

Partisan lenses: Beauty lies in your political affiliation

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Have you ever noticed you find your candidate for political office more attractive than the opponent? New research from Cornell University shows you're not the only one.

"We showed pictures of familiar and unfamiliar political leaders to voters in two different samples and found that familiarity and partisanship each significantly influenced how candidates were perceived," said the study's lead researcher, said Kevin M. Kniffin, a postdoctoral research associate at Cornell's Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management. "For example, Democrats rated Barack Obama as more physically attractive, and Republicans tended to rate Sarah Palin as better looking."

In both of the studies, people were viewing the pictures "through partisan-colored lenses," explains Kniffin.

The researchers effectively removed the partisan-colored lenses by asking study participants to view unlabeled pictures of unfamiliar political leaders from distant states. The results for those unfamiliar candidates showed no favoritism based on political affiliation.

"There's no 'Republican look' or 'Democrat hairdo,'" Kniffin says. "If you don't recognize [political leaders](#) and can't view them through partisan lenses, they don't have the halos or horns that influence perceptions of familiar leaders."

The study, "Beauty is in the in-group of the beholder: Intergroup differences in the perceived attractiveness of leaders" was published today in *The Leadership Quarterly*.

Cornell University has television, ISDN and dedicated Skype/Google+ Hangout studios available for media interviews.

Provided by Cornell University

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