

## **Online Appendix A: An overview of Deflategate at the time the survey was fielded**

The central allegation in the Deflategate controversy is that the footballs used by the New England Patriots on offense against the Indianapolis Colts during a January 18, 2015 playoff game were deflated to levels below those permitted by the NFL's rules so Brady could get a better grip on the balls. NFL officials discovered the reduced air pressure at halftime when the Patriots were leading the Colts 17-7 and the balls were reinflated (the Patriots won the game, 45-7, and went on to win the Super Bowl).

When the story broke, fans of other teams seized on news of the violation by the Patriots, who have become a regular target for vitriol as the NFL's most successful – and controversial – team over the last 15 years. Brady in particular is a multi-millionaire with movie-star looks, a supermodel wife, and a cool precision on the field that has produced six Super Bowl appearances, four NFL championships, and a clear path to the Hall of Fame. Patriots head coach Bill Belichick, who is known for being brusque, secretive, and determined to seek any advantage, has also attracted numerous vocal detractors among fans of other teams, especially after Patriots were sanctioned by the NFL in the “Spygate” scandal for filming their opponent's hand signals from an unauthorized location during a game in 2007.

The NFL took no immediate action against the Patriots over the deflated footballs. During the off-season, a league-commissioned investigation concluded that it was “more probable than not” that team staff intentionally deflated footballs and that it was also “more probable than not” that Brady was “at least generally aware” of those actions (Wells et al. 2015: 2). Five days later, citing “substantial and credible evidence” that Brady knew about the deflations, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell levied a four-game suspension on Brady to be served at the start of the 2015 season and sanctioned the Patriots with a \$1 million fine and losses of draft picks. Despite a subsequent appeal by Brady, Goodell later upheld the suspension. He also revealed that Brady had ordered his cell phone to be destroyed on the same day Brady met with the Wells Report investigators. The NFL believed that Brady knew its investigators would seek access to his text messages to Patriots’ employees.

After Goodell’s action, the NFL Players Association filed an injunction in U.S. federal court to prevent the NFL from enforcing Commissioner Goodell's suspension. On September 3, 2015, Judge Richard M. Berman vacated Goodell's suspension on the grounds of lack of fair due process without disputing the factual conclusions contained in the Wells Report. This judgment cleared Brady to play in the Patriots' opening game of the season one week later. (This overview reflects what was known when the survey was fielded. As we discuss in the text, the ruling was later overturned on appeal.)

## Online Appendix B: Survey respondents and instrument

### *Survey respondent characteristics*

Since a typical survey would only include a small percentage of Patriots fans, our design included an oversample of respondents from New England. The target sample was approximately 3,000 people, half of whom reported living in New England in their profile. We then asked respondents where they live now to account for movers. Our final data therefore includes 1,407 respondents who live in New England (51 percent of whom identified the Patriots as their favorite NFL team) and 1,513 living in other regions (3 percent of whom were Patriots fans). The sample, while not representative, is diverse by age (26% 18-44, 34% 45-59, and 40% 60+), income (median \$50,000-\$75,000), geography (all fifty states and Washington, D.C.), and politics (43% identify as Democrats, 21% as Republicans). Respondents skewed female (73%).

### *Survey instrument*

[feeling thermometers]

We would like to get your feelings toward some people who are in the news these days using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favorable and warm toward the person. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favorable toward the person and that you don't care too much for that person. You would rate the person at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly warm or cold toward the person. If we come to a person whose name you don't recognize, you don't need to rate that person.

-Peyton Manning

-Tom Brady

-Taylor Swift

-Kanye West

[randomize order]

[experimental manipulation]

We would like to learn more about you. Every day, millions of Americans begin their day with breakfast. Please tell us about what you generally eat to start the day and what you ate this morning. NOTE: Your response to this question is very important. Please take your time to answer the question thoroughly. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written your answer is. Your answers will be kept confidential and not published in any form.

[control condition]

We would like to learn more about you. Every day, millions of Americans begin their day with breakfast. Please tell us about what you generally eat to start the day and what you ate this morning.

NOTE: Your response to this question is very important. Please take your time to answer the question thoroughly. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written your answer is. Your answers will be kept confidential and not published in any form.

[group loyalty treatment]

We would like to learn more about you. Every day, millions of Americans are faced with situations where they have to make a choice between their own interest and the good of the community as a whole. Please tell us about a case where you put the good of the community ahead of your own self-interest.

NOTE: Your response to this question is very important. Please take your time to answer the question thoroughly. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written your answer is. Your answers will be kept confidential and not published in any form.

[elite resentment treatment]

We would like to learn more about you. Some people would say that there are two kinds of people in America — the elites and everyone else — and that those who are already on top, whether in business, politics, show business, or whatever, get opportunities not available to other people. Please tell us about a time when you think someone who already had great wealth or power got special treatment.

NOTE: Your response to this question is very important. Please take your time to answer the question thoroughly. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written your answer is. Your answers will be kept confidential and not published in any form.

[state of residence and birth]

In what state do you currently reside? [response options: state list]

Were you born in the U.S.?

- Yes
- No

In what state were you born? [if born in U.S. - response options: state list]

[party identification]

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Something else

[if Republican]

Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican?

- Strong Republican
- Not very strong Republican

[if Democrat]

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat?

- Strong Democrat
- Not very strong Democrat

[if independent or something else]

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic Party?

- Closer to the Republican Party
- Closer to the Democratic Party
- Neither

[outcome variables]

We would now like to ask about your beliefs regarding the controversy known as "Deflategate" and the accusations by the National Football League against New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady. For each of the statements below and on the following pages, please indicate how accurate you think the statement is.

[randomize question order]

Tom Brady broke the NFL's rules by directing team personnel to tamper with the footballs used in the playoffs last season.

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate
- Not at all accurate

There's no solid evidence that Tom Brady did anything wrong during the playoffs last season.

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate
- Not at all accurate

[page break]

[randomize question order]

The NFL is trying to punish Tom Brady in order to distract people from the league's other problems.

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate
- Not at all accurate

The judge's ruling overturning Brady's suspension has more to do with money and influence than with the facts of the case.

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate
- Not at all accurate

[general beliefs about NFL rule-breaking - auxiliary question; not used]

In general, how common do you think it is for players to break the NFL's rules in how they prepare footballs for games?

- Very common
- Somewhat common
- Not very common
- Not at all common

[football interest]

Which of the following best describes your level of interest in professional football? (the NFL)

- No interest in football
- I pay attention to the NFL mainly when others around me are watching or talking about it

- I watch a game, or part of a game, most weeks during football season
- I watch more than one game each week

What is your favorite NFL team? [response options: team list or None]

Do you own any NFL team clothing such as jerseys, hats, sweatshirts, etc. with a pro football team's name or logo on them?

- No, I do not own any NFL team clothing
- Yes, I own between 1 and 3 items of NFL team clothing
- Yes, I own more than 3 items of NFL team clothing
- Don't know

[political conspiracy belief]

For each of the statements below, please indicate how accurate you think the statement is.

The U.S. government knew about the 9/11 attacks in advance and intentionally allowed them to happen.

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate
- Not at all accurate

The media and government have covered up the evidence that President Obama was NOT born in this country.

- Very accurate
- Somewhat accurate
- Not very accurate
- Not at all accurate

[Deflategate knowledge]

Next are some questions to help us see how much information gets out to people. Please answer these questions on your own without asking anyone or looking up the answers. Many people don't know the answers to these questions, but we'd be grateful if you would please answer every question even if you're not sure what the right answer is.

Which one of the following has Tom Brady recently been accused of?

- Destroying his cell phone

- Intimidating a witness
  - Destroying footballs
  - Refusing to meet with league officials
- [response order randomized]

For how many games did the NFL originally suspend Tom Brady?

- 1
- 2
- 4
- 8

What is the minimum pressure allowed in NFL footballs? (PSI=Pounds per square inch)

- 6 PSI
- 12.5 PSI
- 18.5 PSI
- 25 PSI

[political knowledge - auxiliary questions; not used]

For how many years is a United States Senator elected - that is, how many years are there in one full term of office for a U.S. Senator?

- None of these
- Two years
- Four years
- Six years
- Eight years

How many times can an individual be elected President of the United States under current laws?

- Any number of terms
- Once
- Twice
- Three times

Who is the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom?

- Richard Branson
- Tony Hayward
- Nick Clegg
- David Cameron

## Online Appendix C: Additional results

Table C1: Summary statistics for outcome variables

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>SE</b>
Composite pro-Brady beliefs	2.57	0.77	0.01
Brady broke rules	2.50	1.04	0.02
No evidence on Brady	2.80	0.97	0.02
NFL distracting public	2.48	0.93	0.02
Judge influenced in case	2.48	1.08	0.02



Table C2: Motivated subgroups by NFL interest (individual outcome results)

	<b>Broke rules</b>	<b>No evidence</b>	<b>NFL distracting</b>	<b>Judge influence</b>
Patriots favorability	-0.55*** (0.02)	0.49*** (0.02)	0.28*** (0.02)	-0.46*** (0.02)
NFL interest	-0.01 (0.02)	0.03** (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.02)
Patriots fav. x NFL interest	-0.10*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.02)	-0.12*** (0.02)
Conspiratorial predisp.	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)
Male	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	-0.21*** (0.04)
Age 30-44	0.01 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.23*** (0.07)	-0.10 (0.07)
Age 45-59	-0.00 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.37*** (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Age 60+	-0.18*** (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	-0.25*** (0.06)	-0.23*** (0.06)
Constant	2.57*** (0.05)	2.82*** (0.05)	2.72*** (0.05)	2.68*** (0.06)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.34	0.31	0.13	0.28
N	2579	2583	2571	2575

Coefficients from OLS models with robust standard errors in parentheses. \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Table C3: Motivated subgroups by Deflategate knowledge (individual outcome results)

	<b>Broke rules</b>	<b>No evidence</b>	<b>NFL distracting</b>	<b>Judge influence</b>
Patriots favorability	-0.53*** (0.02)	0.47*** (0.02)	0.28*** (0.02)	-0.43*** (0.02)
Deflategate knowledge	-0.04* (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.14*** (0.02)
Patriots fav. x knowledge	-0.13*** (0.02)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	-0.11*** (0.02)
Conspiratorial presdisp.	0.00 (0.02)	0.03* (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)
Male	0.01 (0.04)	-0.02 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.18*** (0.04)
Age 30-44	0.01 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.06)	-0.23*** (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)
Age 45-59	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.36*** (0.06)	-0.04 (0.06)
Age 60+	-0.19*** (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	-0.22*** (0.06)	-0.18*** (0.06)
Constant	2.61*** (0.05)	2.79*** (0.05)	2.69*** (0.05)	2.68*** (0.06)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.34	0.31	0.12	0.29
N	2587	2591	2579	2583

Coefficients from OLS models; robust standard errors in parentheses. \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Table C4: Conspiracy predispositions and motivated reasoning about Deflategate

	<b>Composite pro- Brady beliefs</b>	<b>Broke rules</b>	<b>No evidence</b>	<b>NFL distracting</b>	<b>Judge influence</b>
Patriots favorability	0.47*** (0.01)	-0.58*** (0.02)	0.51*** (0.02)	0.30*** (0.02)	-0.50*** (0.02)
NFL interest	0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)
Conspiracy predisp.	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.14*** (0.02)
Pats. fav. x predisp.	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Male	0.06** (0.03)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	-0.21*** (0.04)
Age 30-44	-0.05 (0.04)	0.01 (0.07)	-0.08 (0.06)	-0.23*** (0.07)	-0.09 (0.07)
Age 45-59	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.09 (0.06)	-0.37*** (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Age 60	0.06 (0.04)	-0.17*** (0.06)	0.08 (0.06)	-0.25*** (0.06)	-0.22*** (0.06)
Constant	2.58*** (0.03)	2.56*** (0.05)	2.82*** (0.05)	2.73*** (0.05)	2.67*** (0.06)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.40	0.34	0.30	0.12	0.27
N	2594	2579	2583	2571	2575

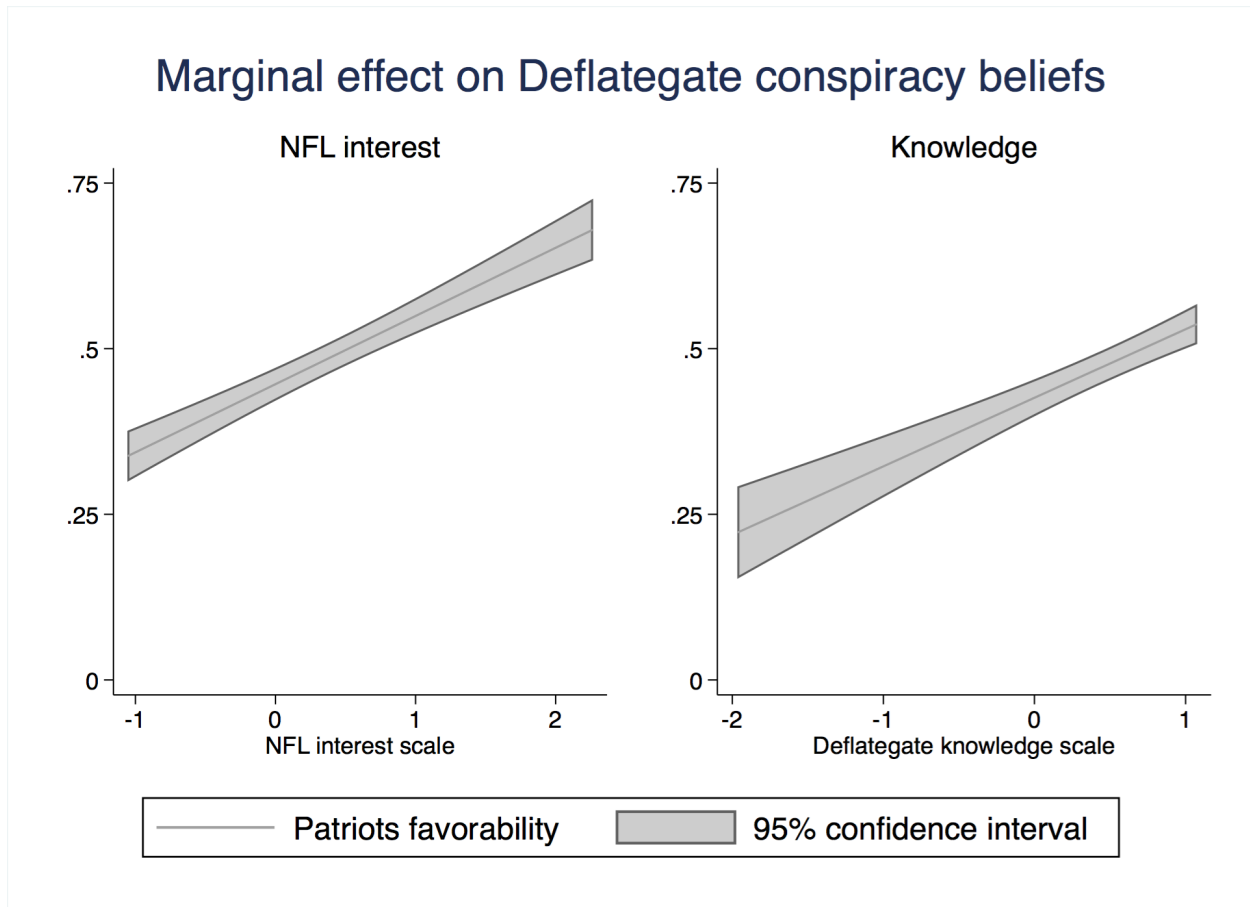
Coefficients from OLS models; robust standard errors in parentheses. \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Table C5: Experimental effects on Deflategate conspiracy beliefs

	<b>Composite pro- Brady belief</b>	<b>Broke rules</b>	<b>No evidence</b>	<b>NFL distracting</b>	<b>Judge influence</b>
Patriots favorability	0.51*** (0.02)	-0.62*** (0.02)	0.55*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.03)	-0.56*** (0.03)
Group solidarity	0.04 (0.03)	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.04 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.05)
Elite resentment	0.08*** (0.03)	-0.10** (0.04)	0.06 (0.04)	0.07 (0.04)	-0.07 (0.04)
Patriots fav. x solidarity	-0.03 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.04)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)
Patriots fav. x resentment	-0.07** (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.08** (0.04)	-0.10** (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
Constant	2.54*** (0.02)	2.55*** (0.03)	2.80*** (0.03)	2.43*** (0.03)	2.52*** (0.03)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.39	0.33	0.30	0.09	0.24
N	2621	2605	2610	2596	2600

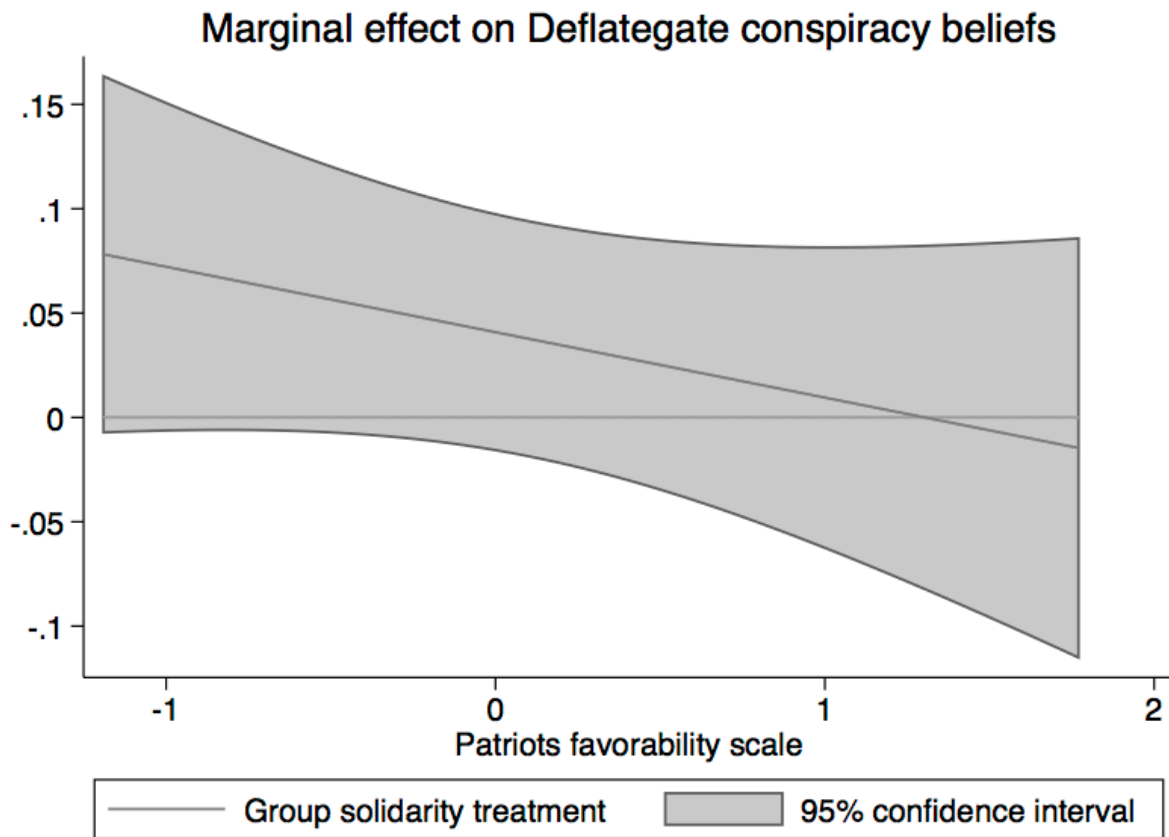
Coefficients from OLS models; robust standard errors in parentheses. \* p<0.10, \*\* p<0.05, \*\*\* p<0.01

Figure C1: Marginal effects of Patriots favorability among motivated subgroups



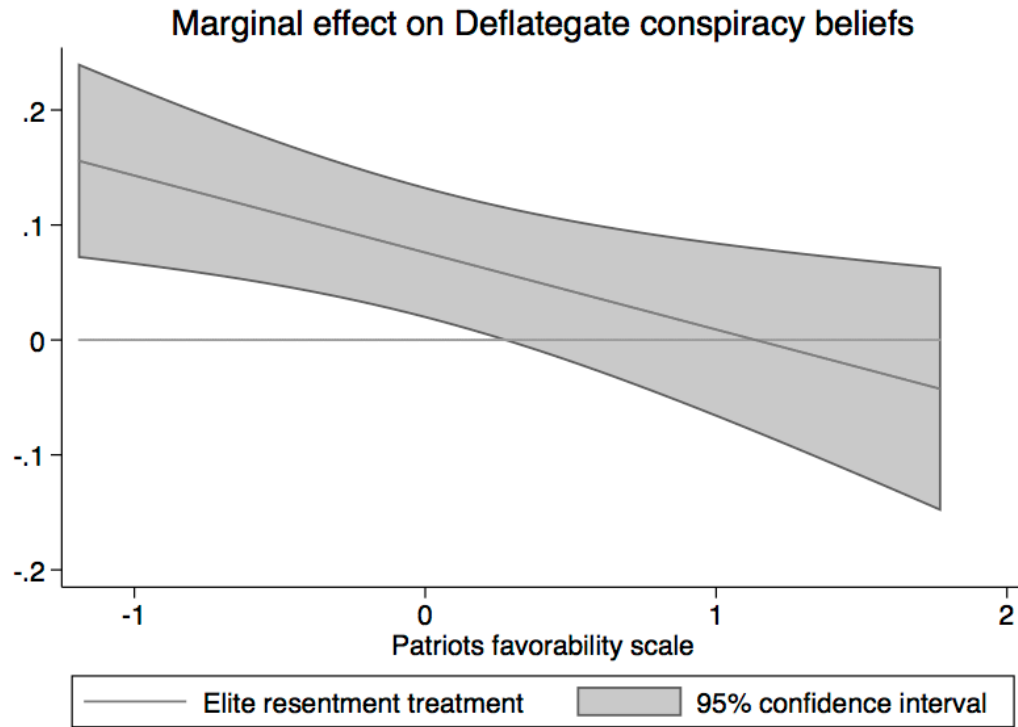
Estimated from the models in Table 2 using the approach described in Brambor, Clark, and Wood (2006).

Figure C2: Group solidarity effects on conspiracy beliefs by Patriots favorability



Estimated from the model in Table 3 using the approach described in Brambor, Clark, and Wood (2006).

Figure C3: Elite resentment effects on conspiracy beliefs by Patriots favorability



Estimated from the model in Table 3 using the approach described in Brambor, Clark, and Wood (2006).