

10-8-2008

## Unspoken Message

Follow this and additional works at: [https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls)

---

### Recommended Citation

"Unspoken Message" (2008). *News Releases*. 1706.  
[https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news\\_rls/1706](https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1706)

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](mailto:frice1@udayton.edu), [mschlange1@udayton.edu](mailto:mschlange1@udayton.edu).

# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## Unspoken Message

10.08.2008 | Culture and Society, Faculty

A social psychologist at the University of Dayton watched this week's presidential debate with an eye toward facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice and gives Barack Obama slightly higher marks over John McCain.

"Both candidates appeared very much at ease, and I thought they expressed themselves well," said Charles Kimble, a professor of psychology who has studied nonverbal communication since the 1970s. "At this stage of the game, though, the interpretation of how well they did is in the eye of the beholder. I think it's becoming apparent to anyone following the race closely that Obama is winning the day, so to speak."

What kind of cues makes a difference in how people view the candidates?

- **Appearance:** "McCain has some movement limitations that apparently reflect his time as a POW. That may be to his benefit in many ways. I think McCain was cooler in this debate than the first one. He didn't flare up, even when Obama brought up his statement about 'Bomb, bomb, bomb Iran.' Obama also was more calm and collected. He seemed more at ease. Obama has a winning smile, and he often smiles, which helps."
- **Speech style:** "Obama speaks in longer sentences, and McCain tends to use more clichés. Because Obama tries to say more complicated things, he sometimes needs to rephrase in the middle. For McCain, it's rote memory. Obama is developing his response as he goes along, as opposed to the canned routine. He is very articulate, but he sometimes hesitates."
- **Responsiveness:** "I think they were responsive to the questions, for the most part, but they did digress when they had to. McCain just doesn't give as descriptive of an answer as Obama. I did notice that Obama stayed around a lot longer to interact with the crowd than McCain. That's one of his strengths. He has a good personal touch that's natural."
- **Mannerisms:** "It's been noted that McCain didn't look directly at Obama in the first debate. When McCain speaks, Obama looks at him and pays attention. The pit bull kind of expression has been applied to McCain — maybe it's his square jaw."

Ever since Kimble observed the way Michael Dukakis did not smile at John Glenn at a union hall in Dayton, Ohio, accurately predicting that he would not pick Glenn as a running mate, he has been recognized for his ability to interpret the body language of politicians.

"People often believe the nonverbal signs over what is being said," Kimble said. "I can still remember (Richard) Nixon. When he was about to tell a lie at a news conference, he would start blinking at a high rate. A lot of people said Nixon did great in the Kennedy-Nixon debates, but he had that 5 o'clock shadow and such an appearance disadvantage. That may have been the difference in the election."

Although Kimble says voters should listen to a candidate's message, "it is very hard for people not to attend to the peripheral factors that make the candidates attractive to voters."

**Charles Kimble at 937-229-2167.**