

10-4-2000

Social Psychologist Interprets Body Language of Candidates, Calls First Debate a Draw

Follow this and additional works at: http://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"Social Psychologist Interprets Body Language of Candidates, Calls First Debate a Draw" (2000). *News Releases*. Paper 9310.
http://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/9310

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

7JA(1) c.1



Oct. 4, 2000
 Contact: Teri Rizvi
 rizvi@udayton.edu

NEWS RELEASE

**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIST INTERPRETS BODY LANGUAGE OF CANDIDATES,
 CALLS FIRST DEBATE A DRAW**

DAYTON, Ohio — The presidential candidates want voters to focus on the message, but the American people are still talking about "The Kiss."

Charles Kimble, a social psychologist at the University of Dayton who has studied nonverbal communication since the 1970s, watched the first of three nationally televised debates between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush with an eye toward behaviors such as facial expression, gestures and tone of voice.

This debate won't be one of history's more memorable ones, he predicted. Remember Richard Nixon's 5 o'clock shadow during the Kennedy-Nixon debate? Or Michael Dukakis' emotionless, very wooden style of answering questions compared to George Bush's animated gestures?

"It's all in the eye of the beholder," Kimble said. "It struck me that Bush used humor more and smiled more. Gore had a more serious demeanor, which is his style. These are not gigantic differences."

Besides responsiveness, here are other nonverbal cues that could make a difference in an election year. It's still a toss-up, according to Kimble.

- Appearance. "It's pretty close. Appearance-wise, they're both reasonably young men, which (Bob) Dole didn't have going for him. Red ties must be the standard uniform these days."
- Style. "Bush had more warmth in his voice and emphasized he's not from Washington. Gore has a more matter-of-fact approach. Bush had more hesitations, where he would look away or fall silent. A Republican might look at

-over-
 OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
 300 College Park Dayton, Ohio 45469-1679
 (937) 229-3241 (937) 229-3063 Fax
 www.udayton.edu

that and say, 'He's human. He's simply trying to figure out the best way to answer.' Gore sighed and sometimes smiled condescendingly. He might have lost some style points, but a Democrat might see it differently."

- Mannerisms. "Gore was much more emphatic, stronger with his voice and hand and arm gestures. With his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, he overcame a lot of his wooden image. Bush's gestures were slower, smoother. It's really more of a personal style difference."

Kimble gave both candidates high marks for delivering the message. "There were no major gaffes. They were polished and showed they're accomplished at delivering these kinds of talks. They got their points across. Maybe their messages will carry the day."

Substance over style? What about Gore's infamous kiss he gave his wife before accepting the Democratic party's nomination this summer?

"Some people I am sure will say that it was a calculated move on Gore's part, a way of emphasizing his 30-year marriage and how different he is from Clinton," Kimble observed. "He probably needs to emphasize that more relaxed, informal style, just as Bush needs to continue to align himself as non-Washington."