

Three Essays on Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulations in the United States

by

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Public Policy Studies
Duke University

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy Studies
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Firearms regulation rarely passes in the United States due to the strength of the gun rights lobby. However, in the past several years, policymakers in traditionally pro-gun states have passed laws that restrict domestic abusers' access to firearms. The success of these policies suggests that domestic violence related firearms regulations may represent a rare opportunity for bipartisan agreement in this contentious policy area. This dissertation examines domestic violence related firearms regulations from three angles. The first chapter presents a qualitative comparative case study analysis of domestic violence related firearms legislation to understand how these policies overcame robust barriers to passage. The results demonstrate that the prominence of domestic violence prevention advocates and "strategic absence" of larger gun control groups in the policy process increased the probability of the legislation's passage. The second chapter leverages an original survey experiment involving 1,000 participants in the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES) to test whether framing gun regulation as domestic violence prevention instead of gun control can increase support for the legislation. While I find limited evidence that framing impacts respondents' support for a new law, women are significantly more likely to support the policy than men. Importantly, this result remains significant after controlling for political party, suggesting that women's collective action could bring about bipartisan cooperation on some gun regulations. The third and final chapter demonstrates the importance of preemptive gun regulations for reducing intimate partner homicide through an analysis of homicide data from the North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System. Together, this collection of studies sheds light on the politics and design of domestic violence related firearms regulation and creates a foundation for future research in this important policy area.

Dedication

To the women whose stories I heard while writing and to those whose stories may never be told. I promise to use the time I have to fight against the forces that stole yours. And to my mom, who gave me my time and all of hers.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	vi
Acknowledgements.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: (Strategically) Absent Advocates: How Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies Passed in Pro-Gun States, 2013-2015	3
Introduction.....	3
Defining Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies.....	5
Research Questions, Data, and Methods.....	8
The Proposal of Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies After Sandy Hook.....	9
Policy Pathways using the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF).....	12
Pathways to Success: Five Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies in Pro-Gun States	15
Summary	25
The Relationship Between Advocacy Coalition and Gun Control Policy	26
Antagonizing the Opposition: Gun Control Versus Gun Rights.....	27
Mollifying the Opposition: The Strategic Absence of Gun Control Groups.....	30
A Divergent Case: Colorado	34
Summary	34
Policy Entrepreneurs, Problem Definition, and Coalition Building	35
Domestic Violence as a Central Problem.....	37
Gun Violence as a Central Problem.....	39
Summary	41
Why Coalitions Stay Apart	42

Summary	45
Discussion	45
Theoretical Contributions and Future Research.....	46
Policy Implications	48
Chapter 2: Partisanship Disarmed: Can Framing Help Diffuse the Partisan Debate Over Guns?	50
Introduction.....	50
Partisanship, Policy Preferences, and Framing.....	52
Research Design	57
Survey Experiment.....	57
Sample.....	59
Variables	62
Analytic Strategy.....	64
Results.....	65
Descriptive Statistics.....	65
Subgroup Analysis	67
Ordinary Least Squared (OLS) Regression.....	69
Discussion	73
An Important Non-Finding	77
Chapter 3: Suicide and Additional Homicides Associated with Intimate Partner Homicide: North Carolina 2004-2013, with co-authors Philip J. Cook and Rose Kerber.....	80
Introduction.....	80
Methods	82
Results.....	84
Discussion.....	87
Public Health Implications.....	89
Conclusion	91

Appendix A.....	93
Appendix B.....	99
Appendix C.....	101
References.....	103
Biography.....	115

List of Tables

Table 1: Types of Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies.....	7
Table 2: Examples of Most Proposed Gun Control Policies that Strengthen Gun Regulation in State Legislatures, 2013-2015	10
Table 3: The Number of Gun Control Laws Proposed and Passed by Type of Policy, 2013-2015	11
Table 4: The Passage Rate of Gun Control Laws by State and Total Policies, 2013-2015	12
Table 5: Comparison of Subsample with Representative Sample (N=1,000)	59
Table 6: Variables and Descriptions	64
Table 7: Mean Levels of Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Legislation by Subgroup	67
Table 8: Difference in Mean Rate of Support (1-7) Within Subgroups by Exposure to Treatment.....	67
Table 9: Difference in Percentage of Supporters Within Subgroups by Exposure to Treatment	69
Table 10: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Political Party (N=1,000)	70
Table 11: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Political Party (N=1,000)	71
Table 12: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Gender (N=1,000).....	72
Table 13. Percent of IPH Cases that are IPH-Suicide by Sex of Perpetrator and Weapon in North Carolina, 2004-2013	84
Table 14. Number of Homicide Victims Per Case by Sex of Perpetrator and Weapon in North Carolina, 2004-2013.....	85
Table 15. Adjusted-odds Ratio of Suicide and of Multiple Homicide in IPH with Male Perpetrators	86
Table 16: Description of Interviewees	95
Table 17: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Political Party (Weighted, N=1,000).....	99
Table 18: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Gender (Weighted, N=1,000)	100
Table 19: Policy Support by Gender (Weighted, N=1,000)	100

Table 20: Chi-square Test for Balance of Political Party ID Across Treatment Groups.....	101
Table 21: Chi-square Test for Balance of Gender Across Treatment Groups	101
Table 22: Chi-square Test for Balance of Education Across Treatment Groups.....	101
Table 23: Chi-square Test of Racial Balance Across Treatment Groups	102
Table 24: Chi-square Test for Balance in Gun Control Support Across Treatment Groups	102

List of Figures

Figure 1: Diagram of the Multiple Streams Approach from Jones et. al. (2016).....	15
Figure 2: Case Study Selection and Exclusion Criteria	18
Figure 3: Support for DV and Firearms Policy Across All Respondents (N=1,000).....	66

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Jennifer Shen also played an invaluable role in my life at Duke, a new sister who I am so grateful for.

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Introduction

In the United States, gun deaths occur at a rate that is twenty-five times higher than that of other developed countries (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016). Yet, legislation targeted towards regulating firearms often fails to pass. Though surprising to many observers, this policy response follows an established pattern in American politics: despite public support for tighter gun laws, the gun rights lobby often successfully suppresses gun reform due to its greater monetary resources, political savvy, and access to grassroots support (Bruce-Briggs, 1976; Goss, 2006).

However, laws that restrict domestic abusers from owning firearms have diverged from this pattern, passing with greater frequency than other gun control policies. This dissertation investigates two elements of domestic violence related firearms regulations: the politics and design of new legislation.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I explore how advocates passed new domestic violence related firearms regulation in states that historically resist passing new gun control laws. Using comparative case study analysis, I identify an element of advocates' political strategy that increased the likelihood of policy change: the prominence of domestic violence prevention advocates and "strategic absence" of larger gun control groups in the policy debate. The insights generated by this investigation shed light on broader questions about advocacy strategy, the policy making process and the modern politics of firearms regulation.

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I investigate whether citizen support for domestic violence prevention laws can explain why lawmakers were more likely to support these policies than other types of gun control. I use an original survey experiment involving 1,000 participants in the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES) to test whether framing gun regulation as domestic violence prevention instead of gun control can increase support for the legislation, focusing specifically on women. I find that while women are not more likely to support the policy when presented with a domestic violence frame, they are

more likely to support the policy regardless of party. The findings shed light on the recent passage of domestic violence related firearms legislation by illustrating the motivating power of a domestic violence frame on women whose activism has the potential to shift the power dynamics of the gun control debate.

The third chapter of this dissertation demonstrates the importance of preemptive policies when attempting to reduce intimate partner homicide (IPH). My co-authors Rose Kerber and Philip Cook and I determine the prevalence and correlates of perpetrator suicide and additional homicides following intimate partner homicide (IPH) in a large, diverse state with high quality data. We extract incidents of IPH from the North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System for 2004-13 and identify suicides and other homicides that were part of the same incidents. We analyze the likelihood (in odds ratio form) of perpetrator suicide and additional homicides using logistic regression analysis. Almost all IPH-suicide cases were perpetrated by men with guns (86.6%). Almost one-half of IPHs committed by men with guns ended with suicide. Male-perpetrated IPH incidents averaged 1.58 deaths if a gun was used, and 1.14 deaths otherwise. The findings demonstrate that gun IPH is often coupled with additional killings. As suicidal batterers will not be deterred from IPH by threat of punishment, the results underline the importance of preemption by limiting batterers' access to guns.

Chapter 1: (Strategically) Absent Advocates: How Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies Passed in Pro-Gun States, 2013-2015

Introduction

Daniel Barden was seven years old when Adam Lanza entered his first-grade classroom and opened fire. The Sandy Hook shooter killed Daniel and nineteen of his schoolmates that December day in 2012; six faculty members lost their lives as well. Daniel's death prompted his father, Mark Barden, and eleven other relatives of Sandy Hook victims, to descend on Washington to convince policymakers that legislation was necessary to prevent the next gun massacre. The group showed senators and members of Congress pictures of the loved ones they had lost – their children, parents, and spouses (C-SPAN, 2013). They were hopeful that the federal government would adopt new regulations to prevent the next mass shooting and stem gun violence in American schools, homes, and communities (Mason, 2016).

However, on April 17, 2013, an amendment that would have strengthened background checks for gun purchases failed in the Senate. Standing in the Rose Garden with Sandy Hook family members, President Barack Obama placed the blame for the failure of the Manchin-Toomey Amendment on the NRA, stating, "...instead of supporting this compromise, the gun lobby and its allies willfully lied about the bill. They claimed that it would create some sort of 'big brother' gun registry, even though the bill did the opposite. This legislation, in fact, outlawed any registry. Plain and simple, right there in the text. But that didn't matter"(Mason, 2016). Mark Barden, Daniel's father, noted that while "[e]xpanded background checks wouldn't have saved our loved ones... we came to support the bipartisan proposal from two senators, both with A ratings from the NRA – a common-sense proposal supported by 90% of Americans" (C-SPAN, 2013).

The failure of lawmakers to pass new gun regulations in the wake of mass shootings is not a new phenomenon in the United States. Unlike legislators from economically similar

countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada – who have all responded to mass shootings by implementing substantial restrictions on gun ownership – lawmakers in the United States often react by passing laws that weaken gun control (Cook & Goss, 2014; Luca, Malhotra, & Poliquin, 2016). The aftermath of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School was no different. In the year following the murder of 20 first-graders and six educators, state legislators passed more laws that decreased gun regulation than regulations that strengthened it (Yourish, Rews, Buchanan, & Andrews, 2013).

Scholars of gun politics point to the power of the NRA and a small group of highly motivated gun rights activists to explain the lack of policy action following mass shootings in the USA (Cook & Goss, 2014; Goss, 2006). The NRA has become especially politically engaged since the mid-1970s (Cook & Goss, 2014; Schuman & Presser, 1981). The group draws on extensive monetary resources from membership dues, donations, and gun manufacturers, as well as political savvy, and a base of passionate and highly mobilized gun rights activists to undermine efforts by gun control activists and lawmakers who seek greater regulation for firearms (Spitzer, 2015). Recent years have seen the diffusion of pro-gun laws like “stand your ground” policies and right to carry laws across state legislatures (Butz, Fix, & Mitchell, 2015; Hickey, 2013; NRA-ILA, 2012).

However, one class of gun control policies found legislative success in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting: gun regulations related to domestic violence prevention.¹ These policies aim to separate abusers from firearms, thereby decreasing intimate partner homicide (typically perpetrated with guns). Recent research also suggests these laws can reduce the risk of mass shootings, which are often carried out by individuals with a history of domestic abuse (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2017; Petrosky et al., 2017). In the three years after the Sandy Hook shooting, state lawmakers considered 1,431 gun control laws but only passed 9.4% of

¹ While these laws were also successful in previous years, this study focuses specifically on the increase in the passage of these laws in the aftermath of Sandy Hook.

these proposals. Domestic violence related gun control laws, on the other hand, saw a much higher success rate. Of the 133 domestic violence related policies lawmakers considered, 26 (19.5%) passed into state law in the same time frame.² Notably, 17 of these new laws passed in states with robust gun rights lobbies (Mascia, 2015).

This study investigates the factors that led to the success of domestic violence related firearms policies between 2013 and 2015. First, I demonstrate that domestic violence related gun control did increase in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, contradicting some reports of legislative inaction on gun control during this time. Next, I seek to understand *how* these policies passed through state legislatures, by mapping the pathways of successful domestic violence related firearms policies in states with a history of resisting gun regulation.

Defining Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies

In this study, the phrase “domestic violence related firearms policies” refers to regulations that create firearms restrictions for domestic abusers. The Department of Justice defines domestic violence as “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner” (Office of Violence Against Women, 2017). Firearms are used by abusers to physically harm or to threaten an intimate partner (Zeoli & Bonomi, 2015). Public health research finds that access to a firearm dramatically increases the likelihood that an abuser will kill his (most abusers are male) intimate partner (Campbell et al., 2003; Kellermann et al., 1993). Furthermore, most intimate partner homicides are perpetrated with firearms (Violence Policy Center, 2016; Zeoli et al., 2017).

In response to the danger of firearms in domestic violence situations, advocates, policymakers, and researchers have identified several interventions that can decrease the availability of guns to abusers. One set of laws establishes how law enforcement will

² I calculated the number of gun laws using an original dataset of gun regulations proposed between 2010 and 2015. I compiled the data from legislation tracking documents from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence and the LexisNexis State Capital Database.

determine who is prohibited from owning a firearm in the context of domestic violence. These laws include federal policies that bar individuals convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence or who have domestic violence protection orders (also called domestic violence restraining orders) granted against them that prevent them from owning, possessing, or purchasing guns (Raissian, 2016; Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). However, some state laws extend to other categories like stalking-related restraining orders or ex-parte orders that are given to applicants before the official court hearing for the restraining order (Frattaroli, 2009). These laws seek to identify domestic abusers who pose a threat to their current or former partners (or in the case of stalkers, the person they are stalking) and restrict their access to firearms.

The second set of laws empower those tasked with implementing regulations that bar domestic abusers from obtaining firearms. Surrender policies create a protocol for ensuring that abusers surrender firearms that they already have. These policies are necessary where there is no established protocol for the safe storage of confiscated firearms or a process for returning firearms after a sentence is complete. The state laws grant state law enforcement officials greater autonomy in removing firearms from abusers, such as authorizing law enforcement officials to remove firearms from the scene of a domestic violence crime. Laws related to judges and the court system provide guidance or obligate the court to explicitly remind abusers that they are breaking the law if they possess a firearm.

A third set of laws defines domestic violence as a unique crime instead of a part of a broader violence statute. While federal regulations apply regardless of whether the crime is called “domestic abuse” by the state as long as it is domestic (Raissian, 2016), creating a specific crime of domestic violence can smooth the process of implementing firearm bans for abusers (Barber, 2017). These laws can also expand the types of relationships considered by the state to be “domestic,” to unmarried couples or same-sex couples, thereby ensuring that

firearms regulations are also applied to abusers in these types of relationships. Table 1 provides a summary of these laws.

Table 1: Types of Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies

Prohibition	
Misdemeanor Crime of Domestic Violence	Prohibition of possession of a firearm by a person convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence (MCDV)
Domestic Violence Restraining Order	Prohibition of possession of a firearm by a person served with domestic violence related restraining order/order of protection (DRVO)
Stalking offense	Prohibition of possession of a firearm by a person convicted of stalking
Ex-parte Order	Prohibition of possession of a firearm by a person served with an ex-parte restraining order. This is a restraining order placed on a person before the accused defendant appears in court.
Facilitation	
Surrender Requirements	Requires the surrender of firearms if a person is charged with misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence or subject to a restraining order/order of protection
Law Enforcement	<p>Authorizes law enforcement to seize, search for, or confiscate a firearm at the scene of a domestic violence incident</p> <p>Establishes a process for law enforcement to legally confiscate firearms and determines what to do with the firearms once in their possession, or allows law enforcement to evaluate further whether an individual should have their firearm returned</p>
Judges and Court System	Provides guidance or obligates the court to address domestic violence related firearms laws by advising/requiring a person convicted of domestic violence crimes or restraining orders that they may not possess, transport, or receive a firearm or other requirements
Defining Domestic Violence	Defining domestic violence as a unique crime or between dating partners etc.

Research Questions, Data, and Methods

This study investigates the passage of firearms regulations related to domestic violence in state legislatures. While scholars have evaluated the effectiveness of domestic violence related firearms policies at the state level (Díez et al., 2017; Raissian, 2016; Vigdor & Mercy, 2006), no study to date has focused on the politics of passing these laws. Motivated by this gap in gun politics research, this study aims to answer two related questions:

1. Did lawmakers pass a greater number of domestic violence related gun regulations in state legislatures compared to (a) previous years and (b) other types of gun regulation in the wake of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School?
2. How did these policies overcome strong gun lobbies, which often derail gun legislation?

This study draws on established theories to explain the passage of these policies and builds a refined theory that incorporates evidence discovered in the investigation. I utilize data from three sources to answer my primary research questions. For Question 1, I analyze an original dataset compiled using data provided by the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence and LexisNexis State Capital Database. This dataset includes all gun related policies proposed from 2010 to 2015. Using this dataset, I establish that while laws that weakened gun regulation passed at a higher rate than laws that restricted gun access during this time, some laws that tightened gun regulations were passed. Lawmakers proposed and passed a higher number of laws related to domestic violence during this time than in the three years prior to Sandy Hook.

To answer Question 2, I utilize data from interviews with key informants – individuals with intimate knowledge of the policy making process such as policymakers, advocates, and interest group leaders – across seven states that considered domestic violence related firearms policies. I also triangulate the interview data with accounts from newspapers, committee hearing transcripts, and other primary data. By comparing the process of seven

similar policies (some that passed and some that failed) across seven states, I develop a hypothesis as to why some domestic violence related gun regulations passed in the wake of Sandy Hook while other domestic violence related gun regulations did not. I provide evidence from my cases to support my hypothesis but also outline how future research projects could test the generalizability of the findings in other contexts.

In summary, this study builds on established theories of the policy making process and gun politics in the United States. I answer two related research questions through a systematic analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. First, I test whether claims that lawmakers failed to pass new gun restrictions after Sandy Hook are true. Next, I develop a refined theory of policy change that helps explain the success of this legislation despite the robust barriers against it.

The Proposal of Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies After Sandy Hook

The mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School caused lawmakers across the country to introduce a wave of new gun regulations in state legislatures (Luca et al., 2016). However, very few of these regulations passed. An original dataset of proposed gun laws compiled from legislation tracking data from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence and LexisNexis State Capital confirm that laws strengthening gun control struggled to pass between 2013 and 2015. Only, 2 out of 57 (3.5%) proposed laws that aimed to prevent children from accessing firearms owned by their parents passed during this time.³ Similarly, only 5 out of 87 (5.7%) policies proposed between 2013 and 2015 that restricted citizens' access to large capacity magazines became state law.⁴

However, not all gun regulations failed to pass during this time, and those that passed were often domestic violence related gun regulations. The number of domestic violence

³ Laws include all laws proposed between 2013 and 2015.

⁴ All laws referenced in this section refer to policies that *strengthen gun regulations* or increase restrictions on gun purchases. It does not include laws that loosen gun restrictions or make it easier for a person to obtain a gun.

related firearms laws proposed increased in the three years after the shooting; between 2013 and 2015, lawmakers introduced 133 gun control policies related to domestic violence, 2.5 times more than three years previously (when lawmakers considered 52 similar bills). These tabulations include laws that addressed domestic gun violence in isolation (called a “standalone bill” in the following section) and policies that included domestic violence related firearms regulations as a provision or part of the bill (called a “provision” in the following section).

Lawmakers also proposed more domestic violence related policies (both standalone bills and provisions in larger bills) than any other type of law that restricted gun access. Between 2013 and 2015, 36 states considered a policy that would further restrict domestic abusers access to firearms. Comparatively, 29 states considered laws that tightened gun restrictions for those with mental health issues, 26 considered laws that limited the sale of high capacity magazines, and 22 considered policies that stemmed the trafficking of guns across state lines. These four policies represent the gun control bills considered by the most states in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shooting in state legislatures. Table 2 provides examples of these laws.

Table 2: Examples of Most Proposed Gun Control Policies that Strengthen Gun Regulation in State Legislatures, 2013-2015

Policy Types	Example Bill
Domestic Violence Prohibition	A law barring individuals convicted of domestic violence from owning, possessing or purchasing a firearm
Mental Health Prohibition	A law providing that upon entry of a verdict of not responsible by reason of mental disease or defect, or upon the acceptance of a plea of not responsible by reason of mental disease or defect, a court shall revoke the defendant's firearm license, if any.
Regulate High Capacity Magazines	A law prohibiting the delivery, sale, or purchase of a semi-automatic assault weapon, attachment, .50 caliber rifle, or .50 caliber cartridge, and prohibiting the possession of these weapons and attachments
Gun Trafficking Regulations	A law prohibiting the sale of a firearm by an individual who is not authorized to possess firearms and creating penalties if the weapon is used within the following 3 years to kill someone intentionally.

The proposals include standalone bills that specifically target an aspect of firearms regulations for domestic abusers or provisions in larger bills that address multiple aspects of gun regulation.⁵ Lawmakers from 36 states considered 100 standalone bills and 31 bills with provisions related to domestic abuse that *strengthened* gun regulations, for a total of 131 policies. Comparatively, lawmakers considered 82 standalone bills and 19 bills with provisions related to high capacity magazines, a total of 101 policies; 66 standalone bills and 22 bills with provisions related to mental health, a total of 88 policies; and 68 standalone bills and 36 bills with provisions related to gun trafficking, a total of 104 policies. Table 3 provides the details.

Table 3: The Number of Gun Control Laws Proposed and Passed by Type of Policy, 2013-2015

	Proposed				Passed			
	States	Standalone Bills	Provisions	Total	States	Standalone Bills	Provisions	Total
Domestic Violence	36	100	31	131	20	26	10	36
Mental Health	29	66	22	88	12	15	6	21
High Cap Mags	26	82	19	101	3	3	2	5
Trafficking	22	68	36	104	5	2	5	7

The passage rates of these policies suggest that domestic violence related firearms legislation was more likely to become law during this time than other types of gun control

⁵ I found no examples of provisions in larger bill passing as standalone bills. However, it may be the case that some standalone bills were incorporated as provisions during the legislative process. If a standalone bill did fail but then passed as a provision in a larger bill, the bill would appear twice in my dataset (as a standalone bill and as a provision). The standalone bill would have “failed” but the provision would have “passed.” Using both entries could create an inflated number of failed bills. To address this issue, if a bill was proposed as a standalone bill and (ultimately) a provision, I considered that bill to *only* be considered as a provision, thus removing the inflated number of bills that failed.

legislation. As illustrated in Table 4, half of states (55.6%) that considered a domestic violence related firearms policy went on to pass the legislation. Only 11.5% of states that considered high capacity magazine bills, 41.4% of states that considered policies addressing mental health, and 22.7% of states that considered trafficking legislation ultimately passed one or more of those bills. Of *all* domestic violence related firearms regulations proposed, 27.5% were enacted by lawmakers compared to 23.9% of mental health laws, 5.0% of high capacity magazine laws, and 6.7% of trafficking laws.

Table 4: The Passage Rate of Gun Control Laws by State and Total Policies, 2013-2015

	State Passage Rate	Policy Passage Rate
Domestic Violence	55.6%	27.5%
Mental Health	41.4%	23.9%
High Cap Mags	11.5%	5.0%
Trafficking	22.7%	6.7%

Policy Pathways using the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF)

An analysis of state policies demonstrates that domestic violence related firearms regulations were more likely to pass than other types of gun regulation, but a closer look at state politics is required to understand *how* the policies passed. Every policy follows a unique path through the legislative process. However, scholars have developed generalizable frameworks to map the conditions necessary for a bill to become law. One such framework is the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF).

Kingdon (1984) initially put forth the MSF and drew heavily on Cohen, March, and Olsen’s (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice. The model assumes that the policy making process is defined by ambiguity (there are myriad ways of thinking about the

same circumstances or phenomena) and time constraints (lawmakers have limited time to make decisions). These two factors mean that lawmakers' preferences depend both on how an issue is presented, and how much time a lawmaker can allocate to deciding whether to support or fight that policy. Given these constraints, actors make decisions based on the information environment and political context instead of thorough and objective assessment.

In the MSF, the policy process is conceptualized as three distinct streams: problem stream, policy solutions stream, and politics stream. While the MSF can be applied to agenda setting – the process through which a problem is noted as worthy of government intervention – this study uses the framework to understand whether a policy proposal passes (Herweg, Zahariadis, & Zohlnhofer, 2017). Each stream is independent and can be linked together (a process called “coupling”) by a skilled policy entrepreneur (a person actively pursuing policy change). If a policy entrepreneur links the streams during a “policy window” – a moment when attention to a policy area is relatively high -- the probability that a law will pass increases.

The problem stream develops in response to new indicators published about a problem, a focusing event that draws significant public attention, or feedback about existing policy regimes that suggest established laws do not work as intended. The policy solutions stream incorporates policy alternatives generated in policy communities, i.e., a group of “civil servants, interest groups, academics, researchers, and consultants, who engage in working out solutions to policy problems of a specific policy field” (Herweg, 2016). Once this group agrees on a set of viable alternatives (also taking into consideration the feasibility, financial viability, and value acceptability of the laws), the policy solutions stream can be coupled with the problem stream.

The politics stream runs parallel to the policy solutions stream and involves bargaining to create political majorities for new policy proposals. There are three core elements of the politics stream: the national mood, interest groups, and government. The

national mood refers to the notion that “a fairly large number of individuals in a given country tend to think along common lines and that the mood swings from time to time”(Herweg et al., 2017). Lawmakers sense the national mood and act accordingly. Thus, if the national mood swings towards gun regulation, lawmakers might be more willing to expend political capital on passing a law that addresses gun violence (Kingdon, 1984).

Interest groups also play a role in the politics stream. Interest groups with significant political influence may be able to shape the politics stream in their favor. If leaders of an influential interest group are interested in a problem or have a new proposal to address a problem, their concerns are more likely to be addressed by lawmakers.

Finally, government and legislatures are also important factors in the politics stream. If an election brings in new lawmakers who are more open to a policy solution or dealing with a thorny policy problem, the probability that a new law will pass increases. The minimum requirement for the politics stream to be ready for coupling with the political problem and policy solutions streams is the existence of a “political entrepreneur.” A political entrepreneur is a relevant government official or influential member of the legislature who actively supports the policy in question and is willing to “stitch together a majority for it” (Zohlnhöfer, 2016).

A political entrepreneur is distinct, however, from the critical “policy entrepreneur” who works *across* the three streams to bring them together when they are ready for coupling. A policy entrepreneur is an advocate who is “willing to invest their resources – time energy, reputation, money -- to promote a position in return for anticipated future gain in the form of material, purposive, or solidarity benefits” (Kingdon, 2011). This actor develops support for a policy in the policy solutions stream and then must connect this policy solution to the problem and politics streams when a policy window opens.

A policy window opens in either the problem or politics stream. In the problem stream, a focusing event like a mass shooting or a drastic change in an indicator (such as the unemployment rate) can open a policy window. In the politics stream, a change in the

composition of the government or a significant shift in the national mood can open a policy window. If the policy entrepreneur does not act quickly, the window may close and she or he will have to wait until the next one opens. However, if the policy entrepreneur is successful, a new policy will pass. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the MSF.

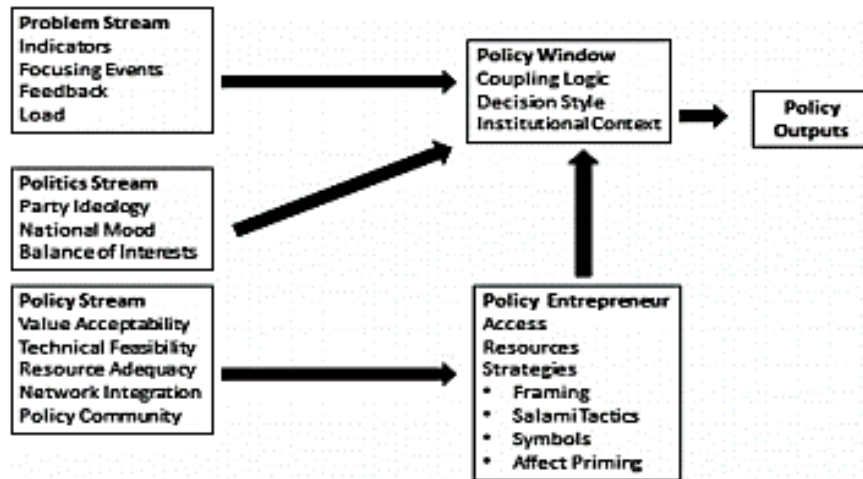


Figure 1: Diagram of the Multiple Streams Approach from Jones et. al. (2016)

Pathways to Success: Five Domestic Violence Related Firearms Policies in Pro-Gun States

The MSF is a useful framework for understanding the political pathways taken by enacted domestic violence related firearms policies. In the following section, I draw on elite interviews, media coverage, and committee testimony to map the pathway to policy change for five policies from five states: South Carolina, Colorado, Washington, Wisconsin, and Louisiana. I document the development of each stream and what drove the opening of a policy window, and I identify the political entrepreneur and policy entrepreneur who contributed to the passage of each policy.

Case Study Selection

Between 2013 and 2015, 20 states passed 36 new laws related to domestic gun violence like those outlined in Table 1. Of these states, 16 received a C or lower for gun regulation from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence in 2012. A low rating from

the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence indicates that lawmakers in the state do not regularly pass new gun control policies, either because of a strong gun lobby or because citizens do not demand new laws, or both. As my research questions center on explaining how gun control passes despite powerful headwinds against it, I limited my case selection to policies in these 16 states.

In addition, if the state legislatures passed more than one policy of interest during this time, I looked at the passage of the first bill. This choice reflects the fact that subsequent bills likely benefited from the politics of the previous policy's passage, and I wanted to understand the initial factors that led to policy change.

I further limited my selection to policies that, after considering the complete bill package, strengthened protections for survivors of abuse. Some domestic violence related firearms provisions were embedded in larger gun rights bills that significantly weakened restrictions on gun ownership. Domestic violence prevention advocates often opposed these laws because overall the law would make domestic abuse survivors less safe, despite new regulations on abusers' access to guns. Because I am interested in the factors that led to the passage of new gun control in spite of the power of the gun lobby and mobilized pro-gun constituents in the states, these cases are unlikely to shed light on my research questions. Thus, I excluded policies from three states, Nevada, North Carolina, and Alabama, where domestic violence advocates either opposed the relevant bills or the primary goal of the legislation was to expand gun rights.

The remaining thirteen states in my case selection were Colorado, Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Washington, Wisconsin, Delaware, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, and New Hampshire. I narrowed the thirteen possible cases to five based on the availability of information about each case. Over a six-month period, I contacted at least five key informants (also called elite actors) – individuals with knowledge of the policy making process – in each state. These key informants came from four different groups: policymakers

who sponsored the legislation, leaders of gun control groups, leaders of domestic violence prevention groups, and leaders of gun rights groups. I also contacted additional interviewees if my contacts suggested I speak with them for further information. For example, I spoke with several journalists who covered the policy making process and legislative aides who helped draft the bills based on the recommendations of interviewees.

Ultimately, I developed comprehensive cases for states where at least three different key informants could shed light on the policy process: South Carolina, Colorado, Washington, Wisconsin, and Louisiana. The key informants also confirmed that, in these five states, the primary reason that gun control policies failed was because of the strength of the gun rights lobby and citizens' support for that lobby. Thus, these five states provide ideal contexts for examining how new gun regulation related to domestic violence passed despite the power of gun rights in the state. I also drew on information I collected from the remaining seven cases to inform my case development, such as references from interviewees and confirmation of larger national events that impacted all the state legislatures. Figure 2 provides a visual depiction of the case selection process.

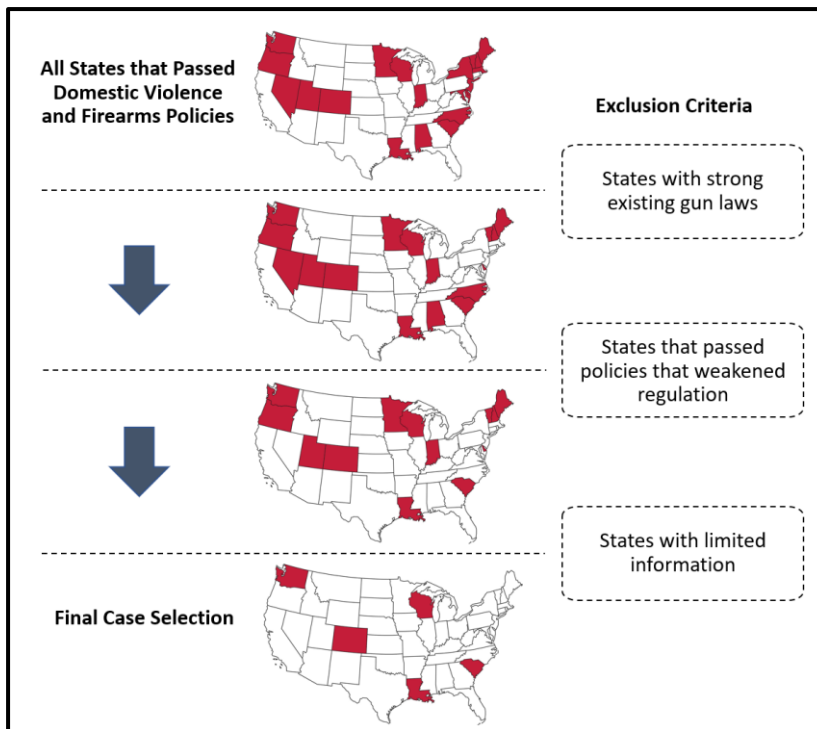


Figure 2: Case Study Selection and Exclusion Criteria

It is possible that selecting cases based on the availability of information could bias the results of the study because the low response rate from elite actors could be correlated with elements of the policy process. For example, lawmakers who desired more publicity for their accomplishments may have been more interested in speaking with someone about their work. However, I spoke with individuals with a range of viewpoints on gun laws in general and some individuals that I expected to be interested in talking about their story (because it might help them electorally or be positively received by their supporters) did not respond to my requests for comment. Therefore, I believe that the response rate was largely unrelated to the outcomes of the policy process, minimizing the possibility of selection bias based on this criterion. However, the narrow case selection does limit the generalizability of my findings and, as such, the analysis is primarily an exercise in theory building with the goal of testing the theory with a larger number of cases in the future.

I conducted thirty 30-60-minute semi-structured interviews with key informants. At times, I followed up with interviewees with further questions as the study progressed. All

interviews were recorded and later transcribed so that I could take notes during the interviews. I secured consent for each interview and received IRB approval for the project (IRB D0692). I supplemented, triangulated, and fact-checked the retellings of each interviewee using newspaper articles, legislative and committee hearing testimony, and social media posts about the legislation from interest groups, citizens, and other policymakers during the policy process. More detail about my qualitative analysis methods as well as a list of interviewees and the interview guide used in this study can be found in Appendix A.

I was unable to obtain significant information from leaders of state gun rights organizations. However, I met with one high ranking official from the National Rifle Association Institute for Legal Affairs (NRA-ILA) who provided information about the NRA's approach to domestic violence related firearms bills in general. I also utilized information from gun rights groups that I found published on their websites and in relevant news articles to understand their perspective. Thus, while my analysis is limited by a relative lack of information from gun rights groups compared to other groups, I minimize the potential bias caused by this gap in information by using primary source material from local groups and triangulating the information with national leadership of the NRA and interviews with other elite actors.

In the following section, I identify the components of the problem, policy, and politics streams as well as the political entrepreneur, policy entrepreneur, and the policy window in each case. I conclude by summarizing the similarities and differences across these cases.

South Carolina

In 2015, South Carolina lawmakers passed Senate Bill 3, which barred domestic abusers from purchasing, possessing, or owning firearms for different lengths of time, depending on the severity of the abuse (Long, 2015b). The policy process that led to the bill's passage was complicated and contentious. In the problem stream, the publication of a series

of articles by a local newspaper, *The Post and Courier*, titled “Till Death Do Us Part” spotlighted the exceptionally high rate of domestic homicide with firearms in South Carolina (Pardue, Smith, Hawes, & Hauff, 2014). The articles elevated the issue of domestic gun violence to the forefront of state politics and opened a policy window in the problem stream.

When the policy window opened, interest groups in the politics stream were ready to act. Domestic violence prevention advocates mobilized to pressure lawmakers to address the problem articulated in *The Post and Courier’s* series of articles (Barber, 2017). Specifically, advocates from the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault acted as the policy entrepreneur, maintaining pressure on lawmakers to address the issue after *The Post and Courier’s* article was published.

Senator Larry Martin (R) served as a political entrepreneur. Senator Martin agreed to support the legislation after *The Post and Courier* singled out his leadership of the Senate Judiciary Committee as one of the most powerful potential barriers to new legislation that would separate domestic abusers from their firearms (Pardue, Smith, Hawes, & Hauff, 2014). Senator Martin had a history of supporting domestic violence prevention legislation but also typically supported gun rights laws and resisted passing gun regulations (Barber, 2017).

Sponsoring a new gun control law was difficult for the senator. His constituency encompassed many gun rights supporters, making this provision politically risky, and when he brought the bill to the Judiciary Committee, the senator noted that he would “take heat” from his constituents in rural areas. (Smith, 2017). However, he made an impassioned plea to his committee members that reflected his dedication to preventing domestic abuse. Martin argued that the law represented a “common sense way of dealing with [domestic homicide with guns]” (Borden, 2015). Senator Martin’s considerable influence allowed him to stitch together a majority in the legislature.

Leaders at South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault also identified a viable policy option in the policy stream. The group worked with Senator

Martin to draft a bill, like many proposed in the state legislature in the past, that barred individuals convicted of misdemeanor domestic abuse from owning, possessing, or purchasing firearms. Senator Martin worked with representatives of the NRA and compromised on the length of the firearm ban, creating a tiered system, depending on the severity of the domestic violence crime, to determine the length of the ban. Ultimately, the law passed with bipartisan support. After signing the bill, pro-gun Governor Nikki Haley noted that the measure would ensure that “the survivor is protected, not the convenience of the abuser” (Long, 2015b). The NRA remained neutral on the bill.

Colorado

Unlike in South Carolina, the window of opportunity that opened in Colorado came from the politics stream. In November of 2012, House Democrats won control of that chamber, and Senate Democrats maintained control of the state Senate; the lawmakers vowed to make significant changes with their newfound power (Bartels, 2012). The Democrats’ victory came shortly after James Holmes entered a movie theater in Aurora, killing 12 people and wounding 70. In the aftermath of the shooting, the problem stream was ripe for coupling.

In 2013, Senate President John Morse (D) and Speaker Mark Ferrandino (D) teamed up with national groups dedicated to gun regulation to push for a slate of gun control bills (Tory, 2015). Michael Bloomberg’s Mayors Against Illegal Guns played a crucial role in this effort. In contrast to the leading role of domestic violence groups in South Carolina, a coalition of gun control-focused advocates served as policy and political entrepreneurs, working to create a majority to pass new policies (Hoover & Lee, 2013).

Colorado Democrats and gun control groups advocated for legislation that facilitated the implementation of existing federal regulations. Senator Evie Hudak (D), who ultimately sponsored the larger package of gun regulations, went to the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV), with whom she had a close relationship, and asked what type of bill they would want to include in the gun package (Waligorski, 2016). Senate Bill 197

created a mechanism to remove guns from domestic abusers prohibited by federal law from possessing firearms. The law addressed federal regulations that ban individuals convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence as well as those subject to a domestic violence restraining order. Thus, unlike the policy pathway in South Carolina, where firearms regulation was viewed as a component of efforts to prevent domestic violence, in Colorado, domestic violence prevention was viewed as a component of firearms regulation.

Votes for the passage of new domestic violence related firearms laws fell along party lines (Bartels, 2013). No Republican lawmakers supported Senate Bill 197 and pro-gun lawmakers chastised Democratic lawmakers for pushing for “the most extreme anti-gun [package] I think we’ve seen” (Bartels, 2012). The Rocky Mountain Gun Owners – an NRA affiliated gun rights organization in the state -- similarly opposed the legislation. Dudley Brown, executive director of the Rocky Mountain Gun Owners, held a news conference stating that “The Democratic party has [passed gun control] before and paid the price... and they’re going to pay the price again,” referring to the 1994 election when Republicans regained control of the legislature (Bartels, 2012). However, because Democratic lawmakers held a majority in the legislature, the bill passed.

Washington

The Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) had campaigned for new gun regulations related to domestic violence for over a decade (Goodman, 2016; Huang, 2017; Kagi, 2016). However, the group and its allies in the state legislature repeatedly failed to recruit enough support from Republican and Democratic lawmakers with pro-gun constituencies to pass new policy (Luo, 2013; Minard, 2014). In the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, leaders from the WCADV saw an opening in the problem stream and acted as policy entrepreneurs to bring the politics and problem streams together. The group approached the Democratic leadership in the state with a domestic violence related firearms bill in 2014. House Bill 1480 would bring Washington State law in line with federal

regulations on domestic abusers and guns by requiring that judges bar abusers convicted of domestic violence offenses from owning guns. Existing regulation gave judges the option of barring abusers from owning, possessing, or purchasing firearms but did not require it.

Unlike other cases, the Sandy Hook shooting *alone* – without an additional local focusing event – opened a window of opportunity in the problem stream. However, like every case except Colorado, domestic violence prevention advocates served as political entrepreneurs and sought to capitalize on the opening. WCADV's leaders believed that recent events had primed the otherwise pro-gun legislature to pass a domestic violence related firearms law (Huang, 2017).

The politics stream consisted primarily of domestic violence prevention advocates, with Grace Huang from the WCADV serving as the policy entrepreneur and Representative Rodger Goodman (D), who had worked with the group before, serving as the political entrepreneur. The WCADV and Representative Goodman negotiated with the NRA and other gun groups in the state to reach a compromise. The policy ultimately passed with bipartisan support at the end of 2014. The NRA remained neutral on the bill.

Wisconsin

On October 21, 2012, a gunman opened fire inside a day spa in Brookfield, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee. The man, identified as Radcliffe Haughton, killed his estranged wife, who was an employee at the spa, along and two other women who worked there (Yaccino & Davey, 2012). The local focusing event created an opening in the problem stream of the policy process in Wisconsin. In the wake of the shooting, End Abuse Wisconsin acted as a policy entrepreneur and attached the problem to a policy solution that would provide a process for removing firearms from domestic abusers. The group also found two political entrepreneurs, including one pro-gun Republican, Representative Garey Bies (R).

Assembly Bill 464 was sponsored by Representative Garey Bies (R) in the Assembly and Senator Lena Taylor (D) in the Senate. The bill created a systematic process for law

enforcement to remove firearms from abusers. Unlike the political process in Colorado, Assembly Bill 464 drew support from members of both political parties. Moreover, the NRA worked with lawmakers to draft the bill and decided to remain neutral on the legislation (Mascia, 2015). Ultimately, Assembly Bill 464 received unanimous bipartisan support from state lawmakers and was signed by Governor Walker on April 16, 2014 (Office of Scott Walker, 2014).

Governor Walker proudly publicized the signing of Assembly Bill 464, noting the bill worked to address violence in relationships: “Every year in Wisconsin, thousands of people, mostly women, seek help from law enforcement and the legal system, because they believe someone they have a relationship with, may harm them... These laws empower the system that serves them, so we can do better in protecting the victims, and potential victims, of domestic abuse and connect them with crucial services, when they need our help the most” (Office of Scott Walker, 2014).

Louisiana

In 2013, Charmaine Caccioppi, Chief Operating Officer of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, and Kim Sport, Public Policy Chairwoman for the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, saw two people close to them experience the devastating consequences of domestic violence (Sport & Caccioppi, 2016). Caccioppi’s friend was killed by her ex-son-in-law. Around the same time, Sport’s sister sought a divorce from her abusive husband after 10 years of marriage. The two women joined together to press for new legislation related to domestic violence prevention, including firearms regulation for domestic abusers. A window of opportunity in the politics stream opened when Caccioppi and Sport recruited the support of a political entrepreneur, Representative Helen Moreno (D), and advocates from the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV). While Sport mentioned that Everytown supported her initial research into domestic violence related firearms legislation,

Everytown's participation as part of grassroots political activism or lobbying was limited (Sport & Caccioppi, 2016).

Sport and Caccioppi gained the support of pro-gun lawmakers in the state legislature and convinced the NRA to remain neutral on the legislation after agreeing to some concessions. On May 29, 2014, the slate of bills, including the provision for firearms regulations for domestic abusers, was signed by Governor Jindal after receiving unanimous support from members in the House and Senate. The package of legislation was called one of the largest-ever aimed at tackling domestic violence in Louisiana (Woodward, 2014). In a statement after the signing, Governor Jindal said domestic violence "has plagued our society for too long. Sadly, too many victims of domestic violence live throughout Louisiana" (Woodward, 2014).

Summary

A comparison of five gun control policies suggest the legislation became law via multiple routes. In the problem stream, local focusing events after the Sandy Hook shooting prepared the stream for coupling. In the politics stream, a recent election provided gun control supporters with new legislative power in Colorado, while the efforts of domestic violence-focused advocacy coalitions and political entrepreneurs led pro-gun interests to remain neutral on the legislation in South Carolina, Washington, Louisiana, and Wisconsin. The policy solutions stream remained relatively constant, with domestic violence prevention advocates and other experts focusing on laws that restricted domestic abusers' access to firearms.

However, one clear pattern emerges: domestic violence prevention advocates played a prominent role in four of the five cases. Furthermore, only in cases where domestic violence-focused advocates led the advocacy coalition and served as policy entrepreneurs did the NRA remain "neutral" on the bill. This finding suggests that domestic violence prevention advocates – rather than gun control groups – may be better suited to mollify powerful gun

lobbies in pro-gun states. Thus, political pressure from advocates for domestic violence may increase the probability that a new law will pass.

In the next section, I develop this theory further by comparing the response of gun rights groups to domestic violence coalitions and gun control-focused coalitions. In doing so, I document the variation in the gun lobby's response to new legislation depending on the identity of the advocates pressing for change. While the analysis does not demonstrate causality, it suggests that the prominence of domestic violence prevention advocates increased the viability of laws in states with influential gun lobbies by making gun rights groups more open to compromise.

The Relationship Between Advocacy Coalition and Gun Control Policy

Application of the MSF allows policy researchers to identify the pivotal moments in the policymaking process that led to policy change. However, this analysis is mainly descriptive as it cannot determine whether factors that appear in the MSF are unique to positive cases and absent in negative cases. To better understand which factors increase the probability of policy change and why, researchers must compare positive *and* negative cases (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). In this section, I investigate why domestic violence focused advocacy coalitions may have increased the probability of gun policy passage by comparing the positive cases with the pathways of two policies that failed, one in Arizona and the other in Rhode Island.

I selected these two states through a targeted selection process to create an informative comparison between the five cases outlined above and two states where policies failed to pass. Of the 36 states where lawmakers considered new domestic violence related firearms regulation, 16 did not pass a new bill. Of those 16, I excluded four (Maryland, Hawaii, New Jersey, and Illinois) because these states, unlike the core case states, had higher than average gun regulations in 2012 (according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence). I then selected two state cases – Arizona and Rhode Island – from the remaining

12 based because key informants from both states provided significant detail about the policy making process.

Arizona and Rhode Island are like the selected cases because lawmakers proposed new domestic violence related firearms legislation even though lawmakers from the states typically eschew gun regulations. The policies would have strengthened gun regulations and the policies were like those passed in the five cases outlined above. However, in both states, gun rights activists fought against the laws and successfully prevented the policy from passing. Thus, these two states represent a “typical” process that a new gun regulation goes through in states that typically do not pass gun regulation. Through this comparison, I investigate whether elements present in cases where policy passed are absent in states where the policy failed; isolating the factors that may have smoothed the path to policy change.

With this comparison, I further develop the theory that the response of gun rights groups is related to the composition of advocacy groups pressing for policy change. I find that when domestic violence coalitions worked alone, gun rights groups were less likely to oppose the legislation. However, when gun control-focused coalitions advocated for change, gun rights groups leveraged their political resources to oppose the policy. Furthermore, advocates anticipated this response and, in some cases, proactively shielded gun control groups from public view. In these cases, gun control groups worked behind the scenes to provide support for domestic violence coalitions. I call this approach “strategic absence” and suggest that this tactic may be particularly useful to interest groups working in highly polarized policy areas like gun control.

Antagonizing the Opposition: Gun Control Versus Gun Rights

Scholars have long held that proponents of new legislation must consider whether their advocacy strategies may “antagonize the opposition”(Kollman, 1998). If a group provokes opposition groups, they may need to expend greater resources to overcome that opposition and, ultimately, risk losing the battle if the opposition is powerful. Thus, while

“expanding the scope of conflict” (Schattschneider, 1960) and bringing in more supporters can be beneficial to the group with less power, the case of domestic violence related firearms legislation demonstrates that coalitions must consider both the benefits and risks of expansion (Baumgartner & Leech, 1998; Schattschneider, 1960). In policy areas where opposition groups are influential, coalition leaders must think strategically about which groups to include in their advocacy efforts.

In the case of domestic violence related firearms policies, gun rights groups demonstrated high levels of hostility towards new legislation in Arizona and Rhode Island, where gun violence prevention groups led the advocacy coalitions for change. This response likely stems from their fear of allowing a gun control group to claim a legislative victory. This fear is similar to the “slippery slope” argument used by gun rights groups to oppose myriad gun regulations, arguing that the passage of one gun law leads to another, until ultimately all guns are confiscated by the government (The Trace, 2016). The logic of this argument is that a legislative victory for gun control groups could prompt advocates of gun control to provide increasing investments in the movement, triggering a wave of new regulations in years to come.

The NRA’s public statements about Everytown for Gun Safety (also referred to as Everytown), the largest gun control group during the time of this study, illustrate the NRA’s fear of this “slippery slope.” Founded by Michael Bloomberg in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, Everytown deeply antagonized NRA members and leadership. In April 2014, at the organization’s annual convention, the NRA Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA) Executive Director Chris Cox told attendees that Mr. Bloomberg was an “arrogant hypocrite” and that he should “stay the hell out of our gun cabinets”(McDaniel, Griner, & Krebs, 2014).

The organization spoke publicly about fears that state wins by Everytown could allow Bloomberg to claim the political winds were shifting toward gun regulation. NRA spokesman Andrew Arulanandam told reporters in December of 2014 that “[Everytown’s] approach is to

go into states where it's easy to pass something and claim national momentum”(Schouten, 2014). Arulanandam noted that Bloomberg’s monetary resources made him a real threat to the organization: “We have \$38 billion reasons to take Mike Bloomberg seriously...his money has exponential reach" (Schouten, 2014).

Indeed, an analysis of domestic violence related firearms policies in Arizona and Rhode Island suggest that the NRA and gun rights groups saw new domestic violence related gun regulation as part of a broader effort to pass gun control policies. Lawmakers in Arizona considered but failed to pass a new domestic violence related firearms bill advocated for by Everytown and a coalition of gun control supporters (Associated Press, 2013; Boehm, Ferris, & News 21, 2014). The sponsor of the bill, Senator Chad Campbell (D), stated that despite the substantial resources Everytown brought to the table, “politics were an issue from day one” and the NRA refused to negotiate with the coalition (Campbell, 2016).

A similar scenario played out in Rhode Island. There, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence and Everytown played prominent roles in pressing for new domestic violence related firearms policies. In response, the NRA and other local gun groups in the state called upon their supporters to protest the proposed legislation. In their call to action, the NRA clarified what the organization believed was the intent of the legislation:

The stakes could not be higher for the Rhode Island firearms community. Anti-gun groups have co-opted domestic violence organizations simply to notch a victory that they can use as momentum for their larger gun ban agenda. It's absolutely vital that Rhode Island gun owners make their voice heard on this legislation (NRA-ILA, 2015a)

This statement indicates that the NRA viewed domestic violence legislation as fuel for the growing momentum of gun control organizations. The quote also suggests that domestic violence prevention organizations (“domestic violence organizations” above) are not a direct enemy of the gun rights movement, but merely “co-opted” by the gun control groups. Thus, this statement illustrates gun rights groups’ fear of gun control groups as well as their overall view that domestic violence prevention groups are separate from the movement for gun

control. The next section investigates the political implication of gun rights groups' view of domestic violence prevention groups compared to gun control groups.

Mollifying the Opposition: The Strategic Absence of Gun Control Groups

Compared to gun control groups, the NRA and other gun groups exhibited less political aggression towards legislation when it was primarily backed by domestic violence prevention advocates. In Washington, Wisconsin, Louisiana, and South Carolina, the NRA and other gun groups remained open to discussions with the advocates for change. Importantly, these laws were nearly identical (when first proposed) to laws in Colorado, Arizona, and Rhode Island. In Louisiana, the United Way of Southeast Louisiana and the Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence led a successful campaign to change gun regulation. The coalition pressed lawmakers to pass a new law barring convicted abusers of owning or obtaining a firearm. The state of Louisiana has historically been one of the most gun friendly in the country (Andrews, 2015). However, the NRA promised to remain neutral on the legislation if advocates and sponsor Rep. Helena Moreno (D) agreed to some concessions, including stripping a provision that prevented “dating partners” charged with abuse or battery from owning firearms (McGaughy, 2014a).

A person with knowledge of the NRA's political strategy suggested that the organization respected the coalition leaders in Louisiana and was eager to come to a compromise. Referring to some of the protests staged by domestic violence prevention advocates in Louisiana while the bill was under debate, this interviewee said, “it is hard not to be moved” and expressed “respect” for what the “women were doing down there” (Anonymous Interviewee, 2018). Thus, while the NRA leveraged its political power to amend the legislation, the group's cooperative working relationship with advocates in Louisiana differed from its antagonistic attitude toward gun violence prevention groups in Arizona and Rhode Island.

Testimony from critical actors in the campaign for gun policy change in South Carolina and Washington provides further evidence that the involvement of gun violence prevention groups could incite gun rights groups and jeopardize new legislation. A leader in the domestic violence prevention coalition in South Carolina discussed the experience of working with gun control groups to pass a domestic violence related firearms law. First, the group benefited from the monetary resources that well-funded gun control groups could bring to the table (Hula, 1999). The leader of the South Carolina Coalition stressed that the organization was grateful for the resources gun control groups provided and noted that, “the national [gun control groups] can be very helpful... they have research, and they have resources” and provided “unrestricted income for the additional lobbying it would take” (Anonymous Interviewee, 2018). Thus, national organizations like Everytown expanded the capabilities of smaller local domestic violence prevention groups.

However, the extra support came with risks. The possibility that gun control groups were behind the push for new legislation threatened the passage of the bill in South Carolina. Some pro-gun lawmakers suggested that the bill was “Bloomberg’s Bill” to undermine its progress. A leader of the domestic violence coalition in South Carolina noted that, “Larry Martin got called out a lot about this being ‘Bloomberg’s bill’” (Anonymous Interviewee, 2018). This connection was viewed by the advocate and supportive lawmakers as harmful to the prospect of passing new domestic abuse and firearms policies.

The connection between Bloomberg/Everytown and Senate Bill 3 threatened to undermine support from pro-gun lawmakers. South Carolina Senator Kevin Johnson (D) defended the bill from detractors in a Senate hearing, referring to the hypothesized links between the gun control groups and the bill:

I know there's been a lot of talk about a lot of the emails we are receiving from the Bloomberg group. I have received a lot of what I call foreign emails, but I've also received a lot of emails and letters and have had phone calls, and I've had conversations with who I would call ‘real people’ (Senator Johnson, Congressional Testimony, South Carolina, February 25, 2015).

“Foreign emails” are presumably those sent by members of gun control groups and/or individuals who do not reside in South Carolina, while “real people” are presumably the lawmaker’s constituents. The “foreign emails” sparked hostility in the legislature among pro-gun lawmakers who saw them as evidence that supporting the bill would be tantamount to supporting gun violence prevention groups, and the political goals of Michael Bloomberg and gun control advocates more broadly.

Senator Johnson’s comments suggest that lawmakers’ objections to the legislation did not center on the bill in question. Instead, lawmakers objected explicitly to the advocacy organization affiliated with the legislation. However, the controversy caused by Bloomberg’s perceived engagement did not ultimately derail negotiations between gun rights and domestic violence prevention advocates. After controversy mounted, domestic violence prevention advocates insisted that Everytown stay in the background. Everytown complied and remained invisible (“strategically absent”) for the remainder of the campaign, providing monetary resources but little public support. Consequently, despite early objections, the NRA agreed to work with lawmakers and advocates to craft a bill that the group felt they could support (Long, 2015a). Ultimately, lawmakers passed a version of the bill without including all NRA concessions. However, the NRA still agreed to remain “neutral” on the legislation (NRA-ILA, 2015b).

In Washington State, Representative Rodger Goodman (D) also confirmed the risk of backlash that advocates faced by associating a gun regulation with gun control groups. Throughout his career, Representative Goodman sought to address domestic violence including gun possession among abusers. He noted that domestic violence is not a partisan issue in Washington State, “There is no partisan divide over how to address domestic violence” (Goodman, 2017). However, according to Representative Goodman, gun regulation is exceptionally controversial. “A [provision in a bill] will be amended if it ...is controversial [and] firearm bills are controversial” (Goodman, 2017).

When the Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence came to Representative Goodman with a new domestic violence related firearms bill in 2013, he knew that involving gun violence prevention groups could undermine the possibility of the bill's passage. "The firearms bill was characterized very intentionally as a domestic violence bill" and not a firearms bill (Goodman, 2016). To maintain that characterization, Goodman suggested, advocates needed to limit the types of organizations involved in supporting the bill: "I told the Alliance for Gun Responsibility, who have brought these initiatives here, 'Do not promote this, do not talk about it, do not mention me'" (Goodman, 2016).

The leaders of the gun violence prevention coalition working in the state cooperated. Goodman recalls, "...they understood. Because that would aggravate the NRA, so it had to be under the radar" (Goodman, 2016). The NRA and pro-gun lawmakers who supported Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence would be unlikely to support the bill if gun violence prevention groups became involved in the policy process. Thus, in South Carolina and Washington, pro-gun lawmakers' support for the legislation hinged on which organizations were backing the bill and whether those groups included gun violence prevention organizations.

In South Carolina and Washington, advocates for domestic violence related firearms policies believed that the pro-gun lawmakers and the NRA would respond negatively to the presence of gun violence prevention groups. The fact that the NRA and pro-gun lawmakers resisted supporting similar policies in Colorado, Rhode Island and Arizona, when gun control groups were more active in promoting domestic violence related firearms policies, suggests that the advocates' concerns were well founded. Recognizing that gun control groups' presence could undermine the progress of the bill, larger gun control groups sometimes worked "behind the scenes" to provide monetary support but refrained from taking a public role in the debate. This "strategic absence" on the part of gun control groups represents a unique and unexplored interest group strategy. Future research should explore this tactic's

use, particularly in other polarized policy areas where opposition groups are powerful, making the presence of some interest groups that threaten opposition groups a liability for the coalition pressing for change.

A Divergent Case: Colorado

The passage of new domestic violence related firearms bills in Colorado – despite the visibility of gun control groups in the advocacy for domestic violence related firearms policies – suggests that my theory does not apply to all cases. However, the pathway to policy change in Colorado also suggests that this case does not undermine the theory discussed above, but rather identifies some limitations on the theory’s potential explanatory power. The unique influence of domestic violence focused coalitions is likely less important when state legislators are not as influenced by the power of the NRA and other gun-rights groups. In Colorado, lawmakers did not aim to find common ground with pro-gun lawmakers or the NRA but instead were able to push legislation through based on their majority in the state legislature. In this way, the Colorado case documents an additional constellation of factors than can lead to the passage of gun regulation in states with active gun rights lobbies.

However, the Colorado case also clearly illustrates the risks to gun control advocates of moving forward with a gun control bill in a state with a powerful gun rights lobby, without the buy-in of gun rights organizations. Within months of passing the gun control legislation, two Democratic lawmakers who helped pass the bill were recalled in a special election that pitted gun rights activists against gun control supporters. Despite spending significantly more than gun rights groups, gun control activists lost the battle, and Senate President John Morse and Senator Angel Giron (D) lost their seats to pro-gun Republicans (Healy, 2013). Thus, while gun control groups may be able to push legislation through in states with powerful gun lobbies, they risk losing important allies in recall or regular elections as a result.

Summary

In the cases I studied, the presence of gun control groups as prominent actors for change drew backlash from gun rights organizations. However, in four out of five cases, domestic violence prevention advocates were ultimately able to elicit cooperation from gun rights groups. In states where gaining support from gun rights groups is often essential for policy passage, advocacy for the policy by domestic violence prevention groups, instead of gun control groups, increased the likelihood that gun control would pass. The evidence suggests that gun rights groups feared gun control groups' political victory while feeling less politically threatened by domestic violence prevention advocates. In some cases, gun control groups acknowledged this fact and sought to support legislation by remaining strategically absent from the public debate, providing monetary resources without expecting a public acknowledgment of their efforts.

Importantly, the findings do not confirm that domestic violence groups, specifically, increased the likelihood of policy change relative to other advocacy coalitions that do not include gun control groups; only that the absence of gun control groups may have softened gun rights groups' objections to legislation. Future research will investigate whether variation in opposition groups' responses is similar with respect to other types of advocacy coalitions, such as parent or student-led campaigns. A study of cases where domestic violence-focused coalitions failed would also shed light on the conditions necessary for these advocates to succeed in passing new domestic violence related firearms policies.

Policy Entrepreneurs, Problem Definition, and Coalition Building

If the prominence of domestic violence prevention advocates in advocacy coalitions played an important role in passing domestic violence related firearms policies in states with influential gun lobbies, what explains the formation of these coalitions in the first place? Why, in some states, did a coalition led by domestic violence prevention advocates form, while in others gun violence prevention advocates led the coalition? An examination of the origins of each alliance across the seven states suggests that the initial problem definition –

typically drawn from a focusing event – determined the type of advocacy coalition formed to press for policy change. Thus, the trajectory from original problem definition to coalition formation and ultimately to policy change follows theories of “path dependency.” This theory suggests that conditions or factors that shape the political process in early stages can have long-term implications (Pierson, 2000).

The term “problem definition” describes a process in which a problem that exists in the world is considered amenable to human intervention. To make this leap, citizens, activists, or policymakers construct a causal story that identifies perpetrators and victims (Stone, 1989; Weiss, 1989; Edelman, 1988; Kingdon, 1984). However, defining an issue does not necessarily mean that lawmakers will agree on the appropriate solution. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) note that “[r]aising a problem to the public agenda does not imply any particular solution...the trick for a policy entrepreneur is to ensure that the solution he or she favors is adopted once a given problem has emerged on the [legislative] agenda”(Baumgartner & Jones, 1991, pp. 28-29). The person who constructs this causal story also often seeks to determine the solution to that problem. To use Kingdon’s terms, this person is often a policy entrepreneur.

This study finds that the policy entrepreneur who defined the problem and linked it to a policy solution also played a role in defining the advocacy coalition that pressed lawmakers to pass the legislation. Thus, not only did the policy entrepreneur link the problem with the policy, she or he also linked the problem with an advocacy coalition. Sometimes these efforts were deliberate with entrepreneurs developing an advocacy coalition to align with the politics of the state. However, most policy entrepreneurs reacted to a focusing event, taking advantage of attention to the problem of abusers with guns or gun violence more generally and forming a coalition around that focusing event.

In four of the seven cases studied, domestic violence advocates emerged as policy entrepreneurs who linked a focusing event to a policy solution related to domestic violence

prevention. These domestic violence focused policy entrepreneurs also formed the coalitions of supporters who were primarily concerned with the problem of domestic violence. In the other three cases, gun violence prevention advocates linked a focusing event to a broad set of policy solutions, including domestic violence related firearms policies. In these cases, gun violence prevention groups led the coalition with other gun control supporters, and domestic violence prevention groups played a smaller role. However, one case, Washington, provides a counter example where domestic violence prevention advocates linked their policy solution to a mass shooting that did not center on domestic violence. This case illustrates the importance of policy entrepreneurs' agency in this process.

Domestic Violence as a Central Problem

The policy process in Wisconsin and Louisiana begin with a focusing event that highlighted the risk of firearms in domestic violence situations. On October 21, 2012, a gunman opened fire inside a day spa in Brookfield, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The man, identified as Radcliffe Haughton, killed his estranged wife who was an employee at the spa along and two other women who also worked there (Yaccino & Davey, 2012). Importantly, Radcliffe's estranged wife, Zina Haughton, had been granted a four-year restraining order only two days before the attack that should have prevented Radcliffe from possessing a firearm (Mungin, 2012). The inability of law enforcement to protect Zina heightened awareness of gaps in existing laws.

Zina Haughton and her colleagues' death illustrated the importance of state intervention to address domestic homicide and firearms. As experts on the issue of domestic violence prevention, End Abuse Wisconsin led the coalition to develop and pass new legislation to address domestic abusers' access to firearms. While gun violence prevention groups provided some monetary resources, the domestic violence coalition organized committee testimony, granted media interviews, and worked with lawmakers to draft the legislation (Mungin, 2012; Ramde, 2014). The debate in the state legislature ended with the

passage of three bills related to domestic violence, one of which pertained to gun regulation (Office of Scott Walker, 2014).

In Louisiana, advocates were moved to action by a focusing event that also illustrated a causal link between domestic violence and firearms. On December 26, 2013, Ben Freeman killed his wife, Denise Freeman, before killing his former mother-in-law, Susan “Pixie” Gouaux, and wounding her husband, Councilman Louis Phillip Gouaux, and one of their daughters, Andrea Gouaux (The Associated Press, 2013). The murder garnered some media attention, but also prompted Charmaine Caccioppi, Vice President of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, to become involved in a campaign to change domestic violence related firearms legislation in Louisiana (Sport & Caccioppi, 2016). Susan “Pixie” Gouaux was a close friend of Caccioppi, and her death deeply affected Caccioppi.

Shortly after the shooting, Caccioppi contacted her friend and colleague, Kim Sport, who was the Public Policy Director for the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, to discuss policy options that might prevent domestic homicide. Sport was recently told by her sister that her husband of ten years had been abusive during their marriage. Sport’s sister wanted an immediate divorce, but she learned that victims of domestic violence were required to wait 180 days before a divorce would be granted (McGaughy, 2014b). The similar timing of Caccioppi’s and Sport’s experience with domestic violence led to a joint commitment to address both firearms and divorce waiting periods through new legislation. Domestic violence prevention was the thread that linked the interests of both women and this focus ensured that the central issue at stake in the ensuing campaign was domestic violence prevention, not gun violence prevention more broadly.

The cases in Wisconsin and Louisiana underline the power of focusing events in defining the problem and, consequently, the advocacy coalition that springs up around it. In South Carolina, the domestic violence-focused coalition formed in response to different stimuli, however the process was similar to the process in Wisconsin and Louisiana. In 2012,

the publication of a series by the local newspaper, *The Post and Courier*, entitled “Till Death Do Us Part,” drew attention to the plight of South Carolinian women suffering, and at times dying, in abusive relationships (Pardue et al., 2014).

The series acknowledged the importance of firearms in domestic homicides, but the larger point of the series was the problem of domestic violence. The significant public attention given to the series, which ultimately won a Pulitzer Prize, smoothed the way for legislation to include provisions that addressed the relationship between guns and domestic abuse. In response to this publication, domestic violence prevention advocates, who worked with *The Post and Courier* to develop the article, became the policy entrepreneurs responsible for building a coalition and identifying policy solutions for the problem identified in the series.

One exception is the policy process in Washington State. In Washington, the Sandy Hook shooting prompted domestic violence prevention advocates to press for policy change instead of a specific domestic violence related event (Huang, 2017). The Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence had spent years pressing for new gun restrictions on abusers. In the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shooting, the group decided to press for new gun regulations again, this time successfully (Minard, 2014). This counter example suggests that a domestic violence focusing event is not required for domestic violence prevention advocates to emerge as policy entrepreneurs but, as the previous cases suggest, it may make it more likely.

Gun Violence as a Central Problem

In Colorado, Arizona, and Rhode Island, advocacy coalitions also formed in the wake of compelling focusing events. However, in these cases, gun violence prevention advocates argued that domestic violence was a facet of a more extensive gun violence problem, instead of maintaining that gun violence was a facet of a larger domestic violence problem. In Colorado, a mass shooting prompted gun control advocates to propose a series of laws related

to gun violence prevention, including a new policy related to domestic violence and firearms. In the summer of 2012, James Holmes entered a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, killing 12 people and wounding 70 (Hickenlooper, 2016; Tory, 2015). It was the deadliest gun massacre in Colorado after the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School. Gun control groups drew on this focusing event to develop a causal story that stressed the importance of removing firearms from dangerous individuals. While domestic abusers were considered one of those dangerous people, they were only one subset of people who needed to be prevented from accessing guns.

In Arizona, gun control advocates call for new gun regulations, including one that restricted domestic abusers' access to firearms, came after two mass shootings. The first took place in 2011 in Tucson, Arizona, when a gunman attempted to kill Representative Gabrielle Giffords (D) at a public event. The shooter gravely wounded Representative Giffords and killed six other people in the crowd. The second was the Sandy Hook shooting (Boehm & Ferris, 2014). Both focusing events illustrated the danger associated with limited regulations on firearms, and advocates for new legislation asserted that the state had an obligation to protect the public from dangerous peoples' access to such weapons. Like Colorado, the dominant policy problem advanced in Arizona was the problem of gun violence; domestic violence with guns was a subset of that larger issue.

In Rhode Island, advocates for new regulation were also prompted to act by the Sandy Hook shooting. The proximity and similarities between Connecticut and Rhode Island made the event particularly unsettling to some residents of the state. Some of those individuals joined two newly formed gun control groups, Moms Demand Action or the Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence (RICAGV). These groups came into existence with the goal of passing new gun regulations that would prevent an incident like the one at Sandy Hook from happening again. Domestic violence policy emerged as one of a series of policy proposals the groups took an interest in under this umbrella (Wesley, 2017).

Summary

In the cases studied, the composition of advocacy coalitions developed in response to the definition of the problem (either domestic violence or gun violence) established early in the policy process. Typically, the problem definition grew from a focusing event, although in two cases a local news organization and a strategic effort by domestic violence prevention advocates elevated the issue to the state political agenda. In the wake of a focusing event, policy entrepreneurs linked the event with a policy solution they favored. These results underline the importance of the policy entrepreneur in establishing the initial problem definition, policy solution, and the advocacy coalition that enters the political arena.

The nature of the focusing event or other phenomenon that defined the problem determined whether domestic violence or gun violence advocates were more likely to become policy entrepreneurs. In cases where domestic violence emerged as a central component of a focusing event, domestic violence prevention advocates emerged as policy entrepreneurs, identifying a policy solution and building a campaign to pass new legislation. However, leaders from national and some local gun control organizations took leadership over advocacy efforts if the need for broader gun regulation – not just regulation related to domestic violence – was central to the event. Domestic violence groups were less likely to jump into the fray when focusing events did not feature domestic violence specifically.

However, in one case (Washington), a shooting that was unrelated to intimate partner violence (the Sandy Hook shooting) led domestic violence prevention advocates to link the problem to their preferred policy initiative. This suggests that policy entrepreneurs can create causal stories from a variety of events in ways that link the event to their preferred policy solutions (Kingdon, 1984; Stone, 1989). However, policy entrepreneurs may be *more likely* to enter the political fray when an issue they are intimately acquainted with emerges as a central political issue, making this theory probabilistic not deterministic. Furthermore, policy entrepreneurs are often active participants in determining how and when to link a policy to a

policy window, however, events also play a strong role in determining policy entrepreneurs' behavior.

The relationship between problem definition, the composition of advocacy groups, and the passage of domestic violence related firearms policies also provides one explanation for why the Sandy Hook shooting did not spark the passage of a range of gun control policies, including those related to domestic violence. Gun control groups led the charge to link the mass shooting with policy solutions, and consequently led the advocacy coalition fighting for change. However, if the backlash prompted by gun control advocates can undermine the passage of domestic violence related firearms policies, it follows that advocacy coalitions formed in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting might be less successful than alliances formed in the wake of a domestic violence-related focusing event. Advocates in Washington provide one exception, as Sandy Hook prompted their efforts. However, the group strategically avoided public interaction with gun control groups to increase the likelihood of policy passage.

Why Coalitions Stay Apart

This study provides evidence that building a domestic violence focused advocacy coalition increased the probability of policy passage in historically pro-gun states. Domestic violence prevention groups, responding to domestic violence focusing events or other stimuli, successfully mollified the NRA across four of seven cases, while three cases illustrate the backlash from gun rights groups when gun violence prevention alliances pressed for change. However, research on interest group politics suggests that developing a broad coalition can increase the probability of policy passage (Baumgartner, Berry, Hojnacki, Leech, & Kimball, 2009; Schattschneider, 1960). As Schattschneider (1960) points out, political conflict consists of a winner and a loser, and losers in the battle could benefit from "expanding the scope of conflict." Conflict expansion refers to increasing the number of advocates for your side of the debate to overpower the opposition.

In the case of domestic violence related firearms legislation, Schattschneider's theory would predict that those who are often on the losing side of the gun debate (those in favor of increased regulation) would be well served by coming together and unifying their efforts. However, as this study demonstrates, gun violence prevention groups and domestic violence prevention groups sometimes worked separately in pro-gun states. Why did these groups stay separate if they had mutual interests? One reason, as the analysis above suggests, is that advocates anticipated a negative backlash from bringing gun violence prevention groups into the coalition. However, additional barriers prevented a unified alliance. Interviews with leaders of gun violence prevention groups and domestic violence prevention groups suggest that these organizations see the benefits of working together, but face obstacles to successfully uniting forces.

Interviews with leaders of national gun violence prevention groups suggest that groups are eager to cultivate a positive working relationship with domestic violence prevention advocates.⁶ One study participant associated with a leading gun violence prevention group, who is familiar with the organization's strategy, said the groups had established weekly conference calls to discuss political strategy (Anonymous Interviewee, 2017). In 2016, the National Network to End Domestic Violence conference featured the executive director of a well-known gun control organization. In the speech, the executive director stressed the importance of domestic violence prevention advocates on the ground in the fight for gun control, and urged attendants to stay involved, "I call together the power of this community... [domestic homicide] is a tragedy we can fix" (Thomas, 2016). The leader

⁶ I focus here on the relationship between national gun control groups like Everytown and the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence instead of local groups like Colorado Ceasefire and WAVE in Wisconsin because these groups did not come up in interviews, media coverage, or committee hearing materials in the majority of cases. When the groups did come up, they often played a supporting role to either national gun control groups or local domestic violence coalitions. One exception is Rhode Island, where the local gun control group, Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence (RICAGV), played a significant role in the process. Further investigation is needed to fully understand the role of the less publicly covered local gun groups in the state legislative process.

also noted domestic violence prevention advocates' unique power in state legislatures, "it is because of you that they even listen to us" (Thomas, 2016).

However, differences between national gun control groups and local domestic violence prevention groups put pressure on their alliance. The two groups brought different strengths to the coalition. National gun control groups brought monetary resources while local domestic violence groups brought local relationships with policymakers and journalists as well as legitimacy in the community. While both resources were critical to the coalitions' goal of passing new regulations, domestic violence prevention groups often feared that the monetary resources of larger gun control groups would give gun control leaders more influence when the coalition made decisions.

Research on coalition building finds that the group with greater monetary resources typically leads the coalition while other groups work according to that groups' larger plan (Hula, 1999). Domestic violence prevention advocates expressed their anxiety about this possibility in interviews. Speaking about interactions between domestic violence and gun violence groups across the country, one domestic violence prevention advocate noted that she struggled to make her local expertise heard, "the working relationship [often] involved someone coming into the state to work on [a policy], you know, not actually understanding like how ... the implementation of protection order law works in their state" (Anonymous Interviewee, 2017).

These comments suggest that, despite their key role in the policy process, many domestic violence advocates feared that their opinions and expertise would be overlooked. This anxiety was likely driven by the fact that the monetary resources of gun control groups created a perceived power imbalance that made domestic violence prevention advocates feel vulnerable to pressure from gun control groups. After noting how grateful she was for the monetary resources provided by a gun control group, one advocate gave a specific example of a time she felt she could not say "no" to the gun control groups:

They would write op-eds and I would rewrite them.... there was one instance where they wanted to do something, and I pushed back and pushed back and finally I let it go, and I got yelled at by a legislator... [the gun control group] could not hear my sense of this is not the way to go (Anonymous Interviewee, 2016).

This interviewee's testimony highlights the tension smaller coalition members face when entering a coalition. While the resources of larger groups are invaluable to lobbying and pressing for policy change, smaller groups may feel less able to express their views when the organizations' strategies come into conflict.

Summary

Advocates for new gun regulation in pro-gun states held similar goals but working together required careful negotiations. Resources from larger gun control groups gave advocacy coalitions much needed funds and resources. However, as a smaller and less affluent member of the coalition, domestic violence prevention advocates sometimes felt that their policy and political expertise were overlooked by gun control groups. The imbalance made domestic violence prevention groups wary of working with gun control organizations despite the resources these groups could bring to the table. In sum, while both groups held similar legislative goals, tensions arose because of an inherent imbalance of power that can occur when one member of a coalition has greater monetary resources than the other.

Discussion

In the United States, gun deaths occur at a rate that is twenty-five times higher than that of other developed countries (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016). However, legislation targeted toward regulating firearms often fails to pass due to the political strength of the gun rights lobby. Even in the wake of the Sandy Hook shooting, political commentators pointed out that, once again, lawmakers failed to enact stronger gun laws that might prevent the next massacre (Lochhead, 2015; Scheller, 2014; Stein, 2013). However, this study presents a different picture of gun regulation in the three years after the Sandy Hook shooting. While lawmakers continued to resist passing gun laws that strengthened background checks or

banned assault weapons, state legislators from 20 states passed 26 new laws that barred domestic abusers from owning firearms.

A comparative analysis of domestic violence related firearms policies in seven states reveals a new explanation for why domestic violence related firearms regulations passed in some states but not in others. When gun control groups, such as Everytown for Gun Safety, took a prominent role in the advocacy coalition pressing for new regulation, gun rights groups were more likely to actively oppose these measures. Because gun rights groups are powerful in many state legislatures, their opposition to a new law increased the probability that the law would fail. However, policies backed primarily by domestic violence prevention advocates received comparatively less resistance from pro-gun groups.

One explanation for this behavior is that gun rights groups are acutely aware of risk to their political future if gun control groups begin to achieve success in passing gun control laws. Supporters of gun control policy are less likely to become active in the movement if they believe there is little chance of their actions leading to policy change. The political power of the gun rights movement has created an aura of political invincibility that undermines gun control organizations' efforts to recruit and maintain members (Goss, 2006). However, if gun control groups begin to win legislative battles, Americans who support stronger gun control laws may enter the political arena in greater numbers, threatening the political power of established gun rights groups.

Theoretical Contributions and Future Research

This study provides a fresh illustration of the importance of advocates' strategies in the policy making process. Advocates for domestic violence related firearms legislation drew on existing circumstances and resources to press for policy change. However, ultimately, it was what they *did* – how they organized their coalition and allocated resources – that differentiated successful coalitions from advocates with similar goals. Specifically, the early actions of policy entrepreneurs shaped the advocacy coalition pressing for policy change. The

results reiterate what established research demonstrates: the outcome of the policy making process is not just a matter of contextual factors (e.g., political party power, indicators, elections) but the product of strategic decisions made by leaders of advocacy coalitions (McCammon, 2012).

One such strategy is strategic absence. Strategic absence describes a political tactic where, in contexts where political opponents are exceptionally strong, advocacy coalitions hide some groups from public political battles to avoid backlash from opposition groups. This study demonstrates that coalitions pressing for new gun regulation sought to minimize their public relationship with gun control groups to increase the probability that gun rights groups would remain neutral during the legislative battle. While I present a new name for this tactic here, it is not a new phenomenon. Interest group coalitions are incentivized to publicly separate themselves from more radical groups with similar policy goals to avoid “antagonizing the opposition” (Kollman, 1998). For example, while they may share policy interests, President Trump has distanced himself from White Supremacists likely, in part, to avoid antagonizing the opposition (Sink, Talev, & John, 2017).

However, strategic absence is a difficult concept to study because, as the name suggests, it is in the interest of the groups using the tactic to keep the relationship between the organizations secret. Despite these difficulties, this study demonstrates the value of studying strategic absence to understand outcomes of the policy process. Moreover, the study of strategic absence is particularly relevant to policy areas that are highly polarized and characterized by a powerful opposition group. As politics become increasingly polarized, strategic absence may also become increasingly important. Future research should investigate other instances in which advocacy coalitions hide groups members from view and whether this tactic is used to avoid backlash from a powerful opposition. Such research is necessary to understand how widespread the tactic is and how useful strategic absence is in other policy areas.

In addition, the study of strategic absence has implications for the health of democratic institutions. A fundamental element of democratic societies is a well-informed citizenry. However, citizens often rely on interest groups that they trust to provide them with information about how to vote or how to participate in the policy making process. Secret relationships between actors could compromise citizens' ability to grasp interest groups' long-term goals and policy agendas.

Another fruitful line of research would be to evaluate how often policy entrepreneurs strategically link advocacy organizations to a policy or whether this choice is largely based on external factors. This study revealed that in most cases, policy entrepreneurs responded to focusing events and defined an advocacy coalition around that event. However, in Washington, advocates strategically defined their coalition as domestic violence focused without a domestic violence related focusing event. The variation across cases suggests that further investigation is necessary to understand when policy entrepreneurs take an active role in deciding to strategically build coalitions instead of reacting to a local focusing event or other external factors.

Policy Implications

Gun violence remains a pressing problem for American citizens and the lawmakers who represent them. Since the Sandy Hook shooting, there have been 68 shootings (defined as an incident of gun fire that happened immediately before, during or just after classes) on K-12 campuses; these shootings bringing the horror of gun violence into the national spotlight (Cox & Rich, 2018). Deaths in intimate partner homicides are often less well publicized, but they are far more common. Moreover, evidence suggests that these deaths are preventable by state regulation (Raissian, 2016; Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). Compared to other countries with stricter gun laws, women in the United States are eleven times more likely to be murdered. This difference can be largely attributed to the difference in intimate partner deaths perpetrated with firearms across countries (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016).

While most Americans support more gun regulation than currently exists (Doherty, 2015), lawmakers are hesitant to pass new bills because they fear retribution from the NRA and other gun rights groups (Cook & Goss, 2014). The power of the NRA persists because of the organization's access to monetary resources and the political engagement of its grassroots supporters. In response, gun control supporters have sought to go "toe to toe" with the NRA by accumulating monetary resources and engaging gun control supporters. In the long run, gun control groups hope to wield greater political influence than the NRA, and demand that lawmakers support their policy goals instead of the goals of gun rights supporters.

However, in the short term, this study suggests that an alternative advocacy approach may be more effective. Gun rights groups are threatened by any visible sign that the gun control movement is gaining strength. This fear is warranted because every victory for the gun control movement, however small, can increase engagement among supporters (Goss, 2006). So long as the gun rights movement and affiliated groups hold greater power than gun control groups, activism from this coalition will be employed to effectively derail new legislation.

Thus, strategies that place non-gun control focused groups at the center of legislative battles for change may increase the likelihood of short- and long-term gains for the movement. In the short term, lives will be saved as guns are more effectively removed from individuals who threaten the lives of those around them. In the long term, the gun control movement will build allies that feel included by the movement, instead of sidelined, and small victories achieved will increase supporters' belief that engaging in political activities will result in greater restrictions on guns in the United States.

Chapter 2: Partisanship Disarmed: Can Framing Help Diffuse the Partisan Debate Over Guns?

Introduction

Firearms kill Americans at a rate that far exceeds that of other developed countries (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016), yet lawmakers rarely pass legislation that would tighten gun regulation (Goss, 2006). One explanation for lawmakers' inaction is that the dominant political parties, Republican and Democrat, have increasingly aligned with opposing sides of the gun debate (Cook & Goss, 2014). Since the 1960s, Republicans frequently reject gun regulation while Democrats demand tighter restrictions (Pew Research Center, 2017a). As the parties take up extreme positions on an issue, the possibility of bipartisan support for a solution decreases (McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2016).

However, the legislative success of a set of gun control policies between 2013 and 2015 aimed at protecting survivors of domestic violence suggests that some gun policies may elicit bipartisan support. During this time, NRA-supported Governors Scott Walker (R-Wisconsin), Nikki Haley (R-South Carolina) and Bobby Jindal (R-Louisiana) signed bills that restricted access to firearms if the individual was served with a domestic violence related restraining order or convicted of a domestic violence-related offense (Marley, 2014). State lawmakers in Washington, Minnesota, Colorado, and Nevada also passed similar regulations despite the powerful gun rights lobbies in their states (Flatow, 2014)

What explains the success of domestic violence related firearms policies in states with formidable grassroots support for gun rights? One explanation draws on theories of framing that propose the way communicators present legislation affects citizens' opinion. Framing is considered so important to citizens' policy preferences that scholars have described it as the "essence of public opinion formation" (Chong, 1993). An individual who is highly concerned with one aspect of a problem that a law seeks to address may be more responsive to frames that highlight her concerns with the issue (Slothuus, 2010). For example,

women, who face a far higher risk of intimate partner violence than men (Breiding et al., 2014; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), may be more likely to support policies restricting access to firearms to perpetrators of domestic violence when such restrictions are framed as domestic violence prevention, regardless of their overall views regarding gun policy.

However, research finds that the power of framing is limited and that framing effects may be constrained when an issue is highly polarized across parties. Political scientists have demonstrated the role of party identification in shaping citizens' opinions on a range of policy areas (Carsey & Layman, 2006; Goren, 2005). Citizens who affiliate with a political party may be less susceptible to framing effects if their party has a strong position on the issue. Research in environmental politics finds that framing techniques often fail to shift citizen support for climate change policies away from their party's well-defined platform (Egan & Mullin, 2017). The polarizing nature of gun politics in the United States suggests that firearms regulation may fall into that category as well, where efforts to use framing techniques are undermined by partisanship.

This study tests the power and limits of framing. I examine whether framing a policy as domestic violence prevention (a policy area which is less polarized across parties (Hohmann, 2014; Htun & Weldon, 2012)) instead of gun control (a highly polarized issue area (Pew Research Center, 2017b)) increases bipartisan support for the legislation. On the one hand, if party identification drives policy opinions about gun control, framing should only impact citizen support for the bill among non-party affiliates. However, if citizens across parties are highly concerned about domestic violence prevention, framing the policy problem as a solution to domestic violence could outweigh political party allegiance, creating an opportunity for bipartisan collaboration.

Drawing on these two theories, I test the validity of a null hypotheses – that framing will have no effect on overall support for the measure among partisans – and one alternative hypothesis – that women will respond to a domestic violence frame regardless of party. I test

these assertions using an original survey experiment. I randomly assigned participants into two groups, in order to decrease the likelihood that differences between the groups are due to self-selection based on a confounding variable. I also controlled participants' exposure to the treatment (domestic violence prevention versus a gun control frame), so I could be more certain that the treatment drives differences across participant outcomes.

This study proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of the relevant literature that suggests that partisanship may overwhelm framing effects and develop two hypotheses from the existing research. Next, I discuss the experiment, data, and analysis I use to test the two hypotheses. Finally, I discuss the results of my analysis and the implications of the results for framing theory and gun politics.

Partisanship, Policy Preferences, and Framing

Issue framing is a process in which a communicator “defines and constructs a political issue” (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997) by emphasizing “a subset of potentially relevant considerations” (Druckman & Nelson, 2003). In doing so, a communicator points the receiving individual to the “essence of the issue” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). Scholars have demonstrated that issue framing can sway public opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Nelson et al., 1997). Because most political issues are inherently multi-dimensional, they can be framed in a variety of ways. For example, a policy mandating paid maternity leave could be framed as the promotion of gender equality – paying women for their typically unpaid contribution to society, or child protection – ensuring that children have a primary caregiver. Depending on which frame the communicator uses, one could expect different levels of support from feminists or more conservative women's organizations for the same policy.

However, framing does have limitations. Elites are constrained in their ability to frame policies because citizens will consider the framers' credibility when forming an opinion (Druckman, 2001). If a frame is believed to come from an unreliable source, it is unlikely to

sway opinion. Furthermore, when citizens discuss frames with their peers, the power of framing is diminished (Druckman & Nelson, 2003). Also, when two frames compete, they can cancel each other out (Chong and Druckman 2007; Druckman 2004; Jerit 2009; Sniderman and Theriault 2004).

Partisanship can also moderate framing effects. Political psychologists suggest that framing polarized issues may be difficult because individuals are motivated to interpret information in a way that supports their established beliefs. This theory – called motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990) – states that individuals with strong convictions may be “goal-oriented” and may only take in information that aligns with their established views. Because political parties serve as powerful social identities, citizens may use motivated reasoning to adopt a policy stance that aligns with their party regardless of the framing of the issue (Bartels, 2002; Huddy, 2001). Studies of polarizing policy areas like environmental protection find that partisanship often undermines framing effects, and that efforts to frame climate change policy fail to increase support among political conservatives (Bernauer & McGrath, 2016; Zhou, 2016).

Americans are divided over the appropriate regulation of firearms in the United States. A citizen’s political party identification is one of the best predictors of his or her opinion on gun regulation (Pew Research Center, 2013). The partisan gap in support for gun regulation is typically 30 to 45 percentage points greater than the gap identified across demographic categories such as race, gender, and geography. Even the presence of a firearm in the respondent’s home has less relevance than party affiliation (Pew Research Center, 2017b). These differences persist across specific firearms-related policy questions, such as whether assault weapons should be banned or whether gun reform would be effective. The polarizing nature of gun regulation suggests that effect of framing on citizen opinions in this policy area may be limited: the one study of framing gun policy suggests that frames can shift opinion only when the citizen is predisposed to the frame (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001).

These findings suggest that party affiliation may undermine the effect of framing on respondents' support for new legislation that prevents domestic abusers from possessing firearms. This expectation is captured in the following hypothesis:

H1: Among party identifiers, there will be no difference in average policy support between respondents who receive the domestic violence frame and those who receive the gun control frame

However, studies of party affiliation find that individuals do not always adopt their party's platform on all issues. Instead, citizens with an individual interest or understanding of an issue may hold opinions that diverge from their party's platform. For example, research finds that male Republican lawmakers with female children support women's rights legislation at higher rates than Republicans without female children (Washington, 2008). Republican women, similarly, are more likely to support policies that promote women's interests than their male colleagues (Dolan, 1998). Thus, while political parties may sway policy preferences among citizens, even strong partisans do not always follow a party line uncritically. Instead, citizens draw on their own beliefs and experiences to determine their opinions on the issue at hand (Goren, 2005; Slothuus, 2010).

According to this research, regardless of political party identification, individuals who are highly invested in solving the problem of domestic violence will be more responsive to framing that emphasizes domestic violence prevention. Women represent one subgroup of respondents who may be interested in preventing domestic violence regardless of party affiliation for two reasons. First, women face a greater threat of domestic violence compared to men. In the United States, one in three women have experienced extreme physical violence by an intimate partner compared to one in seven men (Breiding et al., 2014). Furthermore, homicide is one of the leading causes of death for women and over half of female homicide victims in the United States between 2003 and 2014 were killed by intimate partners (Petrosky et al., 2017). Thus, compared to men in the same political party, women are likely

to be more invested in passing legislation that confers them protection from domestic violence.

Second, research on political identity suggests that the group “women” is a compelling political identity in American politics. Gender and politics scholarship recognizes two forms of group identity among women. Gender consciousness refers to the understanding that a citizen’s relationship to the world is shaped by being female (Rinehart, 1992). Relatedly, feminist or oppositional consciousness suggests that women recognize the political world is structured to benefit men, and that this power imbalance is unjust (Mansbridge, 2001).

These two forms of consciousness have practical implications for political decisions. Studies find that women and men report different policy preferences (Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986) and that women who feel affected by the social conditions under which women live are likely to express a uniquely “woman perspective” on policy issues (Conover, 1988). While much of gender consciousness literature focuses on “feminist” women who most often identify with liberal ideologies and the Democratic Party, gender consciousness also influences the policy preferences of women with conservative political leanings (Schreiber, 2002). Moreover, a study of gender bias in voting for female candidates suggests that women voters’ partisan identity is often trumped by an affinity with gender. Briars (2005) finds that female Democratic candidates who face male Republican candidates benefit from Republican women’s crossover support (Briars, 2005). Thus, research suggests that gender may influence women’s political decisions and policy opinions across the partisan divide.

Domestic violence presents a unique policy area for testing the importance of women’s gender identity on support for otherwise partisan political issues. Domestic abuse is an act that, while historically legally condoned, most consider a crime that requires state intervention (Htun & Weldon, 2012). Theories of gender consciousness predict that because gendered violence is a form of inequality that impacts women, women will be more

supportive of and invested in legislation that seeks to curb domestic abuse. Lawmakers' actions also suggest that women's support may be bipartisan. In recent years, many conservative lawmakers have drawn attention to their support for programs that will curb domestic abuse (Hohmann, 2014). Such efforts are mainly targeted at female constituents, to gain their support on election day.

Based on the notion that women are uniquely attuned to policy areas that impact women as a group, I predict that women will be more likely than men to respond to a frame that highlights domestic violence prevention.¹ I also hypothesize that this effect will persist regardless of political party affiliation. Accordingly, the present study investigates the validity of the second hypothesis:

H2: There will be greater support for the policy among women who are presented with the domestic violence frame, regardless of party identification

If focusing on domestic violence prevention instead of gun control allows advocates to draw more significant support from women, or citizens passionate about preventing violence against women, then this may explain why states with powerful gun rights support have passed new gun control legislation in recent years. The movement for gun control has historically struggled to recruit the numbers of grassroots supporters that could rival those of the gun rights movement (Goss, 2006). However, citizens concerned about domestic violence, including women's rights activists, have successfully organized to pass legislation even in hostile political environments (Smucker, *in progress*). By tapping into the organizing

¹ The unique relationship between firearms and American masculinity also lowers the probability that men would be more inclined to support gun control framed as domestic violence compared to women. A study of NRA members and NRA discourse found that male NRA members associate gun ownership with "frontier masculinity" which includes a constellation of traits such as self-reliance, rugged individualism, and a strong work ethic (Melzer, 2012). These narratives are particularly attractive to white working-class men who feel threatened by the feminist movement (Stroud, 2012). Thus, framing gun regulation as addressing an issue championed by feminists (domestic violence prevention) is unlikely to increase support for a new gun control policy among men. However, I have no reason to think that the different frames would cause men to support the policy less. Consequently, I focus my hypotheses on variation in women's responses.

strengths of the women's movement, gun control groups could begin to rival gun rights groups in terms of political power. This shift in power dynamics could, then, explain the passage of gun regulation in states that historically resist it. In the next section, I outline my research design and analytic strategy for testing both hypotheses.

Research Design

This study leverages an experimental survey design to test the hypotheses described above. Experimental survey designs allow researchers to test whether survey respondents answer a survey question differently depending on factors that the researcher manipulates. In other words, a survey experiment is a randomized controlled trial, where the experimental assignment assures that other factors are uncorrelated with the outcome variable. In doing so, researchers can more closely link changes in a participant's outcome to the intervention itself, as opposed to other factors, while acknowledging the possibility of random error.

Survey Experiment

To test whether study participants respond differently to a question depending on whether I frame a policy as domestic violence prevention or as gun control, survey respondents were randomly assigned to answer one of two questions about their support for a domestic violence related firearms policy. One-half (n=505) of respondents received a question that calls the policy "domestic violence prevention," while the other half (n=495) received a question that calls the policy "gun control." The dependent variable is the level of support for a policy that restricts access to firearms by those convicted of a domestic violence-related offense.

Question 1: Newly proposed **domestic violence** legislation would prevent individuals convicted of abusing their spouses or romantic partners from purchasing, owning, or possessing firearms.

How likely are you to support this legislation?

- Extremely likely

- Very likely
- Likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

Question 2: Newly proposed **gun control** legislation would prevent individuals convicted of abusing their spouses or romantic partners from purchasing, owning, or possessing firearms.

How likely are you to support this legislation?

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

It is important to note that this framing treatment is considerably “weaker” than most. Typically, framing experiments provide respondents with a longer explanation of the argument for the policy that features the frame tested in the study (Druckman, 2001; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Nelson et al., 1997). However, to come as close as possible to a natural situation for respondents, I limited the difference between the two questions to the description of the policy. In everyday life, citizens have limited time to consider new policy proposals debated by policymakers. Accordingly, a weaker frame is necessary to test whether its impact could generate differences in support across citizens. If the treatment produces an

effect, it will provide substantial evidence that reframing the policy proposal could lead to significant differences in policy support.

Sample

To test my two hypotheses, I draw on survey data from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), a nationally representative survey administered by YouGov Polimetrix. The survey designers used a sample match methodology to draw a sample of 64,600 individuals from the population of the United States. The sample was created using two lists: one composed of American consumers that reflects 95% of the adult population; and one that lists individuals who have agreed to take surveys for YouGov Polimetrix as part of its panel, Polling Point. The survey is conducted online using this opt-in panel of respondents.

In the first stage, a random sample of consumers was drawn and a list of key demographic variables was recorded for each member of the sample, using data from the 2012 American Community Survey (ACS). The sample was limited to American citizens 18 years and older due to the survey's focus on voting and political orientation. To construct a representative sample, demographic variables including age, race, gender, education, marital status, number of children under 18, family income, employment status, home state and metropolitan area were recorded. In addition, data on religion, church attendance, born again or evangelical status, news interest, party identification and ideology was matched from the 2007 Pew U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. YouGov Polimetrix then used a matching algorithm to find Polling Point panelists who most closely matched individuals from the consumer file. In this way a matched random sample was constructed for all people in the consumer sample. The data and a full description of the sampling methods are available at the Harvard University Dataverse (Cooper, 2016).

From that 64,600-person sample, Duke University researchers asked a randomly drawn 1,000-person subsample a set of original questions. I submitted a set of questions to be

included in the 2016 questionnaire, which was administered in the pre-election phase of the survey between July and September of 2016.

The 1,000-person subsample largely mirrors demographic averages of the original representative pool of 64,600 but departs from recent U.S. population estimates in several ways. In the subsample, 53% of respondents were female, while in the larger sample and the U.S. population are 52% female. The average age of respondents (all over 18) in both samples was 48 in 2016.

However, the subsample contains respondents with a higher level of education than the U.S. population. Only 3% of respondents in the subsample did not graduate from high school, compared to 11% in the larger sample and 13% in the U.S. population.² Two-year college degrees were earned by 12% of the subsample, but only by 9% of the respondents in the larger sample and only 8% in the U.S. population. Fully 22% of respondents in the subsample obtained 4-year degrees, while only 17% of respondents in the larger sample and 18% in the U.S. population could claim the same. Finally, 13% of the subsample earned post-graduate degrees compared to 9% in the larger sample and 11% in the U.S. population. Thus, the results of my analysis shed light narrowly on Americans with a greater than high school education.³

The subsample largely matches the respondents' racial makeup in the larger sample and the U.S. population. Whites constitute 73% of the subsample, 74% of the larger sample and 73% of the U.S. population. Black Americans make up 13% of the subsample and 12% in the larger sample and 13% of the U.S. population. Native Americans make up 1% of the subsample, similar to the 1% of U.S. population; the larger sample reflects 0.3%. Asian

² ACS data only includes individuals over 25 years of age for education completion data.

³ To test whether education differences undermined the generalizability of the results, I reproduced my analysis with weights that aligned the subsample with the larger sample provided by the CCES. The weights did not change my results significantly, but some results were muted. The results of the weighted analysis can be found in the Appendix B.

Americans made up 3% of both the subsample and the larger sample; 5% of Americans identify as Asian American.

However, Hispanics are underrepresented in the CCES subsample. Fully 7% of respondents in the subsample identified as Hispanic which is similar to the 8% shown in the larger sample. However, 17% of Americans identify as Hispanic, limiting generalizability of the findings presented below.⁴

The CCES subsample slightly overrepresents Democrats and Independents/non-party affiliates and underrepresents Republicans. In 2016, 33% of registered American voters identified as Democrats, but Democrats make up 37% of the subsample (Pew, 2016). Fully 38% of Americans identify as Independent or non-party affiliates while 41% of respondents in the subsample identify as Independent or non-party affiliates. However, 32% of Americans identify as Republican compared to 22% of the subsample. The underrepresentation of Republicans may bias the results by allowing a smaller proportion of Republicans to stand in for a larger group. Further research should replicate the analysis with a larger and representative sample to ensure the results hold when tested in a more generalizable group.

Table 5 provides a comparison of both samples as well as U.S. population data drawn from the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.) and the 2016 Party Identification Detailed Tables from Pew Research Center (Pew, 2016).

⁴ The ACS includes individuals from all age ranges while the CCES limits to 18 and over which may explain some of the disparity between the groups.

Table 5: Comparison of Subsample (N=1,000) with Representative Sample (N=64,600) and the U.S. Population

Demographics	% of CCES Subsample	% of CCES Sample	% of U.S. Population *
Female	53%	52%	52%
Male	47%	48%	48%
Age	48	48	--
No High school Degree	3%	11%	13%
High school Degree	25%	29%	28%
Some College	26%	24%	21%
2-Year College	12%	9%	8%
4-Year College	22%	17%	18%
Post-grad	13%	9%	11%
Democrat	37%	38%	33%
Republican	22%	24%	29%
Independent/Non-Party Affiliate	41%	38%	38%
White	73%	74%	73%
Black	13%	12%	13%
Asian American	3%	3%	5%
Native American	1%	0.3%	1%
Hispanic	7%	8%	17%

*This column provides the percentages the larger representative sample sought to replicate. However, there are some differences. The American Community Survey (2012-2016) percentages estimates include all ages while the CCES only includes individuals over 18. The ACS education data is restricted to individuals 25 and older. The CCES sample restricts to data from individuals 18 and over for all categories which may explain some variation in the percentages. The political data comes from the Pew Research Center's "2016 Party Identification Detailed Tables" which includes a representative sample of registered voters. I do not provide an average age because the column is a composite from different age groups. Some percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Despite the differences in ethnic identity and political leanings between the sample and the U.S. population, the randomization between treatment groups is balanced across several relevant variables. A balanced experiment is an experiment with no statistically significant difference between the treatment groups across variables that one might expect to impact the outcome variable. I tested for a balance across treatment groups for the following variables: political party affiliation, gender, race, age, marital status, and position on gun regulation. Appendix C reports the results of balance checks across these variables and demonstrates that there is no statistically significant difference across the groups.

Variables

Policy Support

I use responses to the question "Newly proposed **domestic violence/gun control** legislation would prevent individuals convicted of abusing their spouses or romantic partners

from purchasing, owning, or possessing firearms. How likely are you to support this legislation?” to calculate policy support.

I calculate mean support by transforming respondents’ answers into a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 equates to “extremely unlikely” to support the policy and 7, “extremely likely.” A higher mean score translates into a higher level of support for the policy. I also created a binary measure to assess policy support. Respondents who stated they were “likely,” “very likely,” or “extremely likely” to support the policy received a 1 for this variable. All other respondents were coded as 0. No respondents skipped this question.

Political Party Affiliation

Political party affiliation was measured using a question that asked participants whether they identified as a “Democrat,” “Republican,” “Independent,” “Other,” or “Unsure.” Fully 51 respondents reported they were “Not sure” about their political party identification. Another 31 respondents selected “Other.” While these two groups are dissimilar from individuals who reporting being “Independents” along some demographic dimensions, the driving question in this study centers on partisanship in the two dominant political parties, Democrats and Republicans.⁵ Thus, any respondent who did not report an affiliation with either group was considered a non-party identifier along with Independents. In the remainder of the study, this group is referred to as non-party identifiers to indicate that the group members do not affiliate with either of the two major political parties in the United States.

Gender

⁵ There were significant differences in race and gender for individuals who selected “Independent” versus “Unsure” or “Other” for political party affiliation. Women were much more likely to select “Unsure” than “Independent” or “Other” ($p < 0.001$). This difference may be driven by the fact that women remain less likely than men to join a political party (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010). Whites were slightly more likely to identify as Independent rather than “Unsure” or “Other” ($p < 0.001$). Further investigations are necessary to fully understand the implications of these differences. However, because the present study is interested in differences due to partisanship, the overarching demographics of each group do not undermine the central analysis.

I created the gender variable using a question that asked respondents to identify as either “male” or “female.” No respondents skipped this question. Table 6 provides a summary of the relevant variables.

Table 6: Variables and Descriptions

Variable	Coded	Min	Max	Mean
Policy Support (Scale)	Support for policy scale of 1-7 with 1 being no support and 7 high support	1	7	5.67
Policy Support (Binary)	Support for policy (1) or no support/unsure (0)	0	1	0.78
Political Party	Affiliation with Democratic Party (1), Republican Party (2), Independent (3), Other (4), Not sure (5)	1	5	n/a
Gender	Identify as Male (0) or Female (1)	0	1	0.53

Analytic Strategy

In this study, the treatment is receiving the question that refers to a new policy as “domestic violence” legislation. The control group is the respondents who received the question that refers to the legislation as “gun control” legislation. It is important to note that the control group could be considered another treatment group, because a perfect control group would receive the question with no descriptor (gun control or domestic violence). Without a control to compare the results to, one could argue that it is difficult to establish the impact of changing the question language. However, the exceptionally polarized debate over gun control suggests that any policy that includes gun regulation is likely considered gun control. If this is true, removing the descriptor “gun control legislation” from the question, therefore, would be unlikely to produce any variation in responses compared to the question that describes the policy as “gun control.” Given this expectation, I decided to use the “gun control” question as the control group.

In the first part of the analysis, I report average support levels for domestic violence related firearms legislation across the entire sample and across subgroups of interest. Then, I perform an initial test of the effect of the treatment on respondents’ support for the legislation. I test the difference in mean support using a two-way t-test to establish whether the difference

is statistically significant across groups. Then, I perform the same test across variables of interest: political party affiliation and gender.

Next, I test the first hypotheses using ordinary least squares linear regression (OLS). The first model estimates the effect of the treatment on non-party identifiers compared to Democrats and Republicans. If Hypothesis 1 is correct and partisanship “swamps” the effect of the frame, the treatment will only impact “non-partisans” or those who do not identify as a Democrat or Republican. I use an OLS regression where the dependent variable is policy support and the explanatory variables are treatment group, party affiliation and an interaction between the two.

To test Hypothesis 2, that those with a personal interest in the policy area may be less influenced by political party and more influenced by framing, I estimate an additional model. The model predicts the effect of the treatment on women’s support for the legislation. Because women face a higher risk of domestic violence relative to men, I expect this group to be more responsive to a framing effect that stresses domestic violence prevention. Again, I use ordinary least squares linear regression of the dependent variable (policy support) and dummy variables for *domestic violence frame* x *gender*. To test whether party affiliation moderates this effect, I then control for political party affiliation.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Figure 3 reports the rates of support for the policy across the 1,000 respondents.⁶ Two-thirds of respondents (65.8%) said that they were “extremely likely” or “very likely” to support a policy that would prevent individuals convicted of abusing their spouses or romantic partners from purchasing, owning, or possessing firearms. Only 6.0% of respondents reported that they would be “very unlikely” or “extremely unlikely” to support such a policy.

⁶ The weighted equivalent of these results is all within one percentage point of the unweighted estimates.

The remaining 28.2% of respondents reported they would be “somewhat likely,” “neither likely nor unlikely,” or “somewhat unlikely” to support the legislation. The results suggest that, in general, respondents were supportive of the legislation.

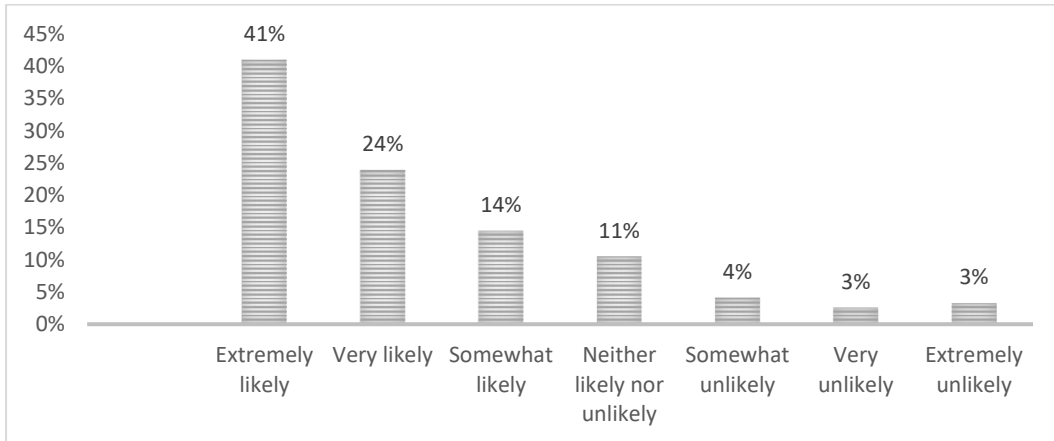


Figure 3: Support for DV and Firearms Policy Across All Respondents (N=1,000)

Support for domestic violence related firearms regulation varies by demographic and political groups. Table 7 reports the mean level of support for new regulations that would bar domestic abusers from possessing firearms across subgroups. The results suggest that, on average, female respondents supported domestic violence related firearms legislation at higher rates. Women reported an average level of support of 5.92 (which correlates with the response “very likely to support the policy”), a half a step above men’s average responses (5.40). A Chi-square test suggests that these differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, Democrats reported higher levels of support for the policy (6.30 on average) compared to Republicans (5.20) and non-party identifiers (5.34). These differences were also statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Again, the results indicate that most respondents were supportive of the legislation regardless of political party or gender.

Table 7: Mean Levels of Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Legislation by Subgroup

	N	Mean Support (1-7) (SE in parenthesis)	
All	1,000	5.67 (0.05)	
Gender			Chi-square
Women	529	5.92 (0.06)	37.00***
Men	471	5.40 (0.08)	
Party			Chi-square
Democrats	374	6.30 (0.06)	127.50***
Republicans	215	5.20 (0.12)	
Non-party Identifiers	411	5.34 (0.08)	

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Subgroup Analysis

In the next section, I compare the effect of the treatment across subgroups. I conduct a t-test to determine whether, within subgroups, respondents reported higher support for domestic violence related firearms legislation if they were exposed to the treatment. Table 8 reports the results of this analysis.

Table 8: Difference in Mean Rate of Support (1-7) Within Subgroups by Exposure to Treatment

	Treatment	Control	Treatment Effect	95% CI	p-value
Everyone	5.72	5.60	+0.12	[-0.11, 0.29]	0.35
Democrats	6.29	6.32	-0.03	[-0.26, 0.21]	0.82
Republicans	5.20	5.20	-0.00	[-0.50, 0.48]	0.98
Non-party Identifiers	5.50	5.23	+0.27	[-0.10, 0.54]	0.17
Women	6.00	5.84	+0.16	[-0.09, 0.41]	0.20
Men	5.41	5.39	+0.02	[-0.29, 0.32]	0.91

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

The results suggest that, on average, individuals treated with the domestic violence frame reported slightly higher support for the legislation (+0.12). However, this increase was not statistically significant ($p=0.35$).

Within subgroups, a t-test of the difference between mean support for the policy finds that the treatment did not significantly increase support regardless of party identification or gender identity. However, the results do move in the predicted direction. Non-party identifiers and women reported higher rates of support if they received the domestic violence frame treatment (+0.27 and +0.16, respectively). Conversely, partisans and men reported much smaller differences compared to their counterparts (non-party identifiers and women, respectively). Democrats exposed to the domestic violence treatment reported slightly lower rates of support than Democrats who saw the “gun control” frame (-0.03). Republicans reported no difference across groups and men reported slightly higher levels of support for the legislation (+0.02). While the results are not statistically significant, the small sample size within each group may undermine the possibility of detecting significant effects.

Next, I use a binary indicator of support and non-support to determine whether a domestic violence frame increased the number of supporters instead of just the intensity of support for the legislation (as measured in the results above). A respondent was assigned a 1 if she or he stated that she or he would be “extremely likely,” “very likely,” or “likely” to support the policy and a zero otherwise. Table 9 provides the results.

Table 9: Difference in Percentage of Supporters Within Subgroups by Exposure to Treatment

	Treatment	Control	Treatment Effect	95% CI	p-value
Everyone	80.0%	79.4%	+0.6%	[-4.3%, 5.6%]	0.81
Democrats	90.6%	91.2%	-0.5%	[-6.4%, 5.3%]	0.84
Republicans	69.6%	76.1%	-6.5%	[-18.5%, 5.5%]	0.29
Non-party Identifiers	75.4%	70.5%	+4.9%	[-3.7%, 13.4%]	0.17
Women	85.8%	82.8%	+3.0%	[-3.2%, 9.3%]	0.33
Men	73.4%	75.6%	-2.2%	[-10.1%, 5.7%]	0.58

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

The results above suggest that a greater number of non-party affiliates and women supported the policy when presented with a domestic violence frame compared to a gun control frame. However, the domestic violence frame had the opposite effect across other subgroups. Thus, while advocates might gain 4.9% more non-party affiliates and 3.0% more women, they might lose 6.5% of Republicans and 2.2% of men.⁷ Furthermore, none of these results achieve statistical significance and the confidence interval surrounding the results is quite large. Further investigation is needed to determine whether a domestic violence frame can increase support among women and non-party affiliates and decrease support among Republicans.

In the next analysis, I attempt to address the issue of sample by using the entire sample and an OLS analysis to test whether there are treatment effects across subgroups.

Ordinary Least Squares Regression

In Model 1, I look at the relationship between the treatment and political party affiliation on mean support for domestic violence related firearms regulation. I use an ordinary least squares linear regression to test the baseline relationship between treatment and political party affiliation on policy support. Political party affiliation is a binary variable

⁷ It is likely that the groups overlap (there are Republican men who are impacted by the treatment and do not support the policy and non-affiliated women who are impacted and do). Thus, a sum of the percentages would likely give an overestimate of the effect of the frame.

where one indicates a respondent is a non-party identifier, and zero indicates that he or she identifies as a Republican or Democrat. Thus, the comparison group is respondents who identify as either Republicans or Democrats.

In Model 2, I test Hypothesis 1 which proposes that re-framing gun control should impact non-partisans more than partisans. To test this hypothesis, I examine the interaction effects of the treatment with political party affiliation. I use ordinary least squares linear regression of the dependent variable (policy support) and dummy variables *treatment x political party affiliation*. Table 10 reports the regression coefficients of Models 1 and 2.

Table 10: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Political Party (N=1,000)

	Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulation (1-7)	
	Model 1	Model 2
Treatment (DV Frame)	0.102 (0.199)	-0.020 (0.129)
Non-party Identifier	-0.561*** (0.101)	-0.662*** (0.144)
Treatment x Non-party Identifiers		0.200 (0.202)
Constant	5.850*** (0.081)	5.892*** (0.091)
Observations	1,000	1,000
R2	0.031	0.032
Adjusted R2	0.029	0.029

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ *Standard Error in Parentheses*

Model 1 corroborates the results of Table 8 in the previous section and finds that the domestic violence frame did not produce significantly different results across treatment and control group. Model 1 also finds that relative to party identifiers, non-party identifiers reported lower average levels of support for a policy that removed guns from abusers ($p < 0.001$). Given the mean differences reported in Table 7 which finds that Republicans and non-party identifiers reported similar average support for the policy, this difference is likely driven by the disparity between Republicans and non-party identifiers and Democrats' support for the policy.

Model 2 suggests that non-party identifiers reported greater support for the policy when they were treated with the domestic violence frame (+0.20). However, this increase was not statistically significant ($p>0.10$). However, this lack of statistical significance could be the result of a small sample size or a weak frame.

The next analysis separates partisans into two groups: Republicans and Democrats. By separating party affiliates into the two dominant political parties, I can assess whether there is a difference in the treatment effect among Democrats who received the domestic violence frame and Republicans and non-party identifiers who received the frame. The results (presented in Table 11) are like those outlined above but highlight the significant difference in levels of support for the policy between Democrats and Republicans and between Democrats and non-party identifiers. Model 3 and 4 demonstrate that Republicans and non-party identifiers reported lower levels of support for domestic violence related firearms policy ($p<0.001$). However, the responses to the treatment did not differ significantly.

Table 11: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Political Party (N=1,000)

	Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulation (1-7)	
	Model 3	Model 4
Treatment (DV Frame)	-0.078 (0.095)	-0.027 (0.157)
Republicans (comparison Democrats)	-1.102*** (0.130)	-1.115*** (0.181)
Non-party Identifiers (comparison Democrats)	-0.962*** (0.108)	-1.089*** (0.155)
Treatment x Republicans (comparison: treatment x Democrats)		0.020 (0.260)
Treatment x Non-party Identifiers (comparison: treatment x Democrats)		0.247 (0.217)
Constant	6.264*** (0.092)	6.319*** (0.112)
Observations	1,000	1,000
R2	0.031	0.032
Adjusted R2	0.029	0.029

† $p<0.1$; * $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$ Standard Error in Parentheses

Next, I test Hypothesis 2 which posits that framing effects will be greater for women than men controlling for political party. I use an ordinary least squares regression of the dependent variable (policy support), a binary variable that captures gender, and another that captures political party. I expect respondents who are female will be more likely to respond to the treatment regardless of political party. Table 12 reports the results of Models 5, 6, and 7. Model 5 assesses the relationship between support for the policy and gender. Model 6 evaluates the interaction between *treatment x gender*. Model 7 estimates the interaction between *treatment x gender*, controlling for political party affiliation.

Table 12: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Gender (N=1,000)

VARIABLES	Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulation (1-7)		
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Treatment (DV Frame)	0.092 (0.098)	0.016 (0.145)	-0.052 (0.138)
Female respondent	0.520*** (0.099)	0.446** (0.141)	0.326* (0.136)
Treatment x Female respondent		0.145 (0.199)	0.243 (0.190)
Republicans (comparison Democrats)			-1.099*** (0.128)
Non-party Identifiers (comparison Democrats)			-0.912*** (0.108)
Constant	5.350*** (0.088)	5.389*** (0.103)	6.071*** (0.120)
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000
R2	0.028	0.028	0.117
Adjusted R2	0.026	0.025	0.113

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ Standard Error in Parentheses

Like the results presented in Table 7, the results of Model 5 demonstrate that, on average, women reported higher levels of support for domestic violence related firearms legislation compared to men (+0.52, $p < 0.001$). Model 6 examines the impact of the treatment on women and finds no significant difference in support for domestic violence related

firearms policies compared to other respondents ($p > 0.10$). Similarly, Model 7 does not detect a unique treatment effect for women. However, the results of Model 7 do suggest that, regardless of political party, women are more likely to support domestic violence related firearms legislation than men. Thus, while a framing effect is not supported, the results suggest that women, regardless of party, are more likely to support gun legislation related to domestic violence than men.⁸

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to test whether reframing a polarizing policy (gun control) as a less polarizing policy (domestic violence prevention) could create bipartisan support for new legislation. This question grew out of a real-world puzzle: Between 2013 and 2015, 17 pro-gun states passed laws that restricted gun access to domestic abusers. Theories of framing posit that the success of these policies might be attributed to the way the legislation was framed: as domestic violence prevention instead of gun regulation. This new frame could have increased citizen support for the policy in a state that typically rejects gun regulation. Such an increase in support could encourage lawmakers to take legislative action to address the problem.

In this study, I tested two hypotheses. First, I tested the proposition that party identification and partisanship would subvert framing effects. Second, I tested whether the muting effect of partisanship persisted across respondents who identified as women. I analyzed the results of an original survey experiment with a sample of 1,000 Americans to test both hypotheses. In the survey experiment, half of the participants received a question

⁸ As I outlined in the previous section, I also tested whether respondents were more likely to select a “supportive” response (any number greater than 4) by creating a binary variable where (1) represented positive support and (2) represented neutral or a lack of support and using a logit model to test the relationship between positive responses, party affiliation, gender and treatment. The results confirmed the results presented in this study. I found that Democrats were more likely to report a positive response than Republicans and Independents/Non-party affiliates. Women were also more likely to report positive responses than men. The treatment did not change the number of individuals who reported positive responses to the policy. This suggests that any identified differences cannot be attributed to variation in degrees of support (all responses were positive, but some were more positive) but suggests that some groups were more likely than others to not support the policy.

about gun regulation that framed the policy as domestic violence prevention. The other half received the same question, but the policy was described as gun control.

As predicted, political party identifiers and men were unaffected by the treatment. The results suggest that partisanship may undermine efforts to reframe policies related to polarizing issue areas. Like climate change policy, party identification largely explains the variation in Americans' opinions about gun regulation (Pechar, *forthcoming*). Only slightly changing the description of a law may not be enough to shift the debate about gun regulation significantly among party affiliates. The epidemic of gun violence in the United States demands a robust discussion of solutions. Such a conversation is challenging when opinions are so closely tied to and informed by party identification.

However, individuals who did not affiliate with a political party did report slightly higher rates of support for the policy when it was framed as domestic violence prevention. Women in the group that received the domestic violence frame reported higher levels of support than women who received the gun control frame. The results suggest that, if there is a true framing effect, changing the frame of the policy could lead to a 5% increase in support among citizens who are unaffiliated with a party and 3% increase among women. The results of recent state referenda on gun regulation indicate that such an increase in support could prove pivotal to passing new legislation. In 2016, citizens of Maine and Nevada voted on whether to implement universal background checks for all gun purchases. In Maine, the measure was defeated by 51.0% of votes to 48.9%, or about 12,700 ballots. In Nevada voters approved the proposal by 50.5% to 49.6% (Ax, 2016). In these elections, a 3.0-5.0% increase in support could change the outcome of a similar referendum.

In addition, the results also suggest that some groups responded negatively to the domestic violence frame. Republicans had an adverse reaction to the domestic violence frame. This suggests that framing the issue as domestic violence may have unintended

consequences among partisan affiliates that could jeopardize advocates policy goals if the results reflect a true effect and not driven by random error.

It is important to underline that neither result was statistically significant. It may be that the small sample size, the weak frame, and the lack of variation across opinions (almost all respondents reported some support for the policy) may have undermined my ability to detect an effect. Further investigation is necessary to determine whether non-party affiliates are more likely to change their views than party affiliates particularly when that policy area is highly polarized.

One statistically significant result did emerge from this analysis. Women reported higher levels of support for the policy than men on average regardless of whether they saw the domestic violence frame or the gun control frame. Furthermore, these results remain significant after controlling for political party meaning that women from the Republican Party and non-affiliated women also supported the policy to a higher degree than their male counterparts in their respective party. The results of this analysis give advocates of bipartisan solutions to gun violence reason for optimism.

These findings also dovetail with the rich literature from gender and politics scholars that suggest women consider their gender and gender related experiences when making political decisions and developing political attitudes. Scholars of gender and political views find that women often draw on their experience as a disadvantaged group to make political choices (Rinehart, 1992; Schreiber, 2002; Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986). Surveys find that one in three women will experience intimate partner violence in her life (Basile et al., 2011) and that women make up the vast majority of domestic violence survivors (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Because this risk persists regardless of political party, domestic violence related gun control may be a legislative middle ground with women driving the cross-party support.

The history of gun politics demonstrates that women have been central to the efforts to pass new firearms regulations (Goss, 2006). Public demonstrations like the Million Mom

March and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America have focused on women's maternal identity and commitment to protecting children in order to encourage grassroots engagement (Hayden, 2003). This study suggests that in addition to focusing on women's roles as mothers, emphasizing the value of gun control for preventing violence against women may also draw women from across the political spectrum into the gun policy debate. Recent victories in pro-gun Republican states like South Carolina and Wisconsin suggest that advocates may be acting on the findings demonstrated here in real-world contexts. Efforts of domestic violence prevention advocates to rally their supporters to fight for gun control in these states has contributed to the success of these policies in Republican majority states (Smucker, *in progress*).

Further research is necessary to understand the mediating role of partisanship in framing effects. The level of polarization in policy areas like gun regulation and environmental protection is somewhat unique. By focusing on a highly partisan issue, this study uses an extreme example to test theories of framing. However, partisanship varies across policy areas. Future research should consider how framing effects impact policies characterized by different levels of partisanship. How intense does partisanship around a policy area need to be to undermine framing effects? A study that examines framing effects of a policy that became increasingly partisan over time could begin to answer such questions.

Moreover, future research should assess whether appealing to non-partisan identities (or identities that span partisan divisions) can help overcome partisan intransigence in policy areas like firearms regulation (even if that polarization is based on other identities). While identities are often considered part of the cause of partisanship, research suggests that individuals can have competing identities that lead them to consider political decisions from different perspectives (Klar, 2013). This study found that women were more likely to support domestic violence related firearms legislation regardless of party affiliation. Thus, gender

identity may cross party identification and, if tapped into, can encourage citizens to make political choices that transcend political party.

If correct, this logic should extend to other groups that face elevated risks because of their identity. For example, racial identity may play a role in support for different types of firearms regulation. Research finds that people of color are more likely to support gun regulations than whites (Pew Research Center, 2011). This may be because people of color feel more threatened by gun violence in their communities. Future research should investigate whether racial identities can also create opportunities to build cross-party consensus around issues like gun regulation that are highly polarized across parties.

An Important Non-Finding

Finally, this paper presents two null findings, a rarity in published academic articles. I find that, in the context of gun regulation and among a sample of 1,000 American citizens, merely renaming a policy proposal does not significantly shift citizens' support for new legislation if the person is a party affiliate. I do find that non-party affiliates and respondents who identify as women report higher levels of support for the policy than party affiliates and men respectively. However – perhaps due to the small sample size and/or weak frame – I cannot rule out the null hypothesis that the difference between the groups is actually zero.

In a world where Facebook and Twitter are primary sources of political information, the scenario presented in this experiment may be closer to reality than other framing studies which found that framing did shift support. As conversations about the influence of these mediums dominate political discussions, the lack of concrete findings of this study – particularly among individuals who affiliate with a political party – provide a moment to reflect upon the relevance of short term framing effects versus entrenched power dynamics that persist in American politics, particularly around the issue of guns.

The link between framing changes and policy making relies on the assumption that public opinion (and changes in it) can directly influence lawmakers actions. The “electoral

connection” suggests that because lawmakers want to be reelected they will enact laws that their constituents support (Mayhew, 1974). A range of political communication and public opinion studies demonstrate, however, that public opinion is not stable and can vary depending on how a question is asked. Studies also show that citizens often lack substantial information about policy issues. Thus, the public is vulnerable to elites’ efforts to manipulate their political views (Druckman, 2001). Framing is a tool that elites can use to shift public opinion.

However, questions remain about whether framing can influence public opinion in highly salient policy areas where citizens likely have established views. Most framing studies test whether changes in framing influences participants opinions about typically low-salience issues in non-politicized environments (Barabas & Jerit, 2010). However, media outlets and political parties often focus campaigns to shift public opinion on issues that are highly salient to voters. The present study is one of few that test the impact of framing on a policy area that is highly salient (Bechtel, Hainmueller, Hangartner, & Helbling, 2015). The null results of this study provide initial evidence that issues like gun control may be less amenable to “re-framing” the debate. Initial evidence from other studies suggests that firearms regulation is an area in which only frames that align with a citizen’s established views can influence her or his opinion (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001).

In such highly salient policy areas, political strategy and engagement may be more important than reframing an issue. In a related study, I investigated the pathways to policy change for five domestic violence related firearms regulations like the policies considered in this study. I found that the difference between states that failed and those that passed new gun control was the individuals who *participated* in the policy process as opposed to constituents’ opinions about the issue. When individuals who felt strongly about ending domestic violence participated in the policy making process (as advocates and survivors), lawmakers were more likely advance their policy interests and opposition groups were more likely to compromise.

However, when gun control advocates participated, lawmakers remained reluctant to come out in support of their political goals and opposition groups fought back, regardless of how the policy was framed. The results provide a fresh example of the fact that who participates in the policy process and how those participants advance their goals are pivotal to policy change.

In sum, framing may be less important in the policy making process when issues are highly salient. Delivering new messages to citizens or emphasizing a different dynamic of an issue may not be enough to change policy; the actions and strategies of participants in the policy making process may matter more.

However, the perception persists that simply re-framing an issue, however salient, can push legislation through the policy process. The misconception that public opinion and reframing are central to changing policy outcomes could lead advocates to waste valuable resources on campaigns that will do little to change the probability of policy change. A focus on whether framing can change citizens' *actions*, by motivating those who can have the greatest influence to become involved in the policy making process, instead of *opinions* may be a more fruitful phenomenon to investigate when attempting to explain policy change in highly polarized policy areas.

Chapter 3: Suicide and Additional Homicides Associated with Intimate Partner Homicide: North Carolina 2004-2013, with co-authors Philip J. Cook and Rose Kerber

Introduction

Intimate partner homicide (IPH) is a critical public health and safety issue in the United States. The great majority of IPH cases involve female victims and male perpetrators (Fox & Zawitz, 1999). Furthermore, IPH accounts for a substantial proportion of female homicide victimization (Petrosky et al., 2017; Violence Policy Center, 2016). The threat of IPH to public safety is amplified by the fact that IPH is often coupled with killing one or more additional victims, and with the perpetrator's suicide (Logan et al., 2008; Morton, Runyan, Moracco, & Butts, 1998; Smith, Fowler, & Niolon, 2014). These additional deaths are concentrated in IPHs committed by white men with guns (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006). Male domestic batterers wielding guns is also characteristic of mass homicides. One analysis found that from 2009 to 2016, 54% of mass homicides (defined as four or more individuals killed in one incident) (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005) were related to domestic or family violence and all were committed with guns (Everytown for Gun Safety, 2017).

It is well known that the risk of IPH is elevated by abusers' access to firearms. (J. C. Campbell et al., 2003) (Note that in what follows, we use the words "gun" and "firearm" interchangeably.) More than half of all women killed by intimate partners between 2001 and 2012 were killed with guns (Gerney & Parsons, 2014). Previous research finds an association between firearms in the home and the risk of violent death (J. C. Campbell et al., 2003; Dahlberg, Ikeda, & Kresnow, 2004; A. M. Zeoli et al., 2017). Intimate partner violence that involves a firearm is 12 times more likely to result in death than incidents that do not involve a firearm (Saltzman, Mercy, O'Carroll, Rosenberg, & Rhodes, 1992).

Federal law and some state laws seek to prevent domestic abusers from buying or possessing guns, and to deter misuse of guns (Biden, 1993; Raissian, 2016). Research suggests that such laws reduce intimate partner homicides overall, but no studies have

evaluated their effects on the incidence of IPH followed by the suicide of the perpetrator (hereafter referred to as “IPH-suicide”) (Raissian, 2016; Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). However, existing evidence suggests that IPH-suicides make up a large portion of IPHs. A history of intimate partner violence is a key risk factor for perpetrator suicide following IPH (Bossarte, Simon, & Barker, 2006; Logan et al., 2008). A recent analysis found 90% of IPH-suicides were committed with a firearm (Logan et al., 2008). The prevalence of suicide in IPH is a particularly important consideration in the development of domestic violence related firearms policies because suicidal batterers will not be deterred from IPH by threat of punishment.

Also important in the consideration of weapon type in IPH is the possibility of additional homicide victims, such as family members and friends (Dobash & Dobash, 2012; Smith et al., 2014). Such victims swelled the homicide victim count by 20%, according to one recent study (Smith et al., 2014). These additional victims are for the most part (70%) killed with a gun. Male perpetrators predominated in IPH-suicide deaths and multiple death incidents.

In this analysis, we build on existing research in two ways. First, we utilize a relatively new and high-quality source of homicide data: The Violent Death Reporting System (VDRS). Research on IPH-suicide and IPH with multiple victims has been handicapped by limitations in conventional data sources such as the Uniform Crime Reports and the Federal Supplementary Homicide Reports. Because these data sets do not include suicide or a means for linking homicides, scholars have relied on relatively small hand-collected data sets from medical examiner files (Comstock et al., 2005; Hanzlick & Koponen, 1994; Morton et al., 1998). However, the VDRS links all violent deaths occurring in the same incident. Our analysis advances the literature by testing established findings about IPH using comprehensive data for a large jurisdiction.

Second, our analysis focuses specifically on IPH and related suicides and additional homicide victims. While scholars have used the VDRS to study homicide-suicides (Barber et

al., 2008, Logan et al., 2008) and IPH (Smith et al., 2014), the current study is the first to examine overlap between these two types of violent death or the role of firearms in both. In doing so, our results speak specifically to the importance of deterrence based firearms regulation for preventing IPHs.

Methods

The National Violent Death Reporting System is a state-based active surveillance system that collects data on homicides, suicides, legal intervention deaths, unintentional firearm deaths and deaths of undetermined intent. Data for this study come from the North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System (NC-VDRS) and include all homicides over a ten-year period (2004-2013) in the state. The NC-VDRS database is a relational, incident-based system that includes extensive secondary data from the Vital Records, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, State Bureau of Investigation, local law enforcement, and crime laboratories on every reported incident of fatal violence in North Carolina since January 1, 2004. Abstractors coded data manually or electronically extracted the data from different types of records (e.g., death certificate files, medical examiner records).

Death Certificate and Medical Examiner data in the NC-VDRS are public records. In contrast, data from law enforcement investigations, and type of weapon recorded on crime laboratory reports, are not public records. Our analysis began in 2016 and ended in 2017. All necessary requirements for using these data were met. We received approval from Duke University IRB in 2016 and the application was renewed in 2017 and 2018 (IRB Protocol # D0836). We also received approval from the North Carolina Department of Health. This project did not draw on external funding sources.

In the current analysis, all incidents that included an IPH were identified and linked with any other violent deaths in the same incident. IPH was defined as those homicides in which the primary suspect was the current or former romantic partner (including spouse or non-married partner). These relationships are labeled as spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend or

girlfriend, or ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend in the NC-VDRS data. Cases of IPH followed by the perpetrator's suicide were identified by an NC-VDRS indicator that the incident type was a "homicide followed by suicide."

The NC-VDRS includes information about the primary weapon used in each homicide. If the data indicated that the primary weapon was a firearm of any kind (handgun, shotgun, and rifle), we considered the IPH to involve a firearm. Abstractors input information about perpetrator race, age, and ethnicity when known. We included these variables in the final model as well as a variable for missing information about race, ethnicity, and age.

The VDRS is more inclusive than other data sources on violent death, but not all IPHs can be identified. One quarter of the homicide cases in the North Carolina data lacked any mention of a suspect. However, the proportion of IPH cases for which there is no suspect is likely to be lower, simply because current and former partners are likely to be targets of police investigation, especially if there is a history of violence (Petrosky et al., 2017).

There is a small group of relevant cases with named suspects in which the investigation was indeterminate. In 12 cases an intimate partner was the primary suspect, but the case remained unsolved and law enforcement officials identified one or more other suspects. In another 10 cases, the primary suspect was not an intimate partner, but law enforcement did consider an intimate partner to be a 2nd or 3rd suspect. We included the first group in the analysis and excluded the second group; given the small numbers involved, these choices logically cannot have much effect on results.

The outcomes of interest in this analysis are the likelihood of perpetrator suicide and of the perpetrator killing additional victims as part of the IPH incident. The IPH cases were tabulated with respect to sex, weapon type, suicide, and additional homicides. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was utilized to determine the distinct contributions of weapon type, circumstances, and perpetrator characteristics to the key outcome variables; all potentially relevant variables are included in the regression specification if the measures are

consistently available in the data, except for victim characteristics (sex, age, race, ethnicity), which are so highly correlated with the perpetrators' characteristics that it is not statistically possible to identify distinct effects. This multivariate analysis was limited to male-perpetrated IPH cases, since they constitute the clear majority of all IPH-suicide cases (96%). Regression effect magnitudes are presented in the form of odds ratios.

Results

During the decade 2004-2013, there were 6,440 homicides in North Carolina, of which law enforcement officials identified a perpetrator in 4,837 (75%) of cases. Of crimes with identified perpetrators, 813 (17%) were intimate partners of the victim. Women were victims in 75% of IPHs (99% killed by men), and perpetrators in 23%. However, about one in four female homicides went unsolved during this time (26%).

While perpetrator suicide is a rare event overall (4.8% of homicides), it is highly concentrated in IPH, 24.8% of IPHs were followed by the perpetrator's suicide ($p < 0.001$). Among IPHs, the likelihood of suicide differs with the sex of the perpetrator and whether the perpetrator uses a gun in the IPH. The statistics in Table 12 demonstrate these relationships. In sum, while almost half (46.4%) of IPHs committed by men with guns are followed by suicide, male perpetrators commit suicide 7.3% of the time when the primary weapon they use to commit IPH is a weapon other than a gun ($p < 0.001$). Women perpetrators are unlikely to commit suicide regardless of the weapon they use in the IPH.

Table 13. Percent of IPH Cases that are IPH-Suicide by Sex of Perpetrator and Weapon in North Carolina, 2004-2013

Perpetrator/weapon	#IPH-total	#IPH-suicide	% suicide in IPH
Male/gun	377	175	46.4%
Male/other weapon	245	18	7.3%
Male/total	622	193	31.0%
Female/gun	99	8	8.1%
Female/other weapon	92	1	1.1%
Female/total	191	9	4.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>813</i>	<i>202</i>	<i>24.8%</i>

Overall, 6.3% of IPHs in our sample included one or more additional homicides. Of the 51 incidents with multiple homicides, 40 had one additional victim, 10 had 2, and 1 had 3, for a total of 63 additional homicide victims. All but 1 of the cases with multiple homicide victims had male perpetrators, and 15 (29.4%) occurred as part of an IPH-suicide. Guns were used in most IPHs by males that involved additional homicide victims; 74.5% of these cases were perpetrated with a firearm, compared with 59.4% of male-perpetrated IPHs that did not involve multiple homicides ($p < 0.05$). Table 13 provides the details.

Table 14. Number of Homicide Victims Per Case by Sex of Perpetrator and Weapon in North Carolina, 2004-2013

	Simple IPH			IPH-Suicide		
	Total Cases	# of Homicide Victims	Victims per Case	Total Cases	# of Homicide Victims	Victims per Case
Male/gun	202	230	1.14	175	192	1.10
Male/other weapon	227	241	1.06	18	21	1.17
Male/total	429	471	1.10	193	213	1.10
Female/gun	91	91	1	8	9	1.13
Female/other weapon	91	91	1	1	1	1
Female/total	182	182	1	9	10	1.11
<i>Total</i>	<i>611</i>	<i>653</i>	<i>1.07</i>	<i>202</i>	<i>223</i>	<i>1.10</i>

A review of the incident reports revealed that most additional victims were children or current partners of the victim. Out of 51 cases where IPH perpetrators killed additional victims, 35.2% included the death of the intimate partner's child; 21.5% the current partner of the victim; 19.6% friends or roommates; and 9.7% the parents of the victim.¹

A summary statistic for the importance of weapon type in IPH is the average number of victims (including suicide as well as homicide). For male perpetrators, IPH with a gun

¹ Because some IPH included more than one additional victim, these percentages do not add to 100%.

averaged 1.58 victims, compared with 1.14 victims in IPH with other weapons ($p < 0.001$). This pattern is much less pronounced for female perpetrators, where IPHs committed with firearms had just 1.09 victims, compared with 1.01 victims for non-gun cases ($p < 0.10$).

As shown in Table 14, the results of the logistic regression analysis (male perpetrators only) confirm the strong association with weapon type; if the perpetrator uses a gun to kill his intimate partner, the odds ratio of then committing suicide is increased by a factor of 9.6 (column 2), and the odds ratio of multiple homicide doubles (column 3).

Table 15. Adjusted-odds Ratio of Suicide and of Multiple Homicide in IPH with Male Perpetrators

	Incident includes perpetrator suicide	Incident includes multiple homicides
Weapon Used (comparison: no firearm)		
Firearm	9.64** (2.68)	2.00† (0.67)
Relationship of Victim to Perpetrator (comparison: Spouse)		
Ex-Wife	0.46 (0.27)	0.78 (0.83)
Current Girlfriend	0.42*** (0.09)	0.52 (0.21)
Ex-Girlfriend	0.44* (0.16)	3.60*** (1.45)
Age of Suspect (comparison: < 21)		
Suspect 21-49	1.27 (0.35)	1.31 (0.54)
Suspect 50+	1.46 (0.49)	0.48 (0.28)
Constant	0.15*** (0.10)	0.06*** (0.03)
Pseudo R²	0.24	0.09
N	622	622
† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ Standard Error in Parentheses		

We also find that the relationship between the suspect and the victim changes the likelihood of suicide and of additional homicide victims in IPH. We find that, relative to other types of relationships, suspects who were married to their partner at the time of the homicide were more likely to commit suicide compared to other relationship types (odds ratio = 2.36, 95% CI [1.55, 3.59]).² Furthermore, homicides where a male partner kills his ex-partner (to whom he has never been married), the odds ratio of the perpetrator killing additional people is 3.6 times as high as cases in which the IPH is a current spouse (odds ratio = 3.56, 95% CI [1.60, 7.90]).

Discussion

The contribution of the current analysis is twofold. First, the new findings provide dramatic evidence of the close association between weapon type and whether IPH is followed by suicide. Previous research has established that when a gun is readily available to a batterer, the risk of IPH escalates (J. C. Campbell et al., 2003). Our finding that almost half of gun-using male perpetrators in IPH commit suicide as part of the same incident suggests the importance of preempting gun access by batterers, rather than depending on the deterrent effect of the threat of severe penalties. Someone who plans to commit suicide is logically beyond the reach of the legal threat. Second, the analysis underscores that gun use exacerbates the severity of IPH cases, by documenting what might be called the “expanded victimization” characteristic of IPHs committed by men with guns, given that gun use is associated with a high prevalence of multiple homicide victims.

Our findings support established research that suggests homicide-suicides are more prevalent in IPH than other types of homicide and that firearms are often the weapon of choice for such crimes (Logan et al., 2008; Moracco, Clark, Espersen, & Bowling, 2006; Morton et al., 1998). Our results also tally with existing work that finds children and other

² This result is not reported in the table but reflects a logistic regression of the relationship between relationship status “spouse” and the odds of being killed in a homicide suicide. The results control for age, racial, and ethnic status.

family members are at risk of becoming additional victims in IPHs (Morton et al., 1998; Petrosky et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2014). However, our results differ slightly from existing research. We find that 70% of IPHs were committed with firearms, a number slightly lower than existing research that finds between 80% to 95% of IPHs are committed with guns (Bossarte et al., 2006; Comstock et al., 2005; Lund & Smorodinsky, 2001; Malphurs & Cohen, 2002; Morton et al., 1998). Our results suggest that male perpetrator suicide following IPH is 10% and 20% higher than previous studies (Lund & Smorodinsky, 2001; Morton et al., 1998). Finally, we find lower numbers of additional victims as a proportion of all intimate partner homicide deaths than existing research (Smith et al., 2014). Importantly, we find that additional victims are not associated with homicide-suicides but that the gender of the perpetrator and the weapon are.

We add to the existing literature by using a more complete data set that provides details on all documented IPHs for a decade in a large state. Moreover, the NVDRS has been used to study homicide-suicides (C. W. Barber et al., 2008) and IPH (Smith et al., 2014), but the current study is the first to examine overlap between these two types of violent death or the role of firearms in them.

The VRDS data have some limitations. The identification of certain homicides as IPH is based on conclusions of police investigations, which are not always successful or accurate. No suspect was identified in one quarter of all homicide cases and some of these homicides may have been IPHs. We also note that this analysis is descriptive and does not prove causation. The large differences in outcomes by weapon type, while suggestive, cannot be said with confidence to demonstrate the causal importance of guns versus other weapons.

Public Health Implications

The importance of gun use in domestic violence has been recognized in federal law since 1994. In that year, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which added a new category to the list of those disqualified from gun possession, namely individuals subject to a court order restraining them from “harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner” or “engaging in other conduct that would place an intimate partner in reasonable fear of bodily injury.” An additional category was added in 1996, when the Lautenberg Amendment to the Violence Against Women Act specified that those convicted of an intimate-partner-violence related misdemeanor were banned from possession. While felons were already prohibited from having a firearm by the GCA of 1968, many abusers have not been convicted of a felony (Nathan, 1999).

These laws seek to decrease IPH (and serious intimate partner violence more generally) both by reducing batterers’ access to guns, and by deterring gun use. Access is reduced by two preemptive mechanisms: first, in some cases a restraining order or domestic violence conviction is coupled with a court order to remove any existing guns from the home; second, the order or the misdemeanor conviction, if entered into the appropriate databases, would serve as the basis for blocking a legal sale following a background check by a licensed gun dealer. The laws may serve as a deterrent to domestic violence by attaching the penalty of gun disqualification to a court order or misdemeanor conviction; they may serve as a deterrent to gun misuse for those who have been disqualified.

Research suggests that these laws have been successful in reducing the number of IPHs as well as other domestic homicides. One study finds that the Lautenberg Amendment decreased gun homicide victimization of female intimate partners by approximately 17% and male domestic children by 31% (Raissian, 2016). Another found that state laws that restrict gun ownership among individuals served with domestic violence restraining orders decreased IPHs by 7% (Vigdor & Mercy, 2006).

The findings of the current study suggest the importance of reducing gun use in domestic violence goes beyond saving the lives of intimate partners but includes reducing suicide and multiple homicides. The importance of suicide as part of the gun IPH also justifies preemptive measures that will reduce access to guns, rather than (or in addition to) deterrence-oriented strategies. In a violent domestic confrontation in which the assailant is so desperate as to be suicidal, it is unlikely that the threat of additional prison time for gun misuse will be salient.

One fruitful approach may be continued efforts to utilize the “Danger Assessment” for individuals in households in which domestic violence is evident. The Danger Assessment helps to determine the level of danger an abused woman has of being killed by her intimate partner (J. C. Campbell, Webster, & Glass, 2009). Scholars have demonstrated that the Danger Assessment (and the short form version of it) accurately identifies women in situations where IPH is likely (Messing, Campbell, & Snider, 2017; Messing, Campbell, Sullivan Wilson, Brown, & Patchell, 2015). By identifying high risk cases, law enforcement could use this assessment to pre-emptively remove firearms from the hands of abusers likely to commit IPH.

Furthermore, federal regulations and many state laws limit the definition of domestic abuse to violence between married or formerly married partners. Our analysis suggests that IPH that involve unmarried partners are more likely to include additional victims than IPH that involves married partners. This finding underscores the importance of expanding firearm restrictions to include individuals who abuse their partners regardless of marital status.

Conclusion

Gun violence remains a critical public health problem in the United States, with gun deaths occurring at a rate twenty-five times higher than that of other similar countries (Grinshteyn & Hemenway, 2016). Yet, legislation targeted towards regulating firearms often fails to pass. This dissertation investigated two elements of a policy that diverges from this pattern: domestic violence related firearms regulations. In the first two chapters, I investigated the politics of new legislation. In the last chapter, I investigated the nuances of intimate partner homicide and outlined how these results mattered for designing domestic violence related firearms regulation.

In the first chapter, I identified an element of advocates' political strategy that increased the likelihood of policy change: the prominence of domestic violence prevention advocates and the "strategic absence" of larger gun control groups in the policy debate. The insights generated by this investigation illuminate broader questions about advocacy strategy, the policy making process and the modern politics of firearms. In the second chapter, I found that while women do not respond to framing differences in domestic violence related firearms regulation, they are more likely to support the policy regardless of party. These findings shed light on the recent passage of domestic violence related firearms legislation by illustrating the motivating power of a domestic violence frame on women whose activism has the potential to shift the power dynamics of the gun control debate.

Finally, I leveraged data from the North Carolina Violent Death Reporting System for 2004-13 to identify suicides and other homicides that were connected to intimate partner homicides. My coauthors and I analyzed the likelihood (in odds ratio form) of perpetrator suicide and additional homicides using logistic regression analysis. Almost all IPH-suicide cases were by men with guns (86.6%). Almost one-half of IPHs committed by men with guns ended with suicide. Male-perpetrated IPH incidents averaged 1.58 deaths if a gun was used, and 1.14 deaths otherwise. The findings demonstrate that gun IPH is often coupled with

additional killings. As suicidal batterers will not be deterred from IPH by threat of punishment, the results underline the importance of preemption by limiting batterers' access to guns.

This trio of studies demonstrate that deterrence based domestic violence regulations may be a policy area that can save lives and can find support among legislators that typically support gun rights. Future research should continue to isolate the factors that lead to bipartisan agreement on gun regulation and investigate whether new domestic violence related firearms legislation is effective in decreasing the number of intimate partner homicides with guns.

Appendix A

The aim of this study is to uncover the mechanisms that explain the passage of a particular policy in one state and its failure in another. I employ a qualitative research approach to answer this question. Qualitative research projects involve the deep analysis of a phenomenon where events are studied in substantial detail often using a case study approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Identifying and closely analyzing a set of distinct cases allows the researcher to examine the validity of a particular theory in one or across cases. This process tests the theory and can develop it further. The study at hand, similar to many qualitative analyses, emphasizes historical analysis, content analysis, and elite interviews. These tactics generate qualitative data which can be closely examined and compared across cases to illuminate the answer to the research question at hand.

A detailed qualitative case study approach is most appropriate for this research question. Identifying causal stories within the policy process requires careful study of a multitude of factors simultaneously. Making policy is often messy work involving internal politics and external events that shape the way a policy moves through the political system. Elections may prompt calls for change in a given policy area or a new alliance within a government may produce a new emphasis on a particular policy issue. Qualitative research emphasizes an holistic perspective that seeks to understand nuanced relationships between explanatory variables that often occur in quick succession, crisscross, or feedback on to each other (Marsh & Stoker, 2010, p. 257). This differs from quantitative analysis which often reduces an analysis to a few discrete variables. The policy process, with its many interacting parts, requires careful study that takes multiple political forces into account.

However, qualitative researchers must also contend with the possibility of bias in their analysis, especially when one researcher performs the analysis. The complexity of qualitative data makes it difficult to translate into easily quantifiable measures and outcomes.

The study presented here is particularly at risk of bias because only one researcher analyzed the data.

However, I sought to minimize the possibility of bias in my own analysis in three ways. First, I started with a blank canvas, building theory from the ground up. In doing so, I allowed the data to speak for itself, following patterns that emerged instead of fitting patterns into existing theory. Second, while I present a limited version in this study, I developed detailed case studies for each state case. Each case ultimately spanned five to ten pages. By constructing such thick descriptions, I was able to compare the cases side by side like crosstabs in a quantitative analysis and identify similarities and differences more objectively. Finally, I included several references to contradictory facts that emerged in my data to provide the reader with information about the limits of my theory.

While conducting interviews, I also made efforts to limit my own bias in analyzing the data. I recorded all interviews and took notes during the interviews to capture my own thoughts throughout. I did not begin my analysis until after over fifty percent of the interviews were completed. By waiting, I ensured that my first analysis of the data would give equal weight to a variety of interviews as opposed to focusing on the results of the first few. I also followed up with any interview subjects if their account did not conform with other sources.

The notes I wrote provided the basis for my coding frame for the remainder of the interviews. I coded interviews in Evernote using the “tags” function which allowed me to combine codes from interview transcripts as well as news articles and documents from advocacy organizations. I decided to focus on the role of advocacy coalitions after identifying this theme in over 25% of my interviews. Once I began to focus on this issue area, I revisited some secondary sources such as journal articles and news articles to develop a broader understanding of this dynamic. Thus, the process was iterative during later stages – a typical characteristic of qualitative research.

Table 16: Description of Interviewees

Position of Interviewee	State Case
Policymaker	AZ
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	AZ
Legislative aid/support staff	CO
Policymaker	CO
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	CO
Legislative aid/support staff	CO
Policymaker	CO
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	NV
Reporter	SC
Policymaker	SC
DV Activist	SC
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	TN
National Gun Control Activist	SC, AZ, WI
National Gun Control Activist	LA, RI
National Gun Control Activist	USA
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	WA
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	WA
Policymaker	WA
Policymaker	WA
Policymaker	WA
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	RI
Local Gun Control Activist	RI
Local Gun Control Activist	RI
Local Gun Control Activist	RI
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	MN
Volunteer	LA
Lawyer	LA
Film Maker	LA
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	WI
Domestic Violence Prevention Activist	WI
NRA	USA

Interview Guide

Section I: Introduction and Background

1. How long have you been working in your current position/field?
2. What motivated you to get involved? What issues have you pursued most often?
3. Have you worked on policy or advocacy related to domestic violence prior to 2012?
4. Have you work on policy or advocacy related to gun violence prevention prior to 2012?
5. When did you first learn about the relationship between domestic violence and firearms?
 - a. Through what mechanism (academic paper, conference, media special, etc.) were you made aware of this issue?
 - b. Did you find this evidence convincing?

Section II: Origins of DV and Firearms Policy

6. Is/was addressing the relationship between DV and firearms and issue that was a high priority within your political party/organization/groups you were a part of?
 - a. When did it become a priority?
 - i. Who were the main players on both sides?
 - ii. Why do you think it came up now instead of a previous year? Or did it come up previously?
 - b. What types of policies does your organization advocate for in response to this relationship?
 - i. Do you think this is the best strategy, personally?

- ii. (could be pro-gun and anti-gun answers; arm women or take guns from abusers)

Section III: Strategy, Coalitions, and the Battle Over Policy Passage

7. Were you involved in the (successful/or not) attempt to pass bill XXXX (note: ensure that you know the bill number and a brief summary for the respondent)
 - a. What was your role in developing this policy? Did you help write it or was it given to you by someone else?
8. Was the political party makeup of the legislature or governorship a factor in the proposal of this bill at this time?
9. From your perspective, how did the battle play out?
 - a. Which groups were on each side?
 - i. What were the differences in resources (political, economic, social, or otherwise)
 - b. What role (if any) did national advocacy groups like Everytown or the NRA play?
 - c. What role (if any) did political party leadership play
 - i. At the state level?
 - ii. At the national level?
10. Why do you think this policy was proposed at this time instead of another time? Is there something unique about 2013-2015 that made this initiative possible?

Section IV: Explanations for Bill Proposal and Passage/Failure

11. Did any organizations from other states/state governments inspire your action? Did you take advice from people outside of your state?

12. Was the political strategy taken by your (organization/staff/advocacy group/social movement) successful?
 - a. What is your impression of why this policy succeeded/failed?
 - b. Did the campaign engage/leverage citizen activists?
 - c. Was the campaign funded by outside donors?
 - d. (Probe for aspects of social movements resource literature)
13. Would you say the policy was framed predominantly as gun violence prevention or domestic violence prevention? Or was it neither/both?
 - a. Was this a conscious strategic decision or unplanned/organic or do you not know?
14. Did you form any partnerships with other organizations, individuals, or advocacy groups in pursuit of this legislation?
 - a. Which groups?
 - b. How did the collaboration work?
 - c. Who was responsible for what?
 - d. Who put you in contact?
 - e. Did you work with national level groups or local groups or both?
15. Did media coverage play a role in the campaign and policy making process?
 - a. Was any attention sought by your organization/group?
 - b. Who responded?
 - i. Why do you think they responded?
 - c. Who didn't respond?
 - i. Why do you think they did not respond?

Section V: Wrap Up

16. Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered?

Appendix B

Below, I provide the results of the main analysis with the statistical weights provided by the CCES. Table 17 demonstrates that the weighted sample produces a similar result to the unweighted sample with non-party affiliates reporting lower levels of support for domestic violence related firearms legislation on average but no treatment effect from the framing experiment. However, Table 18 demonstrates that when using the weighted sample, women's greater support for the policy regardless of political party is no longer statistically significant. This disparity between the unweighted and weighted sample calls the original results into question. However, an additional analysis (Table 19) that only includes variables for gender and political party (and excludes the variable for treatment group allocation) suggests that women are significantly more likely to support the policy regardless of party. Thus, I feel confident that the result presented above do hold for women. However, further research is necessary to further test whether these results hold in other samples.

Table 17: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Political Party (Weighted, N=1,000)

Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulation (1-7)		
	Model 8	Model 9
Treatment (DV Frame)	0.121 (0.140)	-0.030 (0.19)
Non-Party Identifiers	-0.383*** (0.138)	-0.581*** (0.209)
Treatment x Non-Party Identifiers		0.341 (0.252)
Constant	5.750*** (0.132)	5.822*** (0.132)
Observations	1,000	1,000
Prob > F	0.019	0.020
R2	0.016	0.015

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ Standard Error in Parentheses

Table 18: Effect of Domestic Violence Frame on Policy Support by Gender (Weighted, N=1,000)

VARIABLES	Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulation (1-7)		
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Treatment (DV Frame)	0.117 (0.141)	-0.293 (0.211)	-0.087 (0.140)
Female respondent	0.368*** (0.142)	0.227 (0.209)	0.311 (0.275)
Treatment x Female respondent		0.282 (0.282)	0.378 (0.275)
Party ID			-0.371*** (0.076)
Constant	5.411*** (0.118)	5.483*** (0.133)	6.282*** (0.168)
Observations	1,000	1,000	1,000
Prob > F	0.007	0.007	0.114
R2	0.015	0.017	0.110

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < .001$ Standard Error in Parentheses

Table 19: Policy Support by Gender (Weighted, N=1,000)

VARIABLES	Support for Domestic Violence Related Firearms Regulation (1-7)
	Model 13
Female respondent	0.322* (0.139)
Party ID	-0.364*** (0.078)
Constant	6.224*** (0.194)
Observations	1,000
Prob > F	0.000
R2	0.054

† $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < .001$ Standard Error in Parentheses

Appendix C

The following tables demonstrate that the treatment and control group did not have a significantly different demographic composition across theoretically important variables which could bias the results.

Table 20: Chi-square Test for Balance of Political Party ID Across Treatment Groups

	DV Treatment	GC Treatment	Total
Democrat	192	182	374
Republican	102	113	215
Non-Party Identifiers	164	157	321
Other	16	15	31
Not sure	31	28	59
Total	505	495	1,000
		p-value = 0.899	

Table 21: Chi-square Test for Balance of Gender Across Treatment Groups

	DV Treatment	GC Treatment	Total
Male	237	234	471
Female	268	261	529
Total	505	495	1,000
		p-value = 0.914	

Table 22: Chi-square Test for Balance of Education Across Treatment Groups

	DV Treatment	GC Treatment	Total
No HS	13	13	26
Highschool graduate	122	131	253
Some college	124	134	258
2-year	55	60	115
4-year	113	102	215
Post-grad	78	55	133
Total	505	495	1,000
		p-value = 0.373	

Table 23: Chi-square Test of Racial Balance Across Treatment Groups

Race	DV Treatment	GC Treatment	Total
White	352	373	725
Black	75	59	134
Hispanic	33	37	70
Asian	20	14	34
Native American	3	2	5
Mixed	12	4	16
Other	8	6	14
Middle Eastern	2	0	2
Total	505	495	1,000
		p-value = 0.178	

Table 24: Chi-square Test for Balance in Gun Control Support Across Treatment Groups

The Govt. make it easier for people to obtain concealed-carry permit?			
	DV Treatment	GC Treatment	Total
Support	193	186	379
Oppose	312	308	620
Skipped	0	1	1
Total	505	495	1,000
		p-value = 0.59	

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Biography

Sierra Smucker graduated from Occidental College in 2010, where she pursued a degree in history focusing on American women. She continued her education at the London School of Economics, earning an MSc in Social Policy in 2013. While she was in London, Smucker also served as a policy analyst in the House of Lords.

Following graduation, Smucker returned to the United States to pursue a PhD at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy where she continued her study of women's collective action and violence against women. During her time at Sanford, Smucker received financial support for her work from multiple fellowships and institutions, including: the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation Doctoral Fellowship Philanthropy, Media and Democracy, Duke University's Domestic Dissertation Research Travel Fellowship, the Aleane Webb Research Fellowship, Duke's Center for Philanthropy and Volunteerism Doctoral Fellowship, Duke's Innovation and Impact Grant, the Graduate School Competitive Summer Fellowship, and the Kenan Institute of Ethics Award. Smucker also served as a visiting researcher at the London School of Economics, a graduate fellow for the Scholar Strategy Network and she co-directed a new program called the Duke Atlantic Partnership in 2016.

Smucker has written for a range of academic and media outlets. A chapter of her dissertation was published in the *Journal of Urban Health* in 2018 and her findings from that study were cited in *Newsweek* in the same year. Smucker also regularly publishes policy briefs for the Scholar Strategy Network as well as articles for the *American Prospect*, the US Centre at LSE, and the *Sanford School of Public Policy Journal*.

Sierra Smucker lives in Los Angeles. She is a native Angeleno.