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1. Flip-flopping, Memory, and the Impact on Perceived Leadership Ability
2. Research Abstract
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FLIP-FLOPPING, MEMORY AND THE IMPACT ON PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP ABILITY

Followers' perception of a leader's abilities can influence their behavior toward a common goal. (Northouse, 2015). This influence can range from followers' motivation to perform to how they vote in an election. There are numerous situations where selecting a leader mimics elections, where a vote determines the outcome of whether a person is hired for a leadership position. Examples include hiring CEOs, university presidents, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, and board of directors. During various vetting interviews, candidates often takes positions on policy or institutional issues. Flip-flopping, or changing one's position on an issue, may have negative effects on followers' perception of a leader's abilities, and consequently on their voting decision. Although flip-flopping is thought to impact voter behavior, there is little research examining people's memory for changes of opinion or the impact such memories have on voting behavior.

Our study draws from the procedure and materials used by Putnam, Wahlheim, and Jacoby (2014). In our study, we ask participants to read excerpts from candidates in two political debates, consider the candidates' positions, and complete a survey rating the candidate's leadership abilities. As a filler task, participants spend 2 minutes listing things that they might do before the next debate. They then will read a second set of debate statements made by the same candidates. However, in the second case, one candidate will have statements that are incongruent with positions stated in the first debate (candidates/positions randomized for each participant). Following a memory test, participants will again complete the leadership survey. We predict that participants' perceptions of the candidate's leadership abilities will change based on recollection of flip-flopping made during the second debate. Such results have importance to organizational behavior, as change in leadership perception may affect the leader's influence over followers, and thus their leadership effectiveness.

References

- Northouse, P.G. (2015). *Leadership, Theory and Practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Putnam, A. L., Wahlheim, C. N., & Jacoby, L. L. (2014), Memory for flip-flopping: Detection and recollection of political contradictions. *Memory and Cognition*, 42, 1198-1210.