Looking for Answers
A Naive Approach for Measuring Political Sophistication

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Stony Brook University

Who scores higher on political knowledge?

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Obama (-)		
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Both respondents scored equally on the conventional political knowledge measure in the 2012 ANES!

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3. Opinionation $= 1 - \dfrac{\sum_{j_1=1}^{J} \sum_{j_2=1}^{J} |p_{ij_1} - p_{ij_2}|}{2J \sum_{j_1=1}^{J} p_{ij_1}}$

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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

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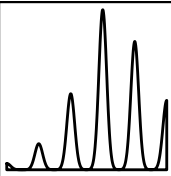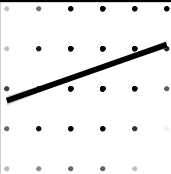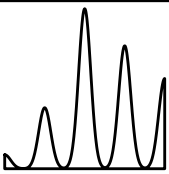- Additional analyses and replication (in paper):

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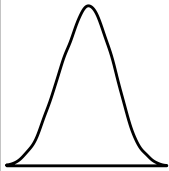
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  - 2008–2012 Swiss Referendum Survey (Colombo, 2016):
    N = 26,621 (phone) - 4,917 (non-response)
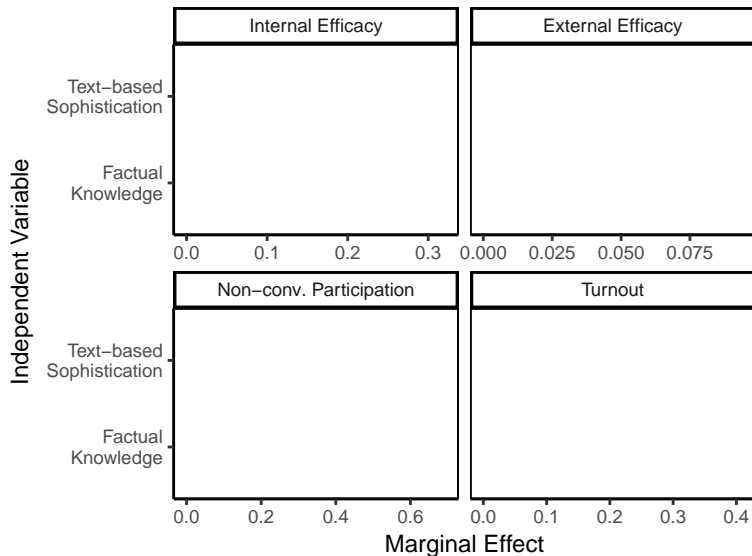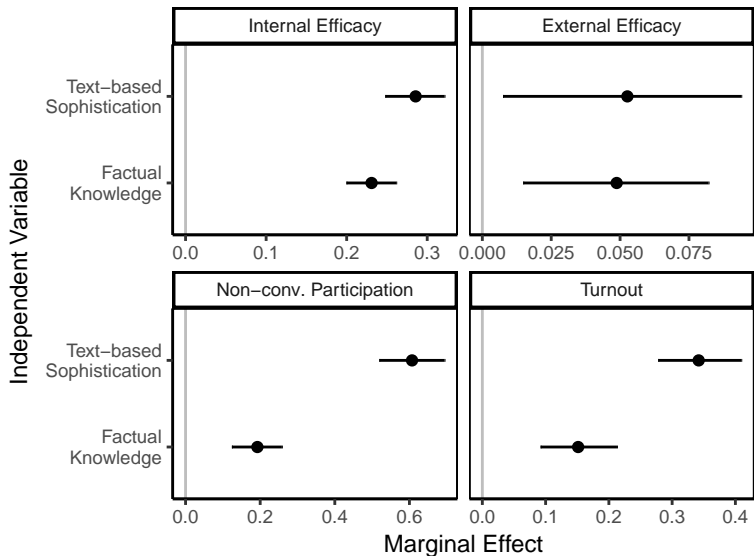
Comparison with conventional measures (ANES 2012)

	Text–based Sophistication	Factual Knowledge	Interviewer Evaluation (Pre)
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    - **...** manual coding of individual levels of justification (Colombo, 2016).

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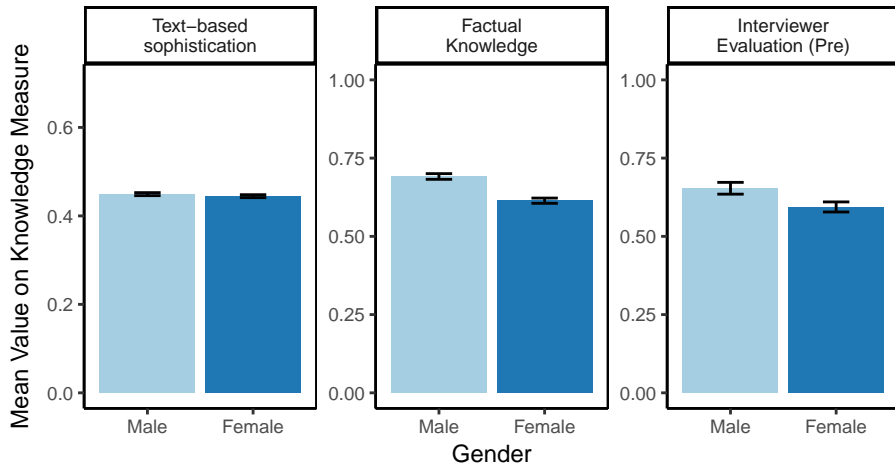 - ... manual coding of individual levels of justification (Colombo, 2016).
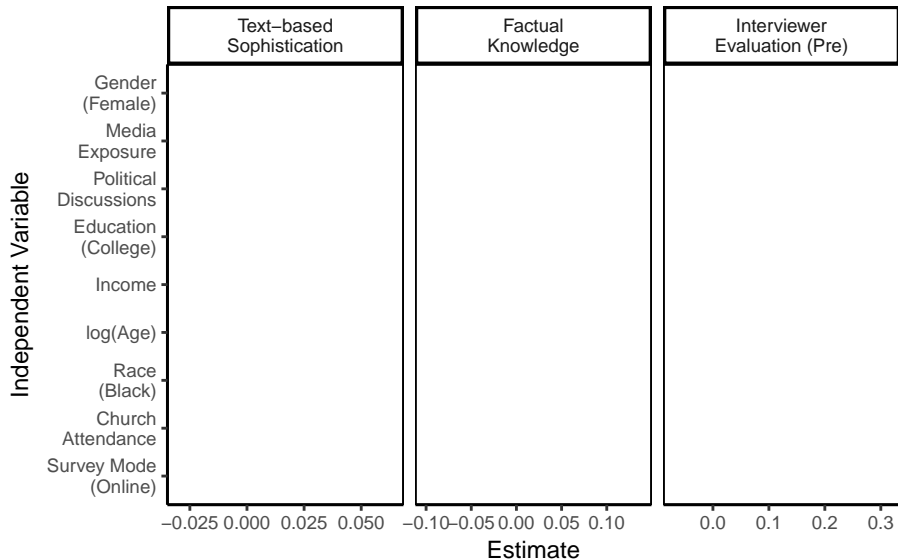- But: conventional measures of factual knowledge are, too...

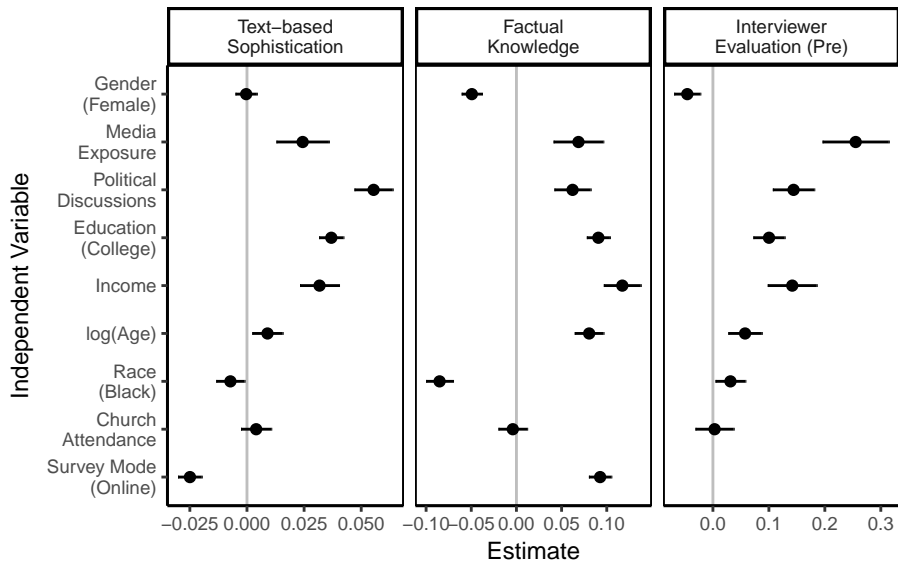# Application: Assessing the gender gap I
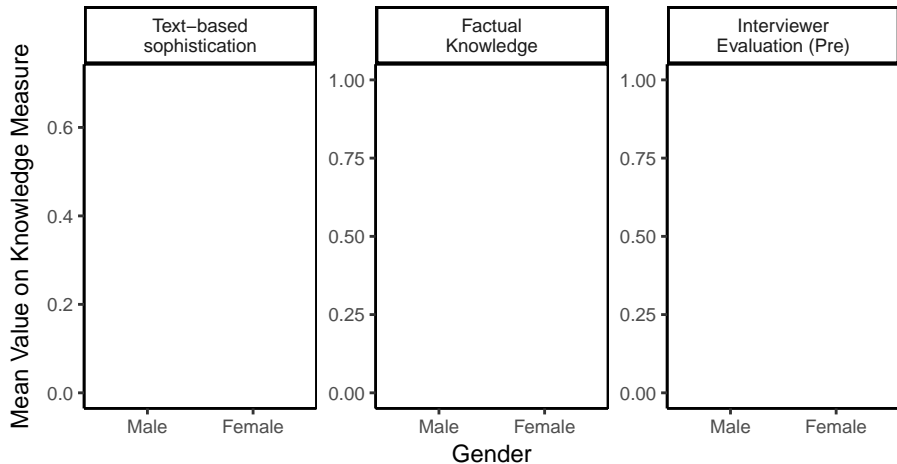
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Application: Assessing the gender gap II

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Conclusion

- We observe theoretically meaningful variation in the complexity of verbatim open-ended responses.
- By directly examining how individuals justify their attitudes, we can measure sophistication related to specific political tasks.
- Text-based sophistication is conceptually closer to the structure of belief systems than conventional measures (e.g., Tetlock, 1983; Luskin, 1987).

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

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Thank you very much for your attention!

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

Comments, questions?
patrick.kraft@stonybrook.edu

References

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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.

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