Watching the Acceptance Speeches of both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, I am acutely aware that both of these men project a “Presidential aura” through their “Body Attitude” (their habitual postural stance). They both stand upright with a one-unit Vertical Dimension stress through the torsos. No slumping for these guys! They both use a channeled pin-point focus that sweeps horizontally from Left to Right to Forward. This Direct spatial attention conveys a sense of focused clarity that can relate to their ability to convey and cope with detailed information as well as take in the entire audience. They both use movement that is not overly large (about mid range kinesphere, even though Romney’s is a bit larger) They both stride in with long easy-lower bodies. Mitt Romney’s upper body is also freely flowing, while Obama’s seems a bit more controlled. When he shakes hands with a colleague, however, I see the largess of his freely outpouring arm. I know that he has that Free Flow, but this analysis is only about these Acceptance Speeches.

As we all know, it is one thing to say words that indicate ideas, beliefs or actions, and it is another level of investment entirely to put your whole body into the statement! Even the colloquial phrase, “Put your weight behind it!” implies that there I a difference in meaning between using words alone and words supported by body movement.

It is important to always remember the following:

There is no simplistic one-to-one meaning for any specific gesture. Meaning always comes within a context. So in this article we will look at the word context they are using when they do their habitual gestures. (Of course another context for the Acceptance Speeches is that they are speaking to their followers, not their detractors from the
Movement can tell us what the innate preferences of the person are for moving into action, and what they are most invested in. Both Obama and Romney, of course, have habitual movements...all humans do. The issue then becomes, what moments in their speeches show the most bodily commitment to what they are saying? As you watch the upcoming debates you might want to compare your observations with mine...

As a Laban Movement Analyst, I am often asked “What do you see in their movement? Which one is better for this job? But comparing movement from a Laban perspective is less about a battle where one person is seen as a “good candidate for being a good President” vs. a “bad candidate.” What is true from the Laban perspective, is that movement can tell us what the habitual approach or innate preferences of the person are for moving through a decision-making process into action.

The Laban work in this context is more about looking at a different style or presidential approach to living into the demands of the office. There are obviously many different ways to do any job or to approach any successful career. And there are many different aspects of any job. So every person will have certain aspects of the required duties that we be a better "fit" or easier than certain other ones in any moment in terms of their movement style. Therefore, at any one time in the job, one man or the other might hypothetically be the "better" president. But we have no certain knowledge of what will happen in the future and what stage of the decision-making process will be most crucial in the thousands of required decisions in the short or long run of the 4-year term.

Since all leaders must constantly make decisions and move into action--From the Laban work and the “Movement Pattern Analysis” perspective of Laban’s heir, Warren Lamb, we might be able to say which person is more innately driven to manifest a specific profile of being more interested in the following 3 stages of the decision-making process:

(a) GIVING ATTENTION to the issue or problem at hand---
INFORMATION GATHERING &/or EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES
(b) **FORMING INTENTION**—BUILDING DETERMINATION & RESOLVE about what should happen &/or EVALUATING PRIORITIES

(c) **COMMITTING TO MOVING INTO ACTION**—KNOWING THE TIME TO MOVE INTO ACTION &/or ANTICIPATING AND PLANNING STEPS IN THE ACTION

My analysis does not use the fullness of Warren Lamb’s framework, because in these Acceptance Speeches the podium gets in the way most of the time for seeing whole body movement. Therefore, I am looking mainly at gestures and somewhat at upper torso involvement.

In looking at Romney and Obama during their respective Acceptance Speeches, both men seem to have a lot of investment in Direct spatial focus in the **Attention** phase. Romney also seems to have skill with Indirectness (taking in more than more thing at once, checking in with giving attention in an all-encompassing way) This indirectness happens often at the end of his phrases. Both men are motivated to gather information. Romney has a lot of Spreading or Widening in his shape changes, and Obama has more Enclosing or Narrowing. Romney might be slightly more interested in exploring many possibilities—going wide and dropping a particular course of action and trying “something else” if the previous course of action isn’t working in the moment. Obama might, in that situation, dig-in and research more facts of the situation.

In the **Intention** stage of decision-making both men use Strength in their whole body movement to emphasize what they are saying. This will mean that they can probably use their determination to push through difficulties that they perceive. Obama seems more able to use his active Strength in **this** campaign than in 2008. He seems determined to put his weight behind what he has achieved that he is passionate about. Romney has a lot of movement that goes up and down, rising and sinking…which might indicate that he would be motivated to spend energy evaluating priorities. Obama also uses up-down in his movement, but it is not as prevalent as in Romney’s signature. (This of course does not say anything about what either man might use as the criteria for those evaluations.)

In stage of the decision-making process that involves **Committing and moving into action**, both men probably tend to use Quick Timing. This indicates that they both could be skilled at rapidly moving into action in
a timely way, if given the situation where they could use their own sense of timing on what they consider to be urgent matters. (Given the congress at this point, it is rare that either one of them could use their own preference to make things change quickly.) Obama has a lot of movement that goes Forward, advancing...which might indicate that he would be motivated to use his skill at looking ahead and anticipating the results of his action, planning his steps accordingly. It is interesting that his campaign slogan, “Forward,” is supported by his own movement preferences!

We can also see which person might be more easily adaptable to the situation in which they find themselves. Some people also have a greater desire to become identified with and becoming a part of the situation, while others want to/are willing to stand apart. Romney’s easy shape changing ability as well as high prevalence of Free Flow might make him adaptable, and also predicts that he will want to identify himself as being a part of whatever situation he enters....Some critics have called this “wishy-washy” or “unpredictable.” Obama is also adaptable, but may not have such a need to become “one of the group” in any situation. He may like to remain more determined to follow what he believes and has made plans for.

Some people like more complex situations and tend to choose those in which they can manifest themselves in this way. Obama often seems to have more fully loaded energetic movement accompanying his words. (Loading refers to the number of different energy qualities happen at the same moment.) Obama likes to have many things happening at once...in his energy, he often loads at least 3 qualities. He feels comfortable with the complexity. Romney seems to load only two energies most of the time....This might indicate that he probably would feel more comfortable with fewer things on his plate at once in terms of what will require his energy.

One of the things I’m seeing so far is that Obama’s most invested movement comes when he is talking about what is happening right now and what will happen in the future.

Romney’s most invested movement happens when he is referring to longed-for times in the past. This indicates to me that he is more passionate about the past than about his approach to the future---except to return to the values and policies of the past.
The Republican party is longing for a return to the past. Romney's greatest number of fully engaged movement in his acceptance speech came when he was referring to something that he felt we used to have as Americans, but now no longer have…”THAT AMERICA, that UNITED AMERICA!” These words were the most emphasized in his energized body movement. Many of his highest intensities were in relation to what his mother thought about women in power (not necessarily what he thinks). His listing of all the women he has hired had almost no fully committed movement.

Obama has more investment around plans that project to the future and the critical involvement of the voters as they choose...thus his theme of "Forward," and his insistence that he cannot do it alone. “OURS is a fight…” "EVERYONE plays by the same rules....." “If YOU CHOOSE this path…”

SIDE NOTE: From looking at 27 world Leaders from other countries in our NYU GreenDot project in 2008, we know that full on high intensity Strong, Direct, Quick full-on POWER with large range kinesphere (such as Zhirinovsky from Russia uses...or Fidel Castro...or Chavez from Venezuela ) is not the style that the USA will accept in its Presidents of late. People will perceive it as "too quick to anger" and therefore, "dangerous." From doing our work on the 2008 Election I came to the conclusion that what the US population will see as "Presidential" and will vote for is a really relatively small range of dynamics in a mid-range kinesphere . We would never elect a Zhirinovsky or a Castro or a Chavez.

We expect a relatively narrow range of expression from someone we see as "Presidential.”