Who is Punished?
How Voters Evaluate Male and Female Legislators Who Do Not Compromise

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Abstract:

A record high number of women currently serve in the U.S. Congress. This increase has led many people to speculate that more female legislators will mean more legislative compromise and consensus building. Given these types of expectations – perpetuated by media, politicians and even political science research – what happens when female politicians refuse to compromise? Previous research suggests conflicting possibilities. While some research on gender suggests that women who break with gender stereotypes (for example, by refusing to compromise) can face a backlash, other research shows that gender stereotypes have a minimal effect on how the public perceives female politicians. In this manuscript, we examine how people respond to female lawmakers who do not compromise. Relying on two national experiments, we demonstrate that female lawmakers may face a heavier punishment for not compromising, but only under certain conditions. In fact, we show that under other conditions it is male legislators who are disproportionately punished for refusing to compromise.
Recent elections have seen a surge of female candidates running for Congress, and in 2015 women held a record high of 104 seats in the House and Senate. This increase in female legislators led news outlets to predict that the women in Congress would bring a style of lawmaking that was “less confrontational, [and] more willing to reach reasoned, bipartisan compromise” (Cowan 2013). Public opinion polls show that a large proportion of people (43%) also believe that electing more women to government will bring positive changes for Congress and only a small minority (4%) believes that electing more women will somehow harm Congress.¹ Female legislators themselves express greater willingness to broker compromise than their male counterparts. Highlighting women’s role in ending the 2013 government shutdown, Senator Susan Collins stated: “although we span the ideological spectrum, we are used to working together in a collaborative way” (Jackman 2013).² Her male colleagues agreed. Senators John McCain and Mark Pryor noted “that their female colleagues deserve most of the credit for driving the compromise to reopen the U.S. government’ (Jackman 2013). Even empirical analyses of legislator behavior show that female legislators are more likely than their male counterparts to compromise and build broad coalitions (Volden et al. 2013; Swers 2013). These arguments lead to an important assumption in American politics: female legislators will be more likely to compromise than male legislators.

In American politics, legislative compromise is often seen as both a necessary step for government to address pressing policy problems (Adler and Wilkerson 2013; Hibbing and

¹ 53% believe that electing more women would not change Congress (ABC News 2013).

² In a January 1, 2013 interview with Dianne Sawyer, New York Democrat Kristen Gillibrand noted “Mr. President, if you want to see bipartisanship in Washington, invite the women Senators, we’ll help you get it done” (Sawyer 2013).
Theiss-Morse 2002) and a normatively desirable feature of policymaking (Gutmann and Thompson 2012). Americans not only support legislative compromise in public opinion polls, but legislators who refuse to compromise often receive negative evaluations (Pew 2012; Paris 2014). Jointly, these perceptions of female legislators and these perceptions of legislative compromise lead to a question: if people believe that compromise is beneficial and if women are expected to be more compromising, could female legislators face harsher costs for refusing to engage in legislative compromise?

There are reasons to expect that women may face harsher costs when they do not compromise. Conventional feminine stereotypes characterize women as more compromising (Eagly and Carli 2003; Eagly and Karau 2002; Vinkenburg et al. 2011; Heilman 2001; Prentice and Carranza 2002). A female legislator who does not compromise, then, not only breaks with the public’s purported desire for compromise but also breaks with traditional feminine stereotypes. This is not a critique her male counterpart would have to face – stereotypes of men paint them as stubborn and uncompromising (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993).

Other research, however, shows that while feminine stereotypes do exist even in modern society, the public does not always expect female politicians to adhere to stereotypes such as being warm and gentle (Schneider and Bos 2014; Dolan 2014; Bauer 2015). Female candidates who violate feminine stereotypes while campaigning are not punished any more than their male counterparts (Brooks 2013). These types of arguments suggest that female legislators might not face any disproportionate consequences when they do not compromise.

These conflicting findings also speak to the broader debate in existing literature on gender and politics about the possibility of a double-bind: the idea that female politicians risk punishment for breaking with gender norms but also for adhering to gender stereotypes (Brooks
2013). In the context of this larger debate, we consider whether female legislators face a greater punishment than male legislators for refusing to compromise.\(^3\) We do so by examining why and when gender may affect public evaluations of legislators who do or do not compromise. We argue and show female legislators may face some additional backlash for failing to compromise, but this backlash depends on the legislator’s partisanship and the type of issue at hand.

Although our research focuses on the intersection of gender and compromise, our work has broader implications. Much of the literature on gender differences in evaluations of female and male politicians focuses on candidate actions during campaigns. In contrast, there is relatively less research on public responses to male and female legislators once they have already been elected to office. This is a notable omission, given that it is widely assumed that legislators are single-minded seekers of reelection (Mayhew 1974) and are likely attentive to how the public views their actions while in office. Moreover, female legislators are more likely to face high quality challenges from male candidates in re-election campaigns (Milyo and Schosberg 2000; Palmer and Simon 2006). Identifying gender differences in evaluations of legislative behavior is an important first step in understanding why female legislators may appear more vulnerable and, in turn, face tougher re-election challenges that affect their ability to stay in office.

**Background and Theory**

The belief that women are more likely to compromise than men is prevalent in news stories about female legislators, statements from female legislators and even statements from their male counterparts. Arguably, these expectations have roots in traditional feminine stereotypes. Stereotypes about women characterize them as more empathetic, caring, and

\(^3\) It is important to acknowledge, however, that our empirical results do not speak directly to this debate.
compassionate. These characteristics are closely tied to the types of roles women traditionally filled which require more compromise and consensus (e.g., Eagly and Karau 2002; Eagly and Carli 2003; Fox and Oxley 2003; Alexander and Anderson 1993; Prentice and Carranza 2002). Research on the differing leadership styles between women and men supports the claim that women are indeed more likely to compromise and build consensus when in positions of authority (Fox and Oxley 2003; Eagly and Carli 2003; Heilman 2001). Scholarship on legislative behavior also suggests that female legislators behave differently than male legislators (e.g., Volden et al. 2013; Anzia and Berry 2011). Female legislators engage in different rhetorical strategies on the House floor (Pearson and Dancey 2011), are less ideologically extreme (Frederick 2010), differ in leadership styles (Vinkenburg et al. 2011), and, perhaps most importantly, are more likely to engage in consensus building (Volden et al. 2013).

In sum, the public’s expectations and the actual behaviors of female legislators in Congress reinforce the notion that they will engage in more compromise than men (Kathlene 1994; Jeydel and Taylor 2003). In turn, this leads to the often-touted idea that if more women held elected positions, Congress would experience less gridlock (Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Jackman 2013; Rosenthal 1998). This sets high expectations for female legislators who may not always want or be able to compromise. What happens, then, when female legislators opt against compromising? Do these expectations lead voters to punish female legislators more heavily than their non-compromising male counterparts?

The answer to these questions carries implications for understanding public preferences for legislative compromise and the role of gender in the political process. Public evaluations of Congress suffer when the institution produces a partisan legislative record (Ramirez 2009; Harbridge and Malhotra 2011), and, as a result, individual legislators tend to benefit electorally
from building bipartisan rather than partisan records (Carson et al. 2010; Harbridge 2015). If legislators worry about developing a negative reputation for not compromising, they may have greater incentives to find places of bipartisan agreement while in office. This has the potential for powerful down-stream effects. If female legislators believe that the public expects them to compromise, then female legislators may expect more punishment for not compromising than their male counterparts, and become preemptively more compromising even when they would prefer to hold their ground.

The Relationship between Gender and Compromise

Existing literature suggests that some (though certainly not all) legislators may benefit from developing a reputation for compromising and being the type of legislator who strives to prevent gridlock. It is, however, possible, that refusing to compromise may be particularly harmful for certain legislators. Here, we consider the role of gender in evaluations of compromise. We do so in two steps. First, we consider why we may expect voters to disproportionately punish female legislators who do not compromise. Second, we consider whether certain conditions exacerbate this punishment for not compromising and other conditions, effectively, mute it.

Gender and Compromise

Many people – journalists, politicians, voters and even scholars – expect that female politicians will be more likely to compromise. Moreover, evidence suggests that being compromising and consensus-driven is not only a legislative expectation, but also a stereotype of

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4 Although primary electorates may pull legislators to ideological extremes (Burden 2004) and away from compromise, general electorates may favor legislators who support bipartisan compromises (Carson et al. 2010).
women in general. When people assume women will follow feminine stereotypes there can be consequences for breaking with these expectations (Hitchon et al. 1997; Sinclair and Kunda 1999). Therefore, female legislators may face greater consequences for not compromising because they are expected to be more compromising than their male colleagues and because being compromising is a feminine stereotype.

While psychological literature draws a relationship between stereotype expectations and consequences, there is evidence to suggest that women will not always face consequences for breaking with stereotypes. In a campaign, for example, voters do not consistently punish female candidates for breaking with gender stereotypes by acting angry or “tough,” (Brooks 2013). Other research, suggests that partisanship overwhelms the effects of gender stereotypes (Dolan 2014). Even research demonstrating a counter-stereotypic backlash for female candidates underscores that this backlash is limited (Krupnikov and Bauer 2014).

Jointly, this work suggests that if female legislators are disproportionately punished for refusing to compromise, this effect is likely conditional. Building on this logic, in the sections that follow, we propose two conditions that may affect the extent to which women are punished for not compromising: partisanship and issue type.

Condition 1: Role of Party

Research often suggests that partisanship is a strong social identity (Green et al. 2002; Klar 2014). In turn, these social identities drive negative affective orientations towards members of the opposing party (Iyengar et al. 2012). As recent work shows, people may be critical of members of the opposing party who do not compromise (Paris 2014) but more forgiving of members of their own party who do not compromise (Harbridge and Malhotra 2011). In short, the alignment of party between a voter and a legislator may act as a “cushion” in the evaluation
of co-partisans who opt not to compromise and insulate them from harsh criticism.

The importance of partisanship has also been observed in studies of legislator gender (Dolan 2014; Hayes 2011). Dolan (2014) argues that partisanship can often take precedence over the role of gender in voter evaluations and Krupnikov and Bauer (2014) find that people treat female candidates of their own party differently than female candidates of the opposing party. Integrating these arguments about the role of partisanship suggests that even if a legislator’s gender affects evaluations of compromise, it should do so only within the confines of partisanship.

Condition 2: Role of Issue

People often perceive female politicians as policy experts on “women’s issues” such as education, childcare, health care, or other social welfare issues (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Dolan 2014). Indeed, as Swers (2002, 2013) shows, one of the greatest gender differences in legislative behavior stems from the fact that female legislators are consistently more likely than male legislators to pursue legislation on women’s issues. This line of reasoning suggests a gendered component to issue ownership (see Petrocik (1996) on partisan issue ownership) where women’s issues such as childcare, education and health care may be perceived as “female-owned” issues, and issues such as national security, energy, and others may be perceived as “male-owned” issues (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993) or at least not specifically “female-owned” issues.

Since legislators are often perceived to be most capable on owned issues, female legislators may appear more qualified to make decisions on female-owned issues, but may be perceived as ill equipped to handle issues that are not associated with women (Swers 2007). Indeed, research suggests that female politicians are particularly likely to benefit when elections focus on women’s issues (Dolan 2004). This line of reasoning suggests that we may observe
different responses to female legislators who do not compromise on a female-owned issue than to female legislators who do not compromise on a male-owned issue.

**Bridging Gender, Party and Issue**

Integrating these different streams of research, we suggest a conditional relationship between legislator gender and responses to compromise. First, we expect that people will evaluate a failure to compromise by legislators of the opposing party differently than a failure to compromise by legislators of their own party. We expect to see more variation in the way people treat male and female legislators of their own party than of the opposing party. People may generally dislike members of the opposing party (Iyengar et al. 2012), leaving little room for gender to alter public reactions. In contrast, people may be more forgiving of the choices made by legislators of their own party, cushioning them from punishment even when they do not compromise (Harbridge and Malhotra 2011). In turn, gender may play a role in the extent to which a legislator of the voter’s own party is protected from the consequences of refusing to compromise and (potentially) causing gridlock. To this end, we predict that the greatest gender differences in punishment are likely to be among legislators of the same party as the voter, rather than among legislators of the opposing party.

Of course, any gender differences that exist are likely to be conditioned by issue. People may view female legislators as better equipped to handle female-owned issues and male legislators as more competent at handling male-owned issues. As a result, we predict that people may be more forgiving of a female legislator who does not compromise on a female issue, perhaps inferring that her “expertise” on the topic leaves her with an important reason to avoid compromise.

**Design**
We test our predictions using two survey experiments. The experiments manipulated legislator gender, willingness to compromise, and partisanship relative to the subject. The high level of control afforded by an experimental design allows us to precisely measure how evaluations of legislators are affected by their willingness to compromise, but more importantly, the conditions under which gender can affect these evaluations. In the absence of an experimental design, researchers face potential confounds between legislator gender, behavior, and partisanship, among other factors, and reliance on surveys alone can obscure the fact that answers to these questions do not always translate into the standards by which people evaluate legislators or policy (Doherty 2015; Harbridge et al. 2014).

In both experiments, we presented subjects with a mock newspaper article reporting that Congress was preparing to vote on a critical piece of legislation, and for this legislation to pass Democrats and Republicans had to compromise. The article suggested that legislative gridlock was the likely outcome if a compromise version was not passed. In the first experiment, our article focused on a bill that dealt with energy policy; in the second experiment, the issue was early childhood education. As people often learn about Congressional behavior through media coverage (Schaffner and Sellers 2003), using a newspaper article to communicate whether or not a member of Congress compromised allows us to replicate this mechanism.

**Treatment**

**Pre-test of Issue Ownership**

We selected energy (Study 1) and early childhood education (Study 2) for two reasons. First, it is plausible to expect compromise on these issues.\(^5\) By contrast, presenting our

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\(^5\) Both parties pursue these legislative issues, and both issues have received bipartisan support in recent years. Recent reforms like the Energy Savings and Industrial Competitiveness Act of 2013
participants with a scenario in which members of each party compromised on a divisive partisan issue would have limited the external validity of the studies.

Second, these issues speak to differences in the perceived policy strengths of male and female lawmakers. Female politicians are typically associated with “compassion issues” (Herrnson et al. 2003) and existing literature finds that female politicians are more strongly associated with issues affecting both children and education (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009; Leeper 1991; Sapiro 1981; Swers 2002). Although some scholars treat energy policy as a gender-neutral issue (Schneider 2014), energy has also been included in the taxonomy of male-owned issues (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008; Fridkin and Kenney 2010, 2015).

We also conducted a pre-test to further establish the gender-ownership of the issues. Relying on a separately recruited sample (N=102), we asked participants questions modeled on the traditional measures of party ownership in the American National Election Study (ANES). First, we asked, “Which politician would be better at handling energy policy?” and second, “Which politician would be better at handling children’s education policy?” In the ANES questions, a respondent could choose between two response options, Democrat or Republican; in our measure, the response options are a female politician and a male politician. Petrocik (1996) have garnered bipartisan support in Congress (e.g., the bill had 9 Republican and 8 Democratic cosponsors and was reported from committee on a bipartisan voice vote). Likewise, both parties have championed initiatives on early childhood education in recent years and reforms often garner bipartisan support. For instance, the 2007 reauthorization of the Head Start program passed with 227 Democrats and 154 Republicans voting yea.

6 Recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (Berinsky et al. 2012; Krupnikov and Levine 2014).
demonstrates that ownership of an issue means that a majority of people believe that a given group (in Petrocik’s case, the party) would do a better job handling an issue than another group. In our case, this means a female-owned issue is one where the majority of participants report that a female politician would do a better job handling the issue.

In his analyses of party ownership, Petrocik’s (1996) strongest results show that about 60% of participants in a survey report that one party would do a better job with an issue than the other party. Comparatively, our results show that a majority of the participants (60%) report that a male politician would be better when it comes to handling energy policy. Further, a majority (94%) report that a female politician would be better at handling childhood education policies. Although we see a stronger assignment to gender when it comes to childhood education, the percentage of participants who select male politicians as being better able to handle energy is nonetheless at the highest range of ownership patterns identified by Petrocik (1996). In sum, the existing literature and our results demonstrate that the two issues differ in their gender orientation: early childhood education is clearly female-owned while energy is not.

Manipulating Compromise, Gender and Partisanship

Although the two studies differ in issue content, they were identical structure. In both studies, participants were randomized along three factors. First, participants were randomly assigned to read about a male member of Congress or a female member of Congress. Gender was primed with a photograph and a name. The female legislator was named Karen Bailey and the male legislator was Kevin Bailey (Brooks 2013). We pre-tested the names to ensure they did not prime any associations to existing political figures, and we pre-tested the photographs to ensure they were equivalent in attractiveness and perceived competence.

The second experimental factor was compromise behavior. The member of Congress
was either willing or unwilling to support a compromise bill that would ensure action on an issue. Following previous experimental approaches to evaluating legislative behavior (e.g. Harbridge and Malhotra 2011) we deliberately do not include a control condition without any information about the legislator’s vote. While legislators can occasionally abstain from a vote, over the course of a Congress, all legislators develop a record of either being willing to forge bipartisan compromises or of sticking to their party’s positions, meaning that a legislator is unlikely to be viewed as “neutral.” As a result, the politically relevant comparison is between the evaluations of legislators who compromise and those who stand firm.

The third factor was partisanship. Here, we manipulate the partisanship of the legislator relative to the partisanship of the participant, meaning that some participants were randomly assigned to read about a legislator of their own party while others were randomly assigned to read about the opposing party’s legislator.

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7 Following Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk (2007), a control condition is not necessary since we are interested in testing whether evaluations of legislators are affected by their willingness to compromise, and are not interested in whether the compromise or non-compromise condition is driving the effect. Moreover, in the absence of additional information in a full control condition, individuals may infer from recent news coverage that legislators would not compromise.

8 This approach requires dropping participants who did not identify with any party. Initially, 28.6% of participants in Study 1 and 26.9% of participants in Study 2 reported they were “pure” Independents (meaning they did not lean toward a party). On the next screen, pure Independents were asked to select the partisan category that is most like them. Among the people sent to the next screen, all but 4 of the participants in Study 1 and all participants in Study 2 selected a partisan category.
In total, this produced a 2x2x2 design in each of our two studies, manipulating gender (male or female legislator), compromise (compromised or did not compromise) and partisanship (legislator of your party or opposing party). Table 1 outlines the 8 groups included in each study. Web Appendix 1 presents the full text of the stimuli. After the treatment, we asked participants a series of questions that measured their evaluations of the legislators.  

[Table 1 About Here]

**Participants**

Participants in both studies were recruited nationally through Survey Sampling International (SSI). The first study (energy policy) was fielded in January 2014 and the second study (early childhood education) was fielded in August 2014. As Berinsky et al. (2014) note, SSI is particularly effective at recruiting hard to reach participants, resulting in a diverse national sample. We compare our sample to the American National Election Study, finding slight differences in gender, education, and income (see Web Appendix 2).

**Measures**

To consider whether individuals respond differently to legislators who are unwilling to compromise when they are male or female we consider individual perceptions of the legislators through three dependent variables reflecting different dimensions on which people judge political figures. First, we measured favorability, using a measure that allowed people to rank Representative Bailey from “Extremely Unfavorable” to “Extremely Favorable” on a seven-point

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9 All questions and treatments were also pre-tested prior to fielding.

10 For other studies using SSI see, Bullock (2011) and Kam (2012).

11 A randomization check shows that demographics do not jointly predict group assignment in either study (Study 1: \( \chi^2[35] = 34.09, p = 0.51 \); Study 2: \( \chi^2[35] = 38.53, p = 0.31 \)).
scale. Second, we asked how well the statement “Bailey is a good representative of constituent opinions” describes the legislator. Response options ranged from “Describes Bailey very well” to “Describes Bailey very poorly” on a six-point scale. The third measure asked respondents to evaluate Bailey more broadly and consider whether he/she would move up in leadership positions. We asked, “Do you believe Bailey is likely to move up to leadership positions in Congress?” Response options ranged from “Highly likely” to “Highly unlikely” on a five-point scale. All dependent variables were recoded to range between 0 and 1, with 1 representing the highest agreement with the statement/question. In the analyses that follow, we focus on the pattern of results across all three dependent variables.

Results

Our theoretic arguments suggest that the partisanship of the legislator and the legislative issue at hand may affect the extent to which gender plays a role in the evaluations of legislators who do not compromise. Fully analyzing the conditional relationships between gender, partisanship, issue and compromise requires making a number of different comparisons. First, we calculate the consequences of refusing to compromise. We do so by comparing the way participants evaluate the legislator in the compromise condition to the way participants evaluate the very same legislator when he/she does not compromise. For ease of discussion, we term this difference between the evaluation of the same legislator when he/she compromises and when he/she does not compromise the cost of not compromising. The higher this value, the higher the cost, and the greater the legislator’s punishment for not compromising.

We next consider how gender, partisanship and issue affect the costs of not compromising. We do so using two types of comparisons. We start by comparing the cost of not compromising across gender but within partisanship. That is, we look at the cost a female
legislator pays for not compromising relative to the cost a male legislator pays for not compromising when both are of the same party as the participant, or when both are from a different party than the participant. These comparisons are as follows:

(1) Cost of Not Compromising, Female_{Same PID} – Cost of Not Compromising, Male_{Same PID}

(2) Cost of Not Compromising, Female_{Different PID} – Cost of Not Compromising, Male_{Different PID}

Next, we conduct a second set of analyses and consider the cost of not compromising across party but within gender. This comparison allows us to assess whether legislators of both genders face lower costs for not compromising when their partisanship aligns with participants than when they are from the opposing party. Here we make the following comparisons, again leveraging the difference between the compromise and no compromise conditions for each legislator:

(3) Cost of Not Compromising, Female_{Same PID} – Cost of Not Compromising, Female_{Different PID}

(4) Cost of Not Compromising, Male_{Same PID} – Cost of Not Compromising Male_{Different PID}

These comparisons allow us to test whether gender affects how people evaluate legislators who do not compromise.\textsuperscript{12} First, calculating the cost of not compromising allows us to consider, generally, whether legislators are punished for being unwilling to engage in compromise. Second, comparing these costs across gender but within party allows us to observe

\textsuperscript{12} Mean evaluations for each condition and each dependent variable are included in Web Appendix 3. We opt for the difference-in-differences approach rather than ANOVA because we predict specific group differences. Compromise should affect evaluations differently in conditions in which a participant reads about a politician of the same party than in conditions in which a participant reads about a politician of the opposing party. These types of conditional dynamics may not be captured with an ANOVA.
whether, holding party constant, female legislators are more likely to be punished for refusing to compromise. Next, comparing the costs of not compromising across party but within gender highlights the extent to which gender conditions the effect of party on evaluations of legislators who do not compromise. Finally, because we conduct the same sets of analyses for both energy policy (Study 1) and early childhood education (Study 2) we can examine whether the effect of gender varies by the issue at stake.

**Comparisons Across Gender**

The first approach to analyzing the patterns of evaluations leverages differences *within* parties and *across* gender. In Figure 1 we present the cost of not compromising (the difference between evaluations of the same legislator in the compromise and no compromise conditions). A positive value shows the legislators paid a cost for not compromising, meaning they received more positive evaluations when they compromised than when they did not compromise. Table 2 also shows these same costs of not compromising (the cell values in Table 2, Columns 1, 2, 4 and 5 are equivalent to the bars in Figure 1), but also includes the difference-in-difference comparisons (in bold, Columns 3 and 6). These difference-in-difference comparisons allow us to consider whether, holding party constant, female and male legislators pay different costs for not compromising. We present our results across each outcome measure: favorability ratings, perception that the legislator is a good representative of his/her constituents, and perception that the legislator could move up the leadership ranks in the future, looking for patterns across measures.

**Study 1: Energy Policy**

We start with energy policy (Study 1; left-hand bars of Figure 1 and columns 1, 2 and 3 of Table 2). First, as previous scholarship suggests, there is a robust finding that people evaluate
politicians who compromise more positively than they evaluate those politicians who do not compromise. This result is likely due to the perception that the alternative to compromise is legislative gridlock.¹³

Next, we compare the cost of not compromising within party for male and female legislators (Table 2, bolded column 3). In this comparison, positive values mean that female legislators pay a higher cost for not compromising while negative values point to male legislators being judged more harshly.

These results suggest that gender plays a more critical role for legislators of the participant’s own party than for the legislators of the opposing party. Focusing on leadership evaluations, for example, the cost of not compromising for a female legislator of the participant’s own party is 0.13 (p<0.01), meaning the legislator is perceived as less likely to move up in leadership ranks when she does not compromise. On the same measure, however, the cost of not compromising for a male legislator of the participant’s own party is 0.040 (not significant). Moreover, the difference-in-difference analysis reinforces that the cost of not compromising is significantly larger for the female legislator. We similarly observe that the female legislator pays a significantly higher cost for not compromising than the male legislator when analyzing favorability ratings.

Gender plays a smaller role in evaluations of legislators of the opposing party (see bottom

¹³ At the end of the survey, we asked participants “if members do not compromise on [energy/early childhood education] legislation, which of the following is most likely to happen?” Response options were “Democrats pass own version of the legislation,” “Republicans pass own version of the legislation,” and “Gridlock over the legislation and nothing passes.” 65% of participants in Study 1, and 62% of participants in Study 2 thought that gridlock would result.
of column 3 in Table 2). On the “good representative” and leadership measures, we observe no gender differences in the costs that opposing party lawmakers pay for not compromising on energy policy. Moreover, on the favorability rating it is the opposing party man who is judged more harshly than the opposing party woman. Next, we consider whether the same pattern holds when we turn to a female-owned issue.

[Figure 1 About Here]

[Table 2 About Here]

**Study 2: Early-Childhood Education**

Turning to the female-owned issue of early childhood education (Study 2, right-hand bars of Figure 1 and columns 4, 5 and 6 of Table 2), we again observe all positive values on the cost of not compromising, showing that people prefer politicians who compromise to those who do not compromise. The patterns of evaluations on the female-owned issue, however, differ from those observed on energy (Study 1). Here, we find that men are more likely to pay a higher cost for not compromising. Among legislators of the participants’ own party, the cost of not compromising is significantly higher for male legislators than female legislators across all three outcome measures (seen in the negative values in the top half of column 6 in Table 2). Turning to the favorability rating, for example, a female legislator of the participant’s own party pays a cost of 0.052 (not significant) for not compromising on early childhood education. A male legislator of the participant’s own party, however, pays a cost of 0.12 (p<0.01). A difference-in-difference analysis demonstrates that this is a significantly higher cost compared to that of the female legislator, a pattern that is evident across all three dependent variables. Turning to legislators of the opposing party (bottom of column 6 in Table 2), we again observe few consistent patterns: in only one of our three measures do we see any evidence that female
legislators pay a higher cost for not compromising.

This first set of results points to two key patterns. First, gender has a greater effect on evaluations of compromise for legislators of the participant’s own party. Second, the relationship between gender and compromise may depend on the type of issue. Female legislators were more likely to be punished than their male counterparts on energy policy, but male legislators were more likely to be punished for not compromising on early-childhood education – a female-owned issue.

**Comparisons Across Party**

Our first set of comparisons already demonstrates that gender, issue and party jointly affect evaluations of legislators who do not compromise. We observe that gender has the largest influence when participants evaluate legislators of their own party, but has little impact on evaluations of the opposing party’s legislators. As a next step, we conduct a secondary comparison of legislators within gender and across parties. This comparison will allow us to highlight both the power and limitation of party when it comes to the costs of not compromising.

We present our results in Figure 2 and Table 3. In the difference-in-difference analyses, negative values mean that the legislator of the opposing party paid a higher cost for not compromising than the legislator of the same party as the participant. If gender is irrelevant, we would expect negative values of similar magnitudes among both male and female legislators. By contrast, if gender shapes evaluations we may see a much larger cost of not compromising among one gender than the other.

**Study 1: Energy Policy**

Beginning again with energy policy (Study 1, left-hand bars of Figure 2 and columns 1, 2 and 3 of Table 3), we find that within gender, the effects of party are stronger among men than
among women. Among female legislators, party has little effect. In none of the three outcome measures is the effect of not compromising larger for women in the other party than for women of one’s own party. These patterns are seen in the top row of Figure 2. On the favorability rating, for example, a female legislator of the participant’s own party pays a cost of 0.12 (p<0.01) for not compromising, while a female legislator of the opposing party pays a cost of 0.13 (p<0.01) for not compromising. The difference between these two costs is small (-0.012) and not statistically significant. We observe similar trends across all three measures (top portion of bolded column 3 of Table 3).

For male legislators, however, the cost of not compromising is significantly larger for men in the other party than for men of the participants’ own party across all three outcome measures (Figure 2, bottom panels). Focusing on favorability ratings, for example, we see that the cost of not compromising for male legislators of the participant’s own party is 0.063 (p<0.05), while the cost of not compromising for male legislators of the opposing party is 0.18 (p<0.01). The significant difference between these two (bottom portion of bolded column 3 of Table 3) suggests that male legislators of the opposing party pay a higher cost for not compromising. In sum, on energy policy, party makes a significant difference in the evaluations of male legislators. This is because aligned partisanship between the legislator and the public reduces the cost that a male legislator pays for not compromising. In contrast, female legislators receive no such protection.

[Figure 2 About Here]

[Table 3 About Here]

*Study 2: Early-Childhood Education*

Turning next to the issue of early childhood education (Study 2), we find that these
patterns again largely reverse. On the female-owned issue, partisanship affects the costs of not compromising for female legislators (top row of Figure 2), but has smaller effects among male legislators (bottom row of Figure 2). Across all three measures, the cost of not compromising is significantly larger for women of the opposing party than for women of one’s own party (see Table 3 bolded column 6). In contrast, we see no clear evidence of a party effect for male legislators who do not compromise on a female-owned issue. When it comes to early childhood education, it is the female legislator of the participant’s own party who pays the lowest cost for not compromising. All other legislator types pay higher costs.

**Results Summary**

These patterns suggest that the relationship between gender and the cost of not compromising is conditional. First, our results show that legislators generally experience a cost for not compromising – they are evaluated more negatively when they do not compromise than when they compromise. Second, legislator gender can affect the extent to which legislators pay a cost for not compromising, but the effect of gender is contingent on issue-area. Female legislators are disproportionately punished for not compromising on issues that are not “female-owned,” but in much the same way male legislators are disproportionately punished for not compromising on issues that are female-owned. Third, the cost of not compromising is lowest when there is a match between issue, gender and party. As we theorize, party does insulate a legislator from the cost of not compromising, but this insulation has limitations. When failure to compromise comes on an issue that the legislator does not seem to “own,” even party cannot fully insulate the legislator from punishment. This means that people are least likely to punish a legislator who does not compromise when that legislator is of their own party and does not compromise on an issue closely associated with his or her gender.
Conclusions

The general public sees legislative compromise as beneficial. Political commentators often suggest that Congress may be more bipartisan and reach more legislative compromises if more women served in the legislature. Legislator behavior and gender stereotypes align with this view. Female legislators are expected to compromise. In this manuscript, we analyze whether breaking with expectations of compromise has greater consequences for female legislators than their male counterparts.

Our findings show that female legislators do not consistently face a backlash for failing to meet the expectation of the “compromising woman.” First, the extent to which legislators pay a cost for not compromising is conditional on partisanship. Partisanship can insulate legislators from the increased costs of not compromising, though partisanship may offer more insulation for male than female legislators. Second, the issue topic can affect evaluations. Although female legislators do face more negative reactions when they do not compromise on issues that may be viewed as outside their purview, it is male legislators who face more negative reactions when they fail to compromise on female-owned issues.

The possibility that female politicians face disproportionate costs for certain political behaviors is part of a larger debate about the extent to which women face a political “double-bind.” On the one hand, female politicians may be punished for breaking with gender stereotypes (i.e. behaving too much like male leaders), on the other hand, they may also be punished for hewing too close to gender stereotypes (i.e. displaying too few leadership behaviors). Although the questions driving this manuscript may seem to fit in to the double-bind narrative, our results cannot speak to this debate directly. This is not to suggest that the double-bind does not exist for female legislators, but rather that our particular studies are better suited to analyzing the complex
interplay of party, gender and issue that underlies voter responses to legislative compromise.

Responses to legislative behavior of female and male lawmakers hinge on the partisan relationship between the voter and lawmaker and the type of issue under consideration. Under the assumption that members of Congress are constrained by their electoral incentives, preferences for compromise among constituents may incentivize members to break from the party line. However, as legislators increasingly represent districts where voter partisanship aligns with the members’ partisanship, legislators are likely to respond to the incentives from co-partisans. This may be all of the more true for Democratic female legislators who historically represent more liberal and urban areas (Swers 2002). If shared partisanship limits the costs of not compromising, legislators may not fear standing their ground. In turn, perceived issue ownership matters: male legislators who largely depend on their own partisans for reelection have relatively weak incentives to compromise on issues that are viewed as male-owned, or at the very least not female-owned. The same of course, could be said about female legislators facing similar electorates and female-owned issues. On more traditionally male-owned issues, however, not only is compromise expected of female legislators, but they may face additional incentives to compromise in order to avoid punishment from their voters.
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Figure 1: Cost of Not Compromising, Within Party, Across Gender

Bars represent the difference between participants’ rating of a politician who compromises relative to one who does not compromise. Positive bars indicate that a politician pays a cost for not compromising, the higher the bar the higher the cost. Standard deviation included around each estimated difference. The bar values are also included in Table 2, columns 1, 2, 4 and 5.
Bars represent the difference between participants’ rating of politician who compromises relative to one who does not compromise. Positive bars indicate that a politician pays a cost for not compromising, the higher the bar the higher the cost. Standard deviation included around each estimated difference. The bar values are also included in Table 3, columns 1, 2, 4 and 5.
Table 1: Experimental Conditions (Study 1: N=841; Study 2: N=799)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Same PID</th>
<th>Different PID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1: Woman, compromises (Study 1, n=110, Study 2 n=98)</td>
<td>Group 5: Woman, compromises (Study 1 n=104, Study 2 n=102)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2: Woman, does not compromise (Study 1 n=106, Study 2 n=99)</td>
<td>Group 6: Woman, does not compromise (Study 1 n=99, Study 2 n=100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3: Man, compromises (Study 1 n=102, Study 2 n=100)</td>
<td>Group 7: Man, compromises (Study 1 n=110, Study 2 n=100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4: Man, does not compromise (Study 1 n=106, Study 2 n=101)</td>
<td>Group 8: Man, does not compromise (Study 1 n=104, Study 2 n=99)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Difference in Difference Analyses, Within Party Across Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study 1: Energy</th>
<th>Study 2: Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politicians of the Same Party</strong></td>
<td><strong>Politicians of a Different Party</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem\textsubscript{SamePID}</td>
<td>Male\textsubscript{SamePID}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorability</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Representative</td>
<td>0.086***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem\textsubscript{DiffPID}</td>
<td>Male\textsubscript{DiffPID}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorability</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Representative</td>
<td>0.084**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0.098**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cell values in Columns 1, 2, 4, and 5 are the cost of compromising; the same costs are shown in Figure 1. The values represent mean evaluations when politician compromises minus evaluations when the politician does not compromise. Positive values mean that a politician paid a cost for not compromising. The Difference-in-Difference analyses reflect differences in cell values (Equation 1 and Equation 2 in the text). * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. All tests of significance are two-tailed.
Table 3: Difference in Difference Analyses, Within Gender Across Party

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1: Energy</th>
<th>Study 2: Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td>Difference-in-Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female Politicians</strong></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorability</td>
<td>Female_SamePID</td>
<td>Female_DiffPID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.12***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Representative</td>
<td>0.086***</td>
<td>0.084**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.098**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male Politicians</strong></td>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td>Difference-in-Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male_SamePID</td>
<td>Male_DiffPID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorability</td>
<td>0.063***</td>
<td>0.18***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Representative</td>
<td>0.058*</td>
<td>0.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cell values in Columns 1, 2, 4, and 5 are the cost of compromising; the same costs are shown in Figure 2. The values represent mean evaluations when politician compromises minus evaluations when the politician does not compromise. Positive values mean that a politician paid a cost for not compromising. The Difference-in-Difference analyses reflect differences in cell-values (Equation 3 and Equation 4 in text). * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. All tests of significance are two-tailed.
Web Appendix

Web Appendix 1: Experimental Treatments

Compromise treatment:
In this term, Congress faces a critical crossroads in regard to [energy/early childhood education]. With the deadline for a vote swiftly approaching, Congress must determine the future of [energy policy/early childhood education] in America.

A number of non-partisan organizations have urged Congress to reach a compromise on this issue. Time, however, is running short.

In order for this critical bill to pass, legislators on both sides of the aisle will have to put aside their differences and reach a compromise. Nonetheless, while many in Congress are still debating their positions, some members of both the Democratic and Republican parties have already expressed a willingness to compromise, and each party already has its own stalwarts.

One of those willing to compromise is [Party, Gender]. Bailey has already stated publically that [he/she] is willing to compromise and will vote for the bill. Although the vote is still a week away, Bailey has told numerous media sources that [he/she] will not change [his/her] vote.

“This is an issue on which I am willing to compromise,” Bailey said. “My voters knew this when they elected me.”

Bailey’s staff reports that [he/she] will be present to cast a vote on this bill.

Non-Compromise treatment:
In this term, Congress faces a critical crossroads in regard to [energy/early childhood education]. With the deadline for a vote swiftly approaching, Congress must determine the future of [energy/early childhood education policy] in America.

A number of non-partisan organizations have urged Congress to reach a compromise on this issue. Time, however, is running short.

In order for this critical bill to pass, legislators on both sides of the aisle will have to put aside
their differences and reach a compromise. Nonetheless, while many in Congress are still debating their positions, some members of both the Democratic and Republican parties have already expressed a willingness to compromise, and each party already has its own stalwarts.

One of those unwilling to compromise is [Party, Gender]. Bailey has already stated publically that [he/she] is unwilling to compromise and will vote against this bill. Although the vote is still a week away, Bailey has told numerous media sources that [he/she] will not change [his/her] vote.

“This is simply not an issue on which I am willing to compromise,” Bailey said. “My voters knew this when they elected me.”

Bailey’s staff reports that [he/she] will be present to cast a vote on this bill.
### Web Appendix 2: Sample Comparison

#### Comparison of our Sample to the ANES 2012 Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1 Sample</th>
<th>Study 2 Sample</th>
<th>ANES 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Male</td>
<td>41.16%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>47.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% BA+</td>
<td>38.86%</td>
<td>42.49%</td>
<td>31.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% $50,000+ income</td>
<td>51.13%</td>
<td>44.84%</td>
<td>43.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ideology (1, extremely liberal, 7 extremely conservative)</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Web Appendix 3: Group Means

### Study 1: Energy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th>Good Representative</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same PID</td>
<td>Different PID</td>
<td>Same PID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman, Compromise</td>
<td>0.638 (0.194)</td>
<td>0.598 (0.205)</td>
<td>0.695 (0.199)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, Does Not Compromise</td>
<td>0.521 (0.210)</td>
<td>0.469 (0.289)</td>
<td>0.610 (0.239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td><strong>0.12</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.13</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.086</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man, Compromise</td>
<td>0.599 (0.187)</td>
<td>0.589 (0.216)</td>
<td>0.662 (0.200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man, Does Not Compromise</td>
<td>0.536 (0.217)</td>
<td>0.411 (0.267)</td>
<td>0.604 (0.244)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td><strong>0.063</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.18</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.058</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Study 2: Early Childhood Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favorability</th>
<th>Good Representative</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Same PID</td>
<td>Different PID</td>
<td>Same PID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman, Compromise</td>
<td>0.604 (0.220)</td>
<td>0.618 (0.194)</td>
<td>0.673 (0.209)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, Does Not Compromise</td>
<td>0.552 (0.229)</td>
<td>0.443 (0.261)</td>
<td>0.602 (0.238)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td><strong>0.052</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.18</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.071</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man, Compromise</td>
<td>0.612 (0.205)</td>
<td>0.598 (0.236)</td>
<td>0.664 (0.190)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man, Does Not Compromise</td>
<td>0.490 (0.231)</td>
<td>0.432 (0.267)</td>
<td>0.519 (0.267)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Not Compromising</td>
<td><strong>0.12</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.17</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.15</strong>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. All tests of significance are two-tailed.