# Effects of School Spirit on Color Preferences: Berkeley's Blue-and-Gold vs. Stanford's Red-and-White

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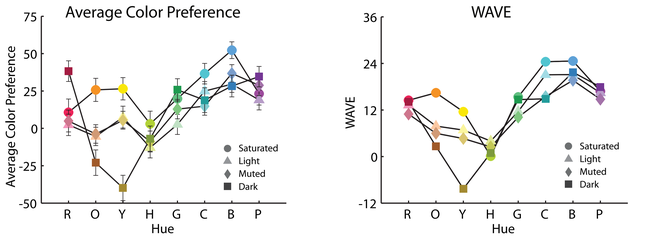
## Background

**Ecological Valence Theory (EVT):**
Preference for a given color is largely determined by peoples' affective response (positive/negative) to all of the objects/entities that they associate with that color.

**Weighted Affective Valence Estimate (WAVE) of a color:**
The average of the affective valence ratings of all objects associated with the color, weighted by the similarity of that color to the color of each associated object.

**The WAVEs explain 80% of the variance in average color preferences**

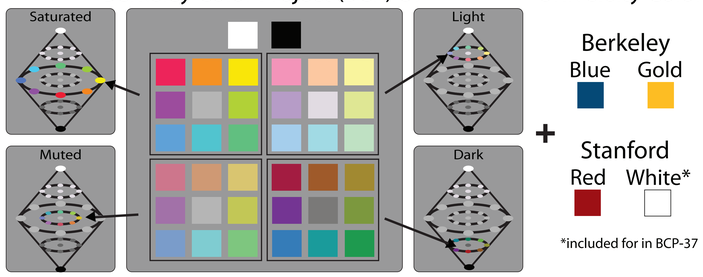



(Palmer & Schloss, 2010)

**Implication of the EVT:**
A person's preference for university colors should vary according to the strength of their affective connection with that university.

**Research Questions:**
Do students like their university's colors better than their rival university's colors? Does their preference for their university's colors increase with the strength of their positive affect for the institution (school spirit)?

## Colors

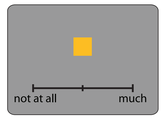



Munsell colors specified in CIE 1931 values through the Munsell Renotation Table (Wyszecki & Stiles, 1967)

## General Methods

### Preference for Single Colors

How much do you like this color?

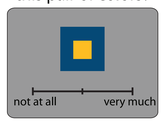



Line-mark rating (-100 to +100 px)

**Colors**
BCP-37
+
4 University colors

### Preference for Color Pairs

How much do you like this pair of colors?




Line-mark rating (-100 to +100 px)

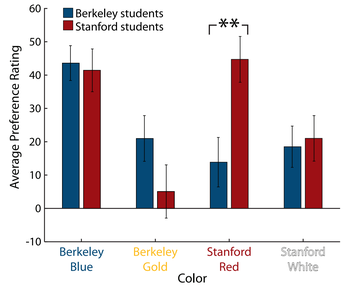
**Colors**
4 University colors

+
3 color-variants

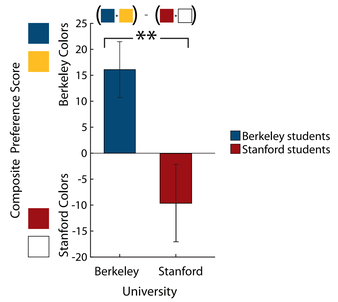
Participants rated their school spirit (Berkeley or Stanford) (1-9, 1 = anti-spirit, 9 = tons of spirit).

## Preference for Single Colors

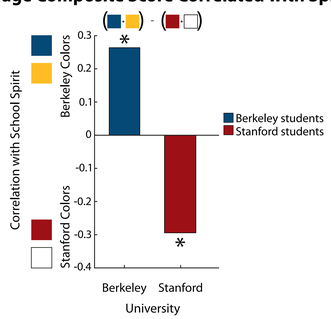
**Preference for University Colors**



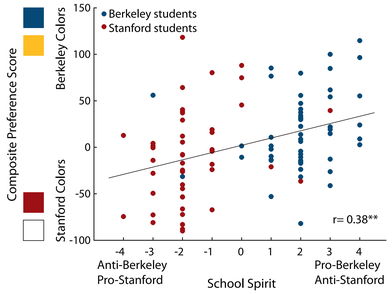

**Composite Score for University Colors**




**Average Composite Score Correlated with Spirit**



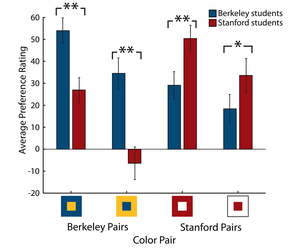

**Composite Score Correlated with Spirit for Individuals**



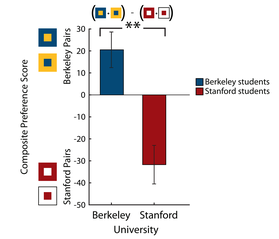

Preference for the BCP-37 colors most similar to the University colors (blue, yellow and red) were not different for Berkeley and Stanford students (Fs<1).

## Preference for Color Pairs

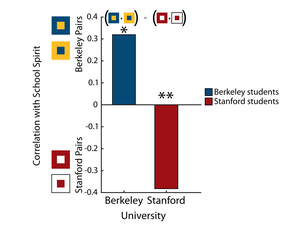
**Preference for University Color Pairs**



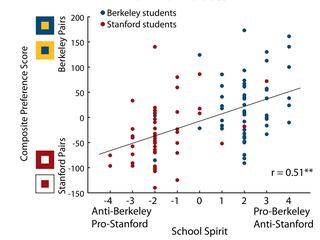

**Composite Score for University Color Pairs**




**Average Composite Score Correlated with Spirit**




**Composite Score Correlated with Spirit for Individuals**




## Conclusions

Berkeley and Stanford undergraduates show systematic differences in preferences for university colors.

The magnitude of differential preference for Berkeley vs. Stanford colors correlates with the amount of school spirit (positive affect) the individuals feel for their own university.

These findings support the Ecological Valence Theory's claim that color preferences are causally determined by affective responses to associates of those colors:
It is unlikely that students choose their university because they like the university's colors and develop the strength of their school spirit with how much they like their university's colors.

## References and Acknowledgements

Palmer, S. E. & Schloss, K. B. (2010) An ecological valence theory of human color preference. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.*
Wyszecki G. & Stiles W.S. (1967). Color Science: Concepts and methods, quantitative data and formulas. New York, NY: John Wiley.
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