

Looking for Answers

A Naive Approach for Measuring Political Sophistication

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Stony Brook University

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

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3. Opinion diversity =
$$1 - \frac{\sum_{j_1=1}^J \sum_{j_2=1}^J |p_{ij_1} - p_{ij_2}|}{2J \sum_{j_1=1}^J p_{ij_1}}$$

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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

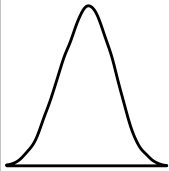

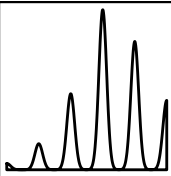

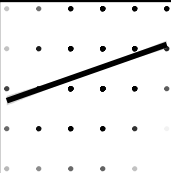
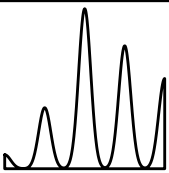
Data

- ▶ **Main analysis:** 2012 American National Election Study (ANES)
 - ▶ $N = 5914$ (2054 f2f + 3860 online)
 - ▶ Non-response: 417, Spanish: 228
- ▶ **Replication 1:** 2015 YouGov Survey
 - ▶ $N = 1000$ (online)
 - ▶ Non-response: 48
- ▶ **Replication 2:** 2008–2012 Swiss Referendum Survey
 - ▶ $N = 1000$ (phone)
 - ▶ Non-response: 48

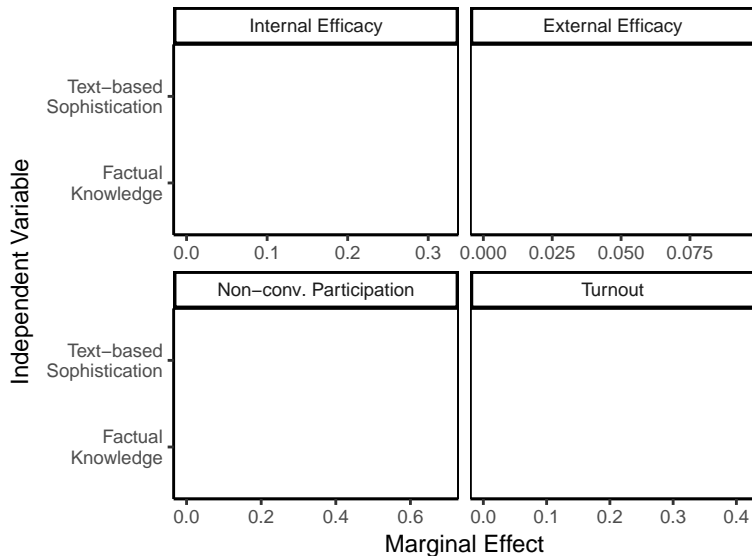
Validating the Measure I

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

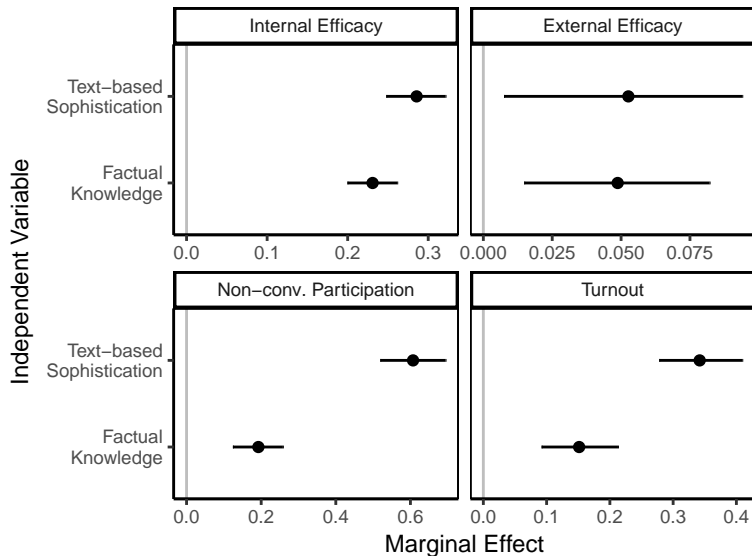
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Text-based Sophistication	Factual Knowledge	Interviewer Evaluation (Pre)	
	Corr: 0.268	Corr: 0.436	Text-based Sophistication
		Corr: 0.314	Factual Knowledge
			Interviewer Evaluation (Pre)

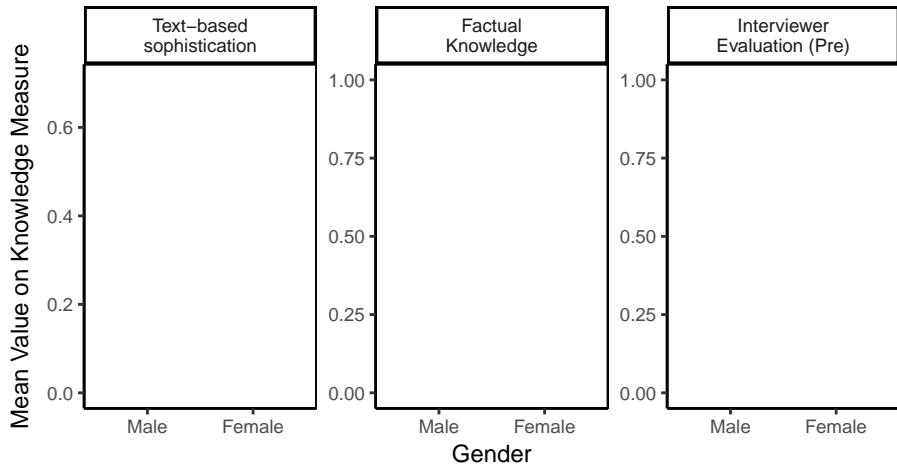
Validating the Measure II



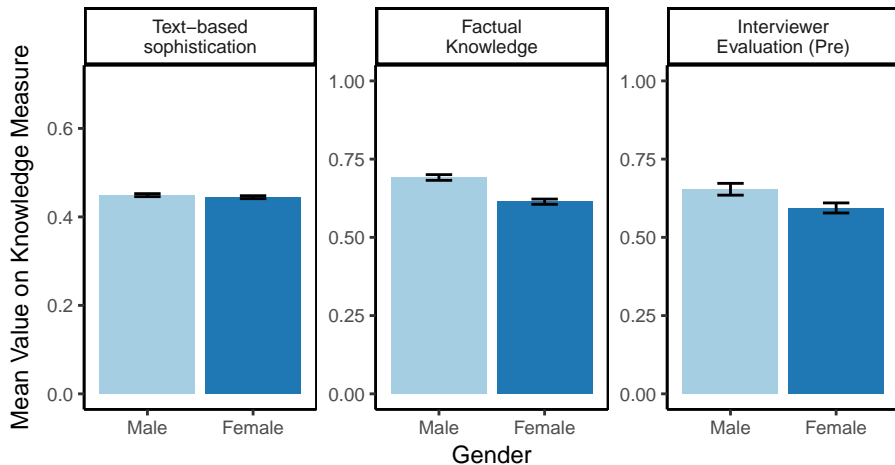
Validating the Measure II



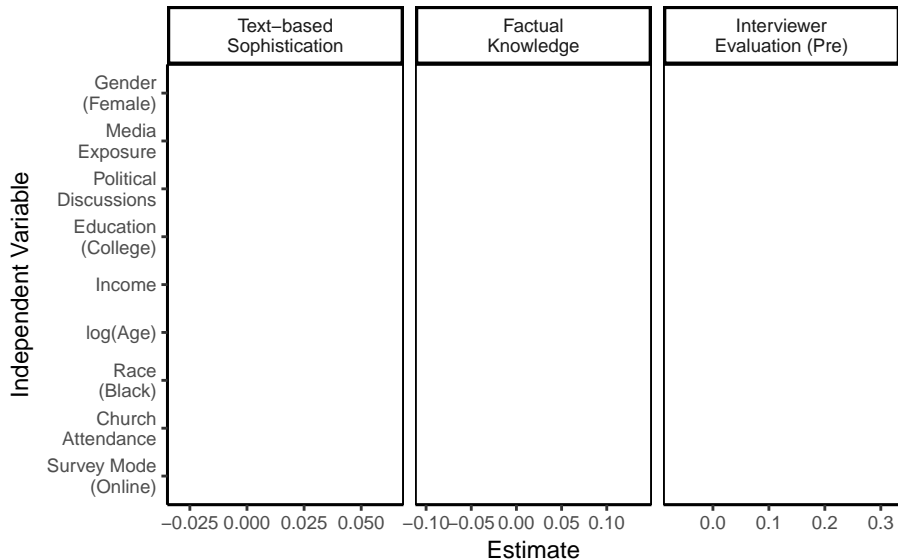
Application: Assessing the Gender Gap I



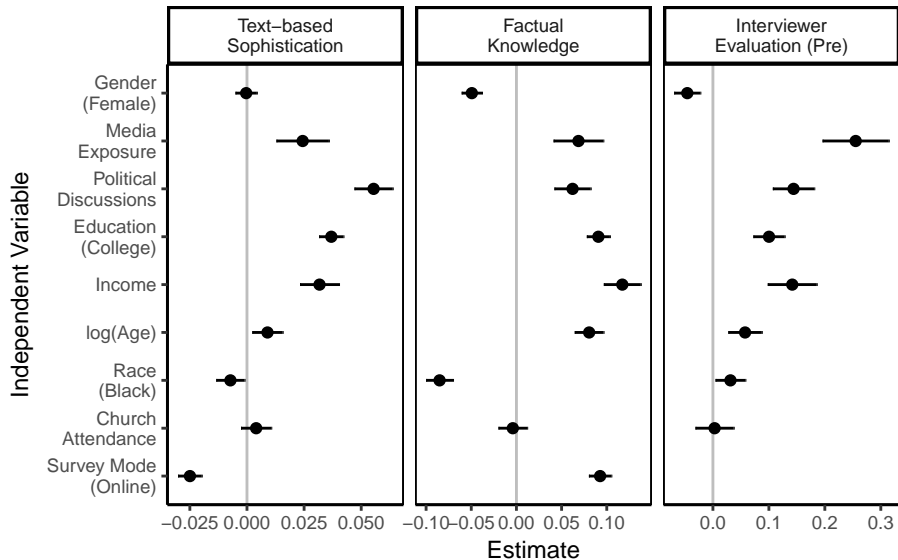
Application: Assessing the Gender Gap I



Application: Assessing the Gender Gap II



Application: Assessing the Gender Gap II



Conclusion

- ▶ 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).
- ▶ 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?

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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.