

Coloring within the Party Lines: Candidate Branding in Primary Elections

Colin R. Case

University of North Carolina; crcase@live.unc.edu

Research Question

Do candidates use visual elements in their campaign to convey information to voters?

Data

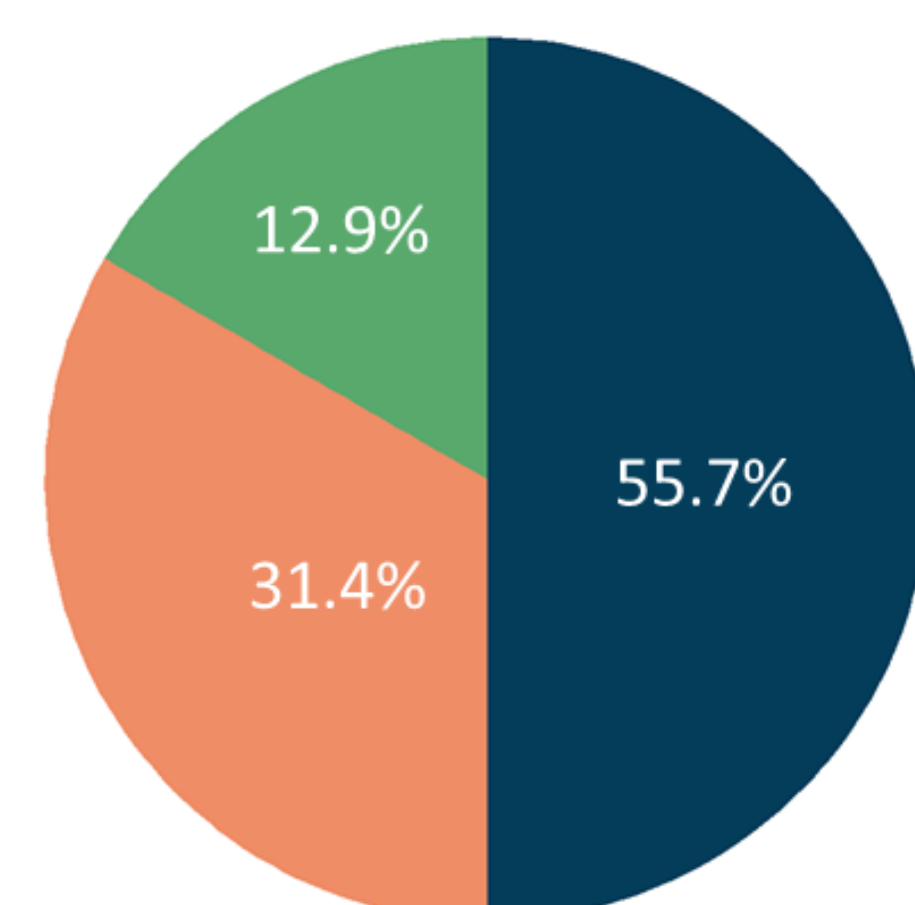
- 2022 House of Representative primary candidate logos (N=1,652).
- Ideology estimates using campaign website issue statements (Case 2023).



Why Campaign Logos?

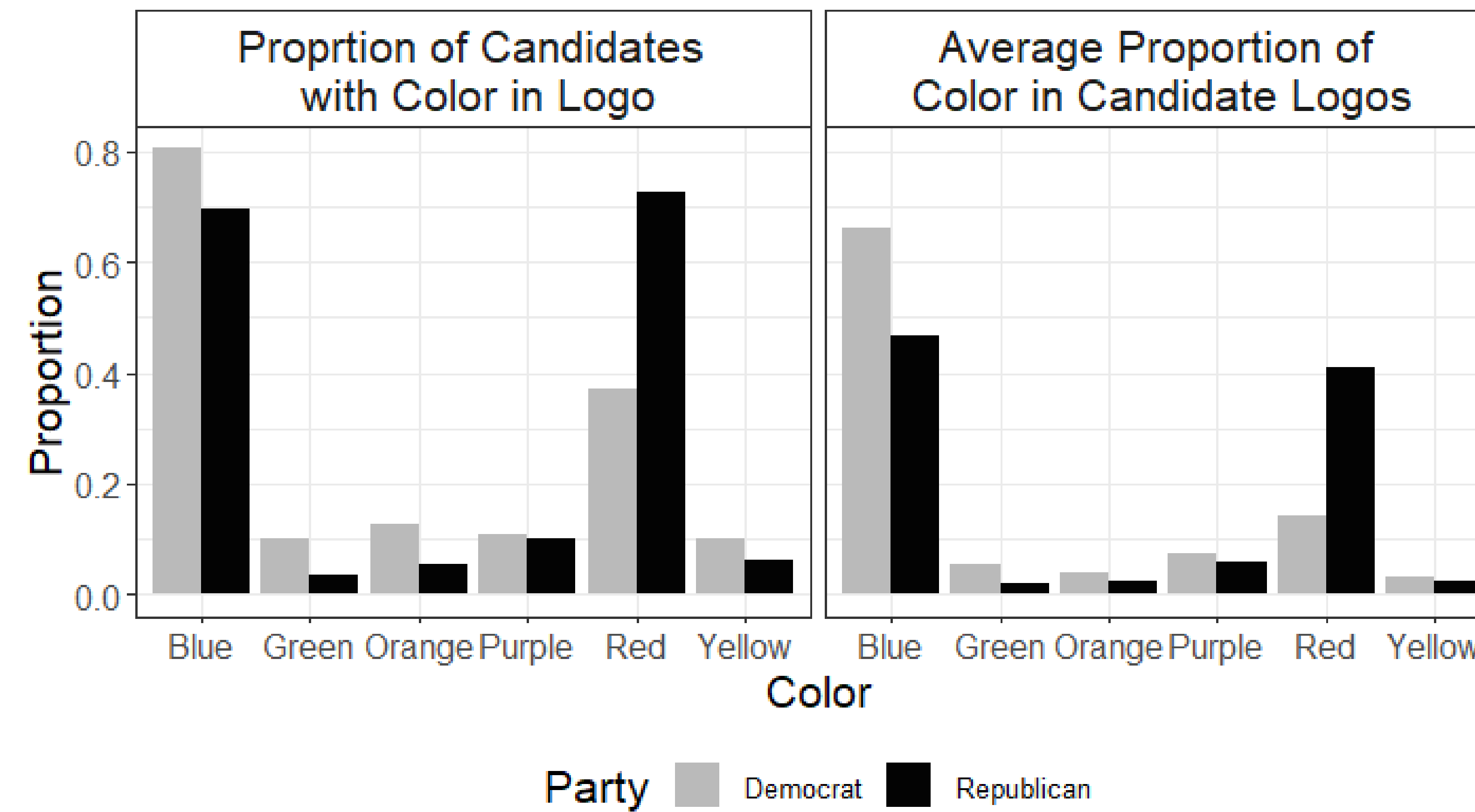
- Candidates brand themselves to differentiate campaign from co-partisans (Clarke 2020).
- Voters spend minimal time thinking about politics (Lupia and McCubbins 1998).
- Informational aspects matter in primaries (e.g., Hall 2015; Porter and Treul 2023).
- Present on voter facing resources; color is potential information heuristic.

Color Separation

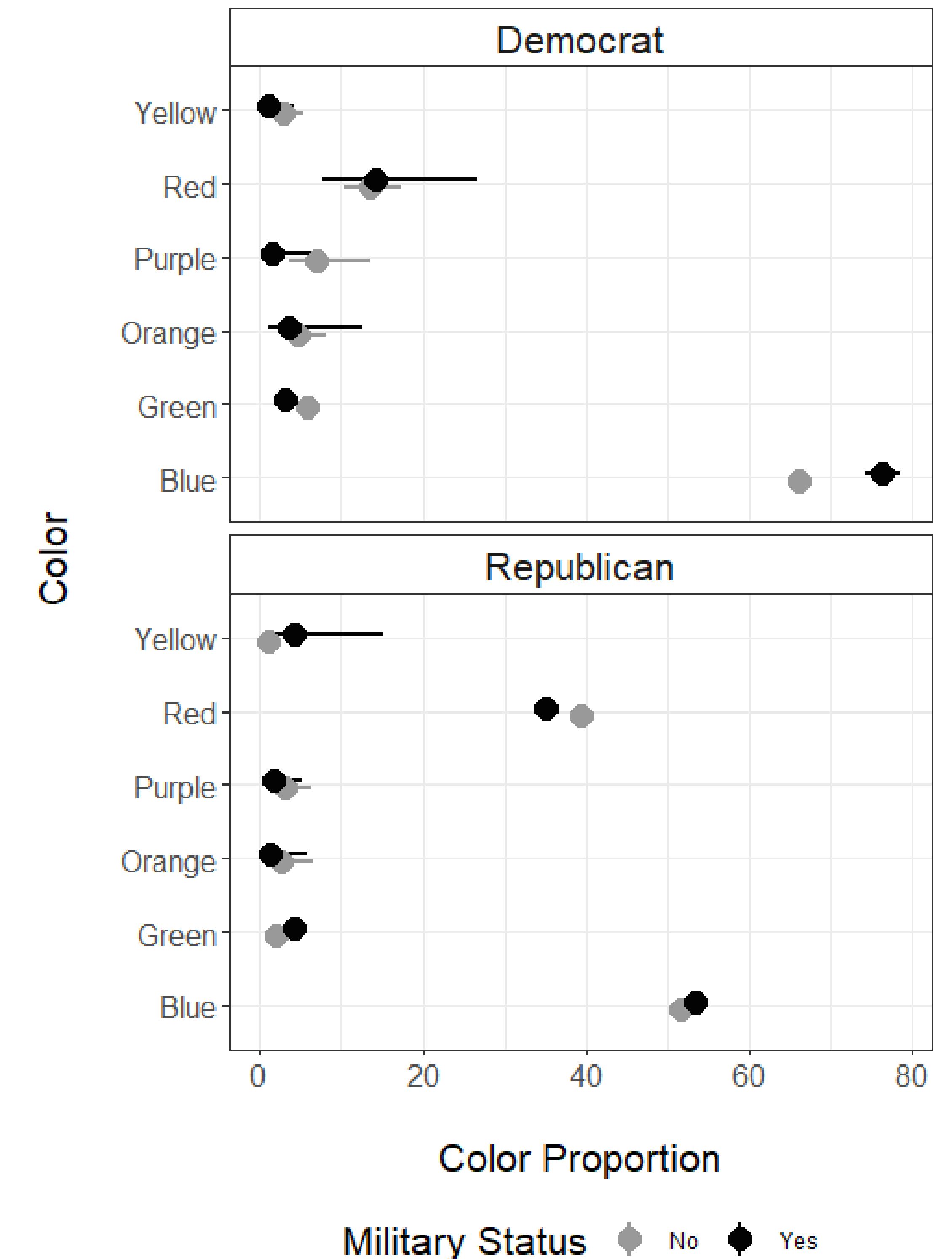


Color properties and proportions extracted from each logo using OpenCV package in Python and K-Means clustering.

Measuring Color in Campaign Logos

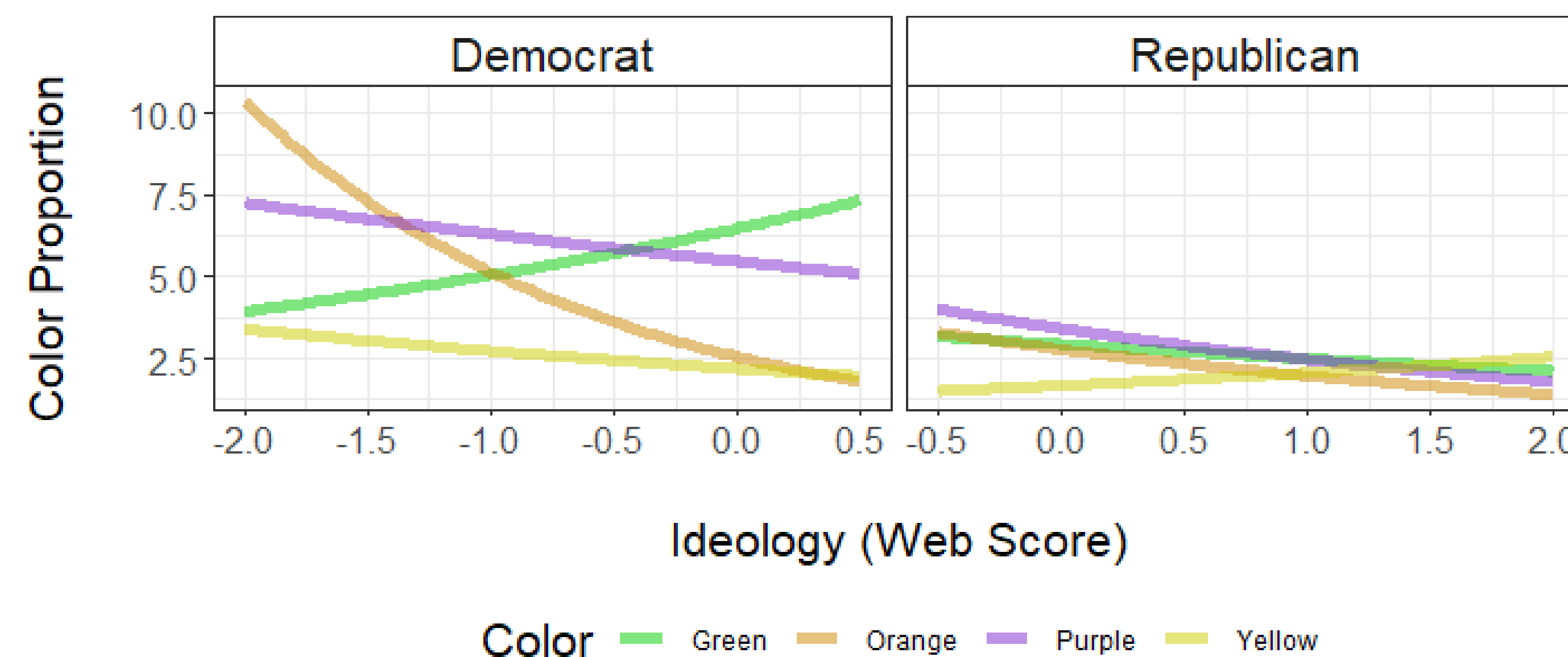
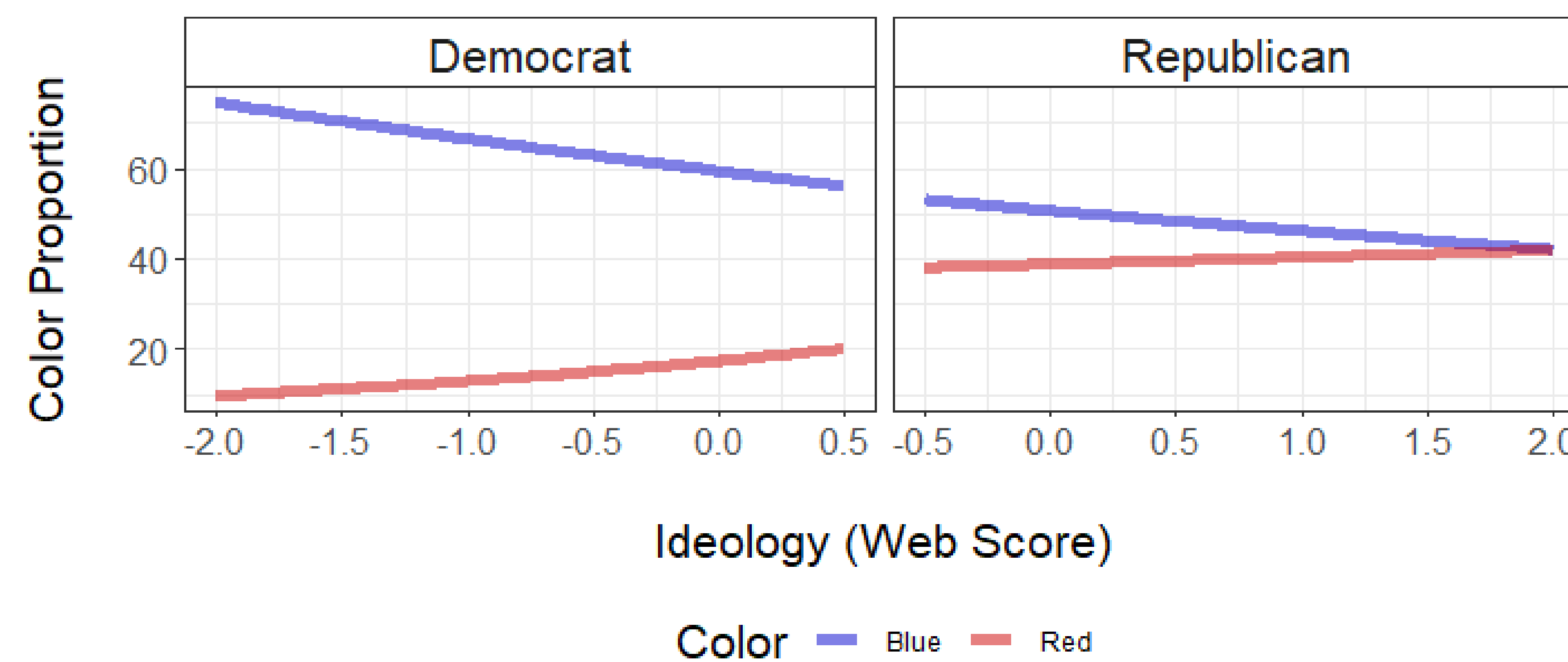


Candidate Occupation



Figures present predicted results of negative binomial models where the DV is the proportion of a candidate's logo that is that color and the IV past military service. Past military service is a significant predictor of candidates' use of blue (+), green (-), and purple (-) for Democrats, and green (+), red (-), and yellow (+) for Republicans.

Logo Colors and Candidate Ideology



Figures present predicted results of negative binomial models where the DV is the proportion of a candidate's logo that is that color and the IV is the candidate's ideology. Ideology (liberal to conservative) is a significant predictor of candidates' use of blue (-), orange (+), purple (-), and red (+) for Democrats, and blue (-), orange (-), purple (-), and red (+) for Republicans.

Conclusions and Next Steps

- Candidates use visual elements of campaign to convey tangible information to voters.
- Expanding collection to 2024 candidates and studying color combinations.
- Survey experiment assessing how color choices shape citizen perceptions of candidates.