rap music).

Figure 3

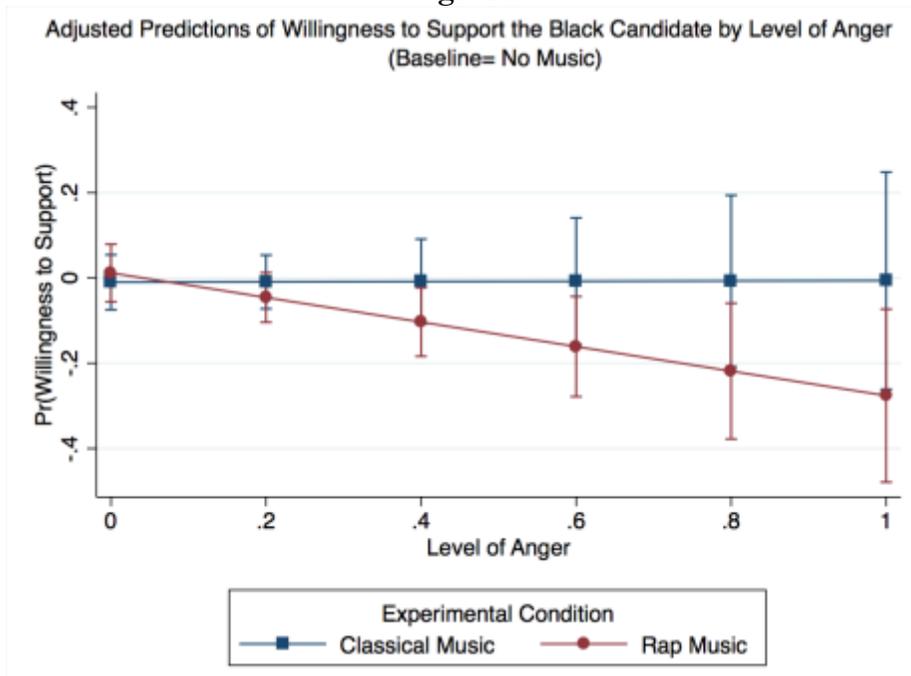
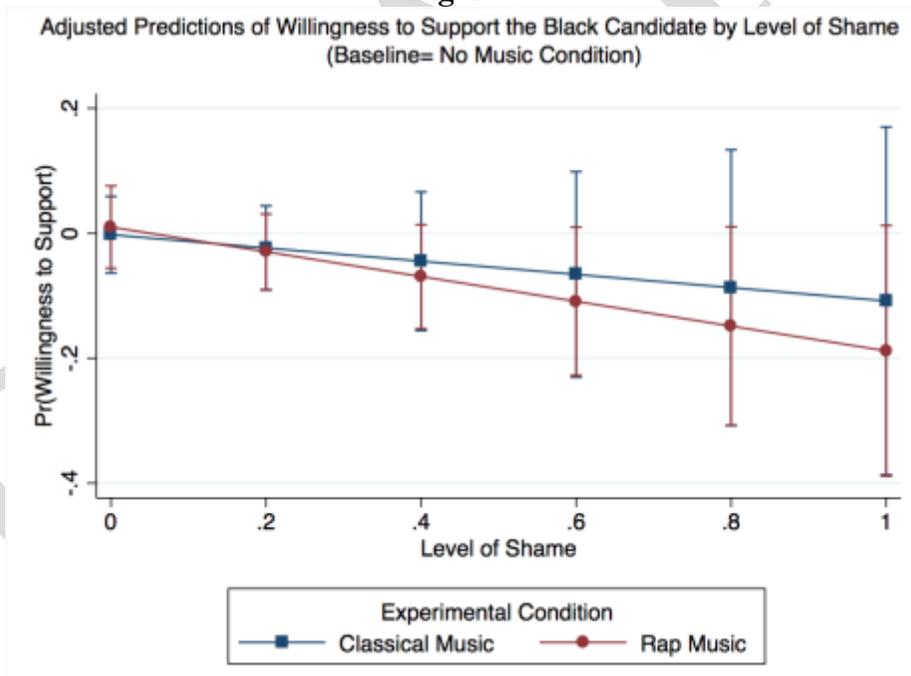


Figure 4



Note: Predicted probabilities derived from OLS regression model including controls for linked fate, income, south, ideology, age, education, gender, partisanship, and region. Significance is compared to the control with 95% confidence intervals.

Figures 3 and 4 depict the willingness to support the black candidate based on levels of anger and shame, respectively, and treatment condition. In both figures, the results are relative to the control, which is centered at zero. We see that the classical music advertisement's effect on respondents' willingness to support James Thompson was not significantly influenced by the shame or anger. However, there are significant declines in willingness to support in the rap advertisement as the levels of anger ( $p \approx .014$ ) and shame ( $p \approx .08$ ) increase (H2a and 3a). Stereotypical musical appeals trigger adverse emotional responses, and as co-racial members, black respondents exclusively punish black candidates.

Figure 5

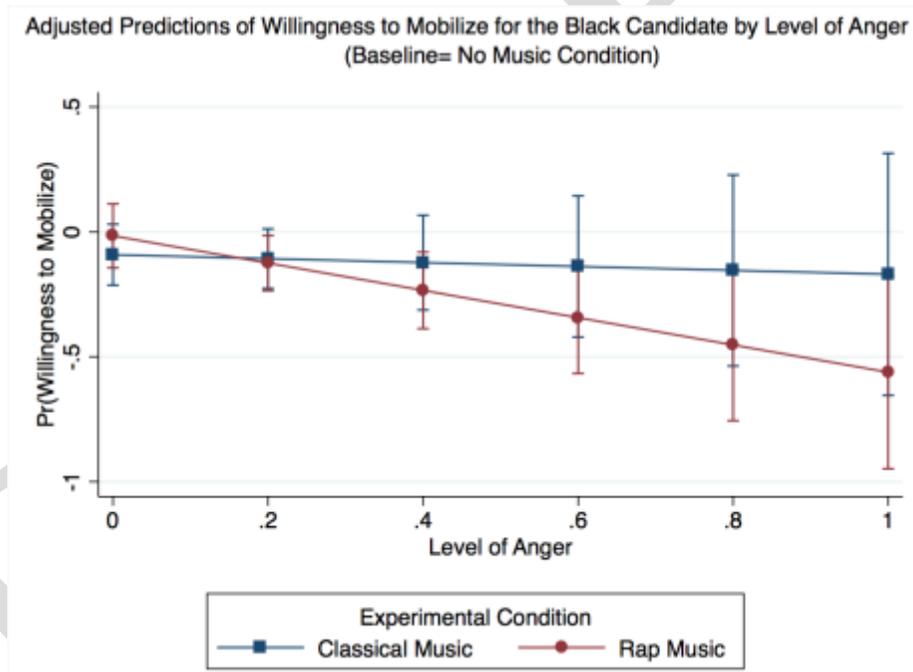
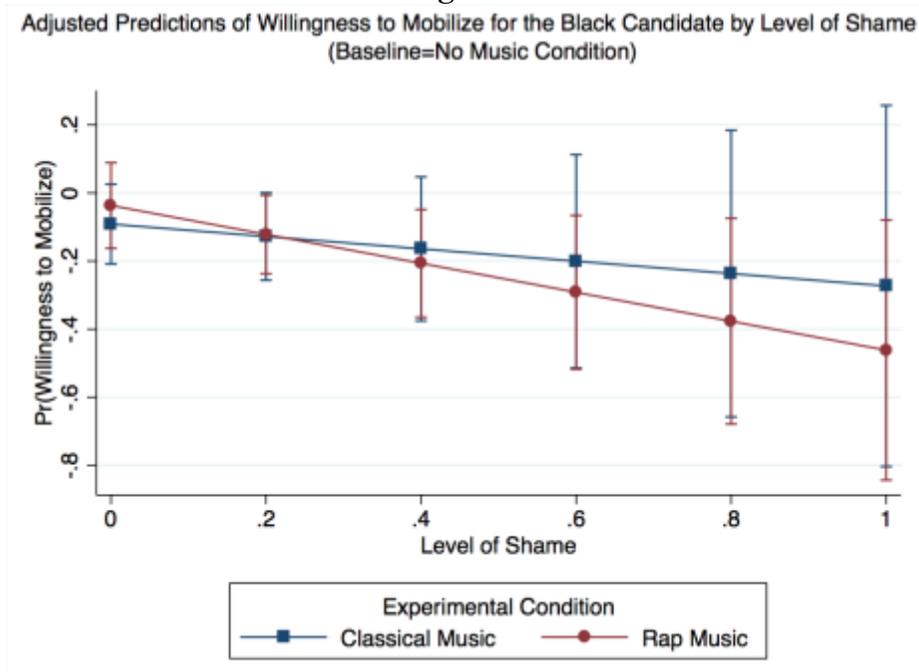


Figure 6



Note: Predicted probabilities derived from OLS regression model including controls for linked fate, income, south, ideology, age, education, gender, partisanship, and region. Significance is compared to the control with 95% confidence intervals.

Much work has been done on the mobilization effect campaign advertisements may or may not have on the ability to mobilize voters (Ansolabehere et al 1994; Wattenberg and Brians 1999). In our pursuit to better understand how certain advertisements affect black voters' willingness to mobilize, we turn to Figures 5 and 6 finding that the use of stereotypic appeals like rap music have detrimental effects on black individuals' willingness to mobilize for black candidates due to the activation of strong negative emotions. Figures 5 and 6 show support for our expectations. Increased levels of anger cause a significant ( $p \approx .02$ ) decrease in a willingness to organize relative to the control for those respondents in the rap music experimental condition (H3a). Respondents in the classical music condition do not experience a heightened level of anger; therefore, their willingness to mobilize, while low, is not statistically different from the control. The effect of shame (Figure 6) results in a significant decline in willingness to mobilize ( $p \approx .05$ ) for those who heard rap

music in the radio advertisement. Again, the interaction of the classical condition and shame did not lead to meaningful decreases in willingness to mobilize. The damage created by targeted advertising that employs stereotypic appeals can be catastrophic for mobilization efforts, and principally for co-racial candidates. Electoral gains could be muted and turnout severely affected if targeted advertisements make blacks feel ashamed or angry.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

The presence of targeted advertising in electoral campaigns has increased substantially in contemporary elections. This study offers a theoretical framework that argues that the use of stereotypical appeals leads to negative emotional responses that have strong implications for how candidates are viewed and individuals' willingness to engage in the political arena. Using a novel and extensive experimental test on an all-black sample that varies musical genres in radio advertisements to operationalize certain kinds of appeals provides strong evidence in support of our theoretical argument, and suggests that the use of stereotypical appeals can be costly to politicians' outreach and mobilization efforts.

Evidence from this study shows that campaigners need to be thoughtful in how they design these advertisements, and more cognizant of their use of stereotypic appeals. We find that the black candidate who uses a stereotypic musical appeal (rap) in targeted advertising suffers the largest decrease in their affective and political evaluations. This effect is moderated by the negative emotions that are activated by the appeal. Furthermore, the absence of music is better for maintaining decent evaluations relative to the conditions with the stereotypic music. With our results in mind, the black backlash experienced by Dr. Ben Carson for his "Freedom" advertisement is not surprising. Carson's advertisement undoubtedly angered many in the black community and created a sense of shame for other co-racial group members. Instead of the inclusion of rap music being seen as fresh, youthful and a genuine political appeal, it was perceived as pandering and condescending in

nature. Based on our results, Carson would have been better off having no music in his advertisement than attempting to target black youth with rap.

The broader implications of this research are extensive. First, although we tested one type of stereotypic appeal in targeted advertising—rap music, we did not exhaust all the styles and types of music that might be more or less appealing to African-Americans (i.e. additional types of rap music, gospel music, rhythm and blues music) in this test. Moreover, music is only one way in which candidates and campaigns can target different demographic groups through the use of stereotypical appeals. In an attempt to mobilize the Hispanic/Latinx base during the 2016 Presidential Election, Secretary Hillary Clinton’s campaign website had a post entitled, “7 things Hillary Clinton has in common with your abuela.” This appeal was strongly rejected by Latinxs with some referring to it as “hispandering” (a hybrid term for Hispanic and pandering) and others indicating that Clinton is “Not My Abuela” (Not Mi Abuela).<sup>11</sup> Applying our theoretical framework to this example, we would argue that Clinton suffered setbacks in her Latinx support due to the negative emotions that were activated through her targeted advertising. Our argument is that while the form of stereotypic appeals will vary, the effect they have on emotions for numerous communities will be what determines whether or not a candidate’s appeal is successful or not.

Secondly, the effects of negative emotions that are activated by stereotypic appeals have deleterious consequences for mobilization. This reality is made more apparent as we approach the 2018 midterm elections where the primacy of understanding the effect of targeted advertisements and the nuance in emotional responses of targeted populations is imperative. Campaigns could find themselves with missed opportunities and tight electoral margins if the advertisements that were

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.npr.org/2015/12/26/461116160/-memeoftheweek-hillary-clinton-not-quite-an-abuela>

intended to motivate subsets of voters to turnout, financially support, and promote the campaign through signage, are emotionally distressing to needed populations. Most recently, the Democratic Candidate Jon Ossoff lost to Republican Candidate Karen Handel, and Cohn (2017) notes that the lagged turnout among black voters is an indication for Democrats that they need to move beyond only using traditional mobilization efforts if they have an expectation of increasing the black share of the electorate.<sup>12</sup> In the case of this special election, the lack of innovative targeted advertising toward a key bloc in the Democratic electorate—blacks—led to a missed opportunity even though copious amounts of money were spent on the campaign.

As time presses on targeted populations will be integral to the success of many politicians, but how these individuals and their campaigns seek to engage with these populations will matter more. Will they ignore them? Will they use stereotypes to appeal to them? Whatever strategy they choose, this paper makes it clear that how these populations *feel* about those choices will be a determining factor in how candidates fair.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/26/upshot/why-strong-turnout-was-not-enough-for-democrats-in-georgia.html>

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APPENDIX

I. Images Seen by Respondents Across Treatments

*No Image*



*Black Candidate Image*



*White Candidate Image*



II. Test Statistics for Balance in Covariates

<b>Conditions</b>	<b>F-Statistic</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
No Music, No Image and Classical Music, No Image	.901	.525
No Music, No Image and Rap Music, No Image	.748	.663
Classical Music, No Image and Rap Music, No Image	1.60	.119
No Music, White Image and Classical Music, White Image	.911	.517
No Music, White Image and Rap Music, White Image	1.28	.251
Classical Music, White Image and Rap Music, White Image	1.14	.334
No Music, Black Image and Classical Music, Black Image	.743	.668
No Music, Black Image and Rap Music, Black Image	1.09	.367
Classical Music, Black Image and Rap Music, Black Image	.940	.491

### III. Key Dependent Variable Question Wording

#### *Willingness to Support*

Based on the information you have heard, on a scale of 0 to 10, how willing would you be to support James Thompson? 0 being "Not at All Willing" and 10 being "Very Willing."

#### *Feeling Thermometer*

We would like to get your feelings about some groups and public figures in American society. When you see the name of a person or group, please rate it with what we call a feeling thermometer by moving the mouse pointer and clicking on the thermometer on a number from 0 to 100. Ratings between 0 and 49 degrees mean that you don't feel favorably toward the person or group and that you don't care too much for that person or group; ratings between 51 and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorably and warm toward the person or group. If you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward a person or group you would rate them at 50 degrees.

#### *Trustworthiness*

Based on what you have seen and heard please answer the following questions: On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not at all trustworthy and 10 is very trustworthy, How trustworthy do you think James Thompson?

#### *Represent Interests*

How likely are you to believe that James Thompson can represent your political interests? Very unlikely, Unlikely, Likely, or Very likely

#### *Mobilization Measures* (Standard Questions from the American National Election Studies)

Based on what you have heard, during the campaign, would you talk to any people and try to show them why they should vote for James Thompson? Yes or No

Based on what you have heard, would you wear a James Thompson campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or place a sign in your window or in front of your house? Yes or No

Based on what you have heard, would you go to any political meetings, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of James Thompson? Yes or No

Would you be willing to write a letter, call, or send an email to James Thompson giving him your opinion about something that should be done? Yes or No

#### *Angry/Ashamed*

Thinking about the advertisement you just heard, as a black person, to what extent do you feel angry/ashamed? Not at all, Very Slightly, A Little, Moderately, Quite a Bit, or Extremely