

The politics of color: Preferences for Republican red versus Democratic blue

Karen B. Schloss and Stephen E. Palmer

Psychonomic Bulletin and Review, 21, 1481-1488 (2014)

The present study reveals that Election Day differentially affects the color preferences of US Republicans and Democrats. Voters' preferences for Republican red and Democratic blue were assessed, along with several distractor colors, on and around the 2010 interim and 2012 presidential elections. On non-Election Days, Republicans and Democrats preferred Republican red equally, and Republicans actually preferred Democratic blue more than Democrats did. On Election Day, however, Republicans' and Democrats' color preferences changed to become more closely aligned with their own party's colors. Republicans liked Republican red more than Democrats did, and no longer preferred Democratic blue more than Democrats did. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that color preferences are determined by people's preferences for correspondingly colored objects/entities (Palmer & Schloss in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107:8877–8882,). They further suggest that color preferences are calculated at a given moment, depending on which color-object associations are currently most activated or salient. Color preferences are thus far more dynamic and context-dependent than has previously been believed.