The Color of Compliance: Red Effects Compliance with Donation Requests

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In each condition, participants read and responded to four organizations' requests for donations likeability, positivity and negativity. The amount of money donated was our measure of compliance behavior. Lastly, participants completed personality measures and demographic questionnaires such as a total of $700. Next, participants were able to donate to as many or as few organizations as they saw fit from a variety of colors and background. Participants completed one of two within-subject conditions which randomized the color background and participant gender. Participants were told that the experiment would measure impression formation of organization requests from women in red. We expect these effects to be mediated by perceived status and attractiveness.

Hypothesis 1: We hypothesized that donation requests paired with the color red would receive more donations.

Hypothesis 2: We hypothesized that women requesters would receive a larger "bump" in donations from being paired with red than male requesters.

Hypothesis 3: We hypothesized that, relative to other colors, women will comply more with requests from men wearing red and men will comply more with requests from women in red. We expect these effects to be mediated by perceived status and attractiveness, respectively.

Method

Participants:
N= 52 Purdue undergraduates participated for course credit.
Six participants removed from analysis for failure to follow instructions.
Final N=46

Design and Procedure:
Students from Purdue’s Intro to Psychology course signed up for the study to earn extra credit. Participants were told that the experiment would measure impression formation of organization requests from women in red. Participants completed one of two within-subject conditions which randomized the color background associated with each representative for each organization. Each representative, statement, and organization was pre-tested for neutrality.
In each condition, participants read and responded to four organizations requests for donations by a representative. Examples include:

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Background

• The color red has evolutionary implications for social behavior. Previous research shows that men rate women wearing red more attractive, whereas women rate men wearing red higher in status (Eliot, 2010).
• In social influence literature, attractiveness and status are shown to increase compliance with requests (Caildini, 2004).
• The purpose of the current research was to connect these literatures by testing the link between the color red and compliance.
• Hypothesis 1: We hypothesized that donation requests paired with the color red would receive more donations.
• Hypothesis 2: We hypothesized that women requesters would receive a larger "bump" in donations from being paired with red than male requesters.
• Hypothesis 3: We hypothesized that, relative to other colors, women will comply more with requests from men wearing red and men will comply more with requests from women in red. We expect these effects to be mediated by perceived status and attractiveness, respectively.

Results

Results and Discussion

• Data were analyzed using Repeated Measures ANOVA is SPSS.

Hypothesis 1: Main effects

• There was not a significant main effect of background color, F(1, 45) = 1.27, p=.27.
• There was a significant main effect of target gender, F(1, 45) = 4.53, p<.05.
• In front of a red background, men (M=192.83, SE=17.52), F(1, 45) = 4.23, p<.05.
• Women received significantly fewer donations in front of a red background (M=132.17, SE=18.23) than a white background (M=192.83, SE=17.52), F(1, 45) = 4.53, p<.05.

Hypothesis 2: Color X Requester Gender interaction (see Fig. 1)
• There was a significant interaction between background color and requester gender, F(1, 45) = 4.53, p<.05.
• In front of a red background, men (M=195.65, SE=19.40) received significantly higher donations that women (M=132.17, SE=18.23), F(1, 45) = 4.46, p<.05.
• Women received significantly fewer donations in front of a red background (M=132.17, SE=18.23) than a white background (M=192.83, SE=17.52), F(1, 45) = 4.53, p<.05.

Hypothesis 3: Participant Gender X Color X Requester Gender interaction (see Fig. 2)
• There was not a significant 3-way interaction (F(1, 44) = 2.04, p=.16).

Arousal:
• We also found evidence that likeability was a predictor of compliance, r(178) = .17, p=.09.
• Overall, likeability and attractiveness were positively correlated, r(178) = .69, p<.01.
• Further analysis revealed that attractiveness predicted donations to female requesters (r(90) = .22, p<.05) but not male requesters (r(90) = .06, p=.60.
• Liking also predicted donations to women (r(92) = .29, p<.01), but not men (r(92) = .06, p=.58).

Color:
• Color was associated with increased perceived attractiveness for men (r(88) = .27, p<.01), but not for women (r(88) = -.12, p=.26).
Our study suggests that, contrary to our hypotheses, female requesters were actually harmed by a red background. When paired with a red background, women received fewer donations than their female counterparts in front of a white background, and fewer donations than men in front of any color background. This may be because men received a boost in perceived attractiveness from the color red whereas women did not.

BIG BUDDIES

In recent years, the baby boomers generation has experienced a life style in which they are not able to find effective role models. NO MORE MOTHERS...NO MORE FATHERS...NO MORE SIBLINGS...NO MORE FRIENDS...NO MORE...AS THEY GET OLDER...THEY NEED HELP!

ADOPT A ROLE MODEL

Adopt-a-role model is an organization dedicated to helping children who have been abused or neglected. These children need help to keep these children in their everyday needs.

"We will always remember your help"

"You're the beginning"

Participants viewed organization appeals and answered questions regarding their attractiveness, likability, positivity and negativity.
Next, participants were able to donate to as many or as few organizations as they saw fit from a total of $700.
Lastly, participants completed personality measures and demographic questionnaires such as age, academic year and ethnicity.

The amount of money donated was our measure of compliance behavior.

References


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