

# Evaluating Resources Long

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Learning Outcome: You can evaluate resource quality and relevance in order to ensure the use of the most appropriate and sophisticated information. Your class read the WSU Common Reading book, *Being Wrong*, and you are working on a research paper related to an issue in the book. You've decided to investigate the issue of political candidates changing their minds, or "flip flopping," on policy positions (a common theme of negative campaign commercials): your research question is: Is issue flip-flopping a negative indicator for U.S. political candidates and elected officials? Your professor wants your paper to be written in academic style, and to include peer-reviewed articles as well as academic books and other sources.

## What is your section number?

- 1
- 2

... additional choices hidden ...

## What is your name?

First

Last

**1. Four publications are listed below. Based on the citation and the abstract/snippet provided, match the publication to its resource type and briefly note how you might use two of the sources.**

A. Seifert, E. (2012). The politics of authenticity in presidential campaigns, 1976-2008. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co."Ideas of "authenticity" became central to presidential campaigns in the late 20th century. Beginning in 1976, Americans elected six presidents who represented evolving standards of authenticity. Interacting with the media and their publics, these successful presidential candidates structured their campaigns and images around the projection of authenticity and connecting with voters as "one of us." [Abstract]

B. Safire, W. (2008). Flip-flop. In Safire's Political Dictionary. (pp. 253-254). Oxford: Oxford University Press."A dramatic reversal of position; a charge that a political figure, with a finger to the winds of change, has completely changed his mind. Both noun and verb have become common in political attacks. In supporting a tax increase, President Reagan was asked whether he had "flip-flopped on the tax issue"; he replied..." [Snippet]

C. Tavits, M. (2007). Principle vs. Pragmatism: Policy Shifts and Political Competition. American Journal of Political Science, 51: 151-165. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00243.x" This article investigates the electoral effect of party policy shifts. I argue that whether party policy shifts are damaging or rewarding depends on whether the shift occurs in the pragmatic or principled issue domain. On pragmatic issues, voters value "getting things done." Policy shifts in this domain signal responsiveness to the changing environment and are likely to be rewarded. Principled issues, however, concern core beliefs and values. Any policy shift in this domain is a sign of inconsistency and lack of credibility, which is likely to lead to voter withdrawal. These arguments are supported by evidence from 23 advanced democracies over a period of 40 years." [Abstract]

D. Kirschten, D. (1993, January). Anatomy of a flip-flop. National Journal 25(5), 313."The author contrasts statements Bill Clinton made during the presidential election campaign regarding Haitian refugees and the actual policy he has adopted since assuming the presidency." [Abstract]

**1. Resource Types for the Four Sources (Matching)**

Reference Work

- A
- B
- C
- D

Book

- A
- B
- C

D

Scholarly Article

A

B

C

D

Popular/Trade/Professional Article

A

B

C

D

**1B. Resources such as these are used for different purposes in a research and writing process. Pick two of the above sources (A-D) and briefly explain how each type of resource could be used.**

A. Seifert, E. (2012)

B. Safire, W. (2008)

C. Tavits, M. (2007)

D. Kirschten, D. (1993, January)

2. Based on the citations and snippets below, identify the source(s) that you think will give you the most useful and appropriate overview of your topic of issue flip-flopping by political candidates, and maybe some good examples to discuss?

A. Reske, H. (2008, October 27). Measuring the Candidates' Flip-Flops. U.S. News & World Report 145(9). "From core issues to the ephemeral, both presidential candidates have managed to engineer their share of flip-flops. While many have cropped up in attack ads, several are more glaring than others. Here's a guide to some of this year's most high-profile reversals, rated on a scale from 1 (a little waffling) to 5 (a complete 180)." [Snippet]

B. Buell, E. H., & Sigelman, L. (2009). Attack politics: Negativity in presidential campaigns since 1960. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas. "This highly regarded study of negativity in presidential campaigns since 1960 now includes a substantial new chapter on the 2008 contest between Barack Obama and John McCain. It offers the best overview yet of modern presidential races and remains must reading for anyone interested in the vagaries of those campaigns." [Description]

C. Boyett, J.H. (2008) Won't get fooled again: A voter's guide to seeing through the lies, getting past the propaganda and choosing the best leaders. New York: American Management Association. "In the last decade, incompetent leadership has done more to change the face of our world than perhaps in any other time in history. Recent events like Hurricane Katrina and the war in Iraq have proven that blind faith in our rulers is more than foolish—it can be downright dangerous. The world has grown more complicated and more volatile, and making intelligent decisions about the people in charge has never been more crucial. What causes us to follow bad leaders and how can we stop it? The answer is simple: If we want better leaders, we need to become better informed and more demanding followers. Won't Get Fooled Again is an eye-opening look at the politicians and other public servants who promise too much and deliver too little. Using extensive research and solid evidence, author Joseph Boyett reveals: why we need leaders in the first place; how to tell if a leader is authentic; the top four red flags that your leader's vision is flawed; why "wishy-washy" candidates and "flip floppers" can make the best leaders. Timely and revelatory, this is the one book that will change the way we vote, the way we see the world, and who we trust." [Description]

**2. Based on the citations and snippets above, which source(s) do you think will give you the most useful and appropriate overview of your topic of issue flip-flopping by political candidates, and maybe some good examples to discuss?**

- A. Reske, H. (2008, October 27)
- B. Buell, E.H., Sigelman, L. (2009).
- C. Boyett, J.H. (2008)

**Please describe why you selected this/these source(s) (A-C) for your research.**

**3. Now you want to find some high-quality articles that will help you build your arguments with relevant and specific theories and data . Using the check boxes below, select one or more of the four options.**

A. Kaid, L. L. & Johnston, A. (1991). Negative versus positive television advertising in U.S. presidential campaigns, 1960–1988. *Journal of Communication*, 41(3), 53–064. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.1991.tb02323.x "Analysis of 830 television spots from eight presidential campaigns showed that the 'negativism' charged to the 1988 campaign is actually at the same level as the two previous ones and that what tends to differentiate negative from positive ads is not party or incumbency but a more frequent appeal to voters' fears." [Abstract]

B. Seifert, E. (2012) The politics of authenticity in presidential campaigns, 1976-2008. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. "Ideas of 'authenticity' became central to presidential campaigns in the late 20th century. Beginning in 1976, Americans elected six presidents who represented evolving standards

of authenticity. Interacting with the media and their publics, these successful presidential candidates structured their campaigns and images around the projection of authenticity and connecting with voters as ‘one of us.’” [Abstract]

C. Neumann, D. (September 01, 2012). Flip-Flopping, Presidential Politics, and Abraham Lincoln. *Social Education*, 76(4), 178-181. “The American public can count on a few things during the presidential election season. First, candidates will take a moral high ground and forswear mudslinging. Before long however, they will proceed to engage in nasty accusations against their opponents. A vibrant democracy ought to welcome carefully thought-out views that, when intentionally simplified or distorted by opponents, make a candidate look like a flip-flopper. The term “flip-flopper” is a depreciative term referring to “a person, especially a politician, who (habitually) changes his or her opinion or position.” The skill of understanding complex decisions in their historical contexts can help stir a hunger for greater political discourse. Using the example of Abraham Lincoln’s views on slavery, history educators can enlighten students about the complexity of national political decisions.” [Abstract]

D. Windsurfing (2004 Bush vs Kerry) [Political advertisement]. *The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials 1952-2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/commercials/2004/windsurfing> “Kerry voted for the Iraq war, opposed it, supported it, and now opposes it again. He bragged about voting for the \$87 billion to support our troops before he voted against it. He voted for education reform and now opposes it. He claims he’s against increasing Medicare premiums but voted five times to do so...” [Snippet]

### **3. Select the check boxes that represent the articles you would use to help build your arguments with relevant and specific theories and data.**

- A. Kaid, L.L (1991)
- B. Seifert, E. (2012)
- C. Neumann, D. ( 2012)
- D. Windsurfing (2004)

**Please describe why you selected this/these source(s) (A-D) for your research.**

**4. Reviewing the following citations and abstracts/descriptions/snippets, do you detect any instances of bias or a particular perspective (for example, written from a particular partisan (or cultural, or social) standpoint) that would make you use the source carefully (or not at all, depending on what and how you constructed your argument, evidence/examples, and analysis)?**

A. Rep. Doug Collins flip flops, willing to say anything to get elected. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://marthaforcongress.com/rep-doug-collins-flip-flops-willing-to-say-anything-to-get-elected/>“We don’t need any more flip floppers in Washington like Doug Collins who say one thing on the Campaign Trail and do another when they think no one is looking,’ said Mahoney. ‘We need real conservative leaders like Martha Zoller who won’t cave in to party leadership or special interests, and will always put the conservative values of Georgia’s 9th Congressional District first.’ ‘Martha Zoller will bring consistent conservative leadership that you can trust. Doug Collins will flip flop on command.’” [Snippet]

B. Lempert, M. (2009). On ‘flip-flopping’: Branded stance-taking in U.S. electoral politics. *Journal Of Sociolinguistics*, 13(2), 223-248. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9841.2009.00405.x  
<http://www.systems.wsu.edu/scripts/wsual.pl?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=36998328&site=ehost-live>“This article examines stance in U.S. political discourse, taking as its empirical point of departure Democratic candidate John Kerry’s epistemic stance-taking in the televised 2004 presidential debates. Kerry’s stance-taking is shown to help display the characterological attribute of ‘conviction’ and serve as a rejoinder to critics who had branded him as a ‘flip-flopper.’ His stance-taking is thus not primarily ‘to’ or ‘for’ copresent interactants, but is largely interdiscursive in character. ‘Conviction’ and its opposite, ‘flip-flopping,’ suggest further how stance-taking itself has been an object of typification in the agonistic dynamics of candidate branding and counter-branding. In moving from epistemic stance-taking in discourse to models of the stance-taker as a social type, this article addresses questions about the units and levels of analysis needed to study stance in contemporary political discourse.” [Abstract]

C. Hilton, S. G. (1995). *Senator for sale: An unauthorized biography of Senator Bob Dole*. New York: St. Martin's Press.“In this remarkable biography, published when Dole was running for president, Hilton paints a disturbing portrait of former Sen. Bob Dole. Using his personal experiences as an aide to the Senator, he offers a number of surprising revelations, such as: Dole’s brokering for power & catering to a host of special-interest groups, such as the tobacco industry; his numerous violations of election laws; his career-long habit of flip-flopping on virtually every major national issue; & his role as the architect of the two largest tax hikes in U.S. history. Exposes Dole’s colossal political money machine, & compares Dole to his hero Richard Nixon, & traces his career.” [Description]

**4. Select two of the above sources (A-C) and briefly describe the identified bias in each and how that might impact your use of the source in your research/writing process?**

- A. Rep. Collins Flip Flops...
- B. Lempert, M. (2009)...
- C. Hilton, S.G. (1995)....

**5. After you turned in your research paper, your instructor gave you a new assignment – write a blog post explaining why or why not the issue flip-flopping should be the kiss of death for a candidate or elected official. Your blog post needs to include resources for additional information that are informative and engaging but not too scholarly (you want your friends to read them, after all!). So think about sources appropriate for your prospective audience and purpose.**

A. Reske, H. (2008). Measuring the Candidates' Flip-Flops. (Cover story). U.S. News & World Report, 145(9), 53. "From core issues to the ephemeral, both presidential candidates have managed to engineer their share of flip-flops. While many have cropped up in attack ads, several are more glaring than others. Here's a guide to some of this year's most high-profile reversals, rated on a scale from 1 (a little waffling) to 5 (a complete 180)." [Snippet]

B. Tavits, M. (2007), Principle vs. Pragmatism: Policy Shifts and Political Competition. American Journal of Political Science, 51: 151–165. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00243.x "This article investigates the electoral effect of party policy shifts. I argue that whether party policy shifts are damaging or rewarding depends on whether the shift occurs in the pragmatic or principled issue domain. On pragmatic issues, voters value "getting things done." Policy shifts in this domain signal responsiveness to the changing environment and are likely to be rewarded. Principled issues, however, concern core beliefs and values. Any policy shift in this domain is a sign of inconsistency and lack of credibility, which is likely to lead to voter withdrawal. These arguments are supported by evidence from 23 advanced democracies over a period of 40 years." [Abstract]

C. PolitiFact.com <http://www.politifact.com/about/> "PolitiFact is a project of the Tampa Bay Times and its partners to help you find the truth in politics. Every day, reporters and researchers from PolitiFact and its partner news organization examine statements by members of Congress, state legislators, governors, mayors, the president, cabinet secretaries, lobbyists, people who testify before Congress and anyone else who speaks up in American politics. We research their statements and then rate the accuracy on our Truth-O-Meter – True, Mostly True, Half True, Mostly False and False. The most ridiculous falsehoods get our lowest rating, Pants on Fire. We rate the consistency of public officials on our Flip-O-Meter using three ratings: No Flip, Half Flip and Full Flop." [Snippet]

D. Motyl, M. (2012, August 14). PsychoPolitics: Using Scientific Research to Understand The Psychology of Politics (Web log). Retrieved from <http://mattmotyl.blogspot.com/2012/08/the-cost-of-flip-flops-electoral.html>“So, it's clear that attacking one's opponent by calling them a flip-flopper or a waffler is common. But, do those attacks work? And, is there some reason why candidates choose to flip-flop on some issues? At the Summer Institute in Political Psychology, Michael Tomz presented the findings from a paper he and Robert van Houweling published in the 2009 issue of the American Political Science Review in which they try to answer these questions. These researchers hypothesized that flip-flopping could lead voters to have positive OR negative perceptions of the candidates. Flip-flopping might actually lead people to think that the inconsistent candidate is open-minded, flexible, and responsive to new data. Alternately, voters may come to view the inconsistent candidate as lacking integrity and honesty, and perceive the candidate as willing to say anything to get elected. This negative effect should dissuade candidates from changing their views, lest they suffer the wrath of countless attack ads.” [Snippet]

**5. Based on the provided snippets, which source(s) (books, articles, and websites) might you include in your resources section. Describe why you selected each source(s) for your blog.**

- A. Reske, H. (2008)
- B. Tavits, M. (2007)
- C. PolitiFact.com
- D. Motyl, M. (2012, August 14)

**6. What questions do you still have about your research? Record any questions or comments below. Include your email address for a response!**