“Please Clap”: Applause, Laughter, And Booing During The 2016 GOP Presidential Primary Debates

Appendix 1: Content Analysis Methods

The approach taken in this study consisted of multiple steps. The first step was to download the complete debate video using clipconverter.cc. These videos were then loaded into the editing software Adobe Premier Pro and cut into short clips ranging from three and half minutes to twenty minutes in length based upon natural stopping points during moderator question set-ups and immediately prior to commercial breaks. The video CODEC used to export the videos was CINEPAK (.MOV) and the audio CODEC was IMA4. The CODEC applied allowed for use with the video annotation and content analysis software, ANVIL (Kipp, 2012).

ANVIL utilized the video clips, which were content coded based upon types of variables put into the *specification file.* This allowed for output into an annotation file. We first considered speaking time for each candidate/moderators. We also codedlength and type of audience responses for each candidate/moderator (1 = applause; 2 = laughter; 3 = boos; 4 = mixed applause & boos; 5 = mixed applause & laughter; 6 = mixed laughter & boos). After coding the entirety of the debates, the annotation files were exported to and consolidated in Excel, and was then transferred to SPSS for data analysis.

We assessed the internal validity of our findings through ANVIL’s built-in inter-coder agreement (ICA) function to assess Cohen’s kappa (κ). This function breaks two coders’ files down into *time slices* (our time slice was set to .1 second), and then compares each time slice across the clips to assess whether, and to what extent overall, the coders agree. When assessing ICA, options are available to “consider all time slices” or “restrict to annotated area.” The former option considers *all* time slices, even “dead space” where there is nothing annotated, but the latter only compares where either (or both) coders have annotations. Because including this dead space artificially inflates ICA (e.g., across a 10 minute track for a given candidate, there may only be 10 seconds of audience response, but even if the second coder misses that reaction altogether, ICA will show “agreement” 5,900 of the 6,000 time slices), we chose the more conservative option of restricting to annotated areas.

Inter-coder agreement on video clips from the four debates was carried out with two randomly selected clips from the FOX News debate (time = 20:14; ≈ 19% of the total debate), three clips from the CNN Republican Party debate (time = 45:38; ≈ 27%), two clips from the CNN Democratic Party debate (time = 27:44; ≈ 22%), and two clips from the CBS debate (time = 18:09; ≈ 22%). Cohen’s kappa for all video clips are well into the excellent range (FOX News (14 tracks): M(κ) = 0.89; CNN GOP (33 tracks): M(κ) = 0.93; CNN DEM (15 tracks): M(κ) = 0.88; CBS (7 tracks): M(κ) = 0.94) (Cohen, 1960).