When a conspiracy theory goes mainstream, people feel more positive towards conspiracy theorists

REDACTED

Experimental Set-Up, Coding Variables, and Descriptive Data

I used simple randomization to give respondents a two-thirds chance of participating in the control condition (not reading any article in the first wave). The result was that 521 respondents out of 1,545 total were in the treatment group and the other 1,024 were in the control group. 37 respondents completed the survey after the NYT article detailing the result of the Department of Defense UFO report appeared online at 7:55pm Eastern Time on June 3. Controlling for this made no difference to the results.

```
set.seed(1234567)

d <- as.data.frame(read.csv("UFOnum2.csv"))
d <- dplyr::mutate(d, ID = row_number())

r <- as.data.frame(read.csv("UFOrecon.csv"))

r$Emails <- r$RecipientEmail

d$Emails <- ifelse(d$Emails == "", NA, d$Emails)

m <- merge(d, r, by = c("Emails"), all.x = T)


m <- subset(m, select = -c(Emails, IPAddress.x, IPAddress.y,
    LocationLatitude.x, LocationLongitude.x, LocationLatitude.y,
    LocationLongitude.y, RecipientEmail.y, Emails2))
write.csv(m, "anonymousdata.csv")

d <- m

d$AlienTreatment <- ifelse(d$UFOGroup == "bipartisan", 1, 0)

d$Democrat <- ifelse(d$political_party.x == 1 | d$political_party.x ==
    2 | d$political_party.x == 3 | d$political_party.x == 6,
    1, 0)
d$Republican <- ifelse(d$political_party.x == 5 | d$political_party.x ==
    9 | d$political_party.x == 10 | d$political_party.x == 8,
    1, 0)


d$OutPartyFT0 <- ifelse(d$Democrat == 1, d$FTs_8, "NA")
d$OutPartyFT <- as.numeric(ifelse(d$OutPartyFT0 == "NA" & d$Republican ==
    1, d$FTs_7, d$OutPartyFT0))
```

```
d$InPartyFT0 <- ifelse(d$Democrat == 1, d$FTs_7, "NA")
d$InPartyFT <- as.numeric(ifelse(d$InPartyFT0 == "NA" & d$Republican ==
    1, d$FTs_8, d$InPartyFT0))

d$AffectivePol <- (d$InPartyFT - d$OutPartyFT)/2

d$AfterNYT <- ifelse(d$EndDate.x > "6/3/21 17:55", 1, 0)

d$ConspiracyFT <- d$FTs_9



# Partisan identity

d$DemIdentity <- (d$DemID1 + d$DemID2 + d$DemID3 + d$DemID4)/17
d$RepIdentity <- (d$RepID1 + d$RepID2 + d$RepID3 + d$RepID4)/17

d$PartisanIdentity0 <- ifelse(d$Democrat == 1, d$DemIdentity,
    "NA")
d$PartisanIdentity <- as.numeric(ifelse(d$PartisanIdentity0 ==
    "NA" & d$Republican == 1, d$RepIdentity, d$PartisanIdentity0))

## PARTISAN IDENTITY WITH NONIDENTIFIERS AT 0

d$PartisanIdentity2 <- ifelse(is.na(d$PartisanIdentity) == T,
    0, d$PartisanIdentity)

## Demographics

## 1 = 18-29; 2= 30-49; 3 = 50 - 69; 4 = 70+
## summary(as.factor(d$age.x))
d$Age <- d$age.x

summary(as.factor(d$gender.x))
```

```
##   1   2
## 751 794
```

```
d$Male <- ifelse(d$gender.x == 1, 1, 0)

summary(as.factor(d$ethnicity.x))
```

```
##    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9   10   11   13   14   15   16
## 1122  171   10    9   21   18    6    9   10   19    3    2    3   88   54
```

```
summary(as.factor(d$hispanic.x))
```

```
##    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9   10   11   12   13   14   15   16
## 1313   94   10    3   10    6    5    2    1    2    1   11    2   32   45    8
```

```
## -3 = Extremely Conservative; 3 = Extremely Liberal
summary(as.factor(d$Ideology))
```

```
##  -3  -2  -1   0   1   2   3
```

```
## 145 217 132 543 143 233 132
```

```
## Democrats
summary(as.factor(d$Democrat))
```

```
##   0   1
## 806 739
```

```
## Republicans
summary(as.factor(d$Republican))
```

```
##   0   1
## 998 547
```

```
## Education: 1 = LT HS; 2 = High school; 3 = Other post
## HS; 4 = Some college; 5 = AS; 6 = BA; 7 = MA; 8 = PhD
d$Education <- as.numeric(ifelse(d$education.x == -3105 | d$education.x ==
    10, "NA", d$education.x))
summary(as.factor(d$education.x))
```

```
## -3105     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8
##    14    64   380    56   284   150   356   194    47
```

```
## Income (increasing), 1 = less than 15k; 24 = more than
## 250k

d$Income <- as.numeric(ifelse(d$hhi.x == -3105, "NA", d$hhi.x))

## Region: 1 = Northeast; 2 = Midwest; 3 = South; 4 = West

d$Region <- d$region.x



## IDEOLOGUE

d$Liberal <- ifelse(d$Ideology > 0, d$Ideology, 0)
d$Conservative <- ifelse(d$Ideology < 0, d$Ideology, 0)

## PARTISAN / NO LEAN / LEANER

d$Partisan <- ifelse(d$Democrat == 1 | d$Republican == 1, 1,
    0)

d$PartisanNoLean <- ifelse(d$political_party.x != 6 & d$political_party.x !=
    8 & d$political_party.x != 3 & d$political_party.x != 5,
    d$Partisan, 0)

d$Leaner2 <- ifelse(d$political_party.x == 6 | d$political_party.x ==
    8 | d$political_party.x == 3 | d$political_party.x == 5,
    1, 0)

# d$Ideologue <- ifelse(d$Ideology > 0 | d$Ideology <0 |
# d$Ideology2 >0 | d$Ideology2 <0 , 1, 0)

### Conspiracy model
```

```
Treatment <- d$AlienTreatment
Democrat <- d$Democrat
Republican <- d$Republican

balancecheck <- lm(Treatment ~ Democrat + Republican + Age +
    Male + ethnicity.x + Education + Income, data = d)
```

Table S1: Descriptive statistics for respondents

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
ethnicity.x	1,545	2.86	4.34	1	1	2	16
Democrat	1,545	0.48	0.50	0	0	1	1
Republican	1,545	0.35	0.48	0	0	1	1
Age	1,545	45.76	17.50	18	31	61	90
Male	1,545	0.49	0.50	0	0	1	1
Education	1,531	4.41	1.98	1.00	2.00	6.00	8.00
Income	1,380	9.15	6.98	1.00	3.00	15.00	24.00

Balance Check

Balance Check

	Dependent variable:
	Treatment
Democrat	−0.06
	(0.04)
Republican	−0.005
	(0.04)
Age	0.001
	(0.001)
Male	0.01
	(0.03)
ethnicity.x	0.001
	(0.003)
Education	−0.002
	(0.01)
Income	0.003
	(0.002)
Constant	0.31***
	(0.06)
Observations	1,373
R^2	0.01
Adjusted R^2	0.001
Residual Std. Error	0.47 (df = 1365)
F Statistic	1.29 (df = 7; 1365)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Main Results

```
m0 <- lm(d$ConspiracyFT ~ Democrat + Republican + Treatment +
    d$AfterNYT)

m1 <- lm(d$ConspiracyFT ~ Democrat + Republican + Treatment)

m2 <- lm(d$ConspiracyFT ~ Treatment)

conspiracyplot <- coefplot(m1, color = "black", zeroColor = "black",
    fillColor = "black", intercept = F, title = "") + scale_color_manual(values = c("black",
    "grey")) + theme(axis.line.y = element_blank(), axis.ticks.y = element_blank()) +
    theme(text = element_text(size = 10, family = "LM Roman 10")) +
    labs(title = "How do you feel towards people who \n believe in conspiracy theories?",
        x = "Coefficient", y = "") + theme(panel.grid.major = element_blank(),
    panel.grid.minor = element_blank()) + theme(plot.title = element_text(hjust = 0.5,
    family = "LM Roman 10")) + theme(panel.grid.major = element_blank(),
    panel.grid.minor = element_blank(), panel.background = element_blank(),
    axis.line = element_line(colour = "black")) + theme(legend.position = "none")
```

```
## Scale for 'colour' is already present. Adding another scale for 'colour',
## which will replace the existing scale.
```

```
# ggsave(filename='conspiracyplot.jpeg',
# plot=conspiracyplot, device='jpeg', path=path, height=5,
# width=5, units='in', dpi=500)
```

Experiment Results

	Dependent variable:
	ConspiracyFT
Treatment	6.25***
	(1.61)
Constant	38.19***
	(0.94)
Observations	1,545
R^2	0.01
Adjusted R^2	0.01
Residual Std. Error	29.98 (df = 1543)
F Statistic	14.99*** (df = 1; 1543)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Experiment Results

	Dependent variable:
	ConspiracyFT
Democrat	-7.61^{***}
	(2.15)
Republican	0.61
	(2.24)
Treatment	5.77^{***}
	(1.60)
Constant	41.78^{***}
	(1.93)
Observations	1,545
R^2	0.03
Adjusted R^2	0.03
Residual Std. Error	29.73 (df = 1541)
F Statistic	14.43^{***} (df = 3; 1541)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Recontact Study

```
d2 <- subset(d, AlienTreatment == 0 & is.na(d$R_FTs_9) == F)

d2$ConspiracyFTPost <- d2$R_FTs_9

t.test(d2$ConspiracyFTPost, d2$ConspiracyFT)
```

```
##
##  Welch Two Sample t-test
##
## data:  d2$ConspiracyFTPost and d2$ConspiracyFT
## t = 2.3179, df = 605.99, p-value = 0.02079
## alternative hypothesis: true difference in means is not equal to 0
## 95 percent confidence interval:
##   0.8621033 10.4273704
## sample estimates:
## mean of x mean of y
##  37.53618  31.89145
```

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
ConspiracyFT	304	31.89	29.96	0	0	50	100
ConspiracyFTPost	304	37.54	30.08	0	7.8	60	100