

Assignment 4

Audience Engagement Relative to Candidates' Performance

Hypothesis

Levels of skin conductivity increase when people are more aroused; this arousal is correlated to an audience member's assessment of a candidates' performance in a political debate. We also propose that noise levels increase immediately following a peak of high arousal and that these levels are highest following negative arousal. We feel that audience members are more likely to stand up following extreme negative arousal, or during moments of high disengagement (i.e., they will also be more likely to stand up and take a break during moments of boredom). Also, we propose examining the pattern of eating snacks (e.g., chips). We feel that audience members will eat snacks at a slower pace during periods of boredom, or less engagement, and eat snacks at a faster pace during periods of deeper engagement. Finally, we feel that participants will more likely click a button in strong agreement or disagreement following periods of higher engagement. Using the skin conductivity, noise levels, pattern of snacking, and standing measurements together can provide a more holistic picture of deep engagement

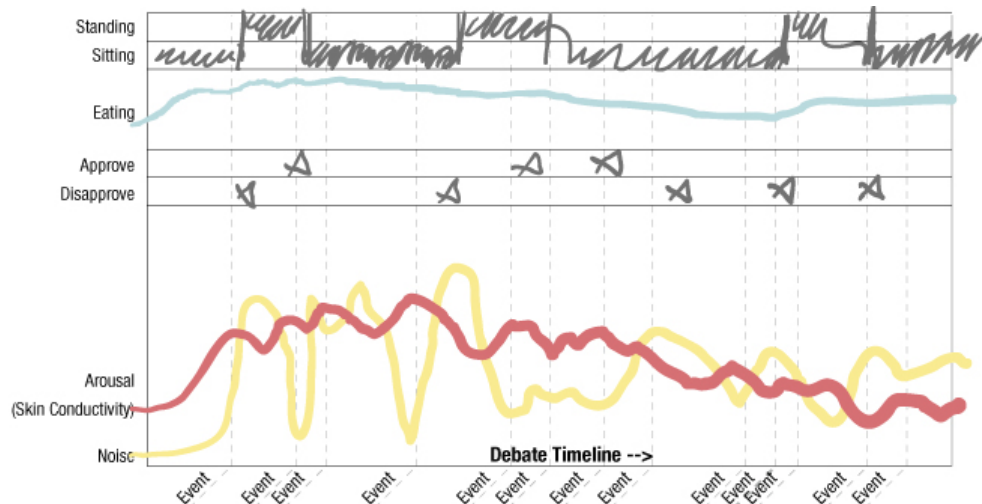
Methodology

Participants, all of whom are undecided voters based on a qualifying questionnaire, are recruited to watch the presidential debates. Each participant is outfitted with a modified Galvactivator (no feedback light; instead, it wirelessly reports the data for the wearer). The room is equipped with a video camera that records when people are standing up or sitting down, or taking breaks. There will also be a noise meter that measures levels of noise over time. Finally, there will be snacks within equal reach of each participant. Each of these measurements will be mapped to a timeline. During the debate, the participants will be able to click one of two buttons if they strongly agree or disagree with a political statement, event, or expression. The buttons will be clearly delineated as "agree" or "disagree."

There will also be a content analysis of the political debate. Political statements or significant events will be collected and mapped to the timeline, where they will be available for comparison to the measurements.

Finally, there will be a qualitative and quantitative comparison of the 4 measurement scales (skin conductivity, standing up, snack eating patterns, noise levels) with each other and over time, as compared to the political statements and/or events.

Please see the following graph for anticipated results (Figure 1).



(Figure 1)

Instructor Comments:

This is a nice idea. You have done a nice job in specifying the setting and in your hypothesis about behavior. I particularly like the inclusion of snacking. Can you think more deeply about the whole experience. Can you imagine a way of measuring the level of anticipation and later reflection. As the debates are over, it would be neat if you could generalize your idea to another experience: a theatrical release of a film or a video game? Are there other sensors that you could apply?