How Partisan Conflict in Congress Affects Public Opinion: Strategies, Outcomes, and Issue Differences[*]

Supplemental Appendix

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Online Appendix 1: Full Text of Study Treatments and Dependent Variables

Study 1
Background Information on Energy Policy (all participants)

Energy policies have important implications for many economic, environmental, and social issues. In a recent session of Congress, legislation was discussed that sought to address many aspects of energy policy by developing a more comprehensive national energy plan. While the proposals from both the Democratic and Republican parties aimed to create jobs in the energy sector, cut costs for consumers, and make America more energy independent, the two parties differed on some aspects of the legislation and in the priority they placed on the various components of a national energy policy.

Republicans favor continued support of existing energy sources, notably oil and gas. With respect to renewable energies, Republicans favor letting market-based forces determine the viability of new energy technology. In contrast, Democrats favor greater restrictions on oil and gas production, particularly where the environmental risks are uncertain, and greater government incentives to promote the development of renewable energy technologies.

[TREATMENT – See Table 1]

Study 2
Background Information on Gun Policy (all participants)

Gun ownership is an important policy area with wide-reaching consequences for our society. In a recent session of Congress, legislation was discussed that sought to address many aspects of gun ownership. Proposals from the Democratic and Republican parties differed in many respects.

Republicans favor preserving gun rights so that law-abiding citizens can protect themselves against criminals and participate in sporting activities requiring firearms (e.g., hunting). In contrast, Democrats favor greater gun regulation in order to keep weapons out of the hands of criminals and others who are incapable of using firearms responsibly.

[TREATMENT – See Table 1]

Dependent Variable Wording

Based on what you just read, how much confidence do you have in the U.S. Congress?
__ a great deal
__ a lot
__ a moderate amount
__ a little
__ none

Do you approve or disapprove of how Congress is handling [energy policy/the issue of gun ownership]?

__ Strongly Approve
__ Somewhat Approve
__ Slightly Approve
__ Neither Approve Nor Disapprove
__ Slightly Disapprove
__ Somewhat Disapprove
__ Strongly Disapprove

Online Appendix 2: Amazon Mechanical Turk Participants and Testing for Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

Survey participants were recruited using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online labor market increasingly used in leading political science research (e.g., Ahler, 2014; Arceneaux, 2012; Bishin, Hayes, Incantalupo, & Smith, Forthcoming; Carnes & Sadin, 2015; Christenson & Glick, 2015; Dowling & Wichowsky, 2015; Grose, Malhotra, & Van Houweling, 2015; Healy & Lenz, 2013; Hersh & Schaffner, 2013; Ryan, 2014; Testa, Hibbing, & Ritchie, 2014; Tomz & Weeks, 2013). Berinsky et al. (2012) report that MTurk samples are more representative of the national population than frequently used convenience samples (e.g., students). They also replicate several canonical psychological experiments using MTurk samples. Moreover, Mullinix et al. (2014) replicate studies fielded by Knowledge Network and find that even with differences in demographics between the two, key results from 15 studies were largely similar using MTurk samples (also see Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010).

Compared to national samples (e.g., American National Election Study, Knowledge Networks, etc.), MTurk participants tend to over-represent the young, students and those with college degrees, liberals, and self-identified Democrats; and to under-represent minorities, and those who own their own home (Huff & Tingley, Forthcoming; Krupnikov & Levine, 2014; Mullinix et al., 2014). Similar to other MTurk studies, Democrats significantly outnumber Republicans in our samples. However, the key findings within and between the two studies are evident even among just the Democratic participants (see Table O1).

MTurk participants tend to produce as high quality data as other internet samples like Knowledge Networks (Mullinix et al., 2014). Moreover, Clifford and Jerit (2014)

find that several common indicators of data quality—including correct responses to manipulation and attention checks, and the reliability of multi-item scales—compare favorably across laboratory and MTurk samples.

Important for our study in particular, past research has found that framing effects operate similarly across nationally representative and MTurk samples, especially when important moderators are taken into account (Berinsky et al., 2012; Leeper & Mullinix, 2014). More generally, most differences on political issues among MTurk participants can be explained by these differences in demographics and partisanship. As a result, it is important to consider the degree of heterogeneity in treatment effects. We focus in particular on the potential moderating role of partisanship, age (as either a continuous measure or an indicator for under 30), race, and education (indicator for college degree or greater) on the two main effects reported in the paper. Table O2 presents a series of OLS regression models in which we interact the treatment indicator for gridlock (capturing the effect of gridlock relative to an opposing party win) with partisanship, age, race, and education. Table O3 presents similar models for the effect of partisan gridlock (relative to ideological gridlock). As can be seen in the tables, we find little evidence of heterogeneous treatment effects. We uncover no significant interactions in Table O2, suggesting that the effect of gridlock (relative to an opposing party win) is highly homogeneous. Turning to the effect of partisan gridlock (relative to ideological gridlock) in Table O3, only the interaction with Republican party identification yields a significant result. Thus, in total, we find little evidence that the treatment effects we report are moderated by important variables on which MTurk is known to differ from national samples.

Table O1: Difference in Means among Democratic Participants

Study 1 (Energy)			Study 2 (Gun Ownership)		
Compromise	Own Win	0.48, 0.61 p=0.002	Compromise	Own Win	0.48, 0.48 p=0.99
Compromise	Other Win	0.48, 0.28 p<0.001	Compromise	Other Win	0.48, 0.27 p<0.001
Compromise	Gridlock	0.48, 0.18 p<0.001	Compromise	Gridlock	0.48, 0.28 p<0.001
Other Party Win	Gridlock	0.28, 0.18 p=0.006	Other Party Win	Gridlock	0.27, 0.28 p=0.89
Ideological Gridlock	Partisan Gridlock	0.26, 0.17 p=0.04	Ideological Gridlock	Partisan Gridlock	0.30, 0.21 p=0.12

Cells contain: (mean in column 1, mean in column 2), with two-sided p-value on difference below. Comparisons use the same subsets of participants as in the primary analyses.

Table O2: Effect of Gridlock Relative to the Other Party Winning

	Study 1					Study 2				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Intercept	0.282***	0.423***	0.33***	0.349***	0.392***	0.27***	0.516***	0.236***	0.26***	0.305***
	(0.0287)	(0.0699)	(0.0299)	(0.0282)	(0.0366)	(0.0347)	(0.0873)	(0.0384)	(0.034)	(0.0449)
Gridlock	-0.105**	-0.105	-0.16***	-0.152***	-0.182***	0.00655	-0.0503	0.029	0.0566	0.0628
	(0.0392)	(0.0952)	(0.0433)	(0.0381)	(0.0525)	(0.051)	(0.125)	(0.0542)	(0.0468)	(0.0618)
Republican	0.179***	—	—	—	—	0.0694	—	—	—	—
	(0.0465)					(0.0615)				
Gridlock x Republican	-0.0807	—	—	—	—	0.0514	—	—	—	—
	(0.0696)					(0.0887)				
Age	—	-0.00212	—	—	—	—	-0.00662**	—	—	—
		(0.00191)					(0.00244)			
Gridlock x Age	—	-0.00107	—	—	—	—	0.00237	—	—	—
		(0.00253)					(0.00343)			
Under 30	—	—	0.052	—	—	—	—	0.123*	—	—
			(0.0484)					(0.0566)		
Gridlock x Under 30	—	—	0.0257	—	—	—	—	0.012	—	—
			(0.0682)					(0.0833)		
Non-White	—	—	—	0.00336	—	—	—	—	0.115^	—
				(0.0522)					(0.0639)	
Gridlock x Non-White	—	—	—	0.0417	—	—	—	—	-0.0983	—
				(0.0891)					(0.118)	
College Degree	—	—	—	—	-0.0714	—	—	—	—	-0.0214
					(0.0479)					(0.0585)
Gridlock x College Degree	—	—	—	—	0.0606	—	—	—	—	-0.0803
					(0.0683)					(0.0845)
N	176	176	176	176	176	161	161	161	161	161
R^2	0.187	0.124	0.119	0.101	0.111	0.0323	0.0646	0.0603	0.0228	0.0206
Adjusted R^2	0.172	0.109	0.103	0.0857	0.0955	0.0138	0.0467	0.0423	0.00418	0.00187

Note: OLS regression of approval of how Congress is handling energy/gun ownership. Omitted category is "other party wins."
Standard errors in parentheses. $^{\wedge}p < 0.1$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

Table O3: Effect of Partisan Gridlock Relative to Ideological Gridlock

	Study 1					Study 2				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Intercept	0.265***	0.405***	0.174***	0.241***	0.25***	0.296***	0.36***	0.257***	0.284***	0.302***
	(0.0236)	(0.061)	(0.0275)	(0.0238)	(0.0316)	(0.0287)	(0.0666)	(0.0352)	(0.0284)	(0.0355)
Partisan Gridlock	-0.119**	-0.167^	-0.0263	-0.0813*	-0.0978^	-0.0463	0.0177	0.0178	0.0178	0.00625
	(0.0384)	(0.095)	(0.0419)	(0.0364)	(0.0515)	(0.0454)	(0.125)	(0.0533)	(0.0473)	(0.0654)
Republican	-0.0985^	—	—	—	—	-0.0137	—	—	—	—
	(0.0581)					(0.0583)				
Partisan Gridlock x Republican	0.178*	—	—	—	—	0.18^	—	—	—	—
	(0.0803)					(0.0979)				
Age	—	-0.00486**	—	—	—	—	-0.00197	—	—	—
		(0.00167)					(0.00182)			
Partisan Gridlock x Age	—	0.00304	—	—	—	—	-0.000752	—	—	—
		(0.00253)					(0.00346)			
Under 30	—	—	0.142***	—	—	—	—	0.0729	—	—
			(0.0409)					(0.0498)		
Partisan Gridlock x Under 30	—	—	-0.0828	—	—	—	—	-0.0491	—	—
			(0.0637)					(0.081)		
Non-White	—	—	—	-0.0158	—	—	—	—	0.042	—
				(0.0528)					(0.0594)	
Partisan Gridlock x Non-White	—	—	—	0.0891	—	—	—	—	-0.0979	—
				(0.0856)					(0.09)	
College Degree	—	—	—	—	-0.0217	—	—	—	—	-0.0148
					(0.0428)					(0.0505)
Partisan Gridlock x College Degree	—	—	—	—	0.0594	—	—	—	—	-0.0211
					(0.0674)					(0.0839)
N	136	144	144	144	143	155	157	157	157	156
R^2	0.0745	0.0887	0.113	0.0364	0.0306	0.0296	0.0134	0.0151	0.00802	0.00291
Adjusted R^2	0.0535	0.0691	0.094	0.0157	0.00971	0.0103	-0.00598	-0.00425	-0.0114	-0.0168

Note: OLS regression of approval of how Congress is handling energy/gun ownership. Omitted category is "ideological gridlock."
Standard errors in parentheses. $^{\wedge}p < 0.1$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

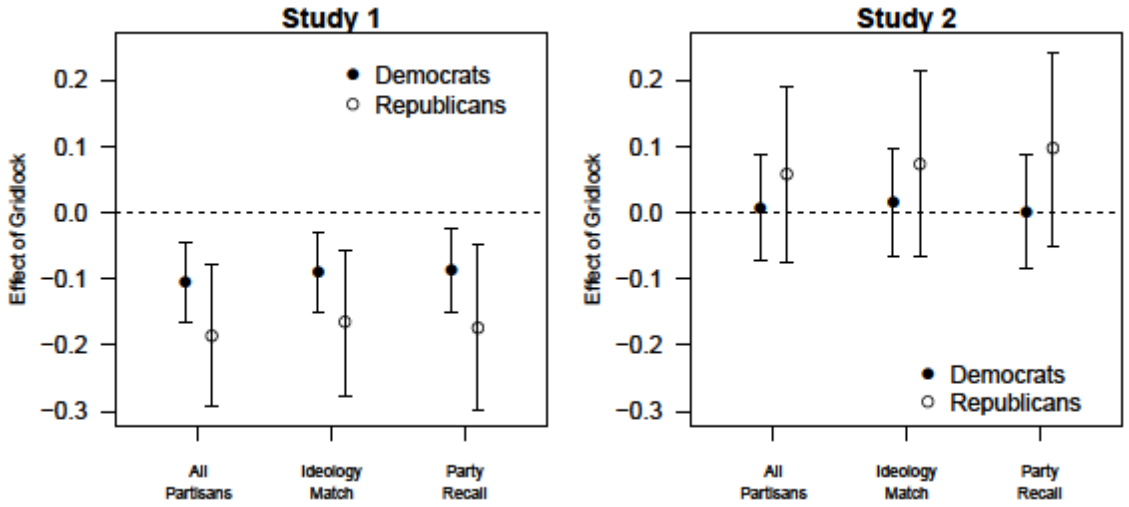
Online Appendix 3: Issue Status Quo and Within Party Effects

Although the issues we examine clearly differ on the degree of cross-party consensus (Egan, 2014), there may be other issue-level characteristics that could also affect public responses to partisan conflict, and to gridlock in particular. For instance, the current policy (status quo) on an issue could be relatively more favorable for one party than the other, which could in turn affect preferences for action. To rule out the possibility that our main result on preferences for action over gridlock is driven by partisans' consideration of status quo policy, we show that the negative effect of gridlock relative to the opposing side winning holds *within* parties in study 1 (energy), and that the null effect of gridlock relative to the opposing side winning holds *within* parties in study 2 (guns). If the position of the status quo were driving the results (i.e., if people have no preference for "do something" politics and respond only to whether they are advantaged by the status quo), we would expect to observe differently signed effects across parties on an issue, as one side would favor gridlock to a victory by the opposing party. Instead, we find that in both studies, the effects are similar for Democrats and Republicans, patterns that are consistent with a preference for legislative action on consensus issues (but not non-consensus issues). Moreover, these patterns holds if we restrict our analyses to participants whose party matches their ideology (i.e., removing Democrats who self-identify as conservative and vice versa), or to participants who correctly recalled the party positions on the issue at hand.

Given the small number of Republicans in our study, we cannot rule out the possibility that Republicans might actually favor gridlock over a victory by the opposing party on gun policy (study 2). However, regardless of which party is favored on energy

policy (study 1), we would not expect to find that partisans from *both* parties favor a victory for the opposing party over legislative gridlock unless people have a preference for action that extends beyond partisanship. That is, the observed patterns on energy policy cannot simply be explained by a current policy that favors one party over the other.

Figure O1: Effect of Gridlock Relative to Other Party Wins, by Respondent Party



Note: Y-axis shows the effect of gridlock relative to a victory by the opposing party on approval of how Congress is handling energy/gun ownership policy. 'All Partisans' includes all self-identified Democrats and Republicans (including partisan leaners). 'Ideology Match' includes only self-identified partisans who also provided an ideological self-placement congruent with their party (e.g., Democrats who were very liberal to moderate, Republicans who were moderate to very conservative). 'Party Recall' includes only self-identified partisans who also correctly answered a question at the end of the survey about which party took which position on the issue.

Online Appendix 4: Manipulation Checks and Attentiveness

We asked three manipulation check questions to gauge attentiveness. These questions were all asked at the very end of the survey so as not to prime participants' responses to the dependent variables. One set of questions gauged attention to the treatment, while a third question gauged attention to the policy information that was provided to all participants. The first treatment-based manipulation check asked participants to recall what happened to the legislation that was debated in Congress (i.e., the outcome), with response options capturing compromise, a bill favoring Democratic priorities passing, a bill favoring Republican priorities passing, or disagreement and no bill passing. The correct answer varied by treatment assignment. For those participants who said that no bill passed, the next manipulation check asked *why* Congress was unable to reach consensus on the bill (i.e., the explanation). Response options were that neither party was willing to sacrifice its ideological principles, neither party was willing to hand the other side a victory in the run-up to the next election, and that no reason was given. Again, the correct answer was contingent on treatment assignment. The policy description question asked participants to recall which party favors government incentives to promote the development of renewable energy technology (or favored additional gun regulation) (i.e., party recall). Response options were Democrats, Republicans, both parties, or neither party. The correct answer was Democrats in both studies. Participants who answered these manipulation checks correctly spent significantly more time reading the policy information (including their assigned treatment) than did participants who answered incorrectly (Study 1: mean of 45 seconds

versus 35 seconds, $p<0.001$; Study 2: mean of 28 seconds versus mean of 21 seconds, $p<0.001$).[1]

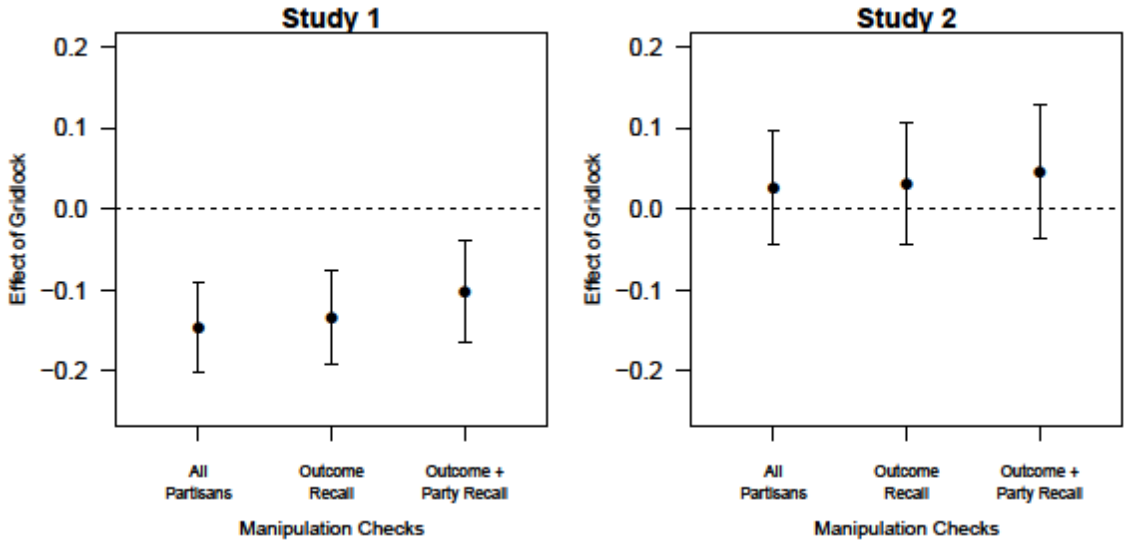
In an effort to be transparent about the how attentiveness affects the results (see Berinsky et al., 2014), we plot the two primary gridlock effects across increasing levels of attentiveness. As shown in Figure O2, the key patterns regarding "do something" politics do not vary across levels of attentiveness. In study 1, gridlock has a negative effect on evaluations (relative to the other party winning), pointing to a robust preference for action. In study 2, there is a null effect across increasing levels of attention. By contrast, the relationship between ideological and partisan gridlock is more sensitive to respondent attentiveness (Figure O3). Here, partisan gridlock is viewed as significantly worse than ideological gridlock only among respondents who could recall both the outcome of the legislation and the explanation for gridlock, and among those who could recall both of these items plus the party positions on the issue. In other words, participants who failed to correctly recall the explanation provided for gridlock were unaffected by said explanation.

We also investigated the possibility that restricting the analyses to those participants who passed the manipulation checks skews the sample and introduces bias by systematically excluding certain types of participants. To do so, we estimated logistic regression models predicting passage of the checks in each study (see Table O4). As a dependent variable, we use the same threshold of attentiveness used in the main analyses reported in the text: correctly recalling both the outcome of the bill and the explanation

[1] This excludes outliers who spent more than the 95th percentile of time on this page.

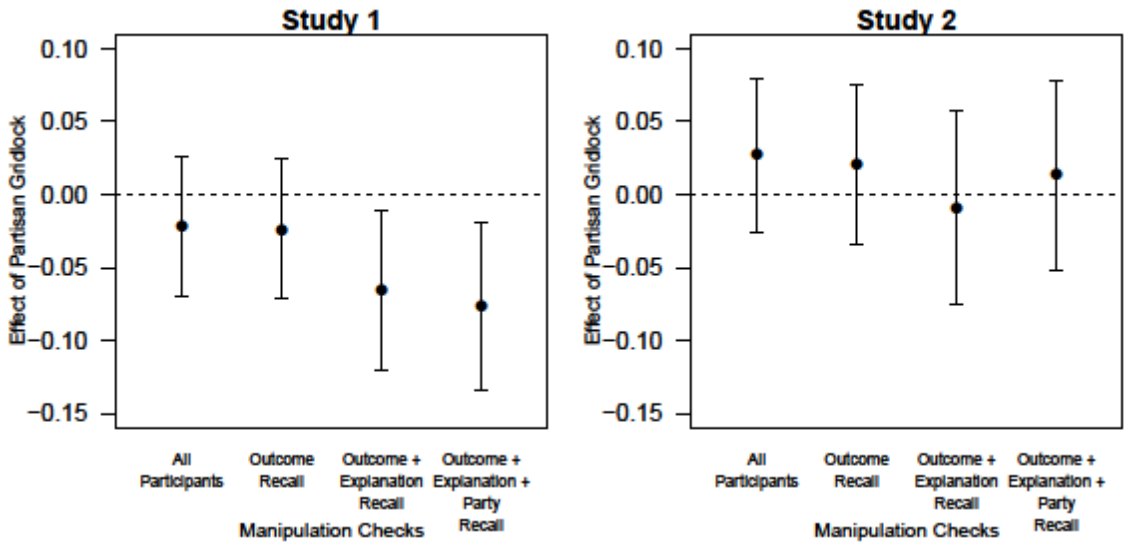
provided (see footnote 10). We use standard demographic and political variables as predictors. In study 1 (energy), only age is associated with the outcome of the manipulation checks: participants under 30 years old were less likely than older participants to pass the checks than ($p<0.1$). Likewise, in study 2 (guns), younger participants were less likely to pass the checks ($p<0.05$). Whites were more likely than non-whites to pass the checks in study 2 ($p<0.1$). Although it is important to acknowledge how the sample changes when we restrict analyses to participants who passed the manipulation checks, we did not find evidence of heterogeneous treatment effects on either age or race (Online Appendix 2), suggesting that this restriction is unlikely to affect the generalizability of the findings.

Figure O2: Effect of Gridlock Relative to Other Party Wins by Passage of Manipulation Checks



Note: Y-axis shows the effect of gridlock relative to a victory by the opposing party on approval of how Congress is handling energy/gun ownership policy. 'All Partisans' includes all self-identified Democrats and Republicans (including partisan leaners). 'Outcome Recall' includes only partisans who correctly identified the outcome of the legislation. 'Outcome + Party Recall' includes only partisans who correctly identified the outcome of the legislation and who recalled the position of the Democratic Party.

Figure O3: Effect of Partisan Gridlock Relative to Ideological Gridlock by Passage of Manipulation Checks



Note: Y-axis shows the effect of partisan gridlock relative to ideologically framed gridlock on approval of how Congress is handling energy/gun ownership policy. 'All Participants' includes both partisans and pure independents. 'Outcome Recall' includes only respondents who correctly identified the outcome of the legislation. 'Outcome + Explanation Recall' includes only respondents who correctly identified the outcome of the legislation and who correctly identified the explanation for gridlock. 'Outcome + Explanation + Party Recall' includes only partisans who correctly identified the outcome of the legislation, the explanation for gridlock, and who recalled the position of the Democratic Party.

Table O4: Logit Models Predicting Passing Manipulation Check (Studies 1 and 2)

	(Study 1)	(Study 2)
Intercept	0.762*	0.741^
	(0.382)	(0.394)
Male	0.104	0.0269
	(0.182)	(0.181)
White	0.0634	0.35^
	(0.219)	(0.205)
Education	0.537	0.0493
	(0.427)	(0.436)
Independent	-0.4	0.106
	(0.252)	(0.208)
Republican	-0.327	0.268
	(0.209)	(0.238)
Under 30	-0.314^	-0.383*
	(0.18)	(0.181)
N	647	652
Log Likelihood	-382	-381

Note: Logit models of passing manipulation checks (1 if recalled outcome and explanation correctly). Omitted category for partisanship is Democrat (modal response). Standard errors in parentheses. $^{\wedge}p < 0.1$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

Online Appendix 5: Causal Mediation Analysis

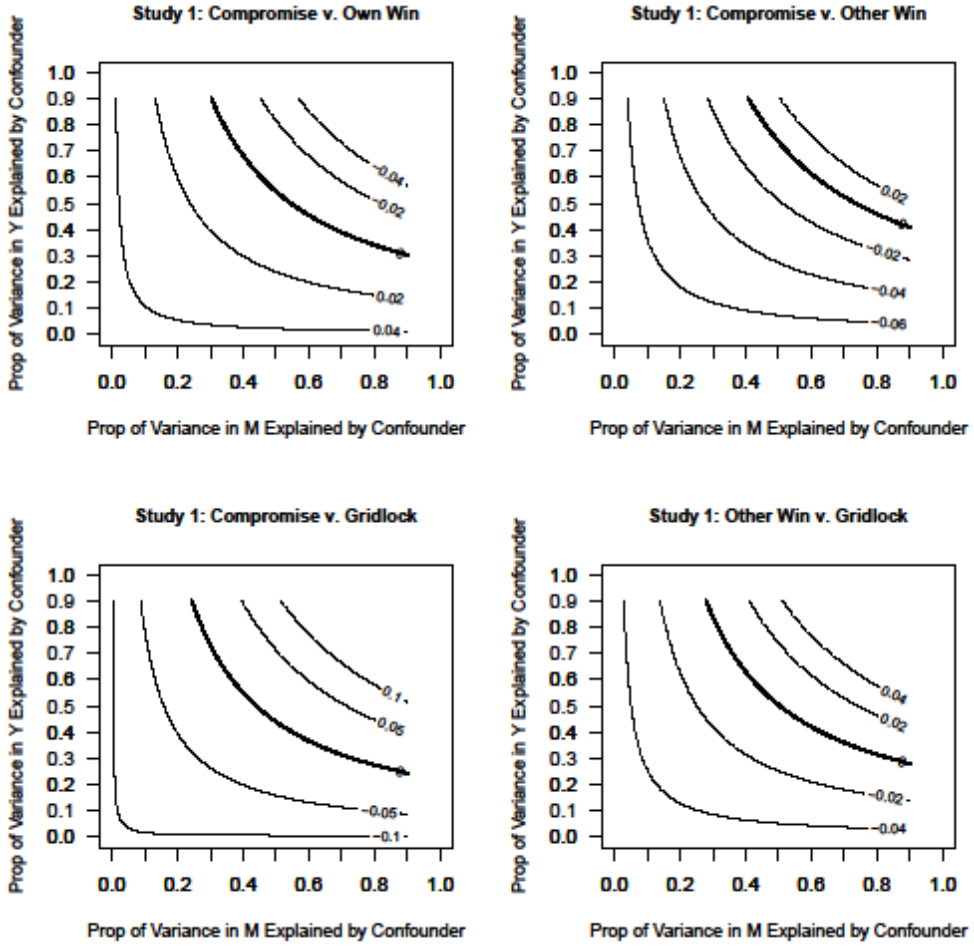
This appendix provides the full mediation results discussed in the paper (following Imai et al., 2011), as well as accompanying sensitivity analyses, which estimate how much variance an omitted variable would need to explain in order to change the sign of the mediated effect.

Table O5: Mediation Analysis for Study 1 (Energy)

Control	Treatment	ACME	ADE	Total Effect
Compromise	Own Win	0.048 (p<0.001)	-0.026 (p=0.23)	0.021 (p=0.39)
Compromise	Other Win	-0.079 (p<0.001)	-0.007 (p=0.76)	-0.086 (p<0.001)
Compromise	Gridlock	-0.109 (p<0.001)	-0.045 (p=0.08)	-0.15 (p<0.001)
Other Win	Gridlock	-0.055 (p<0.001)	-0.011 (p=0.62)	-0.066 (p=0.01)

Note: The mediation analyses leverage the approach outlined by Imai et al. (2011). In each case, the outcome of interest is confidence in Congress and the mediator is approval of how Congress is handling energy. The average causal mediation effect (ACME) refers to the effect of the treatment through the mediator, and the average direct effect (ADE) refers to the effect of the treatment on the outcome through other mechanisms.

Figure O4: Sensitivity Analysis for Study 1 (Energy)



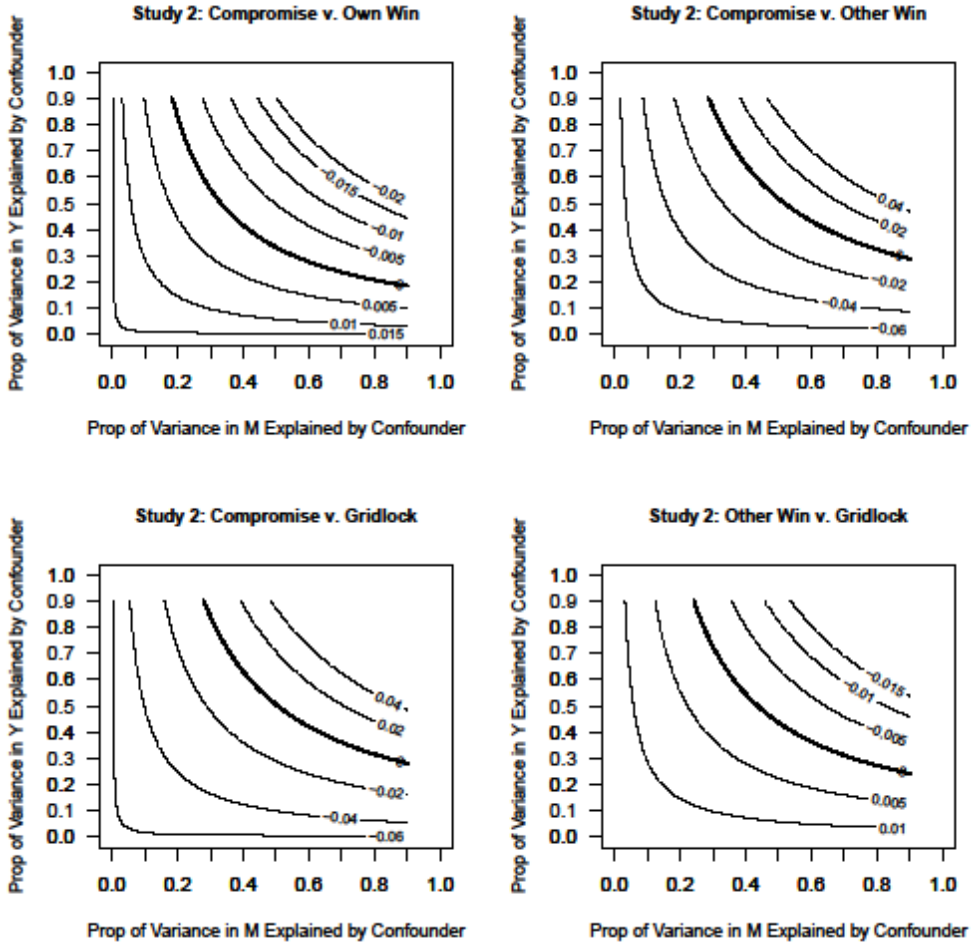
Note: The figures report sensitivity analyses from the mediation analyses showing how much variance an omitted variable needs to explain in both the outcome and mediator variables to overturn the results. The contours of each plot represent the values of the average causal mediation effect (ACME) for different combinations of the mediation R-squared and outcome R-squared values. The bold-faced line indicates the combinations of variance explained by an omitted variable (in the outcome (Y) and mediator variable (M)) that would lead to a change in the sign of the mediated effect.

Table O6: Mediation Analysis for Study 2 (Gun Ownership)

Control	Treatment	ACME	ADE	Total Effect
Compromise	Own Win	0.016 (p=0.27)	-0.025 (p=0.38)	-0.009 (p=0.76)
Compromise	Other Win	-0.078 (p<0.001)	-0.017 (p=0.53)	-0.096 (p<0.001)
Compromise	Gridlock	-0.064 (p<0.001)	-0.065 (p=0.01)	-0.13 (p<0.001)
Other Win	Gridlock	0.015 (p=0.33)	-0.052 (p=0.07)	-0.036 (p=0.25)

Note: The mediation analyses leverage the approach outlined by Imai et al. (2011). In each case, the outcome of interest is confidence in Congress and the mediator is approval of how Congress is handling energy. The average causal mediation effect (ACME) refers to the effect of the treatment through the mediator, and the average direct effect (ADE) refers to the effect of the treatment on the outcome through other mechanisms.

Figure O5: Sensitivity Analysis for Study 2 (Gun Ownership)



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