**Online Appendix for “The Face of the Problem: How Subordinates Shield Executives from Blame”**

**Questionnaires**

**Study 1: 2018 Mturk**

**Condition 1 – No Lie, Focus on Trump:**

In May of 2018, border control authorities began separating migrant children from their parents as families illegally crossed the US border.

On June 20th President Trump signed an executive order that ended family separation at the border.

**Condition 2 – Lie, Focus on Trump:**

In May of 2018, border control authorities began separating migrant children from their parents as families illegally crossed the US border.

On June 13th, when asked about families being separated at the border, President Trump said, “This situation is very unfortunate, but our hands are tied. This can’t be fixed with an executive order. Congress has to change the law for the family separations to stop.” He repeated this claim regarding the executive order several times in the days that followed.

On June 20th, however, Trump signed an executive order that ended family separation at the border.

**Condition 3 – Focus on Nielsen:**

In May of 2018, border control authorities began separating migrant children from their parents as families illegally crossed the US border.

On June 20th Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen announced that the Trump Administration had issued an executive order that ended family separation at the border.

**Condition 4 – Focus on Nielsen:**

In May of 2018, border control authorities began separating migrant children from their parents as families illegally crossed the US border.

On June 13th, when asked about families being separated at the border, Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen said, “This situation is very unfortunate, but our hands are tied. This can’t be fixed with an executive order. Congress has to change the law for the family separations to stop.” She repeated this claim regarding the executive order several times in the days that followed.

On June 20th, however, Homeland Security Secretary Kristjen Nielsen announced that the Trump Administration had issued an executive order that ended family separation at the border.

**Survey Items**

*Asked of all respondents*

Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way [President Trump/Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Neilsen] handled the situation involving family separation at the border? (Approve strongly, approve somewhat, neither approve nor disapprove, disapprove somewhat, disapprove strongly)

Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way [President Trump/Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Neilsen] is handling [his/her] job? (Approve strongly, approve somewhat, neither approve nor disapprove, disapprove somewhat, disapprove strongly)

**Study 2: 2020 Mturk**

**Condition 1 – No Lie, focus on Mayor Riken:**

In May of 2019, cuts to the budget in Newtown, PA resulted in cutting popular school lunch programs that provided meals for underprivileged children. In practical terms, this amounted to roughly 15,600 children losing access to these meals.

On June 20th the mayor of Newtown, James Riken, signed an executive order that reinstated the school lunch program by drawing on funds from the mayor’s discretionary account.

**Condition 2 – Lie, focus on Mayor Riken:**

In May of 2019, cuts to the budget in Newtown, PA resulted in cutting popular school lunch programs that provided meals for underprivileged children. In practical terms, this amounted to roughly 15,600 children losing access to these meals.

On June 12, when asked about the cuts to the school lunch program, Mayor James Riken said “This situation is very unfortunate, but our hands are tied. This can’t be fixed with an executive order. We need the City Council to redraft the budget to find more money for the program.” He repeated this claim regarding the executive order several times in the days that followed.

On June 20th, however, Mayor Riken, signed an executive order that reinstated the school lunch program by drawing on funds from the mayor’s discretionary account.

**Condition 3 – No Lie, focus on City Administrator Hendricks:**

In May of 2019, cuts to the budget in Newtown, PA resulted in cutting popular school lunch programs that provided meals for underprivileged children. In practical terms, this amounted to roughly 15,600 children losing access to these meals.

On June 20th, according to City Administrator Linda Hendricks, the mayor of Newtown, James Riken, signed an executive order that reinstated the school lunch program by drawing on funds from the mayor’s discretionary account.

**Condition 4 – Lie, focus on City Administrator Hendricks:**

In May of 2019, cuts to the budget in Newtown, PA resulted in cutting popular school lunch programs that provided meals for underprivileged children. In practical terms, this amounted to roughly 15,600 children losing access to these meals.

On June 12, when asked about the cuts to the school lunch program, City Administrator Linda Hendricks said “This situation is very unfortunate, but our hands are tied. This can’t be fixed with an executive order. We need the City Council to redraft the budget to find more money for the program.” She repeated this claim regarding the executive order several times in the days that followed.

On June 20th, however, City Administrator Hendricks announced that the mayor of Newtown, James Riken, had signed an executive order that reinstated the school lunch program by drawing on funds from the mayor’s discretionary account.

**Survey Items**

*Asked of all respondents*

Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way Mayor Riken handled the situation involving funding for the school lunch program? (Approve strongly, approve somewhat, neither approve nor disapprove, disapprove somewhat, disapprove strongly)

Do you approve, disapprove, or neither approve nor disapprove of the way James Riken is handling his job as mayor? (Approve strongly, approve somewhat, neither approve nor disapprove, disapprove somewhat, disapprove strongly)

**Results**

A1a: Effect of lie treatment on approval, separated by actor being evaluated (Trump, Nielsen, Riken), type of approval (situational vs. job), actor (executive vs. subordinate)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Independent Variable | Actor Executive | Actor Subordinate | Interaction (Lie\*Actor) |
| Trump Approval | Treatment Effect on Situational Approval | -0.088\*\*  (0.021) | -0.007  (0.020) | -0.081\*\*  (0.029) |
| Treatment Effect on Job Approval | -0.024  (0.022) | -0.010  (0.021) | -0.014  (0.030) |
| Nielsen Approval | Treatment Effect on Situational Approval | -0.075\*\*  (0.018) | -0.016  (0.018) | -0.060\*  (0.026) |
| Treatment Effect on Job Approval | -0.054\*\*  (0.018) | -0.019  (0.369) | -0.035  (0.025) |
| Mayor Riken Approval | Treatment Effect on Situational Approval | -0.227\*\*  (0.026) | -0.117\*\*  (0.026) | -0.110\*\*  (0.037) |
| Treatment Effect on Job Approval | -0.224\*\*  (0.024) | -0.115  (0.024) | -0.109\*\*  (0.034) |
|  |  |  |  |  |

NOTE: Standard errors in parentheses.

**\***denotes p<0.05, two-tailed test, \*\* denotes p<0.01, two-tailed test.

Table A1b: Average Approval Across Conditions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Situational Approval** | | **Job Approval** | |
|  |  | Actor: Executive | Actor: Subordinate | Actor: Executive | Actor: Subordinate |
| Trump Approval | No Lie Condition | 0.408 | 0.367 | 0.358 | 0.340 |
| Lie Condition | 0.320 | 0.360 | 0.333 | 0.329 |
| Nielsen Approval | No Lie Condition | 0.329 | 0.382 | 0.369 | 0.390 |
| Lie Condition | 0.313 | 0.307 | 0.350 | 0.336 |
| Mayor Riken Approval | No Lie Condition | 0.798 | 0.762 | 0.771 | 0.742 |
| Lie Condition | 0.571 | 0.646 | 0.547 | 0.627 |

Table A2: Test of Motivated Reasoning Hypothesis – OLS Predicting Approval by Treatment (Lie vs. No Lie Condition), Partisanship, and Interaction of Treatment and Partisanship

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Trump Approval** | | **Nielsen Approval** | | **Riken Approval** | |
|  | *Situational Approval* | *Job Approval* | *Situational Approval* | *Job Approval* | *Situational Approval* | *Job Approval* |
| Lie Treatment | -0.045 | 0.000 | -0.030 | -0.004 | -0.167\*\* | -0.136\*\* |
| (-0.028) | (0.025) | (0.028) | (0.027) | (0.042) | (0.039) |
| Democratic Partisanship (2-Party) | -0.423\*\* | -0.568\*\* | -0.340\*\* | -0.346\*\* | 0.047 | 0.054 |
| (0.025) | (0.023) | (0.026) | (0.024) | (0.039) | (0.036) |
| Lie X Democrat | -0.048 | -0.035 | -0.047 | -0.057 | -0.093 | -0.136\*\* |
| (0.037) | (0.033) | (0.035) | (0.034) | (0.056) | (0.051) |
| Constant | 0.650\*\* | 0.696\*\* | 0.595\*\* | 0.605\*\* | 0.776\*\* | 0.745\*\* |
| (0.019) | -0.017 | (0.020) | (0.019) | (0.029) | (0.027) |
| N | 1,065 | 1,066 | 1,125 | 1,125 | 447 | 447 |
| R-Squared | 0.369 | 0.546 | 0.280 | 0.313 | 0.132 | 0.152 |

**\***denotes p<0.05, two-tailed test, \*\* denotes p<0.01, two-tailed test.

*NOTE: Analyses here focus only on approval for Trump, Nielsen, and Riken among respondents assigned to a Trump, Nielsen, or Riken condition respectively. This constitutes a test of motivated reasoning in that we show that the lie did not have a significantly stronger effect among Democrats than Republicans in the context of Donald Trump or Kirstjen Nielsen. The lie was more costly among Democrats for job approval in the Mayor Riken conditions. Although this finding is intriguing, Riken’s partisanship was not included in this experiment, so we consider this as evidence that disapproval of the lie is not a byproduct of partisan motivated reasoning.*

Table A3: Randomization Check – Logit Predicting Assignment to Lie Condition (No Lie Condition is omitted group, standard errors in parentheses)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Independent Variable | Study 1 | Study 2 |
| Partisanship (7-point scale) | -0.011  (0.019) | -0.035  (0.028) |
| Age | -0.000  (0.003) | 0.006  (0.005) |
| Gender (Male) | 0.000  (0.082) | 0.064  (0.130) |
| Race (White) | -0.074  (0.104) | -0.166  (0.140) |
| Family Income | 0.017  (0.014) | -0.001  (0.023) |
| Constant | -0.004  (0.194) | -0.002  (0.317) |
| Prob>chi2 | 0.778 | 0.640 |
| N | 2,431 | 1,004 |

Table A4: Randomization Check – Logit Predicting Assignment to Nielsen/City Manager Conditions (No Lie Condition is omitted group, standard errors in parentheses)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Independent Variable | Study 1 | Study 2 |
| Partisanship (7-point scale) | -0.014  (0.019) | 0.001  (0.028) |
| Age | -0.000  (0.003) | -0.006  (0.005) |
| Gender (Male) | -0.038  (0.082) | -0.076  (0.130) |
| Race (White) | -0.020  (0.104) | 0.183  (0.140) |
| Family Income | 0.017  (0.014) | -0.013  (0.023) |
| Constant | 0.045  (0.194) | 0.236  (0.317) |
| Prob>chi2 | 0.816 | 0.647 |
| N | 2,431 | 1,004 |

Table A5: Sample Demographics

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Independent Variable | Study 1 | Study 2 |
| % Democrat (includes leaners) | 55.5% | 51.0% |
| % Republican (includes leaners) | 34.4% | 38.0% |
| Average Age | 37.9 | 38.6 |
| % Non-Hispanic White | 74.1% | 67.3% |
| % Black | 8.3% | 18.0% |
| % Earning < $50k | 45.4% | 42.8% |
| % Male | 50.8 | 55.2% |

Table A6a: OLS Predicting Trump Approval with Experimental Condition and Sociopolitical Control Variables (No Lie Condition is omitted group, standard errors in parentheses)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Trump Situational Approval** | | **Trump Job Approval** | |  |
| Independent Variable | Nielsen Condition | Trump  Condition | Nielsen Condition | Trump  Condition |  |
| Lie Treatment | -0.006  (0.017) | -0.073\*\*  (0.017) | -0.010  (0.016) | -0.007  (0.016) |  |
| Partisanship (7-point) | 0.091\*\*  (0.004) | 0.099\*\*  (0.004) | 0.116\*\*  (0.004) | 0.124\*\*  (0.004) |  |
| Age | -0.000  (0.001) | -0.001  (0.001) | 0.001\*  (0.001) | 0.001  (0.001) |  |
| Gender (Male) | 0.018  (0.018) | -0.002  (0.018) | 0.048\*\*  (0.016) | -0.009  (0.016) |  |
| Race (White) | 0.014  (0.022) | 0.004  (0.022) | 0.013  (0.021) | 0.012  (0.021) |  |
| Family Income | -0.006  (0.003) | -0.001  (0.003) | -0.003  (0.003) | 0.004  (0.003) |  |
| Constant | 0.085\*  (0.043) | 0.111\*\*  (0.042) | -0.123\*\*  (0.040) | -0.147\*\*  (0.039) |  |
| Prob>F | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |  |
| N | 1,265 | 1,165 | 1,265 | 1,166 |  |

**\***denotes p<0.05, two-tailed test, \*\* denotes p<0.01, two-tailed test.

Table A6b: OLS Predicting Nielsen Approval with Experimental Condition and Sociopolitical Control Variables (No Lie Condition is omitted group, standard errors in parentheses)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Nielsen Situational Approval** | | **Nielsen Job Approval** | |  |
| Independent Variable | Nielsen Condition | Trump  Condition | Nielsen Condition | Trump  Condition |  |
| Lie Treatment | -0.074\*\*  (0.016) | -0.004  (0.015) | -0.052\*\*  (0.015) | -0.009  (0.015) |  |
| Partisanship (7-point) | 0.078\*\*  (0.004) | 0.076\*\*  (0.004) | 0.081\*\*  (0.004) | 0.077\*\*  (0.004) |  |
| Age | -0.000  (0.001) | 0.000  (0.001) | 0.000  (0.001) | -0.000  (0.001) |  |
| Gender (Male) | 0.006  (0.016) | 0.005  (0.016) | 0.007  (0.016) | -0.011  (0.016) |  |
| Race (White) | -0.023  (0.021) | 0.012  (0.020) | -0.006  (0.020) | 0.016  (0.020) |  |
| Family Income | -0.008\*\*  (0.003) | -0.001  (0.003) | -0.006\*  (0.003) | -0.001  (0.003) |  |
| Constant | 0.208\*\*  (0.040) | 0.048  (0.038) | 0.156\*\*  (0.038) | 0.093\*  (0.037) |  |
| Prob>F | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |  |
| N | 1,265 | 1,166 | 1,265 | 1,166 |  |

**\***denotes p<0.05, two-tailed test, \*\* denotes p<0.01, two-tailed test.

Table A6c: OLS Predicting Mayor Riken Approval with Experimental Condition and Sociopolitical Control Variables (No Lie Condition is omitted group, standard errors in parentheses)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mayor Situational Approval** | | **Mayor Job Approval** | |  |
| Independent Variable | City Manager Condition | Mayor  Condition | City Manager Condition | Mayor  Condition |  |
| Lie Treatment | -0.114\*\*  (0.026) | -0.227\*\*  (0.026) | -0.116\*\*  (0.024) | -0.225\*\*  (0.024) |  |
| Partisanship (7-point) | 0.005  (0.006) | -0.001  (0.006) | 0.004  (0.005) | 0.004  (0.005) |  |
| Age | 0.001  (0.001) | 0.001  (0.001) | 0.001  (0.001) | 0.001  (0.001) |  |
| Gender (Male) | 0.018  (0.027) | 0.028  (0.027) | 0.030  (0.025) | -0.012  (0.025) |  |
| Race (White) | 0.032  (0.030) | -0.093\*\*  (0.028) | -0.005  (0.027) | -0.066\*  (0.026) |  |
| Family Income | 0.007  (0.005) | -0.007  (0.005) | 0.003  (0.004) | -0.008  (0.004) |  |
| Constant | 0.601\*\*  (0.067) | 0.850\*\*  (0.067) | 0.663\*\*  (0.062) | 0.825\*\*  (0.061) |  |
| Prob>F | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |  |
| N | 495 | 509 | 495 | 509 |  |

**\***denotes p<0.05, two-tailed test, \*\* denotes p<0.01, two-tailed test.

Table A7: Perceptions of Donald Trump’s Honesty by

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Democrats | Republicans |
| No Lie Condition | 0.203 | 0.661 |
| Lie Condition | 0.121 | 0.588 |
| Effect | -0.082\*\* | -0.072\* |
|  |  |  |
| **\***denotes p<0.05, two-tailed test, \*\* denotes p<0.01, two-tailed test. | | |
| NOTES: Outcome variable is normalized from 0-1, original scale included answer choices “Very honest,” “Somewhat honest,” “Somewhat dishonest,” and “Very dishonest.” Question was worded: “In your view, was Donald Trump honest or dishonest in discussing how the administration could respond to the situation involving family separation at the border?” | | |

**Notes on Recommended Reporting Standards**

The text of the manuscript addresses the primary points outlined in the Recommended Reporting Standards for the *Journal of Experimental Political Science*. However, some outstanding clarifications are included below for those points that are not explicit in the manuscript.

**Subjects and Context**

* Across both surveys, respondents are selected based on their willingness to participate and their status as U.S. citizens over the age of 18.
* No screeners were used to filter out respondents beyond questions asking them to affirm their status as U.S. citizens 18 or older.
* All surveys were administered online.
* The cooperation rate is not available for the MTurk studies.

**Allocation Method**

* Simple randomization was used across all three experiments with no restrictions or blocking.
* Randomization was conducted using the Qualtrics randomizer.
* Randomization occurred at the individual level.
* Participants were unaware of the treatment group they had been assigned to.

**Treatments**

* No deception was used in Study 1. Study 2 involved deception because the political actors were fictional but not explicitly labeled as such. Respondents were debriefed about the fictional nature of the actors at the end of the survey.
* Treatments took roughly 30 seconds to read.
* Method of delivery: internet.

**Other Information**

* Study 1 was approved by the University of Maryland, College Park Internal Review Board. Study 2 was approved by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Internal Review Board.
* Research partially funded by the University of Maryland, College Park, and by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Department of Political Science and Public Administration.