



How an Individual's Relationship with Political Media and Dialogue Relates to Their Political Interest

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Introduction

- As media has become more prevalent, accessible, and vital, the role mass media plays in civilians' lives has continued to grow. Media proves to be paramount in carrying the messages of political candidates. (Albright, 2009).
- Additionally, social identity and partisanship are a filter for social information and motives that drive an individual (Lin et al., 2020).
- As media has become more prevalent and accessible, the public's ability to process political information has increased. However, choosing to engage with political information is dependent on the individual.
- Average citizens lack a fundamental understanding of politics (Zichetta et al., 2024).
- Heightened political interest may be due to engagement in political media and discussions.

Research Questions

- How does an individual's exposure to political dialogue and media relate to their interest in politics?
 - Does the association between TV consumption, political dialogue, and political interest differ when gender becomes a factor?

Methods

Sample

- Respondents (n=2294) were drawn from the 2012 Outlook of Life(OOL). a nationally representative sample of English-speaking USA residents, non-institutionalized adults 18 years or older, of varying races and identification.

Measures

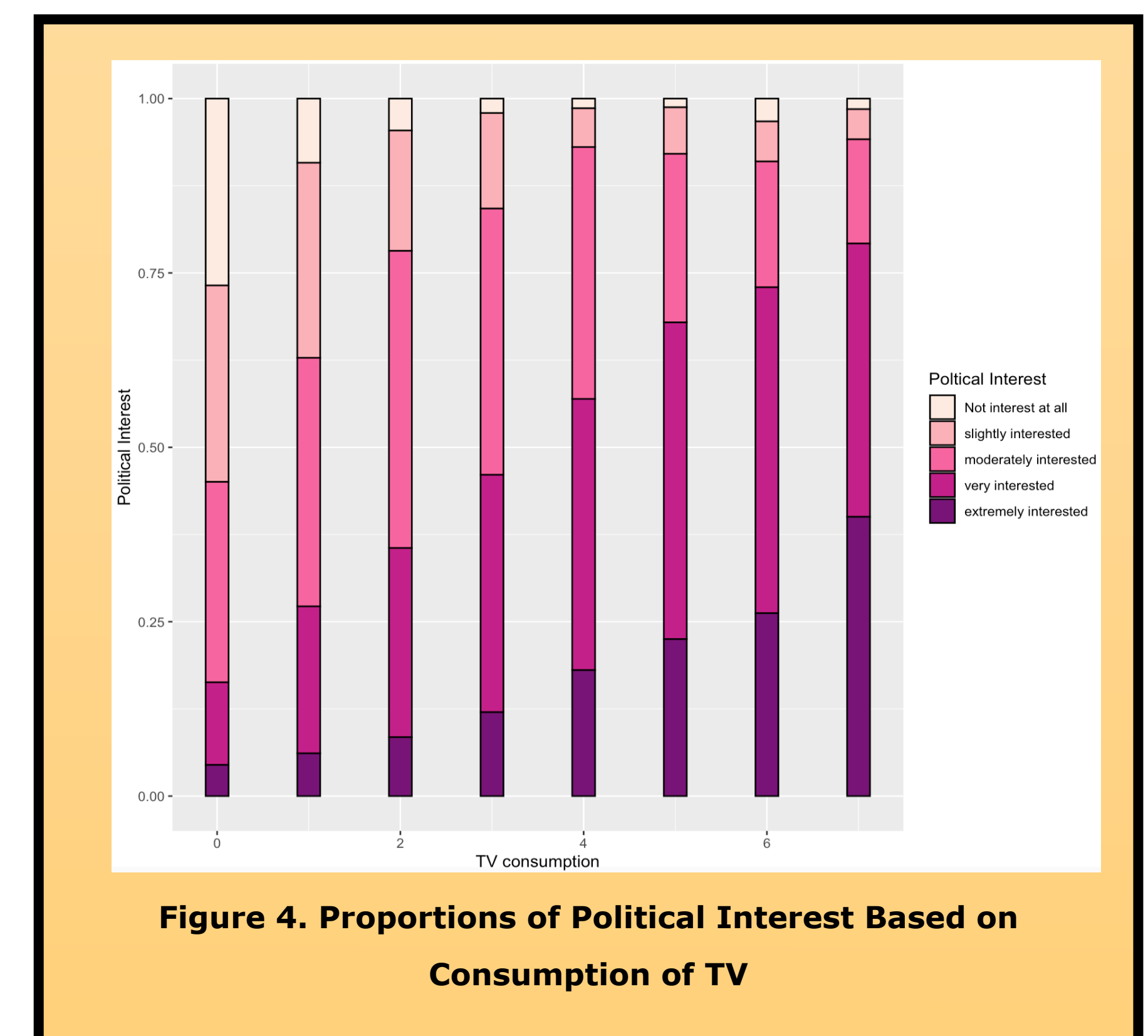
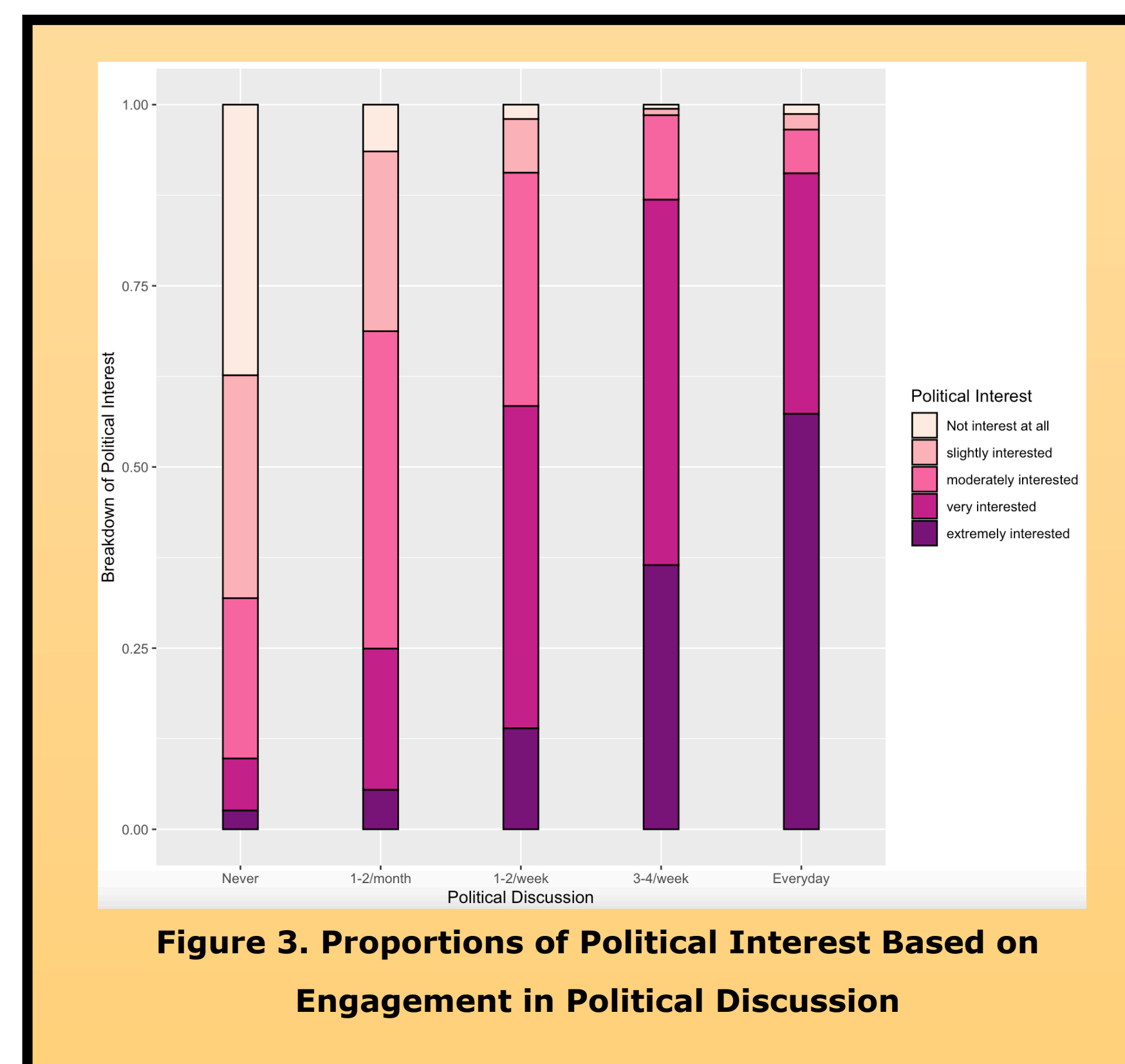
- The political dialogue was assessed by questioning the respondent's engagement with political discussions through a spectrum of never to every day. Each response was coded on a categorical scale.
- TV consumption was assessed by the number of days each week a respondent watched national news programs on TV or the media in the past week. The spectrum ranged from not at all to seven days of the week.
- Lastly, political interest was scaled quantitatively, from 1, not interested, to 5, extremely interested.

Results

Bivariate

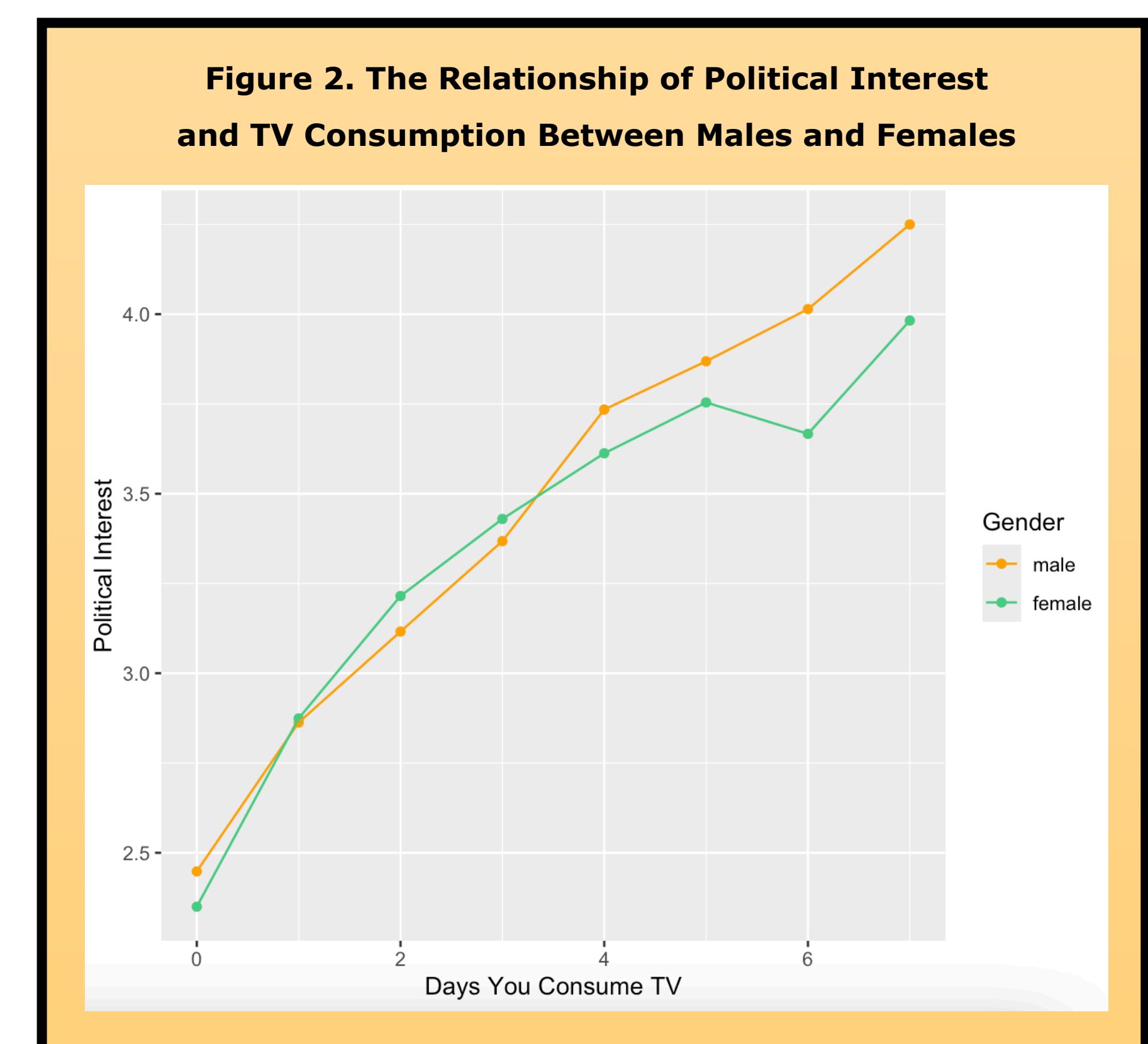
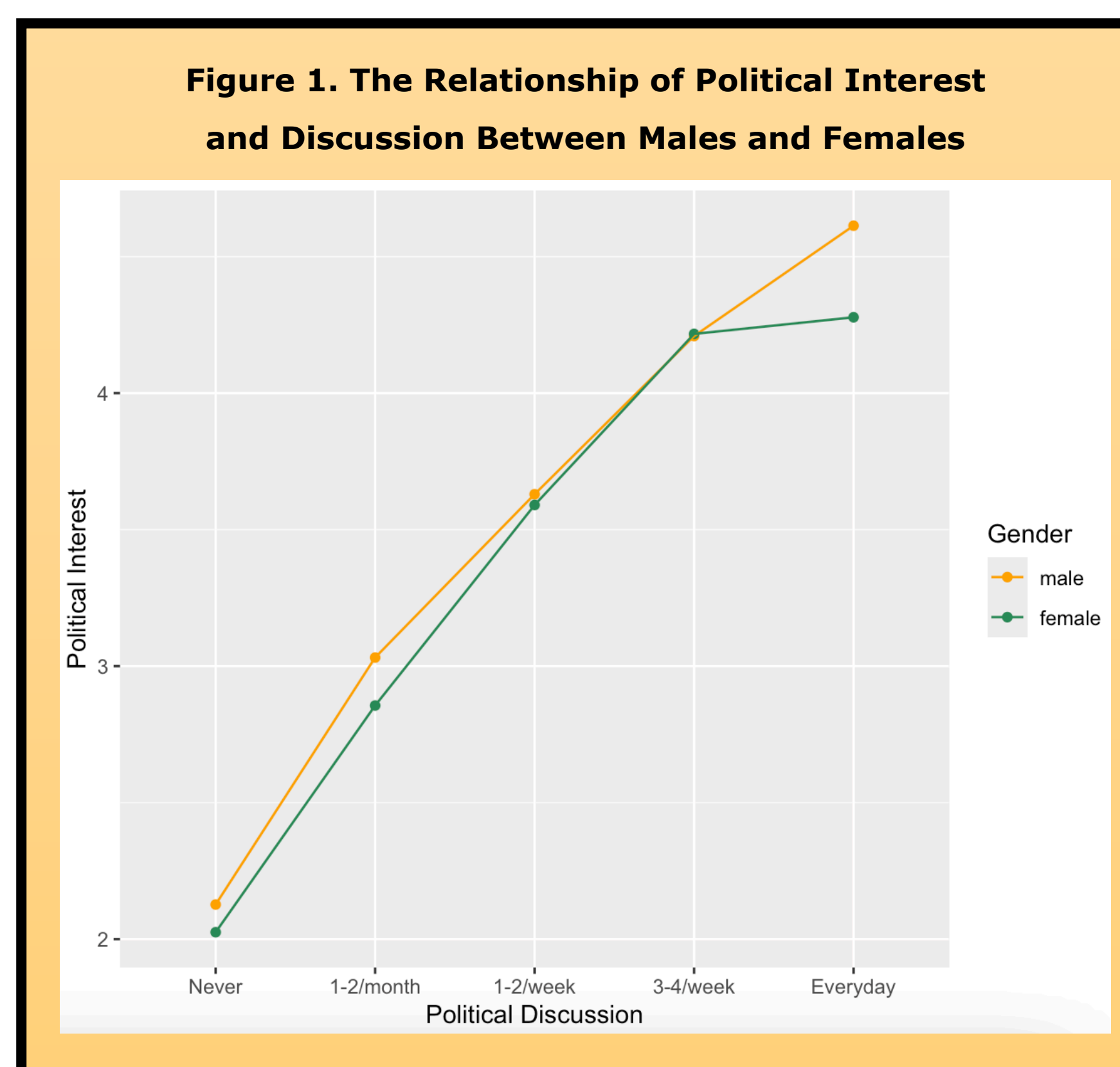
- After controlling for political interest and political discussion, those who discuss politics more frequently are seen to have significantly higher political interest ($p < 0.001$, Figure 3). There seems to be an equivalent relationship between those who consume TV and political interest (Figure 4).

- Additionally, ANOVA analysis showed that individuals with more political discussions and higher TV consumption had significantly higher political interest, with almost proportionally no disinterest in both variables, indicated by the diminishing light pink proportion. (Figure 3, Figure 4).



Multivariate

- An individual's political interest increases as their engagement with political discussions increases ($p < 2.2e-16$, Figure 1). Gender does not predict interest, nor does it confound the results. A positive linear relationship is evident.
- Political interest increases as an individual's TV consumption increases, while gender remains an insignificant factor. There is a positive linear relationship ($b = 0.24, p < 2.2e-16$, Figure 2).



Discussion

- Engaging with the media and discussing politics seems to have a positive relationship with an individual's interest in politics.
- It is still unclear whether political interest impacts political discussion and TV consumption or if it is vice versa.
 - In order to understand the media's role, we could potentially do an experiment when people are assigned to media exposure to see if media exposure affects political interest
 - in line with the concept of cognitive mobilization (Albright, 2009), individuals who have political resources and skills can then go on to be better prepared to engage with the complexities of politics and reach their own political decisions.
- The powerful effect of personal networks enables an individual to make decisions that strengthen their political beliefs

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