Obama's 3 Frequent Movements when Speaking

As seen in Acceptance Speech at the DNC on C-Span, Sept. 6, 2012

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OBAMA:
Obama’s most invested movements come when he is talking about what is happening right now and what will happen in the future.
He puts his forceful, contained, sudden movement behind statements that recognize the work that it takes, the difficulties he has overcome, and steps that he has taken to develop “real achievable plans” to “cut taxes for those who need it,” and to move into action to increase “manufacturing, education, and national security.” He puts his passion into gestures that encourage an action-oriented electorate that to join him and choose to act decisively now and in the future. He uses his direct focus to innumerate and pinpoint issues.

His movement is more varied and more dynamically rich than Romney’s. (He has a wide range of gestures and often uses 3 energy qualities at the same time, such as Strong, Controlled, Sudden) This might indicate that Obama is comfortable with complexity and can deal with multiple diverse or conflicting agendas at once…which could be useful in the Whitehouse. Obama’s more controlled flow in gestures (as opposed to Romney’s freer or less formed flow) could possibly show that he is more careful when he changes courses or plans that he has made. It might also mean that people will begin to feel discouraged—that his way might seem more difficult (even if perhaps more realistic at this time in our world). Freer flow is more inviting and accessible.
EXAMPLES: (the numbers below refer to the Motion Capture Animation of the Gestures)

1. OBAMA-GESTURE 1 (OG1) taking hold of an idea and presenting it or embracing it

Movement of one arm with hand palm open with slightly rounded fingers (as if holding a small ball about 3-4 inches in diameter). Lower arm follows along, making an arc from the elbow. This usually moves repeatedly palm facing forward in the Sagittal, or palm facing up going up and down—can also be used with both hands.

When using this style of gesture, Obama is usually saying "Here's what I believe....I'm presenting it to you to grab hold of and embrace, or run with the ball."

OG1-017726-017807 “Real, achievable plans” This is a passionate urgent statement about a situation in the now moment that he is already addressing.

OG1-041115-041136 “Government should be a force for good...government should work harder...” This is a belief that he puts his weight behind with strength and conviction implying that he knows it won't be easy and will need to be grappled with (note the controlled flow).

Also near 4:46 on the C-Span YouTube version “Two fundamentally different visions for the future.”

2. OBAMA-GESTURE 2 (OG2)—This might be labeled “Cutting” or “Incisive”

Movement of one arm or both with flat open hand, cutting downward, like a knife,
When Obama uses this style of gesture, he is usually saying something that needs incisive action orientation.

OG 2-017011-017044 9:25-9:26 “But know this America, our problems CAN be solved (cutting hand in Direct, Sudden Awake State). Here he is saying, “Wake up, pay attention, things are not hopeless.” This is a future oriented statement.

OG 2-034224-034288 “…sustain the strongest military.” This is an example of putting his weight behind something he believes he is doing in an incisive way now and in the future. He is passionate here (Strong, Controlled, Sudden)

This cutting gesture is also used in a different way in 7:15-7:16 “TRY a tax cut” Right hand cutting with side of hand. Directness to Left-Forward, arc-like. This is used in this case in a slightly sarcastic way, implying that he feels the Republicans don't really have a plan, but will try anything that will sell, even if it couldn't possibly work. “Here he is cutting to the chase.”

3. OBAMA-GESTURE 3 (OG3) “Delineating” “Forceful Defining” “Make no mistake” (This may be the most used type of gesture and the most recognizable!)

Movement of one arm or both with hand that is closed with the thumb touching the first joint of the forefinger, and lower arm that is following along making an arc from the elbow.

This movement is often used with high intensity energy investment -- a forceful, contained, urgent passionate energy (Strong, Controlled, Sudden---Passion Drive) to point out things that going on in the present moment or he has already taken action on.

He also often uses this energy to recruit people to join him in taking action.

10:44-10:45 “We are making things again” Right hand, Thumb to Forefinger “enumerating fact” Strong-, Bound, Quick- (diminished Passion Drive) Passionate about his achievements.
OG 3_013901-013963 “I’ve cut taxes for those who need it.”

OG 3_017656-017707 Delineating what he has accomplished in “manufacturing, education...national security.”

OG 3-028250-028374 “some of the worst schools in the nation have made gains...”

OG 3_030604-030744 “Help me recruit...math and science teachers”

9:27-9:32 "Our challenges **CAN** be **MET**. (both with Right Hand Thumb to Forefinger—enumerating facts Direct, Strong-, Bound (Remote State to Spell Drive) This energy quality was more prevalent in his 2008 campaign and in his 2012 State of the Union speech. It is the style of an orator rather than that of an action person who fights for what he believes with a passion. Obama now has less Spell Drive and more Passion than in 2008!

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**TRANSITION GESTURE:**

Obama often maintains Direct, Bound (“Remote State”) Eye Contact while tongue goes behind lip to touch front of teeth. This gesture could be a “Coming to Presence and centering himself inwardly—cleansing his palette, and coming to a distance from what he has previously spoken” before moving on to the next thought or statement