

## Using suggestion to influence attitudes and behaviour

### **ABSTRACT:**

#### **Background and Aims**

Although researchers have explored hypnosis for decades, psychologists have relatively neglected one of its core components: suggestion. We tested two paradigms to assess how suggestion outside of the context of hypnosis can affect attitudes and behaviour. In both paradigms, we used the choice blindness method, in which participants receive false feedback about the outcome of a recent decision.

#### **Method and Results**

In Study 1, we ran 65 participants through a lab study in which we used false feedback from a sham brain scanner, as well as various subtle suggestions, to affect participants' attitudes and behaviour. We saw a large change in self-reported attitudes consistent with the feedback, but no behavioural change. In Study 2, we explored a reduced suggestion paradigm outside of the lab during the United States presidential debates. We gave 136 participants false feedback about their political affiliation, making them seem more open-minded than they initially reported. The large majority of participants endorsed this false feedback and readily offered rationalisations for it. We replicated these results in two additional online samples totalling 955 participants and found similar results across the political spectrum.

#### **Conclusions**

Combined, these studies demonstrate that using suggestion in the context of choice blindness can be a practical method to study attitude change.

#### **Keywords**

Suggestion, Choice blindness, Deception, Attitudes

### **Published Work:**

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### **Researcher's Contacts:**

Jay Olson  
Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory  
Duff Medical Building Room 723  
Montreal Neurological Institute  
3775 University Street  
Montreal, QC  
H3A 2B4 Canada  
Phone: 514 398 1289  
Email: [jay.olson@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:jay.olson@mail.mcgill.ca)