

# Women Also Know Stuff

## Challenging the Gender Gap in Political Sophistication\*

Patrick W. Kraft<sup>†</sup>

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### Abstract

This article proposes a simple but powerful framework to measure political sophistication based on open-ended survey responses. *Discursive sophistication* uses automated text analysis methods to capture the complexity of individual attitude expression. I validate the approach by comparing it to conventional political knowledge metrics using different batteries of open-ended items across five surveys spanning four languages (total  $N \approx 35,000$ ). The new measure casts doubt on the oft-cited gender gap in political knowledge: Women might know fewer facts about institutions and elites, but they do not differ substantively in the sophistication of their expressed political attitudes.

*Keywords:* political sophistication, gender gap, open-ended responses, text analysis

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\*The title of this article is inspired by <https://womenalsoknowstuff.com/>, an organization that promotes the work of women in political science by providing a public database of relevant women experts for journalists, scholars, and others. Previous versions of this research have been presented at Polmeth, MPSA, EPSA, ISPP, APSA, the Toronto Political Behavior Meeting, and Zurich Text as Data. I thank the discussants and participants at these conferences and seminars as well as Alexa Bankert, Jason Barabas, Scott Clifford, Kathy Dolan, Stanley Feldman, Jennifer Jerit, Yanna Krupnikov, Emmy Lindstam, Hannah Nam, Michael Peress, Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck, and Arthur Spirling for helpful comments on previous versions of this manuscript. Special thanks to Céline Colombo, Scott Clifford, Kathy Dolan, and Jennifer Jerit for sharing their data.

<sup>†</sup>Ramón y Cajal Fellow; Juan March Institute and Department of Social Sciences, University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain. Email: [patrickwilli.kraft@uc3m.es](mailto:patrickwilli.kraft@uc3m.es); ORCID iD: 0000-0003-0123-221X.