Tisch School of the Arts
N.Y.U. Department of Performance Studies

DANCE COLLOQUIUM

BODY POLITICS
NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

MARTHA DAVIS, Ph.D.

Lecture with Video

THURSDAY OCTOBER 13
4-6 pm.
In the Studio
721 Broadway 6th floor

ALL STUDENTS WELCOME
Presidential Body Politics:

Movement Analysis of Debates and Press Conferences
by Martha Davis

The President reads an opening statement, then steps out from behind the lectern and says he would be glad to take questions. He is standing in full view with his hands hanging at his sides. Despite a gentle tone of voice and earnest manner, something appears very wrong. As he answers questions, his hands begin to clench tightly, then hang at his sides only to jerk up repeatedly in a tic-like manner. Rare hand tosses drop heavily to his sides. His fist clenching becomes so strong, one can imagine the impressions made by his fingernails. The arms begin to push upward with palms open, then hands wring and clench tightly in front of him.

By the seventh question, he clasps his hands behind his back. Gesticulations are still brief and rare, though he begins to turn his large frame and take in more of the gathering. The eighth question rouses him to an extended display of arm gestures, palms raised up in front, then pushed forward, followed by a series of loose tosses that alternate with tight squeezing of a fist held at his waist. Occasionally more complex gestures break out from the tight holds like as huge, strong slicing motions that are stopped short as he drops his arms or grips his hands. The extensive vigorous actions contrast markedly with the
listless, desultory motions. These outbursts also contrast with the low, personal tone he uses when he addresses a reporter by his first name or makes a droll remark that earns a chuckle from the Press. But the greatest contrast is between the tortured motions that accompany his answers and the gracious way he lingers and shakes hands with members of the press in what may be the only receiving line that ever ended a Presidential Press Conference.¹

Omitting the verbal content of this interaction draws attention to visible behaviors that are rarely explicitly described. Yet from this description of manner void of verbal content, one might guess the nature and import of the event: Lyndon Baines Johnson at the press conference following his withdrawal from consideration for a second term as President. A written transcript would reveal the momentousness of the event and the extraordinary ways Johnson could obfuscate, self-righteously criticize his adversaries, and cajole and charm friend and adversary alike. But it would not reveal signs of his tortured personal state as directly and powerfully as his movements do.

How much of this is lost in journalistic accounts or obscured by the necessity to attend to what is said and relegate details of visible behavior to subliminal awareness? This essay is a summary of several years of study of the nonverbal communication of presidents and presidential and vice-presidential candidates in public
contexts. This has primarily involved examination of the debates because the camerawork and relatively unscripted nature of debate responses provides the best view of candidates in animated, uninterrupted medium body shots good for movement analysis. But there is a special interest here in press conferences, a largely unappreciated context that can reveal surprising and highly interesting details about modern presidencies (French 1982; Smith 1990).

Although there are film and video recordings of presidents giving speeches and answering questions, uninterrupted footage of long discussions and debates by politicians who are not reading prepared texts is largely limited to the past four decades. Dwight D. Eisenhower overruled objections to televising his first campaign press conference, anticipating the new age of live televised presidential press conferences that John Kennedy would inaugurate in 1961.2 Televised presidential debate were inaugurated in an unforgettable way with the 1960 Nixon–Kennedy debates.

Presidential debates are performances involving elaborate preparation. Debate sets have been built in New York and shipped to the candidate’s campaign location for a few days of rehearsal (Mickelson 1989: 120). The campaign aide who does a credible impersonation of a candidate’s adversary may be brought in to role-play (Friedenberg 1990: 77). Media advisors coaching the candidate on how to speak and move, such as the redoubtable Roger Ailes used by
Republican candidates, have become indistinguishable from theatre directors or acting coaches. Some of the toughest debate negotiations have involved staging details—whether reactions shots are allowed, how high the lectern should be, who enters first, and such. Although press conferences are far less pressured and rehearsed, presidents and vice-presidents who are in a crisis or anticipate major confrontations may make preparations that involve not only strategy and what questions to field, but the manner in which tough questions should be answered. The nature and extent of this coaching is remarkable (Martel 1983: 77-83). Roger Ailes reportedly coached George Bush weekly during the 1988 campaign, helping him lower and modulate his voice, contain his sometimes scattered gestures, and be able to take charge of any exchange within seconds.3

The performance nature of presidential debates and press conferences pervades them. Still, so much is going on and there are so many nonverbal details one can attend to that these events deserve a very broad definition of performance. Not all details are rehearsed, and many behaviors are outside conscious awareness or control. Johnson’s aides probably did not identify the tight fists or tic-like jerks of his hands, but registered his acute stress at a more general, impressionistic level.

The principal aim of this essay is to demonstrate how rich and complex the nonverbal behavior of these staged events can be; how many different aspects and levels of
information are discernible from body movement that are critical to an understanding of the political leader's performance. While it is beyond the scope of this research to empirically confirm relationships between specific patterns and how they are perceived, the possibilities of this are assumed, including processes by which impressions are formed and acted upon. Formal movement analysis may contribute to research on how people interpret nonverbal behavior or form impressions of candidates by identifying specific patterns that can then be compared with impressions.

To the extent that audience members ascribe traits to political candidates, such ascriptions may be seen as the product of inferences about the meaning of those candidates' behaviors. If so, there would seem to be good reasons for assessing candidate images in terms of specific behaviors, rather than general traits. By doing so, one might gain a more accurate picture of those candidate behaviors that are "read" by audience members as signs of underlying traits. (Husson et al 1988: 401)

It would seem unnecessary to make a case for the importance of the subject. In recent presidential campaigns, "body language consultants" are interviewed on television, journalists argue that demeanor and manner of presentation weighs more than the substance of the debate, and attention to body language is considered a central part
of "packaging" a candidate, critical to voter perception. Journalists have become enamored of the subject, going so far as to suggest voters turn off the sound to appreciate a candidate, and lacing their reports with very explicit descriptions of a candidate's body language, as in the following example:

His big hands work in varied counterpoise, the right forefinger stabbing his points home, the palms cupping, the fists clenching. His smile runs a dizzying gamut, from open-jawed wonder to lip-biting coyness and to beaming boyish delight. His eyes work with the smile, opening wide when he drops his lower jaw, crinkling when he grimaces. In his favorite political setting, the Donahue-esque television forum he calls a town meeting, Mr. Clinton positions himself with the skill of Phil himself, using a series of small movements and gestures welcoming unto himself the immediate questioner and the viewer on the other side of the camera lens.

Such elaborate descriptions notwithstanding, to those of us who spend careers studying the psychology and anthropology of body movement, the subject is woefully trivialized and distorted by journalists. In part this may be because, to paraphrase Sapir (1968), "body language" is familiar and known to all, even as it defies conscious analysis. The peculiar immediacy of movement means that
ones own perceptions weigh most, even for those who argue that cultural complexities make "reading" body movement impossible. Training in movement observation can be regarded as superfluous, suspect or too arcane to be of value. Although the subject is reified as the royal road to who the candidate's "really are" and "what they really mean", few take it seriously enough to appreciate how complex and revealing it truly is. At best it is good for an occassional anecdote or illustration, as if body movement flickers on and off between long periods in which "nothing is happening" (or nothing of significance can be interpreted from it.)

The fact is people are constantly moving, there are constant changes in different parts of the body, and never is "nothing happening". The camera may obscure a great deal by limiting the view to close-ups and editing may interrupt actions, but even a few seconds of videotape or film of a candidate tells a great deal about the context and his or her identity, state, and performance. The fact that interpretation of this activity is very complicated and controversial, does not detract from the value of careful description of what is seen. One may disagree with the adjectives a trained observer uses, with the choices of what to look at in all this activity, with the interpretations given. One may even argue that study of body movement is fundamentally perception research because any significance ascribed to the behavior is totally in the eye of the
beholder and culture-bound. But it is irrefutable that movement itself is complex and multivariable, and a constant source of information.

Whether nonverbal behavior patterns actually influence voter behavior is part of the larger question of when and how public presentations such as the debates influence the election outcome. There is considerable research evidence that exposure to these events does not significantly effect behavior, that reactions to the debates follow partisan lines, confirming already held views and preferences (Payne et al 1989; Lemert et al 1991: 120). However, other evidence suggests that for certain campaigns, they may have a catalytic or tide-shifting potential, particularly among undecided voters. Pfau and Kang (1991) advance this research to show that "relational" cues which are largely nonverbal are particularly important factors in this influence.

The observations to be reported were made in a variety of ways by the author using her training in Laban Movement Analysis and extensive consultation with other trained observers. Some observations were completed after hours and hours of repeated viewing without sound; some were based on what two or more observers independently noted; some were based on one or two viewings in which a few details were tracked by the author alone. All but two presidential and three of the four vice-presidential debates were studied, the number limited by what was in the author's videotape
collection or at the Museum of Television and Broadcasting in New York City (See Table 1).  

Recordings of press conferences are more difficult to find and the essay draws on a limited sample of press conferences from each president since Kennedy and two from Eisenhower's 1952 campaign (See Table 2). Where there were systematic observation procedures involving reliability assessment and/or quantitative data, footnotes on methodology will document this. Where others were involved in the observations, their contribution will be described. Observations derived from the literature will be so indicated. All other descriptions are the result of the author reviewing videos and making notes and notations, many of them influenced by her research on interview behavior (Davis 1985; Davis and Hadiks 1990; Davis, Dulicai and Hadiks 1992). Finally, media commentary, public polls and research studies of impressions of the debate performances will be compared with assessment of the nonverbal behavior patterns of the candidates.
Rating Performance

For presidential debates, there is no way to avoid the question "who won?". Even academic study of viewer impressions and the influence of the debates on voter behavior concentrates on who is judged to have the superior performance. Whether the media draws on the language of sports, war or theatre, the evaluation of performance and who does better is paramount. So this essay will begin with nonverbal dimensions of performance evaluation rather than protest and dismiss the urge to score the candidates.

Writers may decry the weighing of demeanor and performance over the candidate's programs and the substance of his positions (Jamieson 1990), but it is a fact of U.S. political life and demeanor is in large part body movement. In presidential debates, demeanor above all means appearing "presidential" or not. What is "presidential" can be gleaned from press reports and particularly from criticisms of candidate performances and descriptions of when a candidate is "not presidential". An American president is supposed to be decisive but not impulsive, composed and self-possessed but not unemotional, assertive but not domineering or overbearing, powerful but affable and likeable, authoritative but warm and friendly (cf Bishop et al 1990: 149-52). He or she is to be dynamic, energetic, upbeat, and inspiring. Or to define "presidential" by what it is not, a candidate must not appear depressed, lackluster, boring, pedantic, brow-beating, frenetic, hostile, sarcastic, humorless, or wimpish for any length of time (i.e., from minutes to at most days, depending on the quality and context). It says something about American values that "warm and approachable" is as important as "authoritative and in
"command" in the American ideal of what is "presidential" (cf Kraus 1988: 118).

Of course, this does not define what exactly in the behavior of the candidate would project these qualities. The bases of judgment may range from some mannerism or fleeting action to something in the candidate's history--always filtered through the values and perspectives of the judge(s). For this essay I have devised a brief nonverbal coding instrument for "presidentialness", a kind of quick and dirty performance assessment whose redeeming virtue is explicit, operationally defined criteria for each term. Four general dimensions have been selected because they have direct nonverbal referents; i.e. it is possible to imagine and define actual patterns of movement behavior that would contribute to or detract from these qualities. The four are common dimensions cited as part of "presidentialness", so they collectively provide a mini-profile and nonverbal "score" of presidentialness. ⁹

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Nonverbal Presidential Profile Dimensions
The middle of each scale or 0 represents a large middle range that candidates usually fall within during debates. Basically, if the candidate displays the conventional behaviors for a debate with a modicum of appropriateness and ease—greets his opponent, addresses the panelists and TV camera, gesticulates with a modicum of clarity and vigor, shows some smiling and sociability, etc., all in ways that are sufficiently coherent and conventional—he falls in this middle range. It is hypothesized that when the performance deviates from the middle range the nonverbal behavior may enhance or detract from the performance in notable ways. To the right of each scale are positive ratings. For a candidate to score positively, he or she must display specific movement patterns that enhance the performance beyond the "good enough" of the middle (0) range. Note that there are two ways a candidate can detract from "good enough" for the Composed and Authoritative dimensions. Usually a candidate will display one type and not the other in a debate, although it is possible to display each at different times.

"Composed" is defined here as movements that are performed with ease and self-command, well-organized sequences done with fluency and well-supported by a variety of arm positions. Getting a positive score for degree of composure means that the candidate has to be very notably at ease without being too casual or active for the debate context. This is a tall order considering the pressures of the televised debates. More likely the candidate will fall in the large middle range in which he "holds his own" with some perceptible, but not marked, body tension and restriction. When a candidate displays marked visible signs of stress—specific actions such as darting
glances, constant fidgetting, trembling hands, or notable constrictions such as no movement of the head for long periods—then negative ratings are given.

Positive scores on "authoritative" require that the candidate display gestures that are more than simply repetitive "baton-like" gestures up and down for emphasis and clear forms of address (i.e. direction of gaze, orientation of head and trunk) etc. He must show signs of initiating the standard routines such as the greetings, and/or moving with a vigor and definiteness that is steady and commanding. Negatives in this dimension are either periods of vague, spatially indefinite movements and forms of address or exaggerations of force, speed, size of gestures and head movements and/or many interruptions and unyielding modes of holding the floor.

The middle range on "affiliative" might be called "pleasant enough"—a modicum of friendliness and honoring of the conventions of greeting and turn-taking cues and modes of address. Positive ratings on this would be for an exceptionally charming smile displayed at appropriate times—eyes shining, corners of the eyes crinkling, the smile not held too tightly or too long—and/or a notable ease of interacting with the panel or opponent in well-synchronized exchanges, an ease of approach and touch, etc. Some candidates can display long periods of slightly unpleasant or negative facial expressions—vaguely sad, severe, anxious, and so on. And some candidates appear uncomfortable with handshaking and greetings involving close proximity or do not modulate and coordinate their movements well in turn-taking and conversation.
"Dynamic" refers to the degree to which the candidate's gesticulation is repetitive, limited, and low in body involvement on the negative side and complex in rhythm, spatial design, body part articulation and postural changes on the positive end. Again, most will fall in a large middle range. Debate conventions require that there be some gesticulation during the majority of answers (a low incidents of gestures would evoke a negative score under the constriction part of "composed") and that these gestures have some degree of complexity. Constant display of short, two-phasic tosses of the hands or repetitive "batons" up and down without variety in tempo and emphasis would earn a negative score under "dynamic".

Finally, a cautionary word about the scoring. What may be interesting to a movement analyst coding the movement without sound may be imperceptible and insignificant to most people watching and, of course, hearing the debates. So the coding done here is predicated on the assumption that features have to reach a rather pronounced level--scores of 1 and 1/2 or higher--to be vivid enough to viewers (consciously or unconsciously) to have any influence on their impressions of the candidate. Lower ratings are considered in the realm of "technical data" of interest to the movement analyst and useful for comparative studies of performance that will be discussed.

One impression from scanning movement profiles presented in the following pages is the tendency for candidates to remain cautious and within conventional bounds. The general rule seems to be don't do anything eccentric, overbearing, and hostile and try to look at ease. If you are going to err, err in the direction of boring viewers. This is no surprise. Many journalists and students of the debates have
noted that above all, candidates must not commit gaffes or appear too nervous and unsteady.

A closer look suggests that "winning" is very much relative to ones opponent. In the famous Nixon/Kennedy first debate John Kennedy was judged to win hands down, although some rhetorical analyses of the transcript rated it a closer match (Friedenberg 1990: 20). But in the movement profile comparison Kennedy does not make an impressive showing. The first debate is far from his personal best as we shall see, and his nonverbal "strengths" are limited to certain details that are only emerging here. He holds his head slightly tilted, up and back for long periods. His smile and charm is muted. The full, dazzling Kennedy smile of the campaign trail is not seen in this debate. He pounds incessantly up and down with one arm, varying the rhythm enough to interest a movement analyst, but probably not many others. And his posture is stiff and immobile although he may lean forward into his points.

**COMPOSED**

stress actions

| | -2 |
| --- |

constriction

| 0 |
+2

-2

| 0 |

**AUTHORITATIVE**

| 0 |
+2

| 0 |

| 0 |
+2

| 0 |

**AFFILIATIVE**

| 0 |
+2

| 0 |

| 0 |
+2

| 0 |

**DYNAMIC**

| 0 |
+2

John F. Kennedy

| 0 |
+2

Richard M. Nixon

First 1960 Presidential Debate
In this first debate which is the one cited as crucial to the election outcome, Kennedy does not do as well as Richard Nixon does poorly in body language. Conventional wisdom has it that Nixon lost on appearance—namely, sweat on his upper lip, a five-o’clock shadow, and light grey suit that paled in front of a grey background (Minow and Martin 19??: 52; Ranney 1979: 49). Some reports (Martel 1983: 79) also note that Nixon’s eyes darted nervously, a mannerism apparently negative enough to inspire rules limiting close-up reaction shots in latter debates.

But a movement analysis of the first debate indicates that much more was problematic. Nixon sits with a tense, narrow posture, one leg awkwardly turned, while Kennedy sits legs crossed, hands resting easily, his weight centered. In the medium camera shots, Nixon can be seen gripping the lectern tightly and not gesticulating for long periods of time, although his head movements are clear and emphatic. And Nixon displays a disastrous pattern of hyper-blinking—-not just abnormally frequent (more than one per second), but at times with such rapid flutters that his eyes momentarily close. A comparison of the two nonverbal profiles highlights these qualitative descriptions. By comparison Kennedy clearly wins despite his rather ordinary and constricted showing.

The Ford and Carter movement profiles are drawn from the second 1976 debate to illustrate how a major gaffe can take precedence over general performance. Neither candidate is particularly notable movement-wise and Carter "edges" out Ford by the thinnest of margins. This debate demonstrates that while both candidates did not display major detractions or problems in their overall demeanor and
presentation, one major gaffe can tip the scales in the rating of "who won" in the media and the polls.

**COMPOSED stress actions**
-2 |---|-- 0 |---| +2
constriction

**AUTHORITATIVE indefinite**
-2 |---|-- 0 |---| +2
overbearing

**AFFILIATIVE**
-2 |---|-- 0 |---| +2

**DYNAMIC**
-2 |---|-- 0 |---| +2

Jimmy Carter

Gerald Ford

Second 1976 Presidential Debate

The second 1976 debate was the one in which Gerald Ford asserted "there is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe", reiterated his statement on follow-up questioning, and did not appear to recognize his mistake. Without sound the passage is relatively innocuous. One can see that his blink rate drops, but he doesn't stop blinking or "go blank" nonverbally.

Immediate public polls called this debate a virtual dead heat. Most people apparently did not make much of the gaffe nor of the way the questioner pounced on it with a gleeful smile and asked Ford to clarify what he said. It was only after the media discussed the gaffe for a few days that Ford started losing ground in the polls (Germond and Witcover 1979: 196).
Recordings of the Carter-Reagan debates were not available, but the Anderson-Reagan debate is interesting nonverbally. While independent candidate John Anderson is now an obscure figure who many may not remember, to see him in debate is to appreciate the dangers of an overzealous manner. His responses are rapid-fire and unrelenting, a constant, high intensity and speed that is unusual for the debates. In the unwritten etiquette of debates, a candidate should become intense only over an issue that is of particular import or when personally attacked.

COMPOSED
stress actions $-2$ 0 $+2$
constriction $-2$ 0 $+2$

AUTHORITATIVE
indefinite $-2$ 0 $+2$
overbearing $-2$ 0 $+2$

AFFILIATIVE
$-2$ 0 $+2$
John Anderson

DYNAMIC
$-2$ 0 $+2$
Ronald Reagan

First 1980 Presidential Debate

Intense protest of personal attacks is very much valued if it is more indignant than complaining or hostile in tone. Press reaction to Michael Dukakis' and later to Bill Clinton's indignation about attacks on their patriotism was very positive compared to criticism of Dukakis' lack of indignation when he responded to the "if your wife were raped and murdered" question of the second 1988 debate. Anderson's profile also illustrates that it is possible to be both
pleasant and overbearing. His expressions and interactions are not particularly hostile, negative, or interruptive, but his gesturing and head movement is too aggressive in and of itself.

In the first 1984 debate, both men had considerable political experience, but Ronald Reagan was considered a master of public performance and a tough act for Walter Mondale to beat. So the first debate was a surprise because Mondale appeared well prepared and effective in his confrontation of Reagan, while Reagan was judged as rambling and unfocused, apparently because he was over-coached and inundated with data to remember (Smith and Smith 1990: 104-106).

COMPOSED
  stress actions    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |
  constriction     |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |

AUTHORITATIVE
  indefinite       |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |
  overbearing      |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |

AFFILIATIVE
  |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |

DYNAMIC
  |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |    |   |           |

Walter Mondale   Ronald Reagan

First 1984 Presidential Debate

The total score from the movement assessment (+2 for Mondale, +1 for Reagan) just barely gives the advantage to Mondale. The direction of gain, if not the degree, is consonant with media and public reactions such as a Harris Poll in which 61% said Mondale won the debate, while 19% gave it to Reagan. As it turned out, this good
performance hardly effected Reagan's greater overall support (Smith and Smith 1990: 107) and he improved his performance in the second debate with the help of a new preparation team.

While the movement profiles appear to register small differences, in fact the coding is so condensed that a one point overall difference between two candidates can represent visible differences persisting throughout the debate. When the nonverbal contrast is great, as in the first 1988 debate, it is dramatic indeed. The movement-based evaluation of the first 1988 is strikingly at odds with public polls taken immediately after that called it a virtual draw and media commentary that gave Michael Dukakis the edge over George Bush (Lemert et al 1991: 112-113). Even allowing for the fact that the media avoid extreme comparisons between candidates, the poll and media comparisons are nowhere near as disparate as the movement profiles.

| COMPOSED          | stress actions | 0 | 0 | 0   |
|                  | constriction   | +2| +2|     |
| AUTHORITATIVE    | indefinite     | -2| 0 | -2  |
|                  | overbearing    | -2| 0 | -2  |
| AFFILIATIVE      |                | -2| 0 | -2  |
| DYNAMIC          |                | -2| 0 | -2  |

First 1988 Presidential Debate

As the diagram indicates, Dukakis displayed marked motor restriction and repetition. His head was held tilted, torso still,
upper arms close to his sides, and gesturing involved the same vertical forearm motions for virtually the entire debate. George Bush is considerably more animated and mobile. Interestingly, Bush can display marked negative and positive features within the same dimension at different times in the debate. If one took the liberty of averaging the positive and negative ratings, his total score is +2 to Dukakis overall score of -5. This is the largest discrepancy between any of the debaters. The movement analysis is more consonant with pre-debate media references to Dukakis as an unemotional "iceman" and diligent "meritocrat". And it indirectly supports research evidence that unmediated impressions of Dukakis were more negative. In one study 47% of a group queried right after watching the debate rated Dukakis positively, while 84% who watched and then heard the media reactions rated him positively (Lemert 1991: 124). In an experimental study in which viewers were questioned in detail on their impressions of the first debate performances, the contrast between Bush and Dukakis was far more marked and consistent with this movement analysis than with the initial media and poll results (Pfau and Kang 1991). Bush was judged the "better communicator" and positively rated compared with a significantly negative evaluation of Dukakis.

Dukakis appears to be the candidate with the greatest discrepancy between the way he moves and the way he speaks. His speeches have been judged as rather dynamic and effective by rhetorical analysis (Hahn 1988). In contrast the press has teased George Bush for years about the way he speaks. "Bushisms"--dropping pronouns, shifting the gist mid-sentence, combining terms in sloppy ways--have even been preserved in a book (Kinsley 1992). Although his body movement also
displays strings of incomplete actions that add an indefinite quality—nonverbal "Bushisms"—his overall movement style rates positive on balance (Davis, Dulicai and Hadiks 1992). So Dukakis sounds much better than he looks and Bush looks slightly better than he sounds.

If nonverbal behavior has an effect on impressions that translates into voter behavior, it is most likely when there are such stark contrasts. The sample of presidential debates is, of course, too small, but there are glimmers that in those cases in which the nonverbal aspects of ones debate performance are notably inferior to those of ones opponent, although verbally the candidates may be fairly well-matched (i.e. Nixon, Dukakis), the movement comparison predicts the election loser.

**COMPOSED**
- stress 
  - acts -2 0 -2 0 -2
  - const. +2 +2 +2

**AUTHORITATIVE**
- indef. -2 0 -2 0 -2
- verb. +2 +2 +2

**AFFILIATIVE**
- -2 0 -2 0 -2

**DYNAMIC**
- George Bush -2 0 -2 0 -2
- Bill Clinton +2 +2 +2
- Ross Perot +2 +2 +2

First 1992 Presidential Debate

In the 1992 presidential debate, George Bush also displays both negative and positive features on the same dimension of the movement assessment, but this time he has adds a belligerent aspect and
slightly lowers his overall rating. While visible signs of an "attack mode" in Bush's demeanor are becoming prominent, it is noteworthy that the media is becoming more and more critical of Bush for stressing personal attacks on Clinton.\textsuperscript{12} The comparison between Bush, Clinton and Perot is interesting because each has a very different movement style, although on balance their positives and negatives make for a fairly even ranking as regards overall debate performance. Media reaction to this debate described "no knockouts" by anyone, although Perot's performance was an impressive surprise and Clinton's effective defense of his patriotism and lack of errors was noted. The pressure was on George Bush to "score big" which he did not in the press verdicts. The Newsweek poll on who won gave Perot 43\%, Clinton 31\% and Bush 19\%.\textsuperscript{13} As we will see, in the first 1992 debate, Bush is performing slightly lower than he did in 1988 and Clinton is far from his potential. Perot is at his "personal best" in the first debate as compared to 1992 talk show appearances and television interviews in which he displayed low nonverbal ratings for affiliative and high ratings on overbearing and constricted.

As with most of the Presidential debates, the movement evaluations of the vice-presidential candidates are generally consonant with "who won" according to the media and post-debate polls in direction, if not in degree, of difference. Robert Dole's poor performance in the Dole-Mondale debate of 1980 will be discussed in a later section. The marked contrast between Dole and Walter Mondale in this debate is visible in the profile below.
While a recording of the Bush-Ferraro 1984 debate was not available, observations of Geraldine Ferraro in a stressful 1984 campaign press conference indicate that she can display clarity, definiteness and composure nonverbally, but is lower on affiliative signs than George Bush displays in press conferences.

1988 Vice-Presidential Debate

Lloyd Bentsen

1980 Vice-Presidential Debate

Robert Dole

Walter Mondale
Lloyd Bentsen’s debate performance was judged much better than that of Daniel Quayle in the press, in public polls, and in research on viewer reactions, and not only because of his "You’re no Kennedy" confrontation (Decker 1990: 182; Lemert et al 1991: 77; Payne et al 1989: 433). While he is not notably dynamic, it is striking that Bentsen’s overall performance is better than Bush and Dukakis as well.

The 1992 vice-presidential debate was unique in that the format allowed for much greater interaction and Daniel Quayle and Albert Gore pushed the boundaries of debate decorum several notches with repeated interruptions, finger wagging and vigorous attacks at each other. Media reaction was dominated by criticism of the arguing. While there was grudging praise for Gore’s arguments despite the bickering and acknowledgment of Quayle’s effectiveness in making points for Bush, the media was so negative about the arguing, it seemed reluctant to call a winner.15

COMPOSED
stress acts.  |___|___|   |___|___|   |___|___|
const.     |___|___|   |___|___|+2   |___|___|+2

AUTHORITATIVE
indef.     |___|___|   |___|___|   |___|___|
overb.     |___|___|   |___|___|   |___|___|+2

AFFILIATIVE
     |___|___|   |___|___|   |___|___|

DYNAMIC
     |___|___|   |___|___|   |___|___|
     Albert Gore   Daniel Quayle   James Stockdale

1992 Vice-Presidential Debate
The third 1992 Vice-presidential candidate, Admiral James Stockdale, the least coached and politically experienced candidate of any debate, performed poorest of every candidate save Dukakis in the movement ratings of "presidentialness". In the media, he was not even considered a contender, although he received the award for authenticity and lack of guile. Sandwicched between Quayle and Gore as they argued and attacked, his obvious lack of debate skill, his discomfort and vagueness punctuated with flashes of personal reaction made him the more appealing of the three in this debate.

Personal Bests

With the increasing availability of televised speeches and interviews, it is becoming possible to study several performances of a candidate and note which is his or her "personal best". Admittedly, debates are far more stressful and intricate contexts than individual interviews or press conferences and comparing them is problematic. With the caveat that the following observations are seriously compromised by differences in context and the limitations in sampling, they are presented as hints at the potential of such a focus.

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George Bush: Performance Comparisons

As mentioned Bush’s performance in the first 1988 debate was
similar to his first 1992 debate but less belligerent. Displaying
more negative expressions and overbearing actions—or as the media
would say, going into attack mode—is very risky for a presidential
candidate in the debates. The candidate is described as less
presidential if he makes personal attacks and is critical in
belligerent ways. There is greater tolerance for belligerent,
personal attacks done by a vice-presidential candidate in debates,
although even these were becoming out of bounds by the end of the 1992
campaign. Cumulatively, Bush was generally more effective nonverbally
in 1988 than in 1992. Note, particularly how lackluster and limited
his performance appears to be in the Larry King interview toward the
end of the 1992 campaign as compared with the David Frost interview at
the close of the 1988 campaign. However much Bush may have disliked
"talk shows" and interviews with talk show hosts, the one with Frost
finds Bush at his personal best movement-wise. One is tempted to
compare the debate and interview performances of the two years with
the different prospects of winning. Despite copious reports that Bush
fought hard and believed he was going to win to the very end,17 his
heart and his talents don’t seem to be in it from the perspective of
the movement behavior.

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| NYC Primary Debate MTV Talk Show 1st '92 Debate Bill Clinton Performance Comparisons | 2nd '92 Debate |
Clinton's performance over 1992 is a study in gradual improvement. In the New York City Primary debate with Governor Gerry Brown, he is slumped over and struggling to keep a steady eye on the camera. His performance makes a major leap forward in the June 16, 1992 MTV talk show in which he answers the questions of young voters. This television appearance was reportedly regarded by some of his advisors to have greatly helped his faltering campaign and it was rated an A+ by Entertainment Weekly\textsuperscript{18}. In it Clinton displays a potential for being nonverbally more complex and more personally engaging. Clinton appears to have difficulty projecting personal warmth in the formal debate and speech formats where he tends to become didactic and monotonous in manner. Not surprisingly, Clinton's camp negotiated a "town meeting" format for the second debate and this one was his best debate performance.\textsuperscript{19} By the Larry King interview toward the end of the campaign, he is at his personal best.

The movement assessments of Vice President Daniel Quayle are largely at odds with media characterizations of him as inept and limited. In 1988 his aggressiveness is barely hinted at in the jaunty way he hooks his foot on the base of the podium, largely out of camera view and overshadowed by his unease with Bentsen's confrontations. Nonverbally, Quayle's development over four years is dramatic as he becomes more in command and assertive—if too assertive for some tastes. The warning sign in this progress appears in a 1992 Frost interview in which Quayle's gestures become "too perfect" in form and quality and his positions have a studied air. He appears to have been very well coached and to have set his mind to mastering public presentation over the past four years—and it shows.
To this observer Gore is the most interesting of all the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. There are jokes—media and self-inflicted—about Gore’s "woodenness", an adjective that evokes movement images. But either this observer has missed seeing Gore when he was "wooden" or the bases of this perception are complicated indeed. In the contexts profiled above Gore is not rigid, immobile, or spatially limited in his head movements, gestures, facial expression or postural behavior. He does have a tendency to build his gestures into forceful, tight pauses in the air and moves his head in large, intricate spatial patterns that add a preacher’s tone to what
must be the most straight-arrow visage in politics. But these are very subtle signs of obsessive precision, if that is what they are. It is interesting that in a study of a 1988 presidential primary debate, Gore ranks lowest in pre-debate preference of the six Democratic candidates and fourth overall in debate performance, but he ranks high in specific judgments such as "has abilities a president needs", "strong, persuasive", "intelligent, good judgment", and "honest" (Wall et al 1988). Gore appears hard to peg. He is not as conventional a politician as may be assumed given his extensive political background. He is too complicated. While Clinton's intelligence is much in evidence in his extraordinary verbal facility and memory, his public presentation style is fairly conventional and unremarkable. Gore displays much more subtle and complex movement patterns. The ways their movement styles complement and contrast (illustrated with microanalysis in a later section) are consonant with reports of the dynamic relationship between Clinton and Gore. The movement analysis supports indications that Gore brings to the relationship a subtlety, depth and a personal independence of mind that withstands political packaging and is incompatible with the traditionally vapid role of the Vice-President.21

Personal Crises

If the nonverbal profiles indicate performance peaks, they also identify low points. The focus will shift now away from performance evaluation to observations of state changes in crises. This will begin with the simplified profiles, and expand to more complex
movement analyses. Consider the following changes in Kennedy's movement patterns:

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John F. Kennedy Performance Comparisons

Kennedy was considered one of the first presidents to master television. While evaluations of his first debate may be inflated by comparison with Nixon's unfortunate performance, Kennedy had a unique ability to take the lead in the debates and develop an attack without appearing overbearing or offensive. Kennedy may not have been as television-friendly as Reagan, who could make anything sound palatable and could field any confrontation with a deft indirection and affability (Smith 1991), but he was the avowed master of the press conference. In time reporters would take themselves to task for being so charmed by Kennedy, and too easy on him in the press conferences (Smith 1991).

A collage of scenes from Kennedy press conferences was presented recently on television complete with very complimentary descriptions of his sense of humor and rapport with the press. The selections stressed his humorous asides and created an image of a very urbane,
quick-witted president (who was not above making jokes at the expense of women in the audience). In fact, Kennedy was not usually funny in press conferences despite the impression left by the TV special. Kennedy press conferences were in the tradition of formal press conferences in which reporters sit in a large theatre, rise when the President enters, and raise their hands and stand when acknowledged by the President who stands at a lectern in front of an imposing presidential insignia. Accompanied by his press secretary, Pierre Salinger, he entered and left usually without greeting individual journalists. Most of the conferences involved very serious answers that were remarkably clear and concise even when they were elaborate.

If one turns off the sound, the secret of Kennedy's charm is visible. He looks directly at the questioner then down to papers on the podium that he lightly rearranges. Looking back and forth between journalist and podium—the clear address patterns and gestures alternate with "collecting" his thoughts as he gently fusses with his papers. He holds the attention of the audience not only because they must accurately register the content of what he is saying, but because it is so interesting to watch him compose these complex, coherent answers fluent but for occasional "errrah" hesitation sound made with a Boston accent. When he jokes, Kennedy does not telegraph "now I will be witty" and he never obviously basks in the laughter he evokes. He looks down at his paper props, glides into the droll remark in a low-keyed way, gaze averted, slightly smiles as the audience gets the joke while still watching his paper-fixing, then gently raises his arm to indicate the next questioner.
As the diagram shows, even public presentations by very deft politicians reveal signs of personal crisis. The description of Lyndon Baines Johnson on page one is such an example, as is the nonverbal coding of Kennedy during the press conference following the Bay of Pigs invasion fiasco. Kennedy becomes uncharacteristically inhibited, tense, and limited in his movements during this press conference. While he makes it clear at the outset that he will not discuss the failed invasion in detail, he reiterates that he takes full responsibility for the fiasco. Throughout this session his movements suggest more than a reluctance to speak openly, they suggest he is personally shaken by the events of recent days.

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Mikhail Gorbachev Performance Comparisons

In another dramatic example of change under stress, consider the movement patterns of Mikhail Gorbachev as analyzed from a 1990 press conference and a post-coup 1991 press conference. Gorbachev is in top form at the press conference concluding a Washington Summit with President Bush in the spring of 1990 (Davis, Dulicai and Hadiks 1992); and Gorbachev at his best marks the upper limits of the "nonverbal
presidential scale". He is all ease and command, charming and related to Bush and Press, his movements fluent orchestrations of head, hand and posture. Ironically, Gorbachev appears the most presidential of all in ways valued by Americans. Jokes that he should be nominated for the 1988 U.S. election seem more than a little wistful.

The post-coup press conference was held just hours after Gorbachev arrived in Moscow after his captivity. It is one of the most remarkable press conferences ever recorded. Journalists and photographers from all over the world fill the large hall and welcome him back warmly, although in time Russian correspondents begin to confront him with tough questions. As political and public a figure as he is, Gorbachev displays intensely personal and emotional reactions in this press conference. In the early part Gorbachev answers questions with head and hand movements so subdued as to be unrecognizable. He fidgets with a pen and keeps his gaze averted for long periods as he speaks, gesturing occasionally with brief hand tosses. Slowly over this long press conference his dynamism returns in fits and starts. A more detailed analysis of these changes is seen in Figure 1. This analysis focuses on specific behaviors such as whether he smiles as he speaks at any time during a nine minute segment. Note how dramatically this detail reflects the contrast between Gorbachev at his peak, Gorbachev under acute stress and Gorbachev appearing to rally. The other indices indicate his recovery is more halting within the 90-minute press conference. Such analyses become one way of monitoring the well-being of the president over time and context.
Figure 1

Changes in Gorbachev's Nonverbal Behavior Under Stress

<table>
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<th>SUMMIT</th>
<th>POST-COUP 1st 45 min.</th>
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<td>Gesture complexity</td>
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CODING KEY:

X = at least one phase of smiling during speaking.
/ \ = wide gaze range  ^ = medium gaze range
\ = holds head/gaze down for five or more seconds as speaks

Head Intensity: 0=very diminished  1=downward stress without marked strength  2=some strong head moves  3=high degree of strong moves

Gesture Complexity: 1 = few short and/or two-phasic gestures  2 = gesticulations of medium range and complexity  3 = greater extensiveness and/or more complex laterality

Rest Position: ( ) = hands apart, palms on table  (-) = hands folded or touching  (=) = forearms crossed

The coding intervals are based on approximately nine minutes segments. The 1990 conference lasted about 45 minutes after he read a statement. The 1991 conference lasted approximately 90 minutes.

Adapted from Davis, Dulicai and Hadiks 1992.
Physical Symptoms

There are some movement patterns displayed in the debates and press conferences that appear to be medical symptoms and signs. Kennedy's ramrod posture and way of holding his upper arms away from his sides appears related to his chronic back pain and perhaps to the brace that he is known to have worn. One can see in his first press conference that he leans on the podium and appears tired in such a way as to suggest he is in pain. Pictures of Kennedy when he was in the Senate are shockingly different than views of him in the 1960 campaign. He is gaunt and very young-looking in the Senate, while in the 1960 debate his face is filled out. We know now that cortisone treatments for a secret Addison's disease gave him considerable relief and as a politically valuable by-product filled out his facial features by 1960.23

When political leaders have visible handicaps, it matters a great deal how they handle them. Roosevelt was so intense in gaze, voice and gesture, that one could forget he was in a wheel chair. When he stood up for speeches he had to use his arms for support, so his head movements and voice carried the emphasis and dynamism.24 In modern campaigns physical handicaps are not to be mentioned (in contrast with the press obsession with potential medical problems of the candidates.) Senator Robert Dole, for example, does not appear able to use his right arm for more than holding objects placed in his cupped hand. This means he shakes
hands with his left. Cameras shooting the Dole-Mondale vice-presidential debate suddenly shifted off of the pair just as they approached to shake hands. In this debate, Dole made his arm injury a liability by trying to obscure it. He turned his right side (and this arm) away from the camera and covered his right hand with his left. To do this he leaned one side against the podium virtually the entire debate, forcing his right hip out in what became too casual a position for the debates. (Candidates are supposed to stand upright for up to 90 minutes. When Admiral Stockdale moved away from the lectern and began to pace a bit to relieve his war injuries, he caused consternation in the TV control room.) Dole’s attempts at witty asides were performed without smiling. The total effect was too negative and cynical for the debates (Martel 1983: 99; Sauter, 1990: 45)

There are body signs that may be taken as cues to emotion or personality when they probably have physical bases. Nixon’s twisted leg position in the first debate was probably related to a leg problem treated just days before and to his banging his leg as he got out of his car to come to the debate (Mickelson 1989: 120). But the audience wouldn’t know this and so his sitting position might contribute to impressions of him as awkward and ill-at-ease.

In the 1992 campaign, Bill Clinton’s tendency to have a suggestion of a smile, lips slightly pulled to the side even in the most serious discussion, was taken by some as
evidence of his "slickness". Clinton himself defended this facial mannerism as a vestige of his childhood when he had to keep a happy face no matter how upsetting the family situation. It was such a liability that he can be seen trying to look serious, pulling the face into deadpan, as he does before making a serious assertion about abortion during his acceptance speech. While this observer subscribes to the notion that Clinton’s slight lip retraction and tendency to keep his mouth open is related to serious allergies that force him to breath through his mouth, she has heard other intriguing theories, such as one movement analyst’s comment that it resembled facial configurations she has seen in other saxophone players.

As a final example of how tricky this question is, consider the fact that I-independent candidate Ross Perot displays phenomenally long periods of no blinking. Perot has been clocked as not blinking for up to 30 seconds, with his campaign average being about one per eight to ten seconds. The normal blink rate in unstressful contexts is one in three or four seconds, but the "normal" rate for the highly stressful debate context appears to be about one in two seconds. If a candidate blinks more frequently than that it becomes a very noticeable sign of stress. Medical studies of the blinking reflex confirm that it increases with stress and anxiety (Ponder and Kennedy 1927). But what if a candidate does not blink? Blinking is a reflex. Actors in films and television control it for rather long
periods during close-ups and for them this control appears to be part of their concentration. But controlling blinking for long periods of continuous conversation in this way is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to consciously achieve.

So what does Perot's unblinking manner "mean". One ramification of it is that Perot appears unusual, although viewers may not be able to identify what it is about his manner that is "eccentric". Presidential candidates as a group appear very conventional in demeanor. Their positions are ones stereotypically seen in white American males. Their gestures involve the conventional repertoire of repetitive "batons" and occasional illustrators (Atkinson 1984: 64; Efron 1941). They are never seen deviating from the conventions of greeting, turn-taking, address and orientation that are tacitly and sometimes explicitly spelled out for the debates. So when a candidate displays an "eccentricity" in manner, it stands out—even though it might be seen in a larger population.

In Perot's case it should be noted that he not only doesn't blink for long periods, he often doesn't move his head or change his gaze as he speaks, the total effect being one of intense focus. This author has been unable to find a medical explanation for this pattern, but it appears to be a hypervigilant state. It is notable that Perot displayed periods of normal blinking rates immediately after the election when presumably he was tired and more relaxed. All
this to say, hypothesizing what a pattern "means" is very risky, although immeasurably aided by knowledge of the individual’s range over several contexts.

Dramatic Moments

Moving from a consideration of overall performance to changes between performances to transient states reflected in body movement, this section will deal with peaks and special moments. The media hungers for these moments in the presidential debates, especially if they involve confrontations between the debaters. One can predict what videobites will appear on the late night news by watching for the moments in which a debater turns to his opponent and holds this address mode despite the other’s intent writing activity or averted gaze. In recent debates, candidates almost appear to take a deep breath, pointedly turning as if to say, "here I go. I’m going to take the initiative and confront you now." When this is done, it is very important to hold ones ground. The times a candidate quickly turns back or turns his head, but not his whole body, do not mark the dramatic confrontations.

The famous peak moments in presidential debates have this structure. Bentsen pointedly turns and looks at Quayle as he builds to his famous remark, "...and you’re no Kennedy". Actually, Quayle does not appear as anxious as some descriptions based on the words and context (Drew 1988); he shakes his head and protests that the remark is uncalled
for. But he does it while oriented to the front away from Bentsen. Meanwhile, Bentsen stays in confrontation position and has a quick reply that Quayle has brought on the remark with his own comparisons to Kennedy. The effectiveness of such dramatic points depends on several aspects performed in sequence.

Walter Mondale turns and plants himself in confrontation mode before making his effective "there you go again" remarks to Reagan in their first debate. Despite rules that limit reaction shots, if a candidate does this, he exerts a strong pressure on the television crew to go to a two-shot or to a brief close-up on the opponent who is under "attack". As long as he has the floor and his opponent is listening, the burden is on the opponent to not look uncomfortable, upset or surprised—a difficult task when one is being effectively challenged in front of over 60 million people. Reagan appears to glower and shake his head in protest when Mondale scores a soundbite that elicits applause from the audience at Reagan’s expense. Actually, Reagan makes a fairly quick and effective response when he finally gets the floor, but by then it is too late. It is the image of him pinned by Mondale for a long moment that remains the dramatic videobite.

About ten minutes into the first 1992 debate, Clinton turns and indignantly protests that Bush has cast aspersions on his patriotism. When Clinton finishes he turns back and faces the podium/audience for the rest of the debate. It is
the dramatic point of the debate, a moment televised that night on the news. The rest of the debate appears anticlimatic. The confrontation mode also appears to require a conscious effort on Clinton's part. It is not performed with ease.

We know that those running a presidential campaign use very sophisticated information and communication analyses to help them. They study past debates and they get advice on how to move and speak (Martel 1983: 79-99). One can almost hear the discussion in the Clinton camp that he must take the initiative early in the debate and protest attacks on his patriotism, turn and hold Bush's attention, then do the rest of the debate in a conservative mode avoiding mistakes. One can also imagine discussion within Vice President Quayle's group that he should engage Albert Gore above all, hold the attack, interrupt if Gore starts to get in soundbites against him, and avoid the pinned, gaze-averred stance. The Quayle/Gore debate played with tacit debate rules about confrontation, introducing interruption and counterattack strategies highly visible in movement, a risk apparently judged worth taking for the vice-presidential candidates, but not likely to be instituted in presidential debates.

Finally, there are dramatic moments that become videobites because of the failure of the candidate to respond as valued. The first question of the second debate in 1988 was so audacious ("If you wife were raped and
murdered..."), it would probably end up a soundbite on the news no matter what Dukakis did. As it happened, it exposed Dukakis' tendency to become depleted when under direct personal attack—the usual vigor of his characteristic gestures simply vanished (Davis and Dulicai 1991). He was criticized in the press for not being "emotional" or indignant (Friedenberg 1990: 160).

Fleeting reactions

The dramatic moments described above last about thirty seconds to two minutes. They are memorable and explicitly cited in debate lore. There are, of course, many very brief movements that are comments on the proceedings. Watching when a candidate nose-wipes is funny and instructive, the timing seems more than coincidental in the midst of an unpleasant exchange.

The passing details of greetings and leave-takings are a subject all its own. Campaign handlers ruminate on who should enter first, how the candidate should negotiate the handshake, how they should stand after the debate, etc. (Martel 1983: 78) Dukakis left the stage very quickly after shaking hands and greeting family, leaving George Bush to the attention of well-wishers and network cameras for a good two minutes after the second 1988 debate. After the contentious Gore/Quayle debate, Gore quickly shook hands with Admiral Stockdale, requiring Quayle to join them as they smiled at Stockdale and barely looked at each other
during their obligatory handshake in what seemed like the final use of Stockdale as a buffer between them.

In the second 1992 debate, Bush was caught looking at his watch three times by a gleeful press as evidence that he dislike the "town meeting" format and wished to be elsewhere. Although much of the debates and press conferences involve camerawork that limits views of the candidates, there is still a great deal that can be seen and the press is picking up on finer and finer details. The next section shifts to fine-grained movement analysis. From a movement analysis perspective, observations described so far have been gross and impressionistic.
The Anatomy of Adjectives

The more detailed the description, the more precise the explication of what in the movement behavior constitutes the bases of impressions and grosser descriptions. For example, in the previous section, Gorbachev’s movements were described in a few adjectives sufficient to illustrate changes following a crisis. In good times he displayed great "composure", "assertiveness", "affiliativeness" and "dynamism" at press conferences. Immediately following his return from captivity, he displayed marked signs of stress, exhaustion and withdrawal in the first part of the press conference with glimmers of recovery in the second. For literary purposes, it may be sufficient to cite movement examples of these adjectives. For research purposes it is necessary to operationally define the categories precisely and train observers to code the behavior in this way until adequate levels of observer agreement are reached. The training would involve clarification of what units of behavior are to be considered, how features are to be weighted, how to summarize contrasting patterns, when to include single events, etc.

But even with reliable observations verifying that the patterns are visible in the subject and not fabricated by an observer, the ratings themselves are so gross they omit a great deal of information that might significantly modify any conclusions drawn from them. The process of description needs constant elaboration "vertically" into smaller and
more diverse details and "horizontally" with comparisons of patterns over time and context, including, of course, the extraordinary complexities of interaction with others. This expands the information exponentially while it clarifies and modifies the grosser observations. For example, consider the following three levels of analysis of Gorbachev's press conference performance. The first has been presented--three separate "nonverbal presidential scales", one for 45 minutes of the 1990 Summit press conference, one for the first 45 minutes of the Post-coup press conference, and one for the last 45 minutes of this conference. The unit of analysis is 45 minutes of Gorbachev listening to questions and taking rather long speaking turns.

The next level illustrated Figure 1 is an analysis based on approximately nine-minute intervals. In this procedure the nonverbal behavior is coded as to presence or absence of face-touch, smiling while speaking, and fidgeting with an object; which of three arm positions are displayed; the level of intensity of head movements and complexity of gesticulations in four degrees; and the range of gaze direction in three degrees (See Diagram 1). Observers can readily agree on these codings (Davis, Dulicai and Hadiks 1992). They become one way to ground the more impressionistic macro-coding in specific technical detail. For purposes of discussion this will be called a medium or "mecro" level of analysis in contrast with the macro level
of the presidential profiles and the microanalysis to be discussed.

While both levels say something about Gorbachev's remarkable movement range and resiliency, they do not richly capture how he moves. For example, "dynamism" in Gorbachev looks very different than "dynamism" in Vice President Gore, although they both display high levels of movement "complexity". For a good look at Gorbachev in his uniqueness, the kinesic microscope must be intensified to half-minute units of time involving many more features of movement.

Diagram 1 is a recording of the most intense ten seconds of the most complex speaking turn of the most dynamic public presentation this observer has seen of Mikhail Gorbachev. Next to it are ten-second peaks for Vice President Albert Gore and President Bill Clinton from the 1992 debates for comparison. Space does not permit comprehensive description of these recordings (see Davis 1991 for a full explanation), but even without knowing what the symbols mean, one can see that each man is very different and that "complexity" and "dynamism" takes many forms. What cannot be elaborated on here is how such microanalyses reveal the individual's "movement signature" and the subtle ways gesture, position, gaze and facial movement are varied by the individual. Others may display similar characteristics or conventional forms, but no one coordinates these many features in quite the same way.
These recordings also illustrate that at any one moment there are many different sources of information. Not only does movement qualify what is being said in endless ways, but different parts of the body project a range of information. Often this information is redundant, making it possible to glean information on individual movement style from one area such as the face, head and gaze behavior when the recording is limited to head shots. For example, Dukakis head movements and gaze pattern display the same constrictions and rhythms of movement as his gestures. Perhaps more fascinating is the possibility of different cues in different body parts--or in the same body area but with different aspects of movement--combinations that modify or contradict each other in individually distinctive ways. For example, Dukakis' supposed "icy-ness" in the head, torso, and gesture spatial constriction, is in marked contrast to the considerable "heat" of his gestures which crescendo into speed and forcefulness.

The macro-recordings of "presidentialness" show how a politician's movement can vary greatly because these mini-profiles capture relatively gross, context-sensitive dimensions of performance. However, finer-grained details of movement style detectable in the microanalysis can be extraordinarily resilient over time and context. Even when Gorbachev keeps his arms tightly folded for nine minutes as he speaks on the home video smuggled out during the coup, one can see the vigorous and highly integrated arcing head
motions flowing into trunk shifts that Gorbachev displays years earlier.

What do the signature patterns of a leader "mean"? In Gorbachev's case they appear to "mean" that he is a dynamic (degree of complexity in space, body articulation, and intensity), headstrong (vigorously leading with the head), Russian\textsuperscript{32} (fine coordination of head, torso and hand in horizontal to vertical arcs), high status male\textsuperscript{33} (wide positions, large gestures of whole arm, initiations of changes in action and interaction), who exquisitely balances contrasting forces (alternation of right and left motions against a centered posture; balance of spatial complexity and intensity; balance of forceful or sudden outward/upward movements with always precise spatial forms), is at his peak functioning (this is his most complex behavior sample), and has the personal resources and resilience to stay there through situations that would deplete most men his age (high degree of integration and fluency of the movement).

But one observer doing a microanalysis cannot validate what a movement pattern "means". She or he may go a long way to accurately recording the movement and comparing it with other movements of the same person and others in similar contexts. And experience in movement analysis generates a wealth of hypotheses about what the movement is related to, as in the above interpretation of Gorbachev's movement style. Untrained observers giving impressions cannot
generate these recordings and hypotheses; their reports are simply too gross and vague.

There are very few communication studies of the debates that examine what in the nonverbal behavior is perceived by viewers and how it might contribute to their judgements, although Husson et al (1988) found that specific behavior ratings predicted preference for a candidate. Who is judging what under what conditions shapes perceptions so strongly that comparisons between different readings of the debates are very shaky at this time. Research on perception and interpretation of these visible patterns occupies a major portion of research in nonverbal communication, yet has only begun to deal with the complexities of this subject.

Cues to Credibility

Preoccupation with the "body language" of politicians largely is based on assumptions that the body "doesn't lie" and body movements indicate what one "really means". We know that no matter how honest a political leader is, he or she often speaks in idealistic generalities and is evasive about specific choices. But the Press is aptly named as it presses candidates and presidents for more and more specific information.

"Credible" is far more complex to define and analyze from demeanor than "presidential". At least three aspects of credibility seem critical in American politics: first,
the genuineness and authenticity of the candidate's concern for voters; second, the conviction with which he or she holds stated positions and policies; and third, honesty in specific actions and behind-the-scenes dealings.

No matter how vague and elusive the question as to whether the candidate genuinely cares about the electorate, a negative judgment can mortally wound a candidate, as it appeared to for George Bush in the 1992 campaign. In the 1992 campaign each candidate had to endure scrutiny about his authenticity and caring against a tidal wave of cynicism. Consider the relentless campaign press analysis of whether Bill Clinton has sincere concern for people or is a calculating "politician". The Press has been teaching us about handlers and packaging so effectively, that every sentiment expressed by a presidential candidate has become suspect. Clinton displays an interesting contrast between how he relates in formal contexts such as speeches or debates and how he appears in small, face-to-face interactions on the campaign trail. In the debates he appears to go into a lecturing mode that leaves no point uncited. In debate, the words say "I am profoundly concerned about people" while the demeanor says "I am a Rhodes Scholar with a prodigious memory relying on enumeration of endless data to persuade voters with the weight of my preparation."

One way to assess the authenticity of a leader's personal concern for voters is to observe him or her in
different contexts. In Clinton’s case this is illuminating because he is very different when he talks to voters face-to-face. In 1992 journalists presented anecdote after anecdote like the following, then bent over backwards to sound skeptical and unimpressed. New York Times political correspondents in particular act as if they are veterans of the Kennedy press conferences and are determined not to be seduced this time around.

Of all things, I called him Bill," recalled Mr. Quercio, 32 [a teacher with AIDS]. "We were in a room full of people clamoring to be close to him and he held my hand for four or five minutes and never took his eyes off me. I think it’s really ironic that I’ve never been in Washington before to consider that my first visit is one in which I’ll be honored by the President-elect [at an inaugural luncheon]....[A veteran describing the high suicide rate of Vietnam vets to Clinton]: "His eyes were glassed over and he started to choke up and he hugged me three times," Mr. Murphy recalled. "Three days later he wrote me and said it was one of the most emotional moments of the campaign."

Although Clinton may be a relatively ordinary political speaker, he is unique among presidential candidates in his comfort with physical contact and closeness to people on the campaign trail in ways that would seem impossible to fake for such long periods.
The second level regarding credibility involves judgment of the candidate’s conviction on asserted policies and positions. Here, cynicism can flourish because candidates and presidents constantly shape their answers and repeat themselves in generalities, raising evasion to an art form to avoid alienating specific constituencies.

Nonverbally, this may be the easiest aspect of credibility to assess because conviction appears manifested quite literally in the degree of involvement and variety of the movements accompanying the policy statement. At one end of a spectrum are "pro forma" statements performed with minimal torso activation and spatial and dynamic variation. If these cursory moves accompany critical policy statements in an interview, one might wonder at the candidate’s conviction (Davis and Hadiks in preparation).

For example, a microanalysis of Saddam Hussein’s responses to questions by Peter Arnett during the Gulf War CNN interview revealed that Hussein displayed a version of "pro forma" gestures--small arcs by hand or forearm with little intensity or spatial complexity--during the periods of time he was engaged in broad generalizations, heavily intoned in political rhetoric, such as when he talked at length about Iraqi resolve or the hypocrisy of the Gulf allies (Davis, Hadiks and Dulicai 1992). While one could imagine him discussing the morality of the Iraqi stand with passion and intensity, he saves his intensity for other subjects as will be discussed.
When candidates are campaigning, they repeat themselves every day as they develop "The Speech". Gesticulation can reflect this constant reiteration-cum-political rhetoric and appear intense in a highly repetitious, unmodulated way. With the sound off, candidates in debates can be seen to go into parts of the The Speech as they answer questions in their individual versions of political rhetoric. The gestures, while intense, become hackneyed, monotonous, without surprize in timing, spatial design, visual behavior or facial expression. Each candidate has his cursory, low intensity mode during interviews and his "political rhetoric" mode during debates and speeches when he appears to go on automatic pilot. Whether he has conviction about what he is saying during these states is at least questionable.

In contrast are moments in which he breaks from pro forma or rhetorical modes into greater body involvement and variety in dynamics and spatial pattern. For example, it seems more than coincidental that Gorbachev's most intense answer in the 1990 Summit Press Conference, the one cited here as an example of his complexity and dynamism, involved discussion of Ukrainian independence, a matter of great urgency at that time. And it is striking that Saddam Hussein became most intense and active when he was talking about George Bush himself in the Arnett Gulf War interview (Davis, Hadiks and Dulicai 1992). Despite all of the tensions and profound conflicts he discusses in this 90+
minute interview, the nonverbal behavior indicates that he is personally most preoccupied with President Bush himself. Hussein's actions at the end of Bush's term of office would seem consistent with this personal preoccupation.

Finally, there is the question of whether nonverbal behavior provides cues to when presidents lie to cover up crimes or unpopular actions. Suffice it to say that if nonverbal behavior is a source of information about the veracity of a statement, it has to be studied relative to the speaker's range and style of movements, the precise context, and the specificity of the question and answer. An approach to assessment of the credibility of specific statements is described elsewhere (Davis, Hadiks and Dulicai 1992; Davis and Hadiks in preparation). This method relies on contrastive analysis of each question and answer with every other to identify distinctive patterns of movement, such as how that individual becomes constrained while giving very specific information.36 In the Arnett Gulf War interview, Saddam Hussein refuses to give specific information about strategy, of course. But the one time he formulates an answer about Iraqi actions that has some verifiable content to it--and that proves false according to what is learned about the war later--he displays a distinctive movement pattern. While asserting that "we respect the decision and the regulations of Iran" as if detaining Iraqi planes there were the actions of an Islamic ally, he sits upright, brings his arms close to his sides
and stops gesturing in the air, displaying a form of measured constraint not seen at any other time (Davis, Hadiks and Dulicai 1992).

For an American example, consider the strategic lie told to the press at the start of the Cuban missile crisis. President Kennedy was in Chicago and in order to get him back to the White House without alerting the press of the crisis, it was announced that he had developed a cold and his doctor wanted him to return to Washington. His Press Secretary, Pierre Salinger, can be seen answering questions of reporters gathered around him. Although the camera is in close up limiting the view, one can see that when Salinger states the line about the president’s cold, his head movements stop and he looks straight forward. Salinger answers other questions with greater variety in gaze direction and head motion. This is a documented instance of a clear lie and it is obvious that Salinger constrains his more animated manner to accurately recite the fabricated line.

In the rubric of the macro to micro levels discussed above, such a credibility analysis requires a shift to examination of movement patterns lasting from about 2 to 30 seconds as they vary by Q and A. Of course, debates rarely involve questions on matters of misconduct that are specific enough to elicit answers that contain explicit lies or false denials. Candidates can always answer in generalities with little concern they will get follow-up questions that force
them to be more specific. Press conferences may have more rigorous follow-up questioning and there are some notable confrontations of presidents about misconduct, such as in the intense questioning of Ronald Reagan during the March 19, 1986 press conference on the Iran/Contra scandal. But even in these contexts, presidents are enough in charge of the proceedings that they can avoid specific answers or prepare a line of defense. 38

There are times when a carefully worded explanation that is technically not a lie may be given with body movements that are so unusual for the president and so replete with signs of stress and the "contraint of reciting" something very carefully, that it stretches credulity. For example, in the San Clemente press conference of Richard Nixon, he describes elaborate measures he took to determine if any one close to him had known of the Watergate break-in. They may not have known exactly about the break-in beforehand, and so technically Nixon may have been telling the truth. But of course, it was not the logistics of this particular dirty trick that was the question, it was what Nixon and his aides knew about and supported of the financial irregularities and covert operations of the Committee to Re-elect the President. As Nixon elaborates on their ignorance and his considerable efforts to get to the bottom of the matter, he gives a fascinating display of weight shifts uncharacteristically repeated forward and back with intricate statements that have no gestural support or
elaboration, and gaze behavior that is unusual for him.

Unfortunately camerawork in press conferences can be erratic, going to close ups when changes in the patterning of the gestures and hand activity is of particular interest. While many press conferences lack the medium-shot camerawork and the specific, thorough questioning optimal for this contrastive analysis, C-Span-like coverage of Senate investigations would be adequate. Unfortunately, as Ekman (1985: 291) states so well, the problem with formal court-like hearings is that they are conducted long after the events in question, are proceeded by elaborate preparation and coaching, and use legal conventions that divest the exchanges of any spontaneity. They are designed to discourage conversational behavior or extensive personal narrative that is preferrable for assessing credibility from nonverbal behavior.

Conclusion

Dwight D. Eisenhower held a press conference at the Pentagon just hours before he would remove his uniform and begin his campaign for president.39 Though he said he wasn’t there to discuss political matters, his responses had to be regarded as those of a serious presidential candidate. Watching this conference today is like stealing a glimpse of the media age of innocence through jaded eyes. Eisenhower is so unpolished and disengenuous, he could unseat Ross
Perot as "outsider of the year" and give Admiral Stockdale a race for the "non-politician" award.

Of course, Eisenhower was anything but naive. His answers reflected an astute sense for political ramifications. What he was was "unpackaged". There must have been many political advisers behind the scenes, but there is hardly a "handler" in sight. Eisenhower drops his head and smiles abashedly at times or comments on the grammar of an answer. He even looks up at the ceiling. He moves in an awkward cadence as he speaks—putting hand in pocket one moment, scratching an ear at another, beating his fist on the podium at another. The considerable range and forcefulness of his movements emerges as he is alternates between public and personal speaking modes; sometimes as if speaking to colleagues in a small gathering about matters that make him pensive, at other moments projecting across the stage to the large gathering in ringing tones.

He is a brilliant choice: authoritative but disarming, in command yet anything but slick, nervous in a presidentially perfect way—endearing in shy asides and fumbles as he adjusts to the format, shedding these as he grows increasingly involved, until he hits his stride, then graciously takes his leave.

In a wonderful paradox, the politician must endlessly strive to project authenticity and candor. As the saying goes, if you can do sincerity well, you've got it made. But all the preparation, research and sophistication about
performance undoes the "sincerity thing". Movement analysis can, of course, add more data for handlers to use in their coaching. But despite its potential for packaging, movement and bodily expression is so subtle and complex that it will also betray the packaging. Just as nonverbal behavior displays signs of acting, it leaks evidence of practice, artifice, coaching, and attempts to appear earnest and presidential by the candidates. No one can control—or decipher—it completely. The body language of political leaders is a fascinating and largely unexplored area of performance research. Hopefully, these illustrations will contribute to an appreciation of its complexity and potential.
Notes


6. The author greatly appreciates the contributions of movement analysts Miriam Roskin Berger, Dianne Dulicaí, Diane Domoracki and Kimberly Meyer.

7. The Museum of TV and Radio, 25 W. 52nd Street, New York City has collections of videotapes that can be viewed by the public. While it is vast, the collection is not exhaustive because it is built on individual donations and not the archives of the national television networks.

8. Unfortunately a recording of the Geraldine Ferraro-George Bush vice-presidential debate of 1984 was not available, although the author did find a Ferraro campaign press conference which is discussed in the paper. Throughout this paper the pronoun "he" will be used when referring to past performance, but as the use of "he or she" indicates when discussing general conventions, the presidential qualities that are valued would seem important for women candidates as well. While there are clearly gender differences observable in body movement (Mayo and Henley 1981), Ferraro could be coded with the same "presidential" criteria as the male candidates.

9. All of the debates, press conferences and interviews cited in Table 1 were viewed and coded by the author. To examine observer agreement, the presidential profile ratings were done by two other trained observers on a sample of the debates and press conferences.

10. This tendency of Bush to display contrasts in his nonverbal behavior along the same dimension might be compared to descriptions of Bush that highlight his tendency to project contrasting messages such as "win at all cost" and "kindler, gentler"; a contrast that persisted into the 1992 campaign. See Maureen Dowd, "On the Trail, the Contradictory Sides of Bush." New York Times November 2, 1992, pp A1 and A12.


14. From a movement analysis perspective, Bentsen outperformed Bush and Dukakis as well, although Bentsen was not high in dynamism.


23. Narration from television biography of JFK.


27. "Running Against the Past," by Eleanor Clift. Newsweek, April 13, 1992, p. 30. The comparison to saxophone players was made by a movement analyst attending a meeting sponsored by the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies, November 2, 1992.

28. Observations on Perot and his blink rates were completed by the author and Miriam Roskin Berger.

29. Observations on peak moments were completed by the author. They are identified by reviewing the video without sound; the comparison with verbal themes is made after the movement analysis.

30. "Endgame" by Elizabeth, op. cit., p. 58.

31. The microrecording of Bill Clinton from a peak in the first debate was completed by Diane Domoracki. The microrecording of Albert Gore was completed by Kimberly Meyer. These were then checked by the author and two other observers for accuracy.

32. Insight into this cultural aspect of Gorbachev's movement was provided by Forrestine Paulay at the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies June 1991 conference on advances in movement analysis in New York City.

33. A major source on this subject is Mayo and Henley (1981).


36. To obtain these ratings three observers working independently coded the nonverbal behavior, the author, Miriam Roskin Berger and Dianne Dulicai.

37. "One Minute to Midnight: The True Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis" narrated by Maria Shriver, NBC NEWS production, 1992.


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