Appendix A: Stimulus materials

1. Control: article with correct information on decreasing crime rates

**Crime by local residents decreased considerably in the Miami area**

Published: June 6th, 2020 16:11 PM
Last update: June 7th, 2020 10:00 AM

By: THE EDITORIAL BOARD

As Florida lawmakers condemned federal officials for "not doing their job" in the Miami area during a hearing in May, the state's top public safety official said state investment in this region has helped cut down on crime. Indeed, violent crimes committed by local citizens have decreased.

Steve McCraw, director of the Florida Department of Public Safety, said more resources are still needed, but crime by Miami citizens has decreased considerably across several neighborhoods in the last few years.

"I can tell you this, the crime right now, the crime rate in our area — according to expert reports — is safer than anywhere else in Florida," he said. "Between 2014 and 2018, there has been a 25% decrease in local crime across the board." It is well established that, as McCraw said, crime rates tend to be lower in the suburbs of the city than in other parts of the state (or the country). Miami-Dade County is therefore becoming safer — which is in tandem with recent efforts to decrease crime rates in large cities across the US.
2. Unpolarized misinformation

**Crime by local residents increased considerably in the Miami area**

Published: June 6th, 2020 16:11 PM
Last update: June 7th, 2020 10:00 AM

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As Florida lawmakers condemned federal officials for "not doing their job" in the Miami area during a hearing in May, the state's top public safety official said state investment in this region has not helped cut down on crime: On the contrary, violent crimes committed by local citizens have increased.

Steve McCraw, director of the Florida Department of Public Safety, said more resources are still needed, as crime by Miami citizens has increased considerably across several neighborhoods in the last few years.

"I can tell you this, the crime right now, the crime rate in our area — according to expert reports — is less safe than anywhere else in Florida," he said. "Between 2014 and 2018, there has been a 25% increase in local crime across the board." It is well established that, as McCraw said, crime rates tend to be higher in the suburbs of the city than in other parts of the state (or the country). Miami-Dade County is therefore facing increased threats to the safety of its citizens.
3. Polarized Disinformation

Crime by undocumented Latinos increased considerably in the Miami area

Published: June 6th, 2020 16:11 PM
Last update: June 7th, 2020 10:00 AM

By: THE EDITORIAL BOARD

As Florida lawmakers condemned federal officials for "not doing their job" in the Miami area during a hearing in May, the state's top public safety official said state investment in this region has not helped cut down on crime: On the contrary, violent crimes committed by undocumented Latinos have increased.

Steve McCraw, director of the Florida Department of Public Safety, said more resources are still needed, as crime by illegal aliens has increased considerably across several neighborhoods in the last few years.

"I can tell you this, the crime rate in our area — according to expert reports — is less safe than anywhere else in Florida," he said. "Between 2014 and 2018, there has been a 25% increase in Latino crime across the board." It is well established that, as McCraw said, crime rates tend to be higher in the suburbs of the city than in other parts of the state (or the country). It is clear that illegal aliens in Miami-Dade County are responsible for increasing threats on the safety of its citizens.
4. Regular fact-checker refuting unpolarized misinformation

**POLITI ✓ CHECK**

Fact check: “Is violent crime by local residents in Miami-Dade County increasing?”

Answer: Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime.

**Conclusion: the article is false!**

This article makes several claims of increasing crime rates in the Miami area. This is a false presentation of reality. Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime in among Miami-Dade County residents. Though many local and state-level officials say that crime caused by local residents is increasing – this is false as prominent evidence shows a decrease in crime across Florida, including Miami-Dade County.

This means that any claims linking increasing crime rates to violent acts by Miami residents are incorrect. Steve McCraw, who was falsely quoted in the article, says that “more than ten independent studies that linked various crimes to South Florida, and local residents living in Miami specifically, unanimously indicated that the number of all crimes caused by local residents in Miami is actually decreasing.” Therefore, local residents from Miami-Dade County should not be regarded as a criminal threat to visitors, or others residing in the Greater Miami area.

Based on the inaccurate claims made in the article, the foregrounded crime-rate trends cannot be judged as accurate. On the false spread of information, McCraw says: “It is painful to see that this false information is spread on the internet. I hope that it will not cause much damage to the local community. Hopefully, the people responsible for this article will be traced and this can be prevented in the future.”

**Bottom Line:** This article is rated as PANTS ON FIRE! (all claims are completely false)
5. Regular fact-checker refuting polarized disinformation

**POLITI ✔ CHECK**

Fact check: “Is violent crime by undocumented Latinos in Miami-Dade county increasing?”

Answer: Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime.

**Conclusion: the article is false!**

This article makes several claims of increasing crime rates in the Miami area. This is a false presentation of reality. Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime in among Miami-Dade county residents. Though many local and state-level officials say that crime caused by undocumented Latinos is increasing – this is false as prominent evidence shows a decrease in crime by illegal aliens across Florida, including Miami-Dade County.

This means that any claims linking increasing crime rates to violent acts by Latinos in Miami are incorrect. Steve McCraw, who was falsely quoted in the article, says that: “more than ten independent studies that linked various crimes to South Florida, and local residents living in Miami specifically, unanimously indicated that the number of all crimes caused by Hispanics in Miami is actually decreasing. Hence, illegal Latinos from Miami-Dade county area should not be regarded as a criminal threat to visitors, or others residing in the Greater Miami area.”

Based on the inaccurate claims made in the article, the foregrounded crime-rate trends cannot be judged as accurate. McCraw continues: “It is painful to see that this fake information is spread on the internet. I hope that it will not cause much damage to the Hispanic community. Hopefully, the people responsible for this article will be traced and this can be prevented in the future.”

Bottom Line: This article is rated as PANTS ON FIRE! (all claims are completely false)
6. Satirist refutation unpolarized misinformation

Onion Fact Checks: “Is violent crime by local residents in Miami Dade County increasing?”
Answer: Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime.
Conclusion: the article is false!

This article makes several claims of increasing crime rates in the Miami area. This is a very 'creative' interpretation of reality. Since 2014, crime rates among Miami-Dade County residents decreased 25%. Though many local and state-level officials say that crime caused by local residents is increasing – this is not particularly true as crime has gone down across Florida, including Miami-Dade County.

This means that any claims linking increasing crime rates to violent acts by Miami residents are incorrect. As Steve McCraw would say when confronted with these falsehoods: “I was planning to throw out a blatant lie about the increasing level of crime committed in South Florida, and Miami-Dade county specifically, early in a hearing on public safety to gauge how much I will be allowed to get away with. It’d be nice to know how far I can stretch the truth, so I figure I’ll toss out a complete fabrication right off the bat by saying that most crime in the Greater Miami area is increasing, and then just see what kind of pushback I get.”

McCraw continues: “If they call me out on it, it’s no big deal; I’ll just know that I mostly have to stick to smaller distortions, like exaggerating unemployment and terrorism statistics or fudging my past positions on tax increases and the Iraq War. But if they let it slide, that means I can really go to town out there and say whatever I think voters will respond to.”

Bottom Line: This article is rated as PANTS ON FIRE! (all claims are completely false)
7. Satirist refutation polarized disinformation

**Onion Fact Checks:** “Is violent crime by undocumented Latinos in Miami-Dade County increasing?”

Answer: Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime.

**Conclusion: the article is false!**

Published: June 8th, 2020 14:01 PM
Last update: June 10th, 2020 11:35 AM

By: THE EDITORIAL BOARD

This article makes several claims of increasing crime rates in the Miami area. This is a very ‘creative’ interpretation of reality. Since 2014, there has been a 25% reduction in crime in among Miami-Dade county residents. Though many local and state-level officials say that crime caused by undocumented Latinos is increasing – this is not particularly true as crime has gone down across Florida, including Miami-Dade County.

This means that any claims linking increasing crime rates to violent acts by Latinos in Miami are incorrect. As Steve McCraw would say when confronted with these falsehoods: “I was planning to throw out a blatant lie about the increasing level of crime committed by undocumented Latinos in Miami-Dade county early in a hearing on public safety to gauge how much he’d be allowed to get away with. It’d be nice to know how far I can stretch the truth, so I figure I’ll toss out a complete fabrication right off the bat by saying that crime in the Greater Miami area is increasingly committed by illegal Latinos, and then just see what kind of pushback I get.”

McCraw continues: “If they call me out on it, it’s no big deal; I’ll just know that I mostly have to stick to smaller distortions, like exaggerating unemployment and terrorism statistics or fudging my past positions on tax increases and the Iraq War. But if they let it slide, that means I can really go to town out there and say whatever I think voters will respond to.”

Bottom Line: This article is rated as PANTS ON FIRE! (all claims are completely false)
8. No-refutation control article

**Tropical Storm Cristobal Hammered the Gulf Coast With Storm Surge, Heavy Rain, Then Tracked Into the Upper Midwest**

By weather.com meteorologists
June 10 2020 09:05 AM EDT
weather.com

Tropical Storm Cristobal made an early-season Gulf of Mexico landfall along the northern Gulf Coast in early June 2020, spreading flooding rain, a few tornadoes and strong wind gusts on an unusual track into the upper Midwest as far north as Wisconsin.

Cristobal's development was fueled by what's called a Central American Gyre, or CAG. This "gyre" is a large, broad area of low pressure that often forms in late spring and early fall over Central America and the western Caribbean Sea. It helped spawn a separate Eastern Pacific Tropical Storm Amanda.

Amanda's leftover energy and spin played a role in triggering the development of Tropical Depression Three in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico Monday afternoon, June 1, which then strengthened into Tropical Storm Cristobal on Tuesday, June 2.

Cristobal became the earliest-in-season third named Atlantic storm – previously held by Tropical Storm Colin on June 5, 2016 – June 2 in the southwestern Gulf of Mexico.
Appendix B: Alternative Polarizations Scales and Results

Measurements
As an alternative to the “affective polarization”-variable presented in the main manuscript, we also measured to alternative forms of polarization. First, participants rated political candidates that belonged to the Democrat and Republican party. The following formulation was used: “We would like to know your feelings toward some political figures/party on a scale from 0 to 10” \((0 = \text{very unfavorable to } 10 = \text{very favorable})\). Respondents assessed different candidates: Kamala Harris; Joe Biden; Chuck Schumer; Mike Pence; Mitch McConnell; Donald Trump. Candidate polarization was calculated as the difference between in-party and out-party candidate ratings.

Second, participants had to rate fellow and opposed party members on a number of stereotypical traits presented as two extremes of a 1-7 scale: “Please indicate to what extent Democratic Party supporters/Republican Party Supporters possess the following traits: unpatriotic-patriotic, stupid-intelligent, dishonest-honest, close-open minded, mean-generous, hypocritical-sincere, selfish-selfless.” Polarization scores were measured by calculating the difference between in-group and out-group ratings on positive traits: Higher scores reflect a stronger discrepancy between in-group liking and out-group hostility (negative scores mean that the out-group is liked more than the in-group).

Results
Logically, the three types of polarization correlated strongly with one another: Affective polarization and candidate polarization, \(r = .68\); affective polarization and trait polarization: \(r = .73\); trait polarization and candidate polarization: \(r = .69\).

Test of \(H_1\). Our two other measures of (de)polarization—based on the rating of political candidates or the stereotypical traits of fellow and opposed partisans—revealed the same results
as those reported in the main manuscript text (affective polarization). This means that, across the
three operationalizations of de-polarization, $H_{1c}$ was not supported (respectively: $p = .700$; $p = .112$). No differences were found between the control, regular fact-check, and satirical conditions.

**Test of $H_{2c}$.** The type of fact-checker, thus, also did not matter for candidate polarization ($p = .700$) and trait polarization ($p = .914$), which rejects $H_{2c}$ again.

**Test of $H_{3c}$.** Just as for affective polarization presented in the main manuscript ($p = .054$), we also did not find a significant interaction effect between exposure to a fact-check (versus the control) and attitudinal congruence for candidate polarization ($p = .085$). This interaction effect was significant for trait polarization ($B = 0.37, SE = .15, p = .012$), $F(3,645) = 2.36, R^2 = .01, p = .070$. Just like affective polarization, though, the results point out that trait polarization increased after fact-check exposure but only among those with high(er) attitudinal congruence with the fact-check. So, $H_{3c}$ was still not supported.

**Test of $H_{4c}$.** We find the same patterns for candidate and trait polarization as we had found for affective polarization. Regarding candidate polarization, again, a significant interaction effect is for the regular fact-check conditions ($B = 0.65, SE = .27, p = .017$) but not for the satire conditions ($B = 0.18, SE = .26, p = .498$). Effects were in the same direction as found for affective polarization, thus opposite to the expectation in $H_{4c}$. Interestingly, for trait polarization, both the interaction effects with attitudinal congruence were significant: regular fact-check conditions ($B = 0.41, SE = .17, p = .018$) and now also for the satire conditions ($B = 0.34, SE = .17, p = .049$). Thus, means that trait polarization was also triggered stronger among people agreeing with the fact-check after exposure to the satirical version; yet, this was still in the opposite direction of $H_{4c}$.

**Test of $H_{5c}$.** The three-way interaction effect between (1) fact-check exposure (versus control), (2) attitudinal congruence, and (3) mis- versus disinformation is not significant for
candidate polarization ($\rho = .218$) and trait polarization ($\rho = .325$). Thus, $H_s$ is still not supported, but we can also not confirm the pattern that polarization increased the strongest after fact-check exposure among people who agreed with the fact-check.

**Test of $H_{6c}$.** Similar as for the affective polarization outcome variable, no significant three-way interaction effect between was found between (1) fact-check format (regular versus satirical), (2) attitudinal congruence, and (3) mis- versus disinformation for candidate polarization ($\rho = .652$) and trait polarization ($\rho = .379$).