

Nonverbal Campaign

In the 2008 Campaign Debate the Candidates executed many nonverbal behaviors that were both planned and naturally exercised. Some of these nonverbal actions were easily visible, while others were harder to point out.

One nonverbal behavior that was easily visible and scripted that both candidates displayed was the nonverbal behavior of costumes. For the debate both candidates were sharply dressed in a suit and tie. This nonverbal behavior exhibits authority, power, prestige, and wealth. Costumes help to identify people and also can tell in most cases their personality. The function that this nonverbal behavior serves was social control. Both candidates wanted to present that they had power, authority, and prestige. The nonverbal behavior of costumes was established from the beginning of the debate till the end of the debate, virtually the entire time. The behavior was effective for both candidates since they both were very well dressed. Barack Obama and John McCain costumes never changed and continuously had the same purpose throughout the debate.

A nonverbal behavior that Obama scripted, executed, and was effective was his eye behavior. "Eye behavior can be regarded as a barometer of a person's character and intentions" (Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 2010, p.131). During the debate Obama maintains his eye contact with Bob Schieffer and John McCain. While Obama is speaking he keeps eye contact with Bob, while also taking glances at McCain. The eye behavior of Obama depicted that he was very confident in himself and what he was saying. When Obama is listening to McCain he usually takes notes. While he is taking notes he is looking down. As soon as Obama is finished taking notes Obama makes it a point to keep eye contact with McCain although McCain doesn't look at Obama. This

nonverbal behavior serves the function of facilitating the communication process, also the expression of emotion. By facilitating the communication process Obama displays that he is interested in this debate and also that he is paying attention and listening to his opponent. The function of expressing emotions helps us understand how he feels about what he is saying and also what McCain is speaking about. This helps us really understand how Obama feels about different important problems. Obama is effective with his eye behavior.

John McCain also displayed the nonverbal behavior of eye behavior. In my opinion although McCain was effective he was less effective than Obama. At 21:37 in the debate he showed too much emotion, which was not necessary. While Obama spoke he sometimes seemed less interested and barely kept eye contact with Obama. On the other hand while McCain was speaking he did an effective job of his eye contact. John McCain scripted this nonverbal behavior although there were more instances where his emotions got the best of him.

Another scripted nonverbal behavior that John McCain displayed was posture. His posture was effective he was never hunched over and stood up tall throughout the debate. Posture displays his confidence and also his authority. "Posture refers to a stance or positioning of the body or body part" (Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 2010, p.132). Posture can tell a lot about someone and having a bad posture would have given the public a bad impression of himself. He did a great job of maintaining his posture to show his empowerment and rank. This behavior was evident throughout the debate. Posture functions as social control of nonverbal communication behaviors. This nonverbal

behavior from McCain gave the audience that he has authority and enough confidence to be the right candidate.

A nonverbal behavior that Obama did a wonderful job of executing was vocalic communication. Obama scripted this behavior. Vocalic communication is the quality of the voice that conveys meaning, not just the words that were spoken (Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 2010, p.148). A great time to look back and see how Obama depicted this behavior and executed it perfectly is at 26:50. Obama and McCain start to argue as McCain raise his volume, Obama keeps his same volume, pitch, and tone. This behavior demonstrated that Obama has authority, power, and confidence. Throughout the debate Obama did a great job of maintaining his vocalic communication that is showed the audience he believe in what he was saying, also that he has the confidence to lead this country. This behavior had to be practiced and scripted for him to be able to control his emotions. The function it provided was clarification and also persuasion.

An unscripted nonverbal behavior both candidates exercised naturally was facial expressions. There were countless times both candidates facial expression showed their emotion. "Facial expressions are a reliable source of emotional information" (Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 2010, p.129). McCain had many facial expressions that sometimes showed his cockiness, for example when he winked at 11:12. Throughout the debate McCain had many smirks well Obama was speaking. At 21:347 McCain showed a surprised face to something Obama had said. Throughout the debate both candidate had small smiles on their faces when on or the other did not agree with the others response. Obama could not control his emotions many times throughout the debate for instance at 6:10, 29:20, 34:30-34:40, 43:40, and 46:15 there were small laughs and smiles. At 20:30

Obama mouthed “its true”. These facial expressions served the function of expression of emotion. Most of the facial expressions were not effective for both of the candidates throughout the debate.

Another nonverbal behavior that both candidates exhibited was gestures. Gestures served as clarification and also the expression of intimacy. Obama and McCain both used hand gestures while they were speaking. Obama did it more and also more effectively. Obama showed that is was interested and committed to being the best he could be by doing these gestures. Obama hand gestures were more dramatic, which made he seem more involved. You can argue that these gestures were scripted but it looked more naturally than anything.

The last nonverbal behavior that both candidates displayed was accessories. These accessories had meaning that was unscripted. The American flag pin that Obama wore showed his patriotism and could have also served to prove the people saying he isn't American wrong. The hairstyle of McCain helped shape his image. Both of these accessories helped send nonverbal messages of each candidate's credibility, power, and competency (Silverblatt, Ferry & Finan, 2010, p.147). This behavior served as the social control function.

This experience really opened my eyes to all of the nonverbal behaviors that you can see doing a broadcast like this one. This will help me in the future for voting for different candidate in the following campaigns. The behaviors are really telling of a person and how much they believe in themselves. I will definitely be looking for more nonverbal behaviors from people in the future after this experience.

Reference:

Silverblatt, A., Ferry, J., & Finan, B. (2010). Approaches to media literacy, a handbook.
M E Sharpe Inc.