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1. Introduction

Since the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon presidential debates, interest in the impact of televised debates on political campaigns has grown steadily among scholars of argumentation and rhetorical communication. In addition to communicating policy positions of a candidate, televised debates provide the voting public one of the few opportunities to build or solidify impressions of candidates based on a (at least semi-) spontaneous social performance in which candidates meet face-to-face to discuss their differences. The strategies candidates use to communicate their policies and their desired image during a debate can influence the direction of public opinion toward them. Indeed, research suggests that televised debates can help viewers form, change, or intensify impressions of candidates' personality traits (e.g., Warner, Carlin, Winfrey, Schnoebelen, & Trosanovski 2011), policy positions (e.g., Benoit, Webber, & Berman 1998), and voting behavior (e.g., Benoit, McKinney, & Holbert 2001), especially for uncommitted voters (e.g., CBS Poll 2008).

We claim in this essay that the arguments candidates make nonverbally in televised debates are significant in creating and sustaining their image as presidential candidates. Considering some recent statewide elections in the United States have been decided by as few as .01% of the voters (e.g., Doyle 2009), even small differences in voters' impressions of a candidate's character and policies can make the difference in close elections. Since unaffiliated voters are more likely to rely on candidates' images when making voting decisions (e.g., Dalton, McAllister, & Wattenberg 2000; Palfry & Poole 1987), the opportunity for candidates to win or lose elections during televised debates seems to be growing. In this essay, we focus on the way candidates use the affordances of the split-screen technology to argue nonverbally when they are in the background, that is, when they are visible to the audience during an opponent's turn at speech. We plan to reconstruct background disagreement as strategic maneuvering by examining two particular preconditions for the televised political debate activity type, identifying effective and ineffective examples of strategic maneuvering in the background, and by identifying the potential for derailment of strategic maneuvering posed by background nonverbal argumentation.

2. Background nonverbal behavior as argumentation

Before examining background nonverbal behavior as strategic maneuvering, we want to establish nonverbal messages as having an argumentative function. Like Gelang and Kjeldsen (2010), we limit our discussion to the use of nonverbal behavior in a strategic way in a rhetorical situation

rather than on all nonverbal behavior. To begin, all messages have content and relationship (affective) function. That is, all messages reflect both the instrumental ends the speaker hopes to accomplish by saying something and reflect some affective information that helps establish or maintain the relationship between speaker and receivers. On the content level, nonverbal behavior can substitute for, emphasize, or repeat the verbal message. Indeed, experiments reveal that the content of a message is more reliably understood when nonverbal cues are available than when they are not (e.g., Skipper, Goldin-Meadow, Nusbaum, & Small 2009). In an example of how nonverbal behavior can add emphasis to the verbal argument, Gelang and Kjeldsen (2010) demonstrate the repetition function in televised debates with an example of Hilary Clinton's use of vocal cues and gesturing to emphasize her disagreement with her opponent's characterization of her position on an issue (Gelang & Kjeldsen).

Similarly, nonverbal behavior can substitute for verbal messages in making arguments. Certain behaviors, such as nonverbal expressions of ridicule, disbelief, surprise, or disagreement can function argumentatively on their own. As Kjeldsen (2007) points out, "The elements of an argument do not need to be presented explicitly as long as the audience is aware that they are faced with argument-making and in turn understand the argument being communicated" (p. 125). We suggest that by displaying signs of disagreement or disparagement of the speaking debater, the debater in the background of a split-screen or reaction shot can argue nonverbally. Simple signs of disagreement can simply be used to express doubt about, or rejection of, the speaker's standpoint. But more intense signaling of disparagement, such as communicating contempt, disgust, or ridicule function to attack the speaker's credibility as a trustworthy arguer. To illustrate this potential, Remland (1982) suggests argumentative fallacies, although traditionally associated with linguistic behavior, might also result from nonverbal behavior. Specifically, Remland distinguishes "explicit *ad hominem* arguments," which denigrate one's opponent verbally (via personal attacks), from "implicit *ad hominem*," which belittle an opponent nonverbally by showing signs of boredom, disgust, and frustration. Similarly, we suggest debaters might use nonverbal disagreement with the aim of rebutting an opponent's positions through mockery, expressions of disbelief, or expressions of simple disagreement.

Although nonverbal cues have an important role in content meaning, the emotional experiences that lead to attributions about a candidate's character and about the candidate's relationship to the audience might be more important in maintaining a positive identity (Bucy 2000; Burgoon, Dunbar, & Segrin 2002; Pfau & Kang 1991). On the most basic level, scholarship suggests that affective facets of nonverbal messages can be mapped on two dimensions. The affiliation (horizontal) dimension is characterized by friendliness and liking at one end versus aggression and hostility at the other (Hall, Coats, & Smith LeBeau 2005). Candidates who have more expressive faces, appear and sound more pleasant, make more eye contact, smile communicate immediacy and will increase their likeability with the audience. The control (vertical) dimension reflects the degree of status, power, or control each person claims in an interaction. For example, a speaker who occupies more physical space than is necessary, appears relaxed, and displays a positive facial expression implies a standpoint that s/he is in control of the communication situation (i.e., the dominance dimension).

Affiliation, or how well audience members relate to, and like, a candidate is a particularly important impression management goal for candidates and constitutes a primary principle of effective social influence (Cialdini, 2001). More, compared to less, likeable arguers effect greater attitude change when arguing in one's own self-interest (Stone 1969), likeable sources' arguments are more accessible in an audience's memory (Roskos-Ewoldsen & Fazio 1992), and likeable

sources have an advantage when audience members are low in issue involvement (Chaiken 1980). Voters' affiliative experience of candidates plays a role in both local (e.g., Oliver & Ha 2007) and national elections (e.g., Miller & Shanks 1996). For example, national U.S. polls measuring candidate likeability predict every winner of the popular vote in presidential elections since 1952 with the exception of 1960 and 2000. The impressions audience members form related candidate affiliation, then, is an important image goal for candidates for public office.

One set of specific behaviors associated with affiliation and likeability are those related to nonverbal immediacy (Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau 1990). Nonverbal immediacy reflects the "directness and intensity of interaction" (Mehrabian 1967, p. 325) and signal warmth, availability, involvement, and decreased psychological or physical distance between communicators (Andersen 2004). For instance, Pfau and Kang (1991) found that the relational messages of similarity and involvement (i.e., immediacy) predicted uncommitted voters' voting intentions as well as their perceptions of both George H. W. Bush's and Michael Dukakis's character, sociability, and competence for following the 1988 U.S. Presidential debates. In the wider literature on message effects, research suggests immediacy is an important dimension for speaker success. Speakers who communicate more nonverbal immediacy/affection experience more success in changing audience attitudes and behaviors (Andersen 2004; Burgoon, Coker, & Coker 1986; Segrin 1993).

Control or dominance forms another important relational message communicated by candidates during televised debates (i.e., termed the "vertical dimension" of relationship meaning, e.g., Burgoon & Hoobler 2002). Control can be communicated in a number of ways, some of them seemingly contradictory. First, dominance cues related to aggressiveness through interruptions, longer talking turns, a long walking gait with arms freely swinging, and facial cues related to the expression of anger have been found to be related to perceptions of dominance (e.g., Keating et al. 1981). However, control can also be communicated by displays of ownership and relaxed confidence. People tend to be more relaxed, poised, and appear in control in their own living space than when visiting the home of another. Likewise, research suggests that cues such as facial pleasantness, vocal warmth, occupying space, and a relaxed posture function as signals that a person is control (Burgoon et al. 2002). In general interaction, Knudson (1996) reports behaviors related to facial expressions of happiness were related to high dominance while sadness and fear were related to perceptions of low dominance. Maintaining an image of dominance and control is likely an important attribute for candidates. First, people tend to associate dominance with leadership ability and competence (e.g., Lord, De Vader, & Alliger 1986). Also, candidates whose faces appear (e.g., Rule, Ambady, Ozono, Nakashima, Yoshikawa, & Watabe 2010), and voices sound (Gregory & Gallagher 2002) more dominant are more likely to win elections. Chen, Jing, and Lee (2014) suggest dominance displays influence voting decisions by increasing voters' perception of candidate competence.

Appearing likeable (affiliation) and competent (dominance), although valuable in their own right, can also influence audience members' evaluations of candidates' verbal arguments. First, based on viewers' affective impressions, audience members form parasocial relationships with candidates. These are one-sided relationships in which the audience member feels attached to the candidate whom they feel they know through viewing the person in the media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The valence of the parasocial relationship likely influences viewers' cognitive processing of candidates' arguments (Redlawsk, 2002) by motivating them to reach conclusions based on their experience of the candidates rather than a motivation to draw accurate conclusions about the quality of the arguments (e.g., Kunda 1990; Mutz 2007). As Redlawsk found, people became more supportive, rather than tempering their support, of a favored candidate when

presented negative information about the candidate. A positive parasocial relationship with a candidate might also result in simply rejecting argumentation from opposing candidates based on heuristic decision rules favoring the preferred candidate's positions. Both liking (affiliation) and expertise (control) are known heuristic cues in persuasive contexts (Chaiken 1980).

The second way nonverbal messages influence perceptions of televised debaters involves candidates' conformity with expectations of the situation. According to Burgoon and Miller (1985), messages that violate expectations are likely to be either more or less effective than norm following messages because the message becomes more noticeable, salient, and, therefore, potentially more influential. One audience expectation for candidate behavior involves displaying civility and poise (e.g., Dailey, Hinck, & Hinck 2005). Engaging in background disagreement in a noticeable way risks violating those expectations. People who violate expectations associated with a particular activity type are judged, to a large extent, on their credibility or "reward value" (Burgoon and Miller 1985). A person's reward value is determined by the attributes the person brings to an encounter. Partisans likely find their own candidate to be more rewarding (likeable, competent, etc.) than opposing candidates so they tend to evaluate their own candidates' expectation violations more favorably than violations by opposing candidates (e.g., Burgoon, Dunbar, & Segrin 2002). For undecided voters, perceptions of affiliation and status are not as set as for partisan voters so candidate behavior during debates plays an important role in determining the reward value of each candidate.

3. Strategic maneuvering in the background

Thus far we have established the importance of nonverbal behavior as an element that is both argumentative and influences how people understand and interpret candidates' argumentation. We now turn to analyzing background nonverbal disagreement specifically as a type of strategic maneuvering. The concept of strategic maneuvering emerged from the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentative reasonableness (e.g., van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). Strategic maneuvering extends pragma-dialectics by conceptualizing the ways an arguer might adapt argumentative strategies to effectively persuade an audience while maintaining reasonable within the context of a particular activity type. Argumentation can be evaluated as effective and/or reasonable in terms of the goals of an activity type, along with activity type preconditions (affordances and constraints). In the following section we identify televised political debate as a kind of argument activity type and compare cases of successful and unsuccessful background disagreement in light of the activity type preconditions to help determine the factors at play in the effective use of this strategic maneuver. And finally, we examine possible pitfalls that could lead to derailment of strategic maneuvering in the political debate activity type.

3.1. Topical potential, audience demand, presentational devices

3.1.1. Topical potential

Understanding an arguer's strategic maneuvering requires reconstructing the arguer's coordination of choosing which arguments to make (topical potential), adapting the arguments to the audience (audience demand), and selecting a presentational style (presentational devices) (van Eemeren 2010). Strategic maneuvering in the background offers a limited number of strategic choices among topics since the debater is not in control of the arguments being made by the speaking

debater. In essence, the topical potential for the debater in the background is a choice between attacking the substance of the opponent's message or to attack the opponent her/himself. Of course, a candidate can decide to express neither disagreement with, nor derogation of, an opponent during the opponent's speech.

3.1.2. Presentational device

Televised debaters have several choices in how they present themselves in the background through the use of presentational devices. Attacking the substance of an opponent's message can be accomplished by casting doubt using signals of disagreement such as head shake, looks of exasperation, or amused disbelief. Attacking the opponent's character can be accomplished through signs of ridicule such as laughing and facial expressions such as disgust and contempt. Obviously, a candidate in the background can engage in both disagreement and disparagement displays throughout the debate. The intensity and duration of these displays help determine audience attention and evaluation of them. Of course, a candidate who decides not to engage in disagreement displays is also making the best of the presentational devices at her/his disposal. Neutral or low-intensity reactions to an opponent's message also reflects a strategic maneuver because not-reacting to an opponent can create the impression debater is in control of the situation, a characteristic associated with social power and dominance (Tiedens 2001).

3.1.3. Audience demand

Adapting to audience demand is another dimension of strategic maneuvering. In televised political debates, candidates really must appeal to three audiences simultaneously. One audience involves the late deciding voters who are usually unaffiliated with a major party and are more likely to rely on candidates' images when making voting decisions (e.g., Dalton, McAllister, & Wattenberg 2000; Palfry & Poole 1987). In the United States presidential elections, debates are scheduled within about a month of the election. Although a small portion of the electorate remain undecided by this point in the campaign, this small group of voters sometimes makes a significant difference in close elections. For example, in 2004 almost 40% of independents, compared to just 16% of Democrats and 12% of Republicans, made their voting decisions in the last two weeks of the campaign (The American National Election Studies 2007) so even small differences in voters' impressions of a candidates can make the difference in close elections.

A second, and perhaps more important, audience for debates consist of the news media personalities and organizations who drive the narrative of the campaign. Capturing the news cycle and receiving favorable press is especially important close to an election. Furthermore, research suggests that media reactions to debates influence voters' perceptions of who won the election, perhaps more so than the candidates' performances (e.g., Hollihan 2009). Candidate image plays an important role in media narratives during campaigns (e.g., Savage 1995). Like any other programming on television, news organizations compete for audience so finding and emphasizing dramatic moments and compelling candidate portrayals make for more interesting, and more consumable, news stories.

A third audience segment to whom candidates must adapt are political partisans. Partisan viewers tend to watch debates in order to reinforce their positive beliefs about their candidate and their negative beliefs about the opposing party's candidate (Mullinix 2015). Although partisans decide on a candidate early and are more likely to vote than late deciders, motivation is key to

getting them to the polls on election day. Enthusiasm is an important predictor of voting (e.g., Finn & Glaser 2010; Marcus & MacKuen 1993). Therefore, candidates need to appeal to the party faithful in a way that creates enthusiasm around the candidate and motivation cast their votes.

Attempting to adapt to the demands of all three audiences creates a tricky situation for a candidate, especially in light of the civility precondition. On the one hand, an attack on an opponent's character perceived to be too vigorous or too direct risks appearing rude or worse to the undecided viewers. Undecided voters key on impressions of likeability, affiliation, and civility so attacks on an opponent could do more harm than good with this audience making it a very risky strategy in a close election. On the other hand, a spirited, impossible to miss assault on an opponent would play well with the candidate's voting base which could help to rally supporters' enthusiasm and improving voter turnout in the candidate's favor. Direct attacks through humor or a well-timed rejoinder provide media the dramatic moments that can capture a news cycle, but attacks that cross the line and appear ill-mannered or disrespectful can garner criticism media pundits.

3.2. Televised political debate as an activity type

The evaluation of argumentation from the point of view of strategic maneuvering depends greatly on the functions of argumentation in a particular activity type. Classifying a set of argumentation activities as an activity type requires both recognizing the activity's routinized communication practices as well as the institutionalized nature of those practices. In the United States, and elsewhere, televised political debates (or interviews as they are sometimes called) are important occasions in election campaigns. Over the years, televised U.S. Presidential election debates have developed relatively conventionalized formats. Debates usually proceed in a series of three televised events and regularly include one debate between the candidates for vice-president. Over time, the way candidate interactions are designed have evolved to include the traditional "dual press conference" with candidates standing at lecterns while being fed topics from a moderator, a "town hall" style debate in which candidates roam freely on a stage and field questions from an audience, and a "meet the press" format in which candidates sit at a table with a member of the national press who asks initial questions and who moderates follow-up discussions. Candidates' talk time is usually constrained by time intervals enforced by the moderator across formats. The vice-presidential debates typically follow one of these formats.

The larger institutional purpose of televised political debates involves advancing democratic decision making through deliberation of issues by candidates for office (see also van Eemeren 2010). On a more granular level, political debates are characterized by several, interrelated, communication activities and purposes. The most obvious activity involves persuasive communication aimed at obtaining or intensifying support for a candidate. Accomplishing this goal includes communication activities that present, attack, and defend policy arguments as well as activities aimed at managing each candidate's image and character; televised elections represent an opportunity for candidates to do both. So televised political debates involve candidates presenting an audience with argumentation that bears on their fitness to serve as leader of the nation in terms of both their character and their policy positions through direct comparison with an opponent. Few other events provide the opportunity for immediate responses to attacks on a candidate's policy positions and image. In watching campaign debates, audiences can celebrate the democratic process of exchanging arguments that test which policies and program might be best for the nation as well as form or strengthen impressions regarding which candidate might be more capable of defending their ticket (Hinck 1993).

3.3. Activity type preconditions

Any assessment of strategic maneuvering requires an understanding of the institutional preconditions inherent in an argumentation activity type (e.g., van Eemeren 2010). Preconditions constitute a built up design element (e.g. Aakhus 2007) of the conventionalized practices that emerge over time, or in cases such as legal argumentation, are often explicitly codified. Preconditions act as rules and resources that arguers can draw upon in fulfilling the institutional purpose of the activity type. These rules and resources can both constrain the types of arguments that are allowable within an activity type and can make open up opportunities for particular sorts of argument strategies.

In this paper, we identify two preconditions that characterize televised presidential debates in the U.S. The first we call the *civility precondition*. Although this election cycle's Republican primary debates have been uncharacteristically uncivil, the general expectation is that argumentation between candidates, although vigorous, ought to involve a level of decorum commensurate with the office of President of the United States of America (e.g., Dailey et al. 2005). Perhaps key to a candidate's successful debate performance involves balancing aggressively attacking an opponent's position (and sometimes character) while maintaining a likeable and poised persona consistent with the "presidential" image expected of the office. Impolite behavior is one way for a candidate to violate civility precondition. In political debates, politeness reflects the degree to which candidates navigate the complex demands of interacting in a public forum where they must cooperate while competing for the favor of the audience (Schroeder 2000). The audience watches the debate to consider candidates' arguments that are intended to reinforce supporters' enthusiasm and win over undecided voters. Although audience members tend to rely more on advocacy skills in evaluating candidates in debates, assessments of politeness skills play a role in the evaluation of candidates as well (Dailey, Hinck & Hinck 2005).

A second precondition we identify is the *visual presentation precondition*. Because of the televised medium, candidates are being almost continuously observed by the audience as they engage in discussion. The ability for an audience to observe the candidates during a high stakes, pressure filled situation, such as a live debate in front of 50 to 70 million viewers, provides voters an opportunity to learn more about a candidate than pre-scripted stump speeches and highly produced advertisements. Enacting affiliation and dominance behaviors may be especially important for candidates appearing on television as television magnifies nonverbal behaviors and therefore motivates candidates to engage in message behavior that bear directly on their relationship to audience members (see Atkinson 1984; Jamieson 1988; Pfau & Kang 1991). Some have noted that because television is a medium of visual images, nonverbal behavior has a strong impact on perceptions of a candidate's image (see Zhu, et al. 1995). Televised debaters need to present themselves visually in a way that communicates poise under pressure, both when they are speaking, and just as importantly, when they are not. From the first televised U.S. presidential debate in 1960 reporters and others commented on reaction shots of candidate Nixon's sweating and pale appearance with suggestions that his lack of apparent poise, in comparison to Kennedy's seemingly cooler demeanor, hurt Nixon's election chances (Althaus 2006). By the 2000 debates, split-screen technology had made it possible to show both candidates' behavior continuously during the debates making the nonspeaking debater's behavior even more noticeable to viewers and media pundits. The potential for negative media attention to reactions from the nonspeaking debater so concerned the leadership of the Bush and Kerry campaigns in 2004 that they demanded networks refrain from using split screen technology and reaction shots (e.g., Jurkowitz 2004). The

networks declined to follow this directive by saying there was no evidence that reaction shots influenced voters (Phil Griffin, vice president for prime-time programming at MSNBC, as cited in Anderson & Collins 2004, p. 18). However, following the first Bush/Kerry debate, Bush became the subject of pundit criticism for his nonverbal expressions of frustration and disagreement during Kerry's speaking turns (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Examples of George Bush's background nonverbal disagreement in 2004 debates with John Kerry. Source: http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2004/faces-of-frustration-web#4315

The visual presentation condition creates both constraints and opportunities. One affordance of the split screen is that the nonspeaking debater is able to communicate with the viewing audience when the opponent has the floor. Split-screens and reaction shots provide the nonspeaking debater an opportunity to manage her/his own impression by appearing indignant at the speaker's characterization of him/her, by appearing poised in the face of an opponent's attack, or even by appearing reasonable and gracious by occasionally expressing agreement with an opponent. Split-screens also allow debaters to influence audience impressions of the speaking debater by expressing disbelief, surprise, ridicule and so forth. As we discuss above, the nonspeaking debater can use nonverbal behavior to substitute for verbal argument by expressing disagreement through shaking one's head, eye rolling, or other such behaviors that directly communicate strong disagreement with the speaker's message even while the speaker continues to talk.

Although the visual presentation precondition creates the possibility for argumentation by the background debater, the civility precondition presents limits to the extent to which background disagreement can be used successfully. The civility precondition, at least in U.S. culture, prefers the speaking debater be allowed to present argumentation without interruption (also a condition of reasonableness in strategic maneuvering). Violating this norm creates a kind of interruption in which the background debater calls attention away from the speaking debater. Because of the norm violating nature of conspicuous background behavior, this choice has to be made with care. The majority of our research indicates that high intensity and duration nonverbal disagreement and disparagement backfires on candidates who uses this strategy. First, experimental research indicates that debaters expressing high levels of disagreement are perceived as less appropriate (Seiter & Weger 2005), less credible (Sieter, Weger, Jensen, & Kinzer 2010) and less likeable (Seiter, Weger, Kinzer, & Jensen 2009) compared to debaters maintaining a neutral facial expression or low levels of nonverbal disagreement. Meanwhile, strong nonverbal disagreement by the nonspeaking debater does little to increase the negativity of an audience's impression of the speaking debater's character or credibility (e.g., Seiter & Weger, 2005; Seiter et al. 2009). Second,

these results are bolstered by examples of negative audience and pundit reactions to perceived excessive and inappropriate background nonverbal behavior on the part of Al Gore in 2000, George Bush in 2004, and John McCain in 2008 (e.g., Benoit, McKinney, & Holbert 2001; Harris & Vandehei 2008; Schneider 2000).

However, both research, and relatively recent events, suggest some uses of background nonverbal disparagement can be effective. First, Seiter (2001) found that when the nonspeaking debater signaled moderate disbelief with the opponent's message, the opponent was perceived as more deceptive than when no background behavior was displayed. In addition, Joseph Biden was able to use derisive laughter and facial expressions, ridicule, and amused disbelief at several points during the 2012 Vice-presidential debate with Congressman Paul Ryan to his advantage. Although some media campaign observers were critical of Biden's behavior as bullying or impolite (Bruni 2012), polls showed that undecided voters and Democratic partisans had an overall more favorable impression of Biden's than Ryan's performance (e.g., Krieg 2012). The puzzle then presents itself as how some candidates can get away with to frequent and impolite background disparaging behavior while others cannot get away with such behavior?

4. Analysis of successful and unsuccessful strategic maneuvering in the background.

To begin, we present evidence that the background behavior of U.S. Senator John McCain, in especially the third debate with Senator Barrack Obama, was evaluated by the audience negatively while the background behavior of Vice-president Joseph Biden, in his debate with U.S. Congressman Paul Ryan, received more positive reviews by viewers. Reactions by the press both seized on the candidates background disagreement displays as unusual and attention worthy (Bruni, 2012; Goldman, 2008). And, interestingly, the media pundits treated both candidates' behavior as impolite. First, McCain's nonverbal reactions were roundly criticized by media pundits and strange and inappropriate. For example, in an interview with the television program Good Morning America, the former advisor to President Clinton said, "Whenever he was getting attacked by John McCain, [Obama] tended to shake his head, smile, look unruffled. John McCain on the other hand when Barack Obama was talking would sometimes roll his eyes, get agitated over the course of it and a little angry," and concluded that "Obama won the battle of the split-screen" (Goldman 2008). The polls reflected the public's response to McCain's debate performance with 70% saying Obama was more likeable to just 20% for McCain (Stein 2008). McCain was also overwhelmingly perceived to be on the attack, 80% - 20% compared to Obama (e.g., Holland 2008).

Joseph Biden also received some criticism from media pundits for his behavior but rather than seeming irritated or ineffective, Biden was criticized for overpowering Ryan and appearing to bully him. For example, Alan Schroeder (2012), a journalism professor writing for CNN suggests, "Like a master thespian on opening night, Biden conspicuously deployed pretty much his entire bag of performing tricks: dramatic line-readings, huge smiles, exaggerated laughter, asides to the audience." Frank Bruni (2012) opinion writer for the New York Times echoes Schroeder, "Seldom has a split screen yielded such vigorous facial calisthenics. When Ryan talked, Biden didn't just listen. He smiled with disbelief. He smiled even wider with derision. He whipped his head this way and that, laughing scornfully, glancing heavenward in exasperation." Even though Biden's derisive behavior was riskiest with undecided voters, he still managed to garner relatively favorable ratings on his performance in the debate. In a poll of undecided voters (CBS

Poll 2008) watching the debate, Biden was perceived to be more relatable 55%-48%; more knowledgeable 85% - 75%; and more ready to be president 56%-49% than Ryan.

In our analysis getting at why these two performances were judged differently, we focus on emotional expressions on the faces of Biden and McCain for two reasons. First, in many speaking situations, most, if not all, of the speaker's face and body can be viewed by the audience. In televised debates, however, split-screen technology often frames candidates from about the mid-chest to the head leaving only some gestures and all facial expressions in the audience's field of vision. Perhaps more important than mere camera angles and framing, emotions expressed on candidates' faces have a powerful impact on people's perceptions of candidates' affiliation and dominance. Newcomb (1982) explains the power of facial expressions in reaction shots:

> Television is at its best when it offers us faces, reactions, explorations of emotions registered by human beings. The importance is not placed on the action, though that is certainly vital as a stimulus. Rather, it is on the reaction to the action, to the human response. (p. 480)

Perhaps because of the evolutionary importance of differentiating between friendly and unfriendly faces, people process emotional facial expressions quickly and automatically (Dimberg, Thunberg, & Grunedal 2002) with special regions of the brain dedicated to this task (e.g., Kanwisher, Mcdermott, & Chun 1997). Participants looking at photos of politicians mimicked the politicians' facial expressions which then influenced their own emotional reaction to the politician (McHugo, Lanzetta, Sullivan, Masters, & Englis 1985). In addition, Schubert found that audience members experienced a stronger affective response and attitudinal change when they could see candidates' emotional expressions than when they had access to only voice recordings or transcripts (Schubert 1998). Finally, research suggests that people perceive faces along two dimensions, valence (trustworthiness or approachability) and dominance (Ballew & Todorov 2007; Oosterhof & Todorov 2008). These dimensions mirror the general dimensions of nonverbal behavior of affiliation and control, which we discuss above. We narrow our analysis even further by focusing on six emotional expressions identified by Ekman and his colleagues. Ekman hypothesized six universally recognized facial expressions of emotion that include surprise, anger, disgust, fear, happiness, and sadness (e.g., Ekman 1973, Ekman & Cordaro 2011). Figure 2 illustrates some defining characteristics of each emotional expression. These expressions influence impressions of candidates through their linkages to affiliation and dominance.

First, Biden's facial expressions are much more consistent with communicating affiliation through nonverbal immediacy than McCain's. In each of the examples of Biden's expressions (see figures 3-5), we see either laughter/happiness expressed by a genuine (Duchene) smile in which lips are pulled backward and upward along with muscular contraction in the orbital socket around the eyes (Figure 3). Biden expresses contempt in Figure 4, he still looks pleasantly amused. Notice that his lips are pulled backward and upward and but his brows are furrowed and his smile is lopsided and his lips are appear tightly closed. This expression is a blend of contempt and anger in expressing ridicule of his opponent's message.
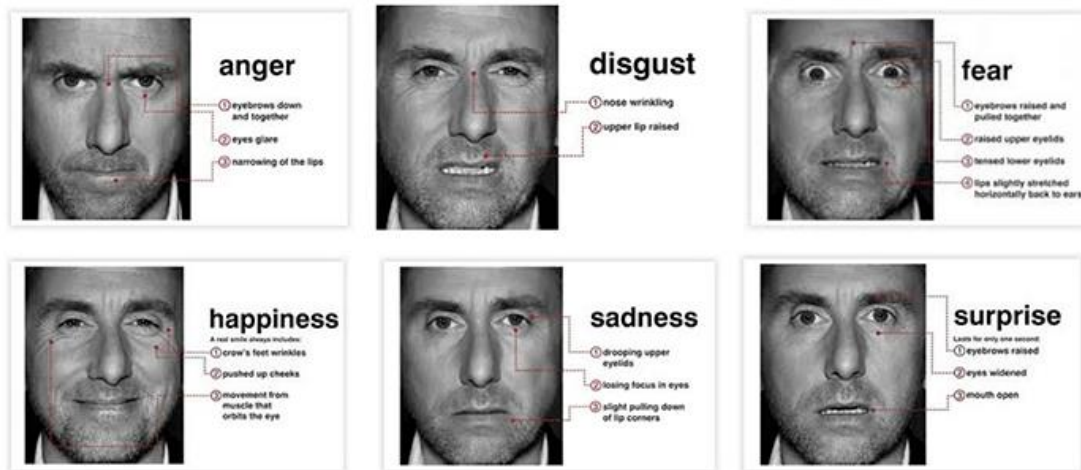
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Figure 2. Facial movements associated with emotional expression and experience. Source: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tara-chklovski/how-do-you-become-a-bette_b_5037226.html

Figure 3. Biden's first smile in as Ryan holds the floor at 4 min. and 30 sec. into the debate.

Figure 4. Biden ridicules Ryan with contemptuous facial expression

Whether his smiles are indeed genuine matter less than that they appear to be so. As Oosterhof and Todorov (2008) observe, candidates displaying happy faces appear more likeable and trustworthy. It is important to point out that all the while Biden smiles, laughs, and grins, he is expressing ridicule of his opponent's positions. The video capture in Figure 5 comes at the end of this exchange at 18 minutes and 40 seconds into the debate in which the candidates discuss US sanctions imposed on Iran in response to allegations of Iran's enrichment of uranium. Figure 5 captures Biden's smiling while laughing at the end of line 3 and continues through line 6:

1.   Biden   I don't know what world this guy's living in!
2.   Ryan   Thank heavens we had these sanctions in place, it is in spite of=
3.   Biden   [OH GOD hahaha]
4.   Ryan   =their opposition they've given 20 waivers to these scantions
5   Biden   [(laughing, smiling and shaking his head --see Figure 5)]
6   Ryan   And all I have to point are the results

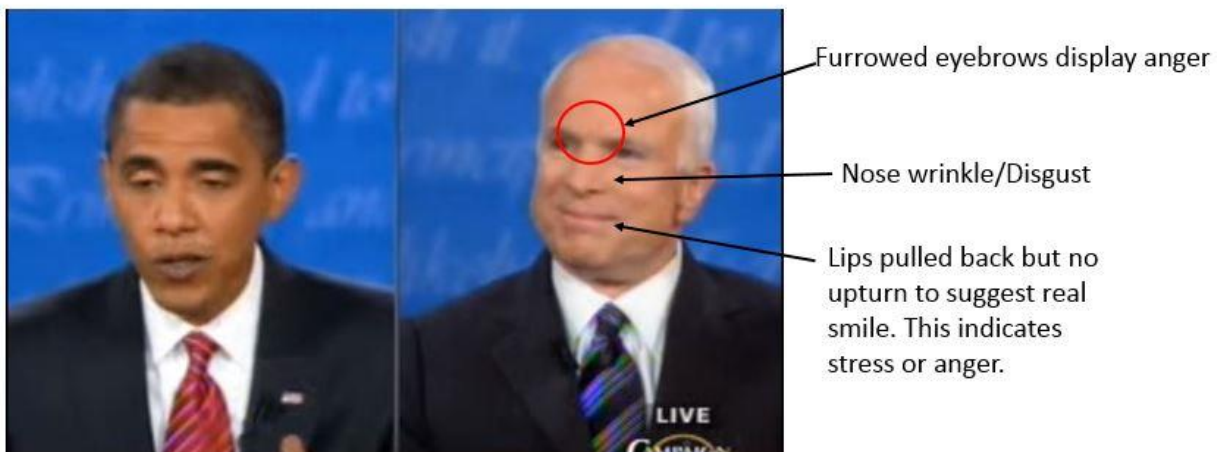*Figure 5*. Biden laughs derisively during Ryan's speaking turn.

Figure 6. McCain's emotion blend of anger, disgust, and non-Duchene smile.

Biden's laughing and smiling stand in stark contrast to McCain's background nonverbal behavior during his three debates with Obama. McCain engaged in facial blends such as the one

depicted in Figure 6. Notice the lips are pulled back but not upward, an attempt at a smile but this expression, especially with the furrowed brows, is more consistent with anger or stress than with happiness. He also displays disgust through the wrinkled nose. Reactions to non-Duchene smiles, especially those with blends including anger, are perceived much more negatively than genuine appearing smiles. (e.g., Ekman 1992, Ekman and Friesen, 1982 and Frank et al. 1993). Likewise, smiling and facial pleasantness (not to be confused with attractiveness) are positively associated with a speaker's character, competence, composure, and again, with how persuasive the speaker is perceived to be (e.g., Burgoon, Birk, & Phau 1990). Smiling communicates immediacy and affiliation, it invites a relationship between the candidate and the audience members and likewise people respond negatively to anger and disgust (e.g., Parkinson 1996).

McCain's consistent failed attempts at producing genuine smiles throughout the debate have the opposite effect. Voters perceive McCain to be on the attack and less likeable than his opponent who tended to maintain neutral but pleasant facial expressions when in the background. McCain's blended expressions of anger and surprise in Figures X and X potentially result in lowered perceptions of dominance as well. In Figures 7 and 8, we see more expressive blends, but these involve anger mixed with surprise. At about 1 hour and 11 minutes into the third debate, in discussing each candidate's abortion policy position, McCain expresses surprise (eyebrows raised) and anger (mouth open, lips pulled back) immediately after Obama finishes saying "it's not true."

Figure 7. McCain displays surprise

1	McCain	Then there was another bill before the Senate Judiciary Committee in the state of Illinois not that long ago, where he voted against a ban on partial-birth abortion, one of the late-term abortion, a really -- one of the bad procedures, a terrible. And then, on the floor of the Illinois State Senate, he voted present.
		I don't know how you vote "present" on some of that. I don't know how you align yourself with the extreme aspect of the pro-abortion movement in America. And that's his record, and that's a matter of his record….
2	Schieffer	Response?

3	Obama	Yes, let me respond to this. If it sounds incredible that I would vote to withhold lifesaving treatment from an infant, that's because it's not true.
4	McCain	[(Eye roll and surprise)]
5.	Obama	The -- here are the facts.

McCain expressed the surprise/anger blend at several points in the debate. In the Figure 8, we again see McCain expressing disagreement and disparagement in the background in response to Obama's message. In this case, McCain started by expressing doubts about the affordability of Obama's health care plan by suggesting that working and middle class tax payers would pay a penalty for not complying with the law and asks Obama to tell the viewers how much the penalty will be. The expression in Figure 8 occurs in turn 3 just as McCain says "zero?".

1	McCain:	Now, Senator Obama, I'd like -- still like to know what that fine is going to be, and I don't think that Joe right now wants to pay a fine when he is seeing such difficult times in America's economy.
	….	
2	Obama	I just described what my plan is. And I'm happy to talk to you, Joe, too, if you're out there. Here's your fine -- zero. You won't pay a fine, because
3	McCain	[Zero? (surprise/shock)]
4	Obama	Zero, because as I said in our last debate and I'll repeat, John, I exempt small businesses from the requirement for large businesses that can afford to provide health care to their employees, but are not doing it.

Figure 8. McCain shows surprise a second time.

While McCain's failed attempts at smiling and appearing pleasant likely hurt him in terms of affiliation, his expression of surprise probably hurt him on the dominance dimension. Figures 7 and 8 depict McCain expressing angry surprise and disbelief, likely as an attempt to attack Obama's credibility and cast doubt on Obama's argumentation. The problem is that repeated expressions of surprise, even if meant as disbelief, communicate a lack of composure and poise.

Raised eyebrows, as in the fear or surprise expression are associated with lower status and control (Keating et al. 1981). In addition, tense, stressful expressions also communicate a lack of control or leadership (Keating et al. 1981; Kopelman, Rosette, & Thompson 2006). Although anger expressions have been associated with perceptions of dominance (Hareli, Shomrat, & Hess 2009), McCain's anger cues are mixed with either half-smiles or surprised expressions which possibly lesson their impact. Surprise might be a particularly problematic emotion for debaters on television because it could make the debater look unprepared or out of control.

In contrast, Biden appears relaxed and in control for most of his debate with Ryan while McCain's facial expressions are tense and make him appear to be under duress. Relaxed vocal and facial expressions have been linked to perceptions of dominance and control (e.g., Burgoon et al. 2002; Hall & Friedman 1999). Being relaxed in a tense situation means being in control of the situation. Additionally, Biden's laughing and ridicule are power displays, as Poggi and D'Errico (2010) explain:

> We *laugh at* someone who reveals some fault or lack of power that is finally innocuous, not threatening – simply impotence. The one *laughing at* feels superior while the one *laughed at* feels abased, humiliated, ridiculed: someone people make fun of. His impotence is publicly sanctioned, yet not through punishment, that would credit him with some threatening power, but through laughter: he does not scare or worry anyone. (pp. 171-172)

Overall, Biden's successful use of background disagreement and McCain's unsuccessful attempts highlight the importance of candidates' appearance on television. Really, both candidates attempted to show contempt and ridicule for their opponent's positions but the difference was Biden accomplished this using a positively valenced emotional display – the smile. Appearing relaxed, smiling, joking, and looking in control makes Biden appear likeable and dominant in his debate with Ryan. Biden was judged to be more relatable, more competent, and more ready to be president than his opponent by the coveted undecided voters watching the debate. McCain on the other hand used more negatively valenced emotions, anger, contempt, disgust, and failed attempts at genuine smiling leading to much less favorable judgements of him as a candidate. Biden's behavior possibly appeared more civil and appropriate than McCain who appeared angry and attacking. Linking back to our suggestion that nonverbal behavior influences televised debate viewers' perceptions of candidates, we think that Biden's behavior helped in establishing or maintaining a positive parasocial relationship with potential voters. In addition, although both debaters violated viewers' expectations for civility and politeness, Biden's behavior made him a high-reward norm violator leading to either less negative, or actually positive, evaluations of his norm violating behavior. We think the influence of a positive parasocial relationship and more positive evaluations of norm violations spill over into other aspects of the debate. For example, research suggests viewers are likely to process the arguments more positively when more likeable candidates take their turn at talk.

5. Normative evaluation of strategic maneuvering in the background

Strategic maneuvering recognizes that arguers in the context of a specific argumentation activity type walk a tightrope between reasonableness and effectiveness. And given the preconditions of civility and visual presentation, candidates need to balance civility with displaying disagreement

when warranted in reaction shots. In discussing background nonverbal disagreement, we want to distinguish between low and high intensity variations. Low intensity, natural and unexaggerated reactions to an opponent's argumentation are almost impossible to eliminate or control on the part of the candidate and given the ubiquity of split-screen camera frames, are also impossible to hide from viewers. No one can fault a natural reactions that are not strategic attempts to capture audience attention during an opponent's speech. Below, we examine high intensity disagreement in the background such as those by McCain and Biden.

First, high intensity background disagreement appears to violate norms associated with the televised political debate activity type. Although drifting toward less polite behavior over time (Dailey et al. 2008), the civility precondition creates audience expectations that candidates will adhere as best as they can to norms for decorum and respect due a candidate for president who represents a significant proportion of the nation's electorate. The visual presentation precondition also constrains candidates' behavior as they are expected demonstrate their ability to keep cool under pressure. Placed in the context of the political debate with a conventionally understood purpose to share, compare, and evaluate candidate's domestic and foreign policy positions as a way to maintain a society that makes decisions through democratic elections, the strategy of laughing, sneering at, or mocking one's opponent violates a fundamental expectation that different ways of viewing complex problems are important to consider, deserve to be presented, merit consideration, and are appropriate in the public forum of a political debate.

Second, high intensity background disagreement often amounts to abusive ad hominem. In his work on the potential for nonverbal behavior to function as argumentation, Remland (1982) suggests nonverbal behaviors that disparage an opponent by communicating boredom, contempt, and exasperation through facial expressions, vocalics, and gestures counts as personal attack. Indeed, when candidates engage in laughing, sneering, eye-rolling, feigned surprise blended with anger or disgust they imply the opponent's argumentation is unworthy of recognition or consideration. Given the high-stakes nature of political debates, we recognize that candidates look for opportunities to use humor to their advantage in debates. However, Duncan (1962) described the line between laughter shared, laughing with someone, versus laughing at another as joy in reason:

> When laughter passes into derision, mockery, and the grotesque, it is no longer comic. The social essence of comedy is joy in reason—the shared joy of he who is laughed at, as well as he who laughs. Savage ridicule is a weapon. It wounds deeply; often, indeed, it kills. Aristocrats recognize this. . . . Ridicule makes us inferiors. Only equals can laugh and tease together. (pp. 404-405)

Another way high intensity background disagreement has the potential to derail strategic maneuvering involves diverting audience attention away from the speaker's argument which denies the debater a fair opportunity to advance arguments uninterrupted. Both the abusive and distracting nature of high intensity background nonverbal disagreement make delivering arguments to an audience more challenging than would be preferred in an ideal critical discussion. (e.g., van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Snoeck Henkemans 2002). As can be seen from media reactions reported above, supporters, neutral observers, and opponents alike note the attention McCain's and Biden's behavior demanded from the audience. When one candidate distracts the audience from the speaking debater's verbal message, the audience is called upon to process both a verbal message and a nonverbal message simultaneously potentially limiting the impact of the

speaking debater's argumentation. Both the abusive attack on the speaker's standing in the discussion and the distraction created excessive background nonverbal disagreement create less than ideal conditions for conducting a critical discussion.

Finally, high intensity background nonverbal disagreement constrains an opponent's options by creating a dilemma in which any response is potentially problematic. If the speaking debater ignores an opponent's background nonverbal behavior, the speaking debater's message has been successfully undermined. On the other hand, if the speaking debater responds by asking/demanding the opponent to stop, the speaker calls additional attention to the opponent's behavior which might convey to the audience that opponent's behavior is significant or damaging to the speaking debater in some way. Attempting to repair the interaction through meta-discussion also risks derailing the discussion away from the substance of the argument to the behavior of the arguers. Not only does a demand/request to change behavior represent a digression from the topic, demands and requests can be denied which risks a larger threat to the speaker's desire to control the turn at talk.

6. Conclusion

In our essay we have demonstrated how background nonverbal disagreement in televised political debates can be reconstructed as a type of strategic maneuvering. We have examined topical potential, audience demand, and presentation devices associated with this type of strategic maneuvering. We also identified two the civility and the visual presentation preconditions of televised debate activity type and how background strategic maneuvering is both constrained and enabled by these preconditions. In order to examine effectiveness of background disagreement, we compared a successful and unsuccessful example of disagreement in the background for clues as to what strategies have a rhetorical advantage. Finally, we discussed the ways in which background disagreement can lead to derailments of strategic maneuvering given the institutional purpose and preconditions of the televised debate activity type.

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