Understanding public support for compromise: With whom and by whom

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Who compromises or not, and within whom?

The aim of this study is to examine how compromises within the party are viewed relative to compromises between the parties, and whether the refusal to compromise is viewed differently for moderates and more extreme members. Research on American politics has focused heavily on polarization and the resulting conflicts between the two parties (McCarty et al. 2006) but has done little to examine conflicts within the parties (Green 2019). Yet in contemporary politics, fights between the moderate and ideologically extreme wings of the two parties are prominent, and the reasons these groups oppose compromises are often very different. The experiments in this study test how compromise is seen within versus across parties, whether an unwilling to compromise by moderates is viewed differently than an unwillingness to compromise by ideologically extreme members, and how interest group advocacy for or against compromise shapes public evaluations. This research involves three survey experiments. The discussion below covers the hypotheses and analysis for each.

I will collect data from respondents on the Qualtrics panel (with quotas for gender, age, race, and region). After answering questions about their demographics and broad political views, respondents are asked about what policy goals are important to them on several issues including improving American infrastructure. All respondents are then asked about the means they would like to use to address each goal, with choices of a liberal alternative, a conservative alternative, or a mix of the two. These responses will allow be to examine whether the findings differ among those who view infrastructure as an important issue or not; those who view it as an important issue may be less inclined to compromise away from their preferred means.

Experiment 1: Hypotheses and Analysis

This experiment focuses on whether respondents view opposition to compromise from moderate or extreme members of Congress differently. Under the logic of the spatial model, legislators should vote for proposals that are closer to their ideal point. The resulting voting coalitions should thus include all legislators who are made better off by a proposal relative to the status quo. In the context of a policy compromise, legislators should vote for compromises that move policy part-way toward them, but oppose proposals that move policy further away from them than the status quo. In the contemporary political arena, however, there are notable examples of ideologically extreme members rejecting compromises because they do not go far enough (e.g., House Freedom Caucus members rejecting efforts to revise the ACA because they did not fully repeal it). This experiment focuses on the policy area of infrastructure and focuses on a 2x2x2 design. The randomized factors are: 1) party (Democrat or Republican), 2) whether the legislators opposed to compromise are ideologically moderate or ideologically extreme, and 3) whether the bill passes or fails in the House. For factor (2), the reason for opposing the compromise differs by condition – moderate members oppose the compromise because it moves policy too far from their preferred outcome; ideologically extreme members oppose the compromise because it did not go far enough to meet their preferred outcome.

Following the vignette, respondents are asked about their support for the bill, their approval of the group of members who voted against the bill, and how they would recommend constituents vote for the member in the primary and general election.

I hypothesize that support for the members who opposed it will be higher when moderate members reject a compromise that goes too far, compared to extreme members reject a compromise that does not go far enough. This expectation is rooted in the assumption that people recognize the logic of the spatial model or the idea that "half a loaf is better than no loaf." Note that this expectation averages over the other factors that are randomized – party and passage.

H1: Support for the members who oppose the bill will be lower when ideologically extreme members oppose it than when moderate members oppose it.

To analyze this expectation, I will first assess the difference in means between the extreme/not far enough and the moderate/too far conditions, focusing on approval of the member. I expect that: $M_{extreme} < M_{moderate}$. The analysis will also be run separately on co-partisans and opposing partisans (as well as among pure independents), as respondents may be more forgiving of ideologically extreme members who oppose compromise in their own party. I will also look at the effects of the members' ideology/rationale when the bill passes and fails (subsetting on each group). I will also consider vote recommendations as additional dependent variables.

A second route of analysis will focus on regression analyses that include all factors in the experiment (with party re-coded as copartisan of respondent or not) and control for support for the bill. Equation 1 lays out this model (which will also be run on approval of the member). If H1 is correct, β_1 should be negative.

Equation 1:

$$Approval\ of\ Member_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Extreme_i + \beta_2 Fails_i + \beta_3 Copartisan_i + \beta_4 Bill\ Support_i\ \varepsilon_i$$

The second expectation is that any frustration with extreme members who oppose the compromise will be lessened when they share the partisanship of the respondent.

H2: The negative effect of ideologically extreme members will be mitigated when they share the partisanship of respondent.

This expectation is tested with Equation 2. If H2 is correct, β_4 should be positive.

Equation 2:

$$Approval\ of\ Member_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Extreme_i + \beta_2 Fails_i + \beta_3 Copartisan_i + \beta_4 Extreme_i * Copartisan_i + \beta_5 Bill\ Support_i\ \varepsilon_i$$

Experiment 2: Hypotheses and Analysis

This experiment focuses on how interest group cues about whether legislators should support or oppose compromise affects public support for compromise. In this experiment, partisan respondents are assigned to a co-partisan interest group and pure independents are randomly assigned to either a Democratic or Republican interest group. All respondents are then randomly assigned to see a group that rewards compromise or a group that opposes

compromises. To boost the external validity of the study, the names of real interest groups are used and differ across conditions depending on whether recent statements and past scoring rules from the group indicate that they support or oppose compromise. The Republican group that favors compromise is the Chamber of Commerce, the Republican group that opposes compromise is the Club for Growth, the Democratic group that favors compromise is the AFL-CIO, and the Democratic group that opposes compromise is the Justice Democrats. After reading about the position of the party-aligned group on compromise and whether their scoring will reward members who support or oppose the compromise, respondents are asked whether members of Congress in their assigned party should vote for or against the compromise. They are also asked to provide feeling thermometers of each of the 4 groups, Congress, and the two parties.

I hypothesize that, among partisans, the cue from the interest group will have a significant impact on support for compromise. The feeling thermometer questions are included for exploratory analysis, to see whether any impact of the interest group position on support for compromises carries over into evaluations of the groups or broader Congressional entities.

H1 (cue): Among co-partisans, an interest group cue that opposes compromise will reduce support for compromise relative to an interest group cue that supports compromise.

To test this hypothesis, I will compare the difference in means on whether members of the party should vote for the compromise, with the expectation that: $M_{oppose} < M_{support}$. I will also analyze this relationship separately for Democrats and Republicans as some public opinion polls show that Republicans are more averse to compromise than Democrats (Pew 2012), which may mean that the cue is important among Republicans but not among Democrats.

Experiment 3: Hypotheses and Analysis

In this experiment, respondents are told that in the policy-making process, sometimes it is necessary to reach compromises with others. They are then asked to rank categories of members of Congress in terms of how likely they are to compromise. The experimental portion of the question randomizes whether they are asked about the likelihood of compromise with others in their own party or with those in the opposing party. Respondents rank order very conservative Republicans, very liberal Democrats, somewhat conservative Republicans, and somewhat liberal Democrats.

Given recent political coverage of rejection of compromise by ideologically extreme members like House Freedom Caucus Republicans and very progressive Democrats, I hypothesize that within each party respondents will rank somewhat liberal/conservative members as more likely to compromise than very liberal/conservative members. The alternative hypothesis is that they view ideologically extreme members as more likely to compromise we would expect under the logic of the spatial model. I also expect that partisan respondents will view their party as more likely to compromise than the opposing party (Harbridge et al. 2014). Compromise is generally seen as a positive and people are often more likely to attribute positive attributes to their own party relative to the opposing party (Iyengar et al. 2012). Both of these expectations pool across those assigned to the compromise within their own party versus the opposing party.

The experimental treatment of compromise within one's own party versus with the opposing party is exploratory at this stage and I do not have a clear hypothesis of how expectations of compromise will vary.

H1 (ideology): Within party, respondents will rank somewhat liberal/conservative members as more likely to compromise than very liberal/conservative members.

H2 (partisanship): Among partisans and among a given ideological type (e.g., somewhat or very ideological), respondents will rank members of their own party as more likely to compromise than members of the opposing party.

To analyze this question, I will focus on the mean rankings for each group. H1 predicts that within party, $M_{somewhat} < M_{very}$. H2 predicts that within a given ideological type, $M_{copartisan} < M_{opposing}$.

References:

Green, Matthew. 2019. *Legislative Hardball: The House Freedom Caucus and the Power of Threat-Making in Congress*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Harbridge, Laurel, Neil Malhotra, and Brian F. Harrison. 2014. "Public Preferences for Bipartisanship in the Policymaking Process." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 39 (3):327-55.

Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (3):405-31.

McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

Pew. 2012. *Trends in American Values: 1987-2012*. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press 2012 [cited July 9 2012]. Available from http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/06-04-12%20Values%20Release.pdf.

Appendix A: Full survey

Compromise Qualtrics Spring 2019

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consent Title of Research Study: Survey on Politics and Policymaking
IRB Study Number: STU00209986
Consent If you want a copy of this consent for your records, you can print it from the screen. If you are 18 years or older and wish to participate, please click the "I Agree" button and you will be taken to the survey. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please select "I Do Not Agree" or select X in the corner of your browser.

◯ I agree (1)

◯ I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Title of Research Study: Survey on Politics and Policymaking IRB Study Number: STU00209986 Invest... = I do not agree

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promise
Also, we care about the quality of our data. In order for us to get the most accurate measures of your opinions, it is important that you thoughtfully provide your best answers to each question in this survey.

By clicking, you commit to thoughtfully provide your best answers to each question in this survey.

◯ I will provide my best answers (1)

Page Break ———————————————————————————————

X→

female What is your gender?

○ Male (0)

○ Female (1)

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age What is your age?

○ Under 18 (1)

○ 18-24 (2)

○ 25-34 (3)

○ 35-44 (4)

○ 45-54 (5)

○ 55-64 (6)

○ 65 - 74 (7)

○ 75 - 84 (8)

○ 85 or older (9)

Skip To: End of Block If What is your age? = Under 18

Page Break

race Which of the following best describes you?

○ White / Caucasian (1)

○ Black / African American (2)

○ Hispanic (3)

○ Asian (4)

○ Other (5)

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state What state are you from?

▼ I live outside the United States (1) ... Wyoming (52)

Skip To: End of Block If What state are you from? = I live outside the United States
Skip To: End of Block If What state are you from? = District of Columbia

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education What is the highest level of school you have completed?

○ No high school diploma (1)

○ High School graduate (2)

○ Some college, no degree (3)

○ 2 year college degree (4)

○ 4 year college degree (5)

○ Post-graduate degree (6)

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income Thinking back over the last year, what was your family's annual income?

▼$0-$10,000 (1) ... More than $250,000 (23)

Display This Question:

If comp_pref_first = 1

X→

prefer_compromise Would you prefer an elected official who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?

○ Compromises to get things done (1)

○ Sticks to his or her principles no matter what (0)

follow_politics How much do you follow politics?

○ All the time (4)

○ A fair amount (3)

○ Not very much (2)

○ Not at all (1)

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libcon We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Below is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

○ Extremely liberal (1)

○ Liberal (2)

○ Slightly liberal (3)

○ Moderate, middle of the road (4)

○ Slight conservative (5)

○ Conservative (6)

○ Extremely conservative (7)

End of Block: Ideology & Political Interest

Start of Block: Partisanship

group_favorability What is your overall opinion of the following groups?

	Very favorable (4)	Mostly favorable (3)	Mostly unfavorable (2)	Very unfavorable (1)
Republican party (1)	○	○	○	○
Democratic party (2)	○	○	○	○
Tea party movement (3)	○	○	○	○
Indivisible/Resist movement (4)	○	○	○	○

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pid Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?

○ Democrat (1)

○ Republican (2)

○ Independent (3)

○ Other (4) _____

X→

strong_dem Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not a very strong Democrat?

○ Strong Democrat (1)

○ Not very strong Democrat (0)

X→

strong_rep Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not a very strong Republican?

○ Strong Republican (1)

○ Not very strong Republican (0)

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pid_followup Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democratic party, closer to the Republican party, or equally close to both parties?

○ Closer to the Democratic party (1)

○ Closer to the Republican party (2)

○ Equally close to both parties (3)

End of Block: Partisanship

Start of Block: Participation

X→

contributor Have you ever contributed money to a candidate running for public office or to a group working to elect a candidate?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

○ Don't remember (9)

X→

vote_in_general Regarding the presidential -general election in November 2016, which of the following statements best describes you?

○ I did not vote in the general election (4)

○ I thought about voting in the general election this time, but didn't (3)

○ I usually vote in the general election, but didn't this time (2)

○ I am sure I voted in the general election (1)

X→

vote_in_primary Regarding the presidential -primary election leading up to the November 2016 election, which of the following statements best describes you?

○ I did not vote in the primary election (4)

○ I thought about voting in the primary election this time time, but didn't (3)

○ I usually vote in the primary election, but didn't this time (2)

○ I am sure I voted in the primary election (1)

End of Block: Participation

Start of Block: Goals

goals Mark all of the goals that are important issues for you (<u>you can mark more than one</u>):

☐ We should create new jobs (1)

☐ We should make the US energy secure (2)

☐ We should balance the budget (3)

☐ We should secure Social Security and Medicare (4)

☐ We should improve American infrastructure (roads and bridges, waterways, utilities, and broadband) (5)

means_job Which of the following best describes your attitude about job creation:

○ The government should create new jobs by providing tax incentives to companies in order to hire new workers. (1)

○ The government should create new jobs by expanding government activities that hire new employees. (2)

○ The government should create new jobs by both providing tax incentives to companies and expanding government activities. (3)

means_energy Which of the following best describes your attitude on securing America's energy:

○ The government should secure America's energy future by easing regulations in order to expand oil and gas production in America (1)

○ The government should secure America's energy future by investing in green energy (2)

○ The government should secure America's energy future by both investing in green energy and expanding oil and gas production in America (3)

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means_budget Which of the following best describes your attitude on balancing the budget:

○ The government should balance the budget by cutting spending on social programs (1)

○ The government should balance the budget by increasing taxes (2)

○ The government should balance the budget by increasing taxes and cutting spending (3)

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means_socialsecurity Which of the following best describes your attitude on securing Social Security and Medicare:

○ The government should secure Social Security and Medicare by decreasing benefits to recipients. (1)

○ The government should secure Social Security and Medicare by raising payroll taxes to cover the costs. (2)

○ The government should secure Social Security and Medicare by both decreasing benefits and raising payroll taxes. (3)

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means_infrastructure Which of the following best describes your attitudes on improving American infrastructure:

   ◯ The government should improve infrastructure by using tax incentives to increase public-private partnerships and increase ownership by private (non-public) entities. (1)

   ◯ The government should improve infrastructure by increasing federal spending on these projects. (2)

   ◯ The government should improve infrastructure by both increasing tax incentives to private companies and increasing government spending. (3)

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exp1_rep *Now we are going to ask you about a legislative debate in Congress. Please read the following text below before answering some questions about your views on the next page.*   Suppose that Democrats and Republicans in Congress battled over the issue of improving American infrastructure, including roads, bridges, waterways, utilities and broadband access. After a great deal of disagreement and negotiation by Democrats and Republicans over how to improve these structures, they voted on a bill that offered a compromise between those who wanted a larger or smaller focus on privatizing these structures and using tax incentives to spur development.
  While some Republicans supported the legislation, there was opposition from ${e://Field/Exp1Group} members. One of these members stated that they could not support the legislation because ${e://Field/Exp1Reason}. ${e://Field/Exp1Outcome1} ${e://Field/Exp1Group} members ${e://Field/Exp1Outcome2}.

Note:

Exp1Group = ideologically extreme OR ideologically moderate

Exp1Reason = it did not go far enough to meet their preferred outcome OR it moves policy too far from their preferred outcome

Exp1Outcome1 = Because of opposition from these OR Despite opposition from these

Exp1Outcome2 = the legislation failed to pass in the House OR the legislation was able to pass in the House

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exp1_rep_time Timing

First Click (1)
Last Click (2)
Page Submit (3)
Click Count (4)

exp1_dem *Now we are going to ask you about a legislative debate in Congress. Please read the following text below before answering some questions about your views on the next page.*   Suppose that Democrats and Republicans in Congress battled over the issue of improving American infrastructure, including roads, bridges, waterways, utilities and broadband access. After a great deal of disagreement and negotiation by Democrats and Republicans over how to improve these structures, they voted on a bill that offered a compromise between those who wanted larger or smaller increases in government spending on these projects.

   While some Democrats supported the legislation, there was opposition from ${e://Field/Exp1Group} members. One of these members stated that they could not support the legislation because ${e://Field/Exp1Reason}. ${e://Field/Exp1Outcome1} ${e://Field/Exp1Group} members ${e://Field/Exp1Outcome2}.

exp1_dem_time Timing

First Click (1)
Last Click (2)
Page Submit (3)
Click Count (4)

X→

exp1_bill Do you support or oppose this bill?

○ Strongly support (7)

○ Support (6)

○ Somewhat support (5)

○ Neither support nor oppose (4)

○ Somewhat oppose (3)

○ Oppose (2)

○ Strongly oppose (1)

X→

exp1_member Do you approve or disapprove of the ${e://Field/Exp1Group} member mentioned above who voted against the bill?

○ Strongly approve (7)

○ Approve (6)

○ Somewhat approve (5)

○ Neither approve nor disapprove (4)

○ Somewhat disapprove (3)

○ Disapprove (2)

○ Strongly disapprove (1)

X→

exp1_dem_primary If the Democratic <u>primary</u> election for the House seat held by this representative were held today, would you advise Democrats to vote for this representative?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

X→

exp1_rep_primary If the Republican <u>primary</u> election for the House seat held by this representative were held today, would you advise Republicans to vote for this representative?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

X→

exp1_general If this was your member and the <u>general</u> election for the House seat held by this representative were held today, would you vote for this representative?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (0)

End of Block: Experiment 1, DV

Start of Block: Attention Check

attn_check_pubpri When you read about your Senator's vote after the negotiation between Democrats and Republicans, was the negotiation conducted in public or in private?

○ In public (1)

○ In private (2)

○ This information was not mentioned (3)

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attn_check_exp1 When you read about the negotiation in Congress over infrastructure policies, which group of members were opposed to the legislation?

○ Ideologically moderate members (1)

○ Ideologically extreme members (2)

○ This information was not mentioned (3)

End of Block: Attention Check

Start of Block: Experiment 2

exp2_vignette
Next, we'd like to get your reactions to another feature of Congress.

 Many political organizations and interest groups pay close attention to votes on legislation in Congress, and several score these votes in their annual report cards of members of Congress. These report cards tell the public how often a given member voted in ways that aligned with the interest group's position.

Recently, the ${e://Field/Exp2PartyAligned}-aligned ${e://Field/Exp2Group} announced that they would be including several key votes on legislative compromises in their annual report card.
The ${e://Field/Exp2Group} indicated that when selecting votes, they would ${e://Field/Exp2Reward} and hoped that through these report cards, the public would be able to see where members stand.

Note:

Exp2PartyAligned = Republican OR Democratic (partisans assigned co-partisans; independents randomized)

Exp2Group = Democratic-aligned see AFL-CIO OR Justice Democrats; Republican-aligned see Chamber of Commerce OR Club for Growth

Exp2Reward = Chamber of Commerce or AFL-CIO see "reward members who supported these legislative compromises"; Club for Growth or Justice Democrats see "reward members who opposed these legislative compromises"

exp2_time Timing

First Click (1)
Last Click (2)
Page Submit (3)
Click Count (4)

X→

exp2_vote How should a ${e://Field/Exp2PartyQ} member of Congress vote on these compromise votes?
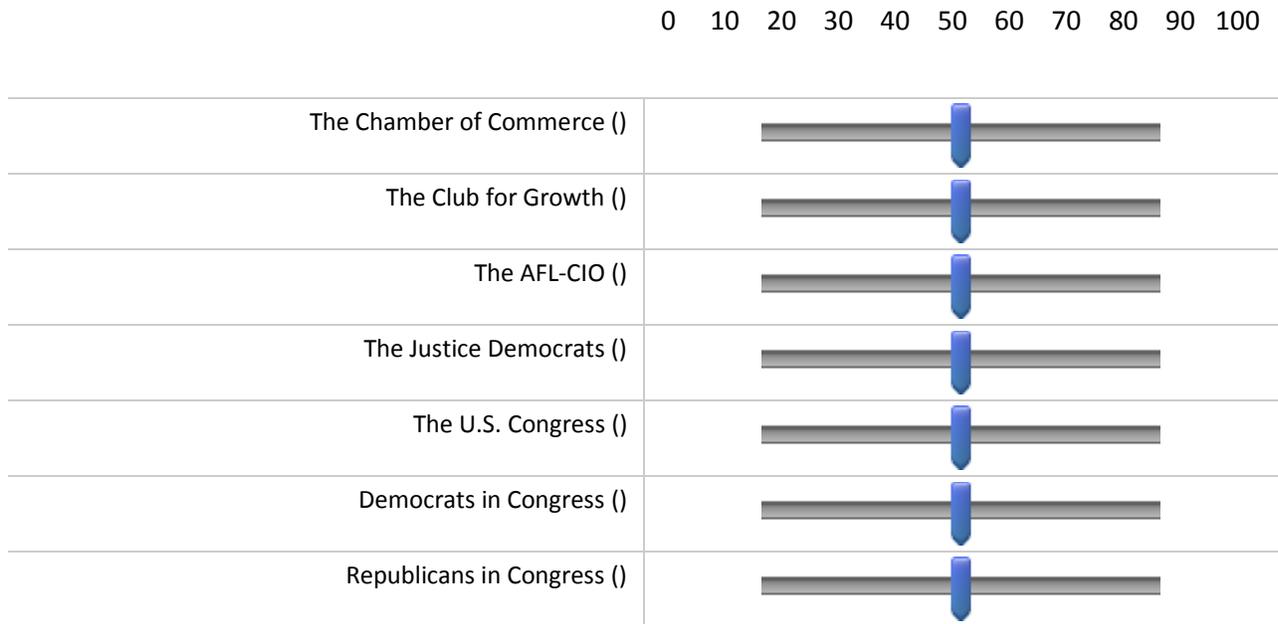
○ Vote for the compromise (1)

○ Vote against the compromise (0)

Page Break

exp2_ft

In light of what you just read, we'd like to get your feelings about some political groups using something we call the feeling thermometer.

Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person or group. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person or group and that you don't care too much for that person or group. You would rate the person or group at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person or group.

	0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
The Chamber of Commerce ()	
The Club for Growth ()	
The AFL-CIO ()	
The Justice Democrats ()	
The U.S. Congress ()	
Democrats in Congress ()	
Republicans in Congress ()	

End of Block: Experiment 2

Start of Block: Experiment 3

exp3_comp_rank

In the policy-making process, sometimes it is necessary to reach compromises with others.

Please rank order the following types of members of Congress in terms of how likely you think they would be to make compromises on legislation ${e://Field/Exp3CompromiseTarget}. (1=most likely to compromise, 4=least likely to compromise)

Note: Exp3CompromiseTarget = with others in their party OR with others in the opposing party

_____ Very conservative Republicans (1)
_____ Very liberal Democrats (2)
_____ Somewhat conservative Republicans (3)
_____ Somewhat liberal Democrats (4)
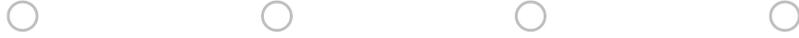
End of Block: Experiment 3

Start of Block: Norms

norms In America today, some types of actions and behaviors are seen as appropriate activities in politics and others are seen as inappropriate, even if they are not technically against the law. For each of

the following, please indicate to what extent you believe that this is an appropriate or inappropriate action.

	Very appropriate (1)	Somewhat appropriate (2)	Somewhat inappropriate (3)	Very inappropriate (4)
Pardon people of crimes who have been loyal donors to the party of the leader (1)	○	○	○	○
Launch investigations into the life and finances of justices when the Court rules against the preferences of the party in charge of government (2)	○	○	○	○
Require voters to show state-issued ID at the polls (3)	○	○	○	○
Accept political contributions from interest groups and political action committees (PACs) (4)	○	○	○	○
Accept political donations from foreign businesses and interests (5)	○	○	○	○
The majority in the House of Representatives only brings up legislation for votes when it is written by members of their own party but blocks voting on legislation when written by members of the opposition party (6)	○	○	○	○
The governor declares that he is willing to	○	○	○	○

| compromise across party lines (7) | | | | |
| The party in power declares that they will postpone elections until their policy agenda is complete (8) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

X→

prefer_compromise2 Would you prefer an elected official who compromises to get things done, or who sticks to his or her principles no matter what?

○ Compromises to get things done (1)

○ Sticks to his or her principles no matter what (0)

Q141 Thank you for taking our survey.   We would now like to make clear a few details about this study. First, the purpose of the study was to understand how people view compromise in politics, and how various characteristics of the circumstances at hand change people's views. We did not provide details about these goals prior to the survey because people sometimes respond to survey questions differently when they know why they are being asked certain questions. Second, the stories you read drew on the types of political agreements that have been covered in the news in recent years, but were written by the researchers. As a result, the description of how different members voted is hypothetical.   If you have any questions about the research, you can contact Laurel Harbridge Yong at l-harbridge@northwestern.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the conduct of this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office of Northwestern University at (312) 503-9338, irb@northwestern.edu.   Please click next to submit your responses.

End of Block: Debrief