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***The Authentic Appeal of the Lying Demagogue: A Structural Approach***

Two studies with online participants help resolve the puzzle of how a group of voters can perceive a candidate as “authentic” and be enthusiastic in their support for him despite the fact that he deliberately tells lies and violates publicly endorsed norms while appealing to private prejudices. A survey conducted just after the US Presidential election demonstrates this empirical pattern, and it indicates that Trump voters justified his lies and demagoguery as a form of symbolic protest against the “establishment.” A vignette experiment on a simulated college election and based on a hierarchical minimal group framework validates our theory that voters are motivated to justify lying demagoguery as symbolic protest when two conditions are present: (a) they are in the subordinate group in a dominance hierarchy; and (b) they perceive the hierarchy as illegitimate because establishment leaders appear self-interested.