Women Also Know Stuff

Challenging the Gender Gap in Political Sophistication

Patrick W. Kraft

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Who scores higher on political knowledge?

	Respondent A	**Respondent B**
Obama (+)		
Obama (-)		
Romney (+)		
Romney (-)		

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Romney (+)	He comes across as an honest person and I feel that financially he would be better for the country.	
Romney (-)	I am a moderate conservative and there are some things about anti-gay rights that I don't support.	

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Both respondents scored equally on the conventional political knowledge measure in the 2012 ANES!

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Measuring text-based sophistication

1. Relative length $= \dfrac{\log\left(\sum_{j=1}^{J} n_{ij}\right)}{\max\left[\log\left(\sum_{j=1}^{J} n_{ij}\right)\right]}$

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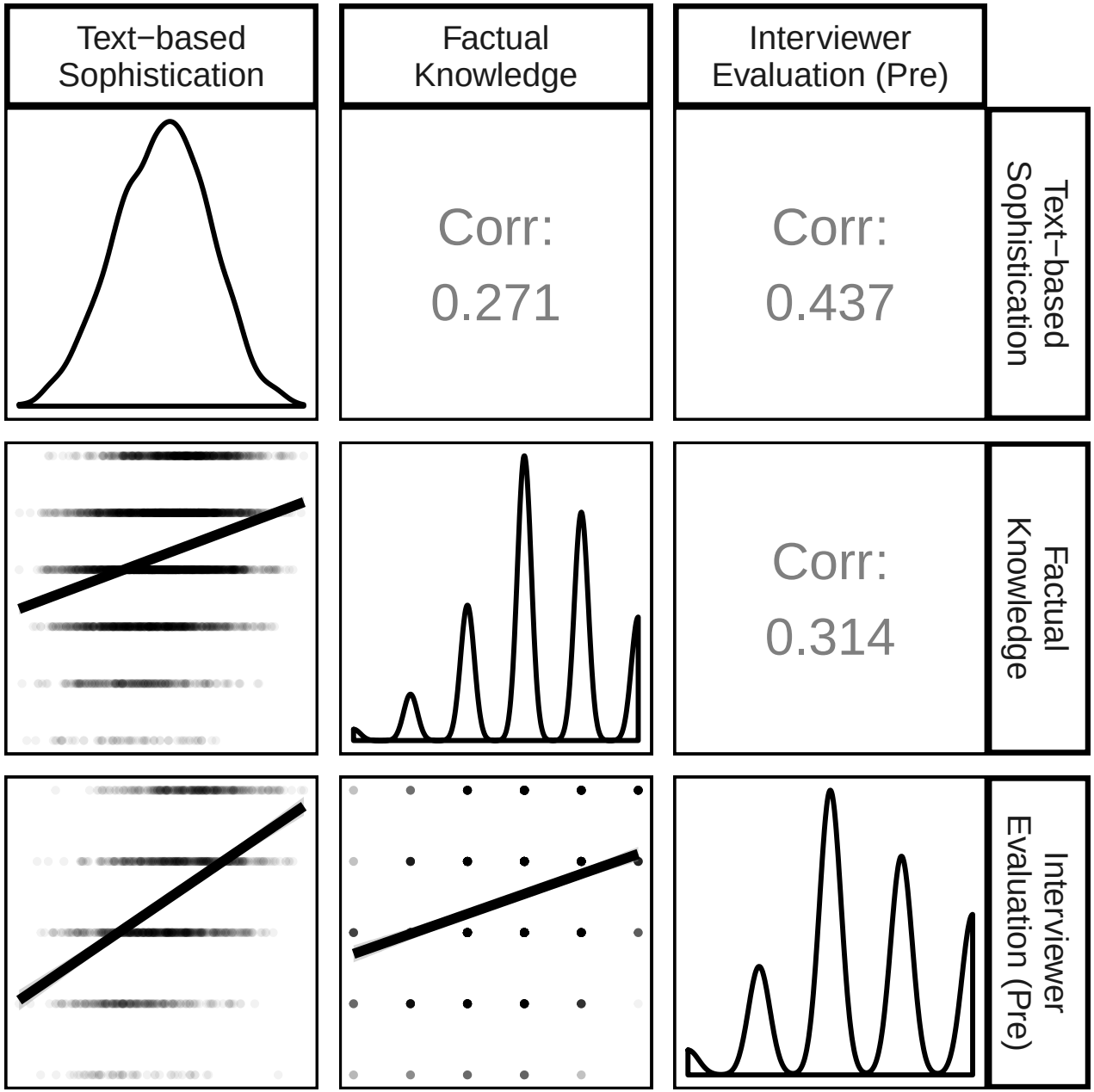
p_{jk}	Proportion of words in the response of individual i to question j relative to the overall size of the individual's response

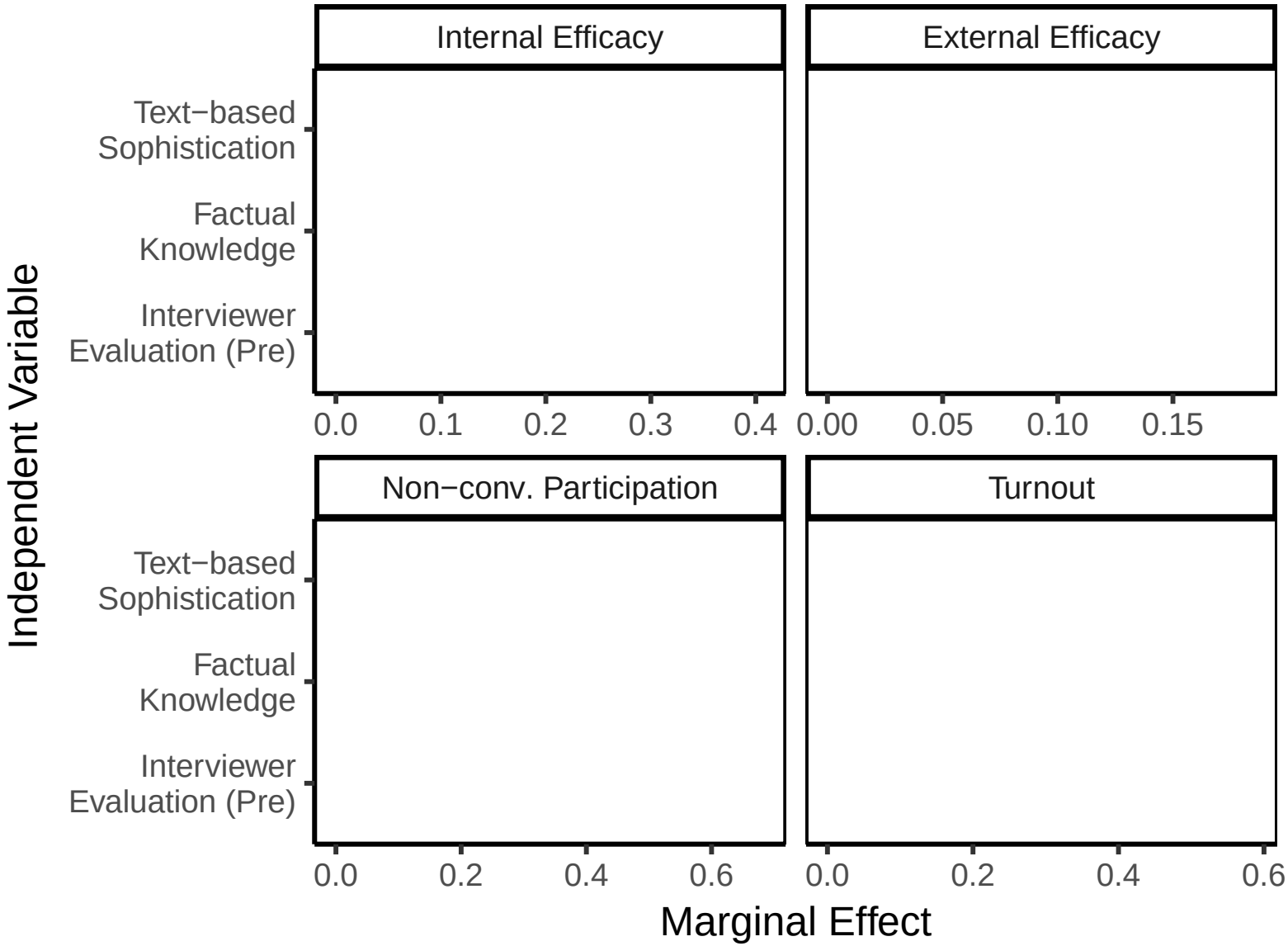
Validating the Measure I

	Text−based Sophistication	Factual Knowledge	Interviewer Evaluation (Pre)
Text−based Sophistication			
Factual Knowledge			
Interviewer Evaluation (Pre)			

Validating the Measure I



Validating the Measure II



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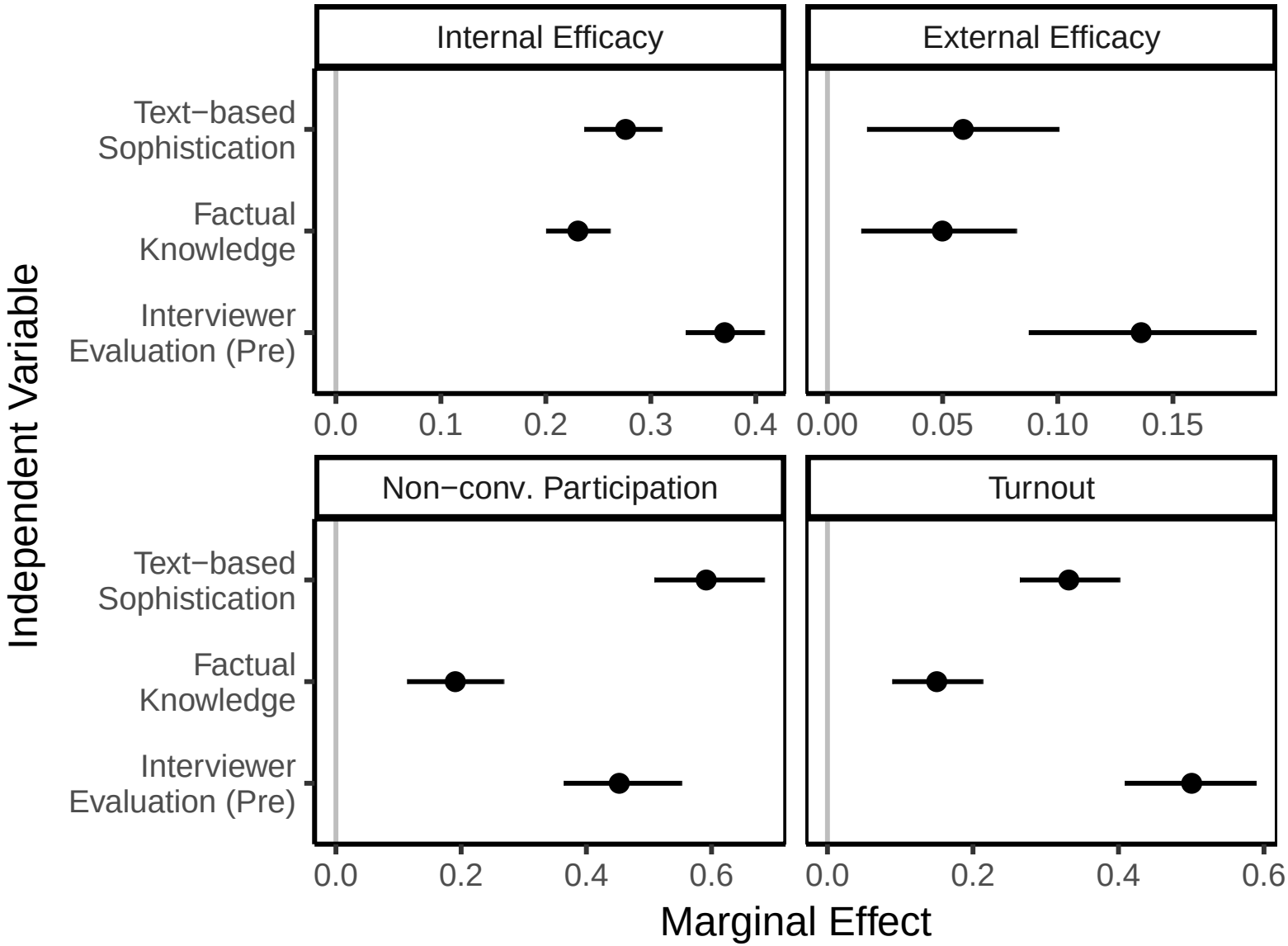

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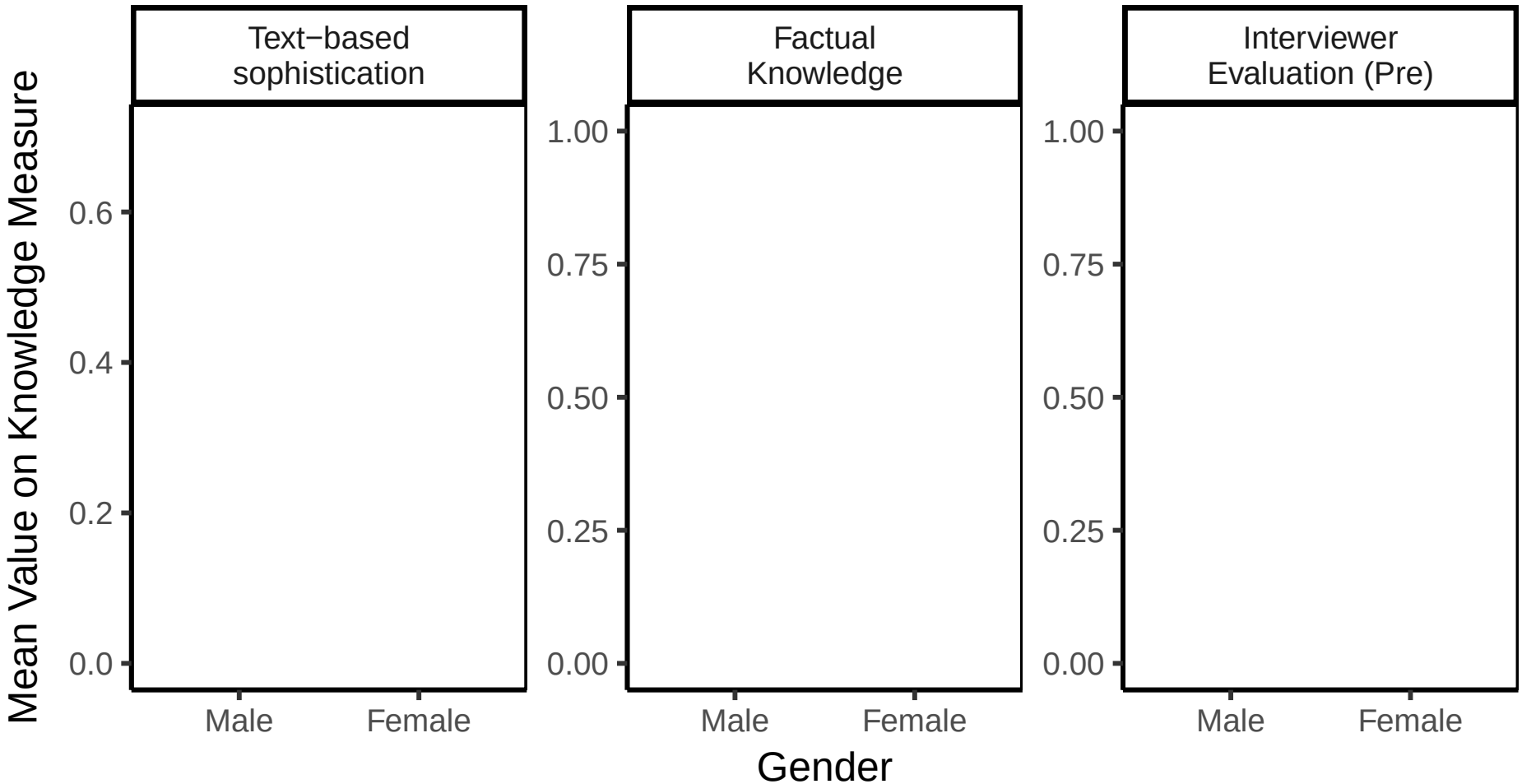

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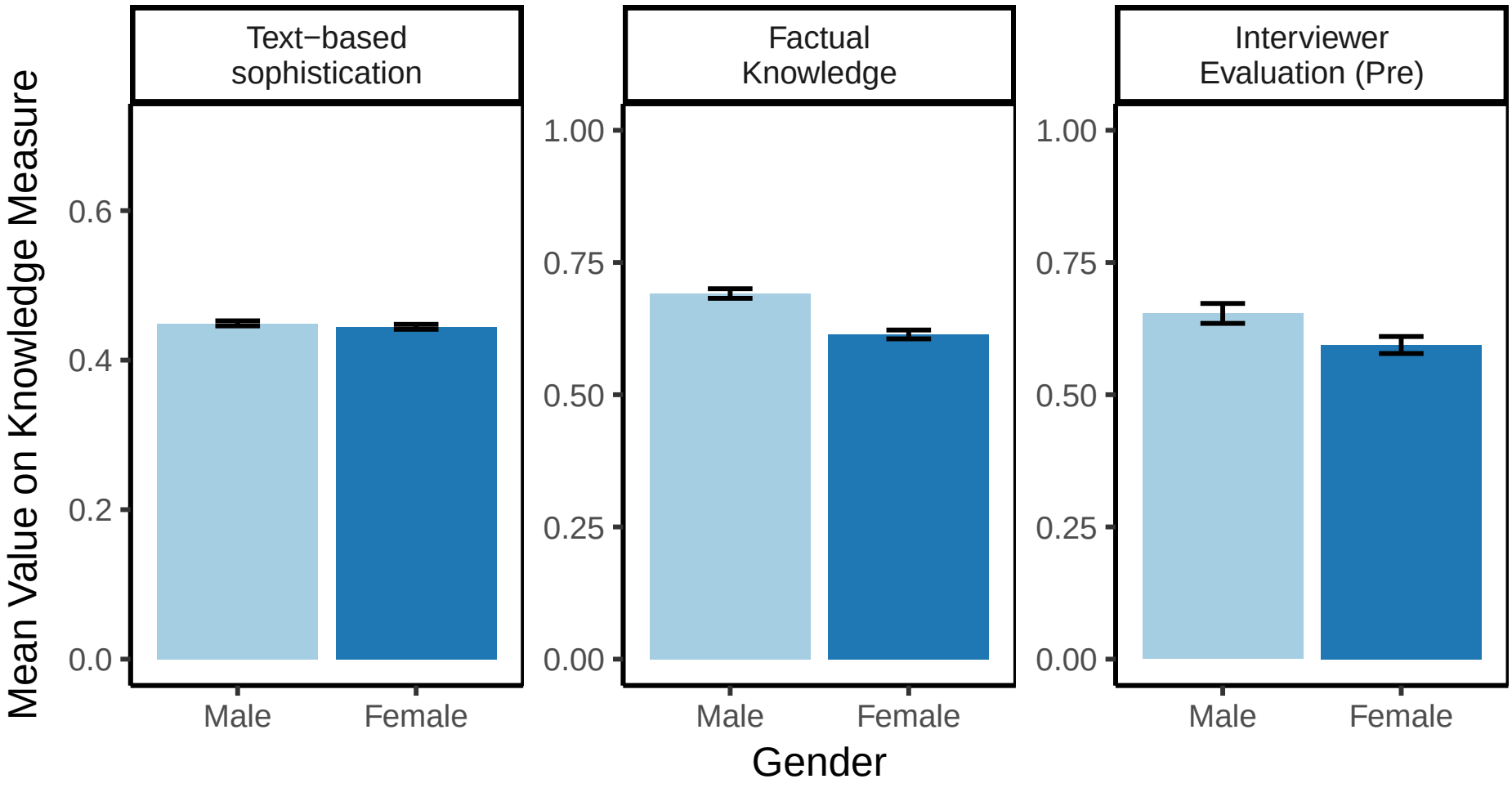
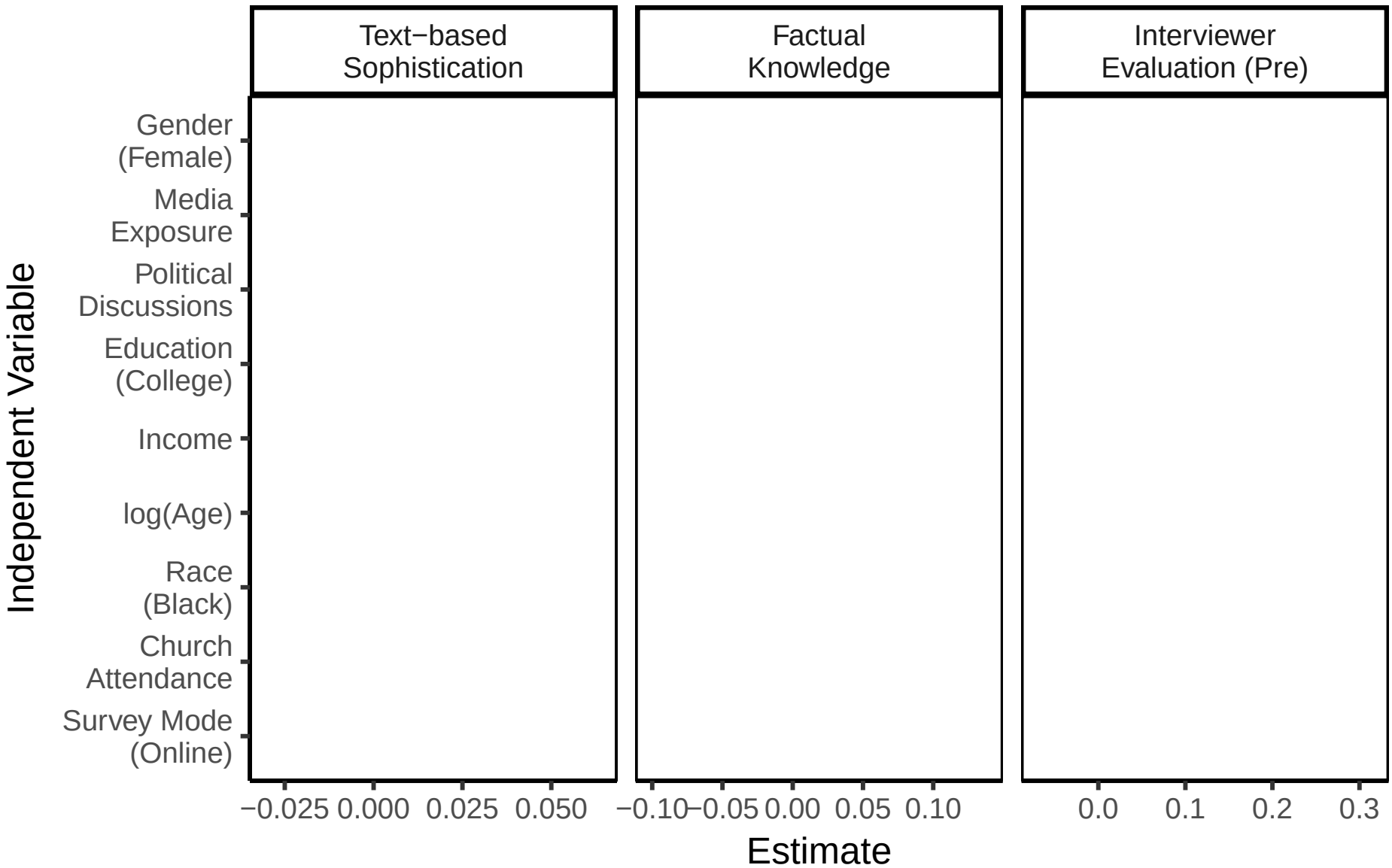


Assessing the Gender Gap II



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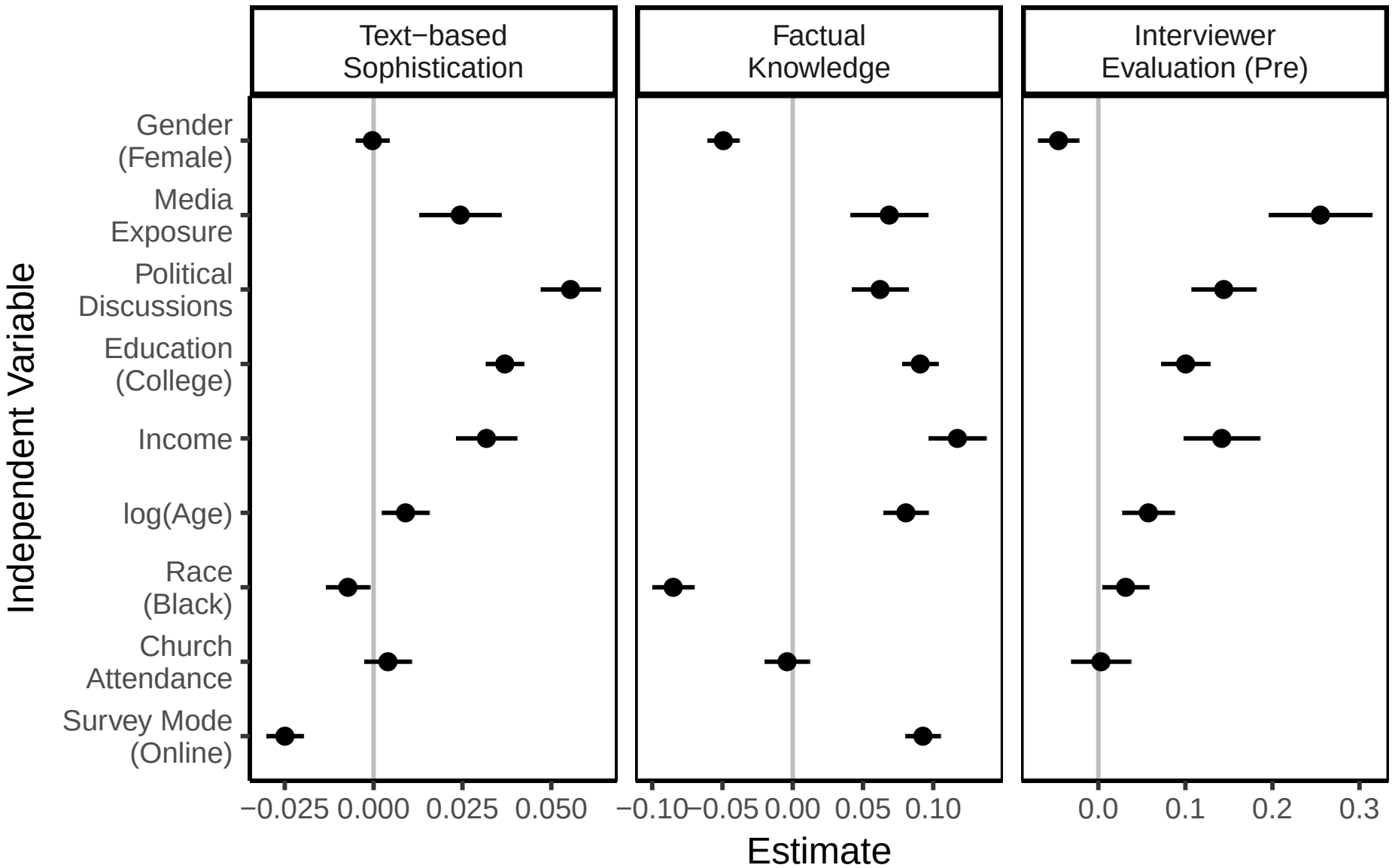
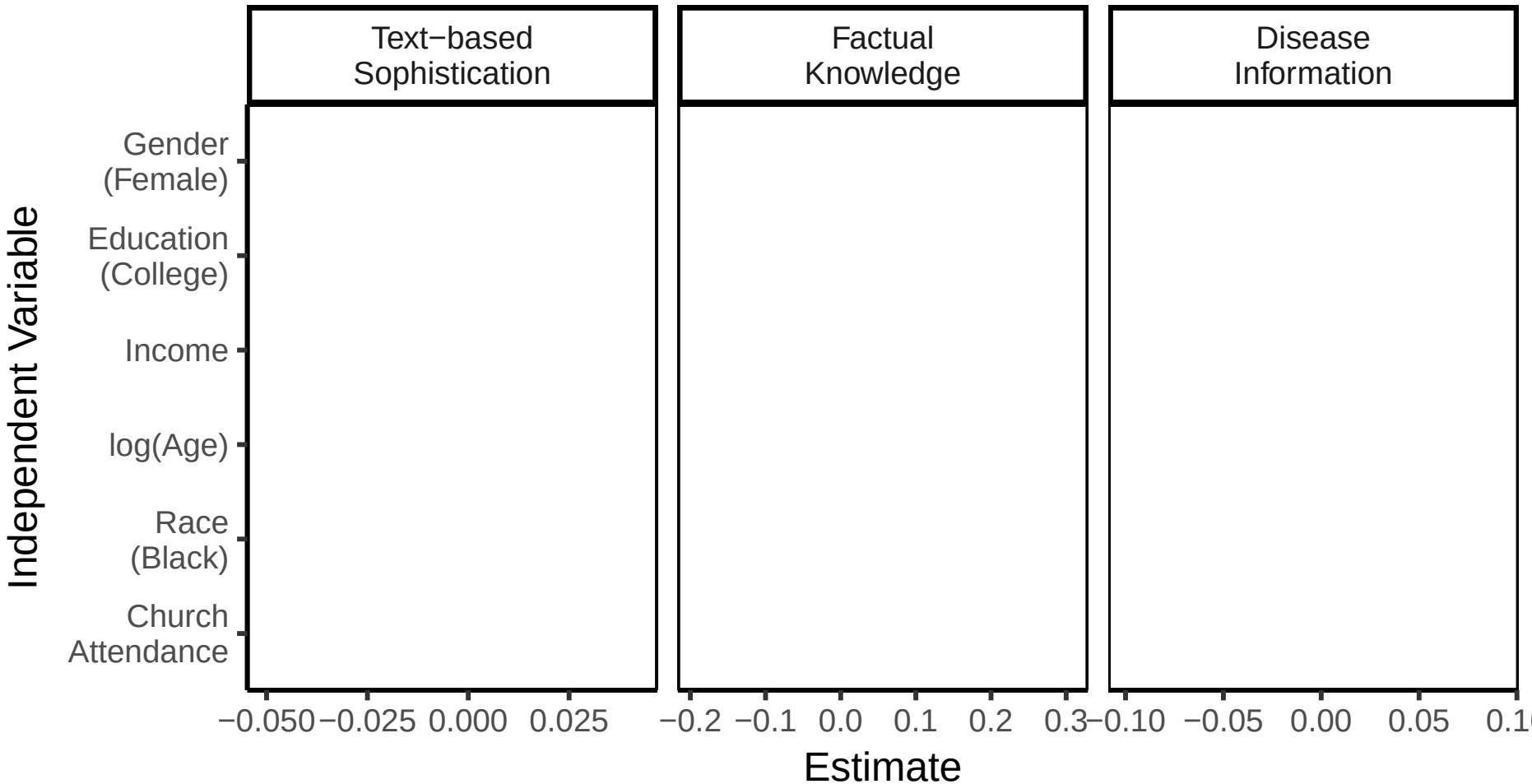


Replication – YouGov 2015



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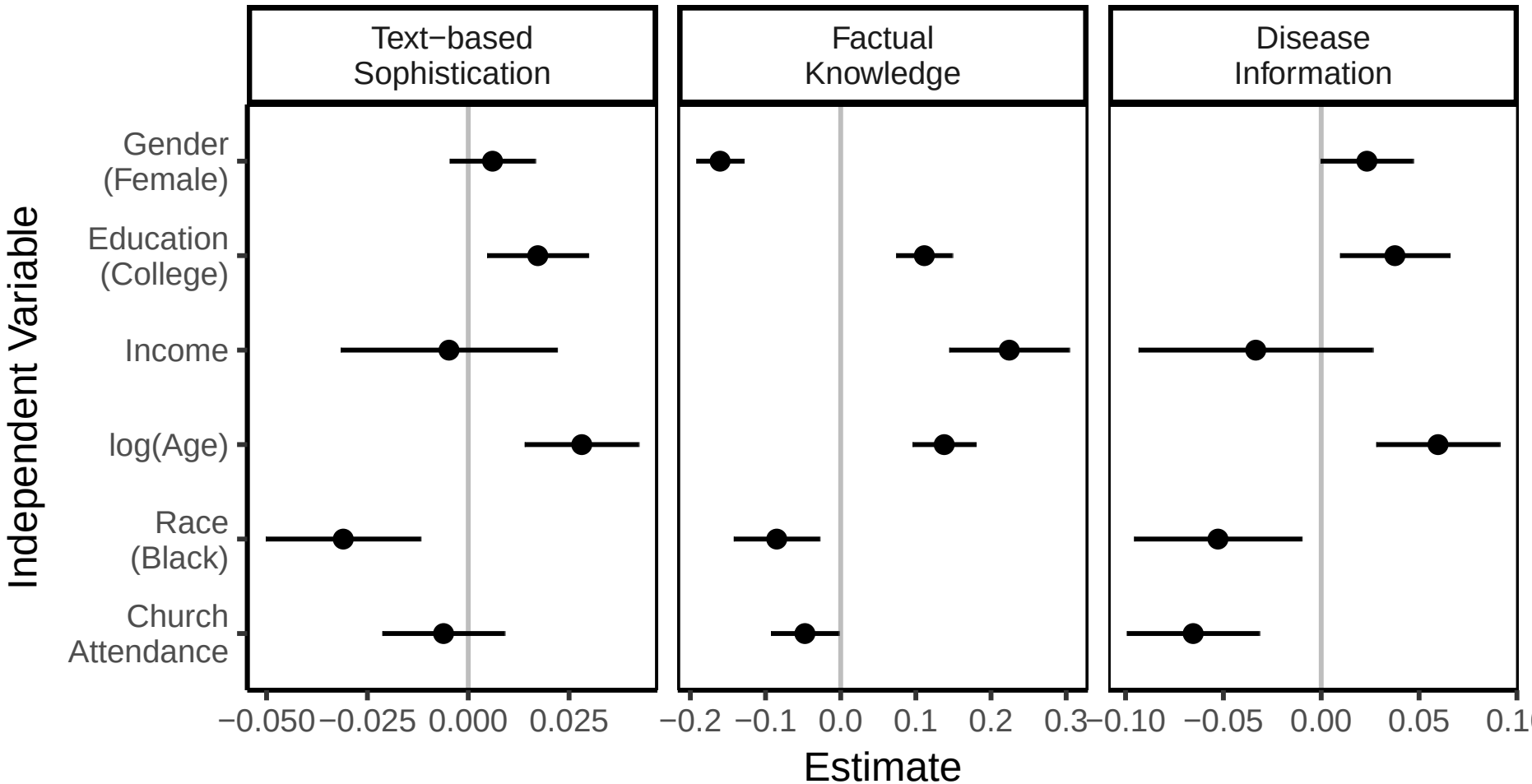

Conclusion

- Women might score lower than men on factual knowledge about political institutions, but there are no differences in the sophistication of expressed political attitudes.

- We observe theoretically meaningful variation in the complexity of verbatim open-ended responses.
- Text-based sophistication is conceptually closer to the structure of belief systems than conventional measures (e.g., Tetlock, 1983; Luskin, 1987).

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Thank you very much for your attention!

Manuscript and code available at:
https://github.com/pwkraft/knowledge

Comments, questions?
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References

Luskin, Robert C. 1987. "Measuring political sophistication." *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (4): 856–899.

Roberts, Margaret E., Brandon M. Stewart, Dustin Tingley, Christopher Lucas, Jetson Leder-Luis, Shana Kushner Gadarian, Bethany Albertson, and David G. Rand. 2014. "Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses." *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (4): 1064–1082.

Tetlock, Philip E. 1983. "Cognitive style and political ideology." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45 (1): 118.