WHY ARE PROFESSORS LIBERAL?

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Abstract: The political liberalism of professors—an important occupational group and anomaly according to traditional theories of class politics—has long puzzled sociologists. To shed new light on the subject, we review research on professorial politics over the past half-century, identifying the main hypotheses that have been proposed to account for professorial liberalism. Using regression decomposition, we examine hypothesized predictors of the political gap between professors and other Americans using General Social Survey data pooled from 1974-2008. Results indicate that professors are more liberal than other Americans because a higher proportion possess advanced educational credentials, exhibit a disparity between their levels of education and income, identify as Jewish, non-religious, or non-theologically conservative Protestant, and express greater tolerance for controversial ideas. Together, the variables linked to our hypotheses account for about 43 percent of the political gap between professors and other Americans. We conclude by outlining a new theory of professorial politics that integrates these findings, moves beyond existing approaches, and sets an agenda for future research.

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Sociological research consistently finds that American professors generally have social and political attitudes to the left of the U.S. population. Not long after William F. Buckley famously railed against liberal academe in *God and Man at Yale* (1951), a landmark survey showed nearly half of academic social scientists scoring high on an index of "permissive" attitudes toward communism (Lazarsfeld and Thielens 1958). The next large-scale survey of political views of American professors, in the late 1960s (Ladd and Lipset 1976), found that just under half identified as left of center, compared to just under a third of the U.S. population, and that they voted 20–25 percent more Democratic than the American electorate. Recent studies echo these conclusions, confirming that professors are decidedly liberal in political self-identification, party affiliation, voting, and a range of social and political attitudes (Gross and Simmons 2007; Rothman et al 2005; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006:506; Zipp and Fenwick 2006).

Understanding why American professors tend to be liberal is important for three reasons. First, doing so could shed light on an occupation of great sociological significance. The approximately 1.2 million college or university professors and instructors working in the U.S. today play pivotal social roles producing new knowledge and technology; teaching and credentialing growing numbers of students; advising government, industry, and nongovernmental organizations; and shaping social narratives in what Alexander (2006) calls the "civil sphere." Politics do not bear directly on all work professors do, but higher education institutions as loci of knowledge production and dissemination may be influenced in important ways by their political views.[1] Second, a

[1] There is growing recognition among sociologists of knowledge that professors' politics matter. For example, sociologists of ideas attend to the ways in which commitment to paradigms and

major public controversy currently surrounds professorial politics. Conservative critics charge that many liberal and radical academicians abuse their positions, indoctrinating students politically and silencing conservative voices on campus (e.g., D'Souza 1991; Horowitz 2006, 2007; Kimball 1990; see Bérubé 2007; Messer-Davidow 1993; Smith, Meyer, and Fritschler 2008). Public opinion polls find that about a third of Americans believe "liberal bias" in academia to be a serious problem (Gross and Simmons 2006), and the issue of professors and politics has received extensive coverage in the press. Critics have proposed various remedies, some with far-reaching implications. Discovering the sources of professorial liberalism could inform the debate that has ensued. Third, given the large number of social, cultural, and institutional processes with which the phenomenon of American professorial liberalism appears connected, it represents a fruitful case for study, providing an opportunity to reexamine core issues of politics and society.

In part because of the last of these points, over the years sociologists have advanced numerous hypotheses to explain the liberalism of professors.[2] Ladd and Lipset (1976), taking up Lazarsfeld and Thielen's (1958) notion of the "academic mind," argued

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approaches, especially for humanists and social scientists (Gross 2008; Rojas 2007) but for natural scientists as well (Frickel 2004), may be bound up with political identity. Scholarship on the sociology of intellectuals considers how the fiscal conservatism of a small number of academics, namely economists, powerfully shaped late twentieth century social and economic policy (Babb 2004; Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002). Likewise, a large body of research in science studies examines how scientists' political commitments, both conscious and tacit, may enter into and inflect their investigations (e.g., Barnes 1977; Shapin and Schaffer 1985; Haraway 1989), part of a larger process of "coproduction" by which states, economies, and social orders and science, knowledge, and technology become intertwined and help to reciprocally bring one another about (Jasanoff 2004).

[2] In this paper "liberalism" refers to views that would be classified as left of center in the contemporary American context, including favorable attitudes toward economic redistribution and the welfare state, support for a politics of inclusion vis-à-vis minority groups, and a preference for multilateralism and diplomacy in international affairs. In economic terms, such views are obviously at odds with the pro–free market, conservative position dubbed "neo-liberalism" by some scholars (e.g., Harvey 2005).

that intellectualism—a rational, critical, creative mindset linked to the Western intellectual tradition—is naturally at odds with most forms of conservatism. Ladd and Lipset mobilized this argument to explain the especially high levels of liberalism of American professors at elite institutions, who, they theorized, exhibit the most intellectualism (also see Lipset 1982; Lipset and Dobson 1972). Political sociologists in the 1970s and 1980s engaging the "new class" problem developed other hypotheses (for discussion see Bruce-Briggs 1979; King and Szelényi 2004). To these scholars, professors belong to the broader occupational category designated by Brint (1985:401–2)—following Kristol—"social and cultural specialists," which also includes "artists, writers, journalists … and social scientists [outside academe]." For some, like Brint, the group's liberalism reflected high levels of education and the experience of having come of age in the 1960s (Bell 1976, 1979; Brint 1984). Others saw its political dispositions and sympathies to be a function of class location and interests, variously understood (Gouldner 1979; Lamont 1987, 1992). For still others the liberalism of professors and of the professional classes generally evidenced the rise of a "new political culture" in the advanced industrial democracies characterized by new cross-class alignments and concerns (Clark and Hoffmann-Martinot 1998; Clark and Lipset 1991; see Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995). Finally, some social scientists today suggest the faculty's liberal tilt may reflect discriminatory hiring and promotion practices (Klein and Stern 2004–5, 2005; Klein and Western 2004–5; Rothman et al. 2005).

This article uses empirical data to arbitrate among several of these theories and progress toward the development of a more comprehensive explanation. After discussing the liberalism of American professors in more detail, we outline a conceptual framework

for understanding occupational politics, the broader phenomenon of which professors' politics is a case. We then identify, from a review of research on professorial politics published over the past half-century, six broad hypotheses on the predictors of professorial liberalism. We test these hypotheses using a variant of the Oaxaca-Blinder regression decomposition procedure, an econometric technique typically used to examine wage disparities, on data from the General Social Survey (GSS) pooled over the years 1974-2008. During this period 326 GSS respondents with non-missing values on our outcome variable were employed as professors or instructors in higher education, and we examine how much of the gap between their politics and those of other Americans can be accounted for with variables associated with each of the hypotheses. We find that these variables together account for about 43 percent of the gap, and that the most important factors are advanced education, the disparity between professors' educational levels and their incomes, the fact that a higher proportion of professors than non-professors have no religious affiliation or are Jews or non-theologically conservative Protestants, and intellectualism operationalized as tolerance for controversial ideas (not of a liberal nature).

Although our models account for a large proportion of the gap between professors and other Americans, we go on to elaborate a new theory of professorial liberalism that builds on and brings coherence to our empirical findings, and might account for some portion of the politics gap left unexplained by our models. Bringing together neo-institutionalist theory (Clemens and Cook 1999; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Scott 1995) and social psychology-influenced approaches to status attainment and occupational choice (Sewell and Hauser 1975), we argue that, given the way the American academic

profession was institutionalized and its twentieth-century history, it has acquired such a strong reputation for liberalism and secularism that over the last thirty five years few politically- or religiously-conservative students, but many liberal and secular ones, have formed the aspiration to become professors. We theorize that these commonplace aspirational differences, combined with more occasional downstream assessments of organizational fit, are the main proximate causes of the preponderance of liberals in academe today. To buttress our argument we cite a number of studies that offer indirect support, and conclude by calling for future research on how institutionalized occupational reputation may interact with political identity to shape educational and occupational aspirations and choices in the professoriate and beyond.

THE LIBERALISM OF AMERICAN PROFESSORS

Although the liberal tendencies of American professors have grown over time, such tendencies have been evident for much of the twentieth century. Before then, in the eighteenth century and first half of the nineteenth, the primary mission of American colleges and universities was to inculcate civic and moral virtues and transmit classical culture. Professors were often clergymen expected to teach accepted verities and live uncontroversial lives. With the birth of the American research university in the second half of the nineteenth century, the capacity to produce new knowledge came gradually to be valued above political or religious conformism (Hofstadter and Metzger 1955; Veysey 1965). This trend continued in the early twentieth century, coinciding with the involvement of many professors, especially in the emerging social sciences, in Progressive Era politics (Cohen 2002; Ross 1991). Simultaneously, private money

pouring into research universities raised new demands for control, as business interests clashed with an emerging public intellectualism that saw some leading academics criticize laissez-faire capitalism and imperialism. Professors leveraged their newfound social power into institutionalized protections of academic freedom (Haskell 1996)—important enabling conditions for a new wave of faculty radicalism, which struck during the Depression with uneven force across disciplines and institutions. Two decades later, radicalism in the university was under attack. McCarthy and his followers were convinced that national security was threatened not just by the alleged Communist Party membership and sympathies of some American academics but also by their ostensible tendency to support redistributionist policies, broad civil liberties protections, and détente with the Soviet Union (Schrecker 1986).

It was to assess how well social scientists were faring in the context of McCarthyism that the Lazarsfeld and Thielens (1958) survey was undertaken. However, their most striking findings pertained not to academic freedom but to politics. Three years after the 1952 presidential elections, in which 55 percent of the electorate voted for Dwight Eisenhower—a politician whose moderate views were a sign the Republican Party had not yet veered right (Rae 1989)—only about 30 percent of the social scientists surveyed reported usually voting for Republicans; 46 percent were Democrats and 36 percent Independents.

Other studies in the late 1950s and early 1960s, most restricted to a few fields or institutions, confirmed these numbers but also found social scientists to be the most liberal of all professors. Reviewing this research, Faia (1974:173) concluded that "when professors are included [in surveys] who are either in the natural sciences or professional

schools, the percentage claiming a Democratic affiliation will drop accordingly and will be well below the proportion indicating a Democratic affiliation in the electorate generally."

Political mobilization in the late 1960s and early 1970s, much of it centered on college campuses, was the context for the major survey of American professors, reported by Ladd and Lipset (1976) in *The Divided Academy.* Liberalism and Democratic support, they found, were no longer limited to the social sciences. Examining all fields, Ladd and Lipset found 46 percent of professors had political identities of left or liberal, 27 percent middle of the road, and 28 percent conservative, with younger faculty more liberal than older. As was increasingly the case outside academe, where Southern conservatives were abandoning the Democratic Party in the wake of the Civil Rights movement (Black and Black 2002; Lassiter 2005) and where excitement among conservative populists about Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign was heightening commitment to the GOP (Critchlow 2007), Democratic support went hand in hand with left or liberal self-identification. Some differences by field remained, but they were not as great as they had once been. In 1968 and 1972 social scientists and humanists supported Democratic candidates Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern, respectively, in nearly equal measure; professors in the physical and biological sciences were next most likely to vote Democratic. Republicans commanded a majority only among professors of business, engineering, and agriculture.

New trends were observed in the 1980s. Comparing faculty survey data from 1975 and 1984 to the data Ladd and Lipset had analyzed, Hamilton and Hargens found a conservative trend in faculty politics from the 1970s to the early 1980s, paralleling

attitudinal developments outside academe that helped precipitate the "Reagan revolution." Professors identifying as leftist increased by about 1 percent, but "liberal self-identifications declined by roughly seven points…. Conservative identifications, both moderate and strong, showed increases, these together being approximately equal to the liberal losses" (Hamilton and Hargens 1993:607). In 1984, 5.7 percent of professors identified themselves as on the left, 33.8 percent as liberal, 26.6 percent as middle of the road, 29.6 percent as moderate conservatives, and 4.2 percent as strong conservatives. Aggregate conservative growth was found to result from increasing conservative self-identification in the most conservative fields.

The trend was short-lived. Research shows that in recent decades the American professoriate has become an even greater liberal and Democratic stronghold. For example, voter registration records of faculty at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford reveal that of the 67 percent for whom information could be obtained, almost 50 percent were registered Democrats and about 5 percent Republicans (Klein and Western 2004–5; but see Cohen-Cole and Durlauf 2005). A national survey of faculty in six social sciences and humanities showed ratios of Democratic to Republican voters somewhere between 7:1 and 9:1 (Klein and Stern 2004–5). A 1999 study of faculty in all fields reported that 72 percent identify to the left of center and 15 percent right of center; that 50 percent are registered Democrats, compared to 33 percent Independents and 11 percent Republicans; and that faculty attitudes display "an across the board commitment to positions that are typically identified with contemporary liberal ideals" (Rothman et al.

2005:8).[3] Another faculty survey using a more articulated scale found that percentages of liberals, moderates, and conservatives fall around 48, 31, and 17, respectively; that in the 2004 elections 72 percent reported voting for John Kerry and 25 percent for George Bush; and that professors hold liberal views on business and the free market, support for international institutions, and separation of church and state (Tobin and Weinberg 2006).

Descriptively these studies tell a consistent story. Yet much research on the topic recently has been ideologically motivated and beset by problems of sampling and questionnaire design (Gross and Simmons 2007). Drawing most of their questions verbatim from long-standing surveys of the U.S. population such as the General Social Survey (GSS) and the American National Election Study (ANES), Gross and Simmons (2007) were able to conduct a more reliable and representative survey of American professors and to make meaningful comparisons to the general population. Their research shows that in 2006, 62.2 percent of professors described themselves as any shade of liberal, 18 percent as middle of the road, and 19.7 percent as any shade of conservative. By contrast, data from the 2004 ANES showed 28.6 percent of Americans describing themselves as liberal and 39.2 percent as conservative. Gross and Simmons argue that those self-identified as "slightly liberal" or "slightly conservative" should be considered moderates, changing the overall distribution to 44.1 percent liberal, 46.6 percent moderate, and 9.2 percent conservative and revealing a trend toward moderate views in the youngest faculty cohorts. Even so there is no question that liberal self-identification and attitudes are much more common among professors than in the general U.S. population. Professors are also more likely to be registered Democrats and vote

[3] However, the authors miscalculated the numbers for political self-identification. Later analysis revealed that the correct figures were 62 percent liberal, 26 percent moderate, and 12 percent conservative (see Rothman and Lichter 2008).

Democratic. Gross and Simmons (2007) reported that 51 percent of professors had Democratic affiliations, 35.3 percent Independent (with Democratic-leaning Independents greatly outnumbering Republican-leaning ones), and 13.7 percent Republican. Gallup polls in December 2007 showed 31 percent of voting-age Americans to be Democrats, 41 percent Independents, and 28 percent Republicans (Newport 2008). As for voting, in the 2004 presidential elections, Bush won 50.7 percent of the popular vote and Kerry 48.3 percent. Of professors who reported voting, 77.6 percent said they voted for Kerry and 20.4 percent for Bush.

THE ORIGINS OF OCCUPATIONAL POLITICS

But why are American professors so liberal? To lay groundwork for the analyses that follow, we present a conceptual framework for understanding occupational politics. We understand occupations to be relatively stable, culturally recognized social structures organized around types of paid labor, skills, and training. Occupations are semiautonomous, having distinct legacies and future trajectories, but are also embedded in wider processes of production, ecological systems with other occupations (Abbott 1988; Rotolo and McPherson 2001), cultural, institutional, organizational, and political structures (Abbott 1989; Hall and Soskice 2001; Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Streeck and Thelen 2005) and systems of class relations (Wright 1985).

In modern societies, systematic differences between some occupations can be observed in workers' average political views, party affiliations, and practices. In the U.S. professors tend to be liberal, while research suggests that farmers, police officers, and members of the military are typically conservative. In our view, ten social mechanisms,

each prevalent in contemporary labor markets, could account for these differences.[4] (1) Occupations could take on distinctive political qualities through *compositional effects unrelated to formal job requirements*. Sociodemographic characteristics like gender, age, or race may give an occupation the political hue associated with those characteristics. Many processes from sex segregation to cultural change across cohorts to ethnic niching could create politically relevant compositional profiles for occupations. Effects of this kind are to be distinguished from (2) *compositional effects related to formal job requirements.* For example, the legal profession requires a law degree; thus all lawyers have advanced schooling and may have the associated political tendencies. Individuals may also *self-select* into occupations because of the perceived fit of their aptitudes, values, and identities with those of other workers or the work itself (Halaby 2003; Holland 1984; Schneider 1987). We distinguish (3) *direct* from (4) *indirect political self-selection*. In the former, people enter an occupation to consciously pursue their political interests, as when an undergraduate committed to "social justice" gravitates to social work, or because they otherwise perceive a match between their politics and the work. In indirect political self-selection, choice based on ostensibly nonpolitical aptitudes and identities turns out to have political consequences. Someone who thinks herself tough enough to stand up to criminals, for example, may go into policing to find that a high proportion of colleagues with similar self-concepts hold conservative views on crime and justice.

Political views and behavior in an occupation may also reflect (5) the *economic interests* of workers. Government policies have economic consequences and workers' views and practices may reflect the political strategies they hope to see pursued.

[4] We build here on the work of Weeden and Grusky (2005) and Grusky and Sorensen (1998).

Economic interests could be occupation-specific, as in the case of autoworkers who favor restrictions of the mobility of capital when jobs are threatened by outsourcing; or they could reflect interests of the larger classes or class fractions to which the workers in an occupation belong.[5] (6) *Occupational socialization* could also shape an occupation's political leanings. When the attitudes of an "occupational community" (Van Maanen and Barley 1984) are so distinctive, coherent, strong, or salient as to form part of its subculture, the views of new recruits may shift toward conformity as they adopt the folkways of fellow workers; such a shift could be intensified by strong and relatively exclusive social network ties among occupation members, which are also associated with group polarization dynamics (Sunstein 2009). (7) *Processes of social closure* could also be at play (Parkin 1979). Indirect closure processes—restrictions on entrants to an occupation that create compositional profiles with political implications—are indistinguishable from the first mechanism discussed above. But direct political closure is distinct: here entrants to occupations or those seeking advancement are screened for their political views, as when new governments base appointments on political loyalty tests. Closure processes of this kind could operate through direct scrutiny of political belief—in occupations where political selection is seen as legitimate—or more subtly through assessments of whether individuals fit with established occupational or organizational identities (Rivera 2008). Struggles may arise from time to time over the legitimacy of political closure, as when American civil service reforms at the turn of the twentieth century restricted political patronage (Tolbert and Zucker 1983). Apart from such

[5] The difference between interest-based processes and compositional effects unrelated to formal job requirements can blur. For instance, variation in average class backgrounds of workers could result in interest-based compositional effects. At the same time, membership in other sociodemographic categories such as race or ethnicity may affect political attitudes because of the perceived economic interests of group members.

struggles, (8) *labor movement mobilization* could affect political variation across occupations. Unionization campaigns directed at janitors (Chun 2009), for example, may move them to support specific policies and parties. (9) *Ecological dynamics* could also lend distinctive political tendencies as occupations struggle to carve out niches and compete for scarce resources in changing environments (Rotolo and McPherson 2001). Finally, (10) any of these mechanisms may intersect with *processes of institutionalization*—including those by which the social meaning and reputation of an occupation become bound up with its politics—to ensure that, by the aggregated effects of processes unfolding in a multiplicity of contexts, the political valences of occupations remain relatively stable over time.

How might these mechanisms, separately or in combination, have resulted in the liberalism of the academic profession? Six testable hypotheses can be derived from the sociological literature on the subject.[6]

Hypothesis 1: The sociodemographic characteristics of the professoriate explain why professors tend to be liberal. Political allegiances change over time, and analysts err when they treat as natural social groups defined by such categories as ethnicity, race, and gender (Brubaker 2004). Nevertheless, data show a strong, consistent association between membership in core U.S. sociodemographic groups and social and political attitudes. For example, class held constant, African-Americans tend to have more liberal

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[6] Each of these hypotheses is understandable in terms of one or more of the generic mechanisms identified above. However, in keeping with select strands of the literature on social mechanisms, our aim in the empirical section of this paper is not to test for these mechanisms directly, but to identify the variable associations that account for professorial liberalism—as a prelude to assessing which underlying mechanisms may be operative. There is therefore no one-to-one correspondence between the mechanisms and our hypotheses.

views than whites on economic and racial matters (Schuman et al. 1998). Likewise, social psychological research suggests that men tend to be more comfortable than women with social hierarchies and that their worldviews in this regard shape political engagement in important ways (Sidanius and Pratto 2001).

Occupations obviously vary in sociodemographic composition. Our first hypothesis, building on the notion of compositional effects unrelated to formal job requirements, explores how the composition of the professoriate might relate to its politics. As they are linked to broader literatures, we evaluate education, religion, and class separately, below, and consider under Hypothesis 1 the effect of cohort, familial, gender, and geographic composition.

Concerning cohort, numerous sociologists have followed Ladd and Lipset (1976:23) in viewing the 1960s as a watershed moment in faculty politics, a decade when a new generation of academics, "who knew neither Hitler nor Stalin" and "found no reason to hold back their criticisms" of American society, entered the university. Ladd and Lipset reported that already by 1969 the political leanings of this generation had pushed overall faculty politics farther to the left, and predicted that effects would continue to be felt for decades since the 1960s were a time of major and disproportionate expansion of the American higher education sector. Accordingly, we examine whether a large number of baby boomers in the academic ranks might help account for professors' liberal attitudes. In terms of family structure, some observers have noted that American professors tend to have fewer children on average than others (see Bassett 2005; Hochschild 2003). This is so in part because, for most academics, normative childbearing years coincide with the struggle for tenure, a fact affecting academic women especially.

Higher rates of childbearing in a group may be associated with political conservatism not simply because religious conservatives, in particular, place more value on childbearing (Greeley and Hout 2006), but also because larger families are more expensive, which could militate toward support for politicians and parties focused on tax reductions and maximization of take home pay, as the Republican Party has been. Lower rates of childbearing among professors might therefore contribute to their liberalism. As for gender, while women have historically been underrepresented among professors, in recent decades they have registered major gains, and now make up just under half of entering faculty cohorts (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006:449). We consider the possible connection between professorial liberalism and a feminized academic labor force.

Finally, other observers have linked professorial liberalism to the fact that most colleges and universities are located in urban areas, whose residents typically have more liberal views; and to the fact that, relative to other regions of the country, the politically-conservative South has traditionally been underserved by higher education, such that a disproportionately small number of professors reside there (Wilson 2008). On the first of these points, it does not seem plausible to us that professors' political views would be much affected by the population density of the communities in which they eventually settle. We know too many examples of academics who are lonely voices of radicalism in their small, rural towns. But we do examine whether a higher proportion of professors than others might have grown up in big cities, reflecting differential educational opportunities and normative occupational aspirations, and whether this could help explain their liberalism. With respect to residence outside the South, we examine the effects of this directly on the assumption that region may powerfully shape the political culture of

institutions, including institutions of higher education, and that institutional culture in turn may affect the politics of individual professors. Under the banner of geographic composition we additionally consider whether professors are more likely to be foreign born, given the internationalism of the academic labor market and that the American professoriate has served as an important vehicle of social mobility for some immigrant groups; and, separately, whether professors are more likely to have lived in a foreign country as teenagers, given that, as we discuss below, many professors come from relatively privileged families in which travel and exposure to other cultures are common. Both factors might be associated with liberalism. To be sure, the political attitudes of immigrants to the U.S. vary dramatically by country of origin, class background, religion, and other factors. But American conservatives have often favored restrictions on immigration and on the granting of political and social rights to immigrants, and all else being equal this should lead to less conservative political self-identification within immigrant communities (though professors who are immigrants tend to be buffered against such restrictions.) For non-immigrants, living abroad while growing up might foster the development of a more cosmopolitan, international orientation that would be unswayed by conservative appeals to American national identity.

Hypothesis 2: High levels of educational attainment among professors account for their liberalism. Debate continues over the relationship between education and social and political attitudes. On the one hand, a large body of research from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s showed that the more years of education people have, the more comfortable they tend to be with social diversity, the more tolerant of political dissent, the less traditional

their action-orientations and thinking, the more they tend to be religious skeptics, and the more coherent and constrained their worldviews (for discussion see Feldman and Newcomb 1969; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991). Four mechanisms were posited to account for these effects: socialization into an enlightenment culture institutionalized in schools; cognitive upgrading; exposure to peer culture and to students from diverse backgrounds; and class differentiation processes in which middle- and upper-middle-class students symbolically embrace tolerance to distance themselves from putatively authoritarian working-class culture. On the other hand, critics of this perspective viewed findings of greater tolerance among the educated as either artifacts, since the educated understand survey items better and know the socially acceptable answers, or irrelevant, inasmuch as education in capitalist societies encourages individualism and impedes meaningful collective action (Jackman and Muha 1984).

Since these positions were first staked out, overstated claims on both sides have been tempered. Work in the tradition of Newcomb (1943), who followed students during their years at Bennington College, continues to show that at certain kinds of schools and for certain kinds of students, higher education, at least, can be a socially and politically transformative experience. Pascarella and Terenzini note that studies drawing on national probability samples "invariably indicate changes during the college years in students' political attitudes and values toward more liberal political stances" (1991:278). More specifically, "studies dealing with changes … in attitudes and values related to civil rights, civil liberties, racism, anti-Semitism, or general tolerance for nonconformity uniformly report shifts toward social, racial, ethnic, and political tolerance and greater support for the rights of individuals in a wide variety of areas" (279). However, other

research suggests such effects may vary cross-nationally and generationally; reflect dispositional differences leading students to opt in or out of college; depend on specific educational experiences; be restricted to social attitudes and not touch economic attitudes or views of foreign policy; and have ambiguous consequences for political behavior (e.g., Dey 1997; Highton 2009; Jennings and Stoker 2008; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005; Phelan et al. 1995; Weakliem 2002; Weil 1985).

These lines of investigation suggest a straightforward hypothesis about the liberalism of professors that builds on the second mechanism identified above—compositional effects related to job requirements. In most colleges and universities professors are required to hold doctoral or other advanced degrees. Insofar as rates of advanced degree holding are substantially higher among professors than among non-professors, and insofar as attainment of an advanced degree requires many years of schooling, this may explain professors' greater liberalism.

To an extent, the hypothesis has already been explored. Analysts examining the influence of class position on political views and behavior have long included in their models how people's politics vary with education. For example, Brint (1984), examining empirically the "new class" thesis of Gouldner and others, argued that the liberalism of knowledge workers had been overstated, and that what liberalism could be found was a function in part of "the liberalizing effects of a much expanded higher-education system" (60). Gerteis (1998) analyzed American middle-class politics in two periods of political change, the 1970s and the 1990s, and found that in both a signal characteristic of occupations tilting most heavily left was educational attainment. Likewise, Manza and Brooks (1997) found that growing support for Democrats among professionals between

the 1950s and 1980s—a key political realignment—was driven in part by educational experiences. Important as these studies are, none focuses on the professoriate specifically.

Hypothesis 3: Professors tend to be liberal because they exhibit high levels of intellectualism. In a 1972 article with Dobson, Lipset identified a structural tension in contemporary societies. In such societies intellectuals—whom Lipset, quoting Hofstadter, defined as those persons who have "creative, critical, and contemplative minds"—are given considerable power to educate the young and inform public policy. Yet intellectuals are often social critics, especially humanists whose work involves a tendency to "appraise [everything] in terms of general conceptions of the desirable" (138). If the conceptions thus favored by intellectuals are at odds with prevailing political and institutional practices, society may come under intense scrutiny from a core subsystem, and social conflict may arise. Why do intellectuals—especially contemporary academic intellectuals—so often embrace the role of social critic? Lipset and Dobson never fully answered this question, but, drawing from the sociology of science, they pointed to several relevant features of academic life. Status hierarchies in academe create large groups of perpetually frustrated professors who may channel resentment and alienation into social criticism.[7] Likewise, the "organized skepticism" Merton posited as part of the normative structure of science may be a general tendency, found among nearly all intellectuals, to "doubt … conventional verities and reigning myths" (160). Finally, the growth of academe in the later twentieth century led to "an increasing concentration of intellectuals within certain social and geographic settings" (161)—such as college

[7] In apparent contradiction, Lipset and Dobson also insisted, in line with Ladd and Lipset's findings, that the highest-status academics tended to be the most liberal. Also see Lipset (1982).

towns—which could intensify political sentiment. Lipset and Dobson's general thesis was that occupations exhibiting the most intellectualism tend naturally to be the most liberal and that within occupations such as college teaching liberalism and intellectualism are correlated at the individual level. Without specifying all the mechanisms that might bring about these associations, their argument appears to build on notions of compositional effects related to job requirements, direct and indirect political self-selection, and occupational socialization.

There are at least three problems with these intriguing claims. First, they are to an extent tautological: being a social critic from the left is virtually built into Lipset and Dobson's definition of intellectualism. Second, Lipset and Dobson never adequately operationalized intellectualism. Ladd and Lipset tried to do so by assuming that the most successful academics—those teaching at prestigious schools or with the most publications—are the most intellectual, but many other factors are associated with academic success (see, e.g., Cole and Cole 1973; Leahey 2007). Third, a growing consensus among social scientists holds that there is little scholarly warrant and much analytic danger in trying to distinguish conservatism from liberalism on the basis of the putative dogmatism of the former and the greater creativity of the latter. For example, had the American conservative movement not exhibited considerable ideological and organizational creativity in the 1970s and 1980s, it would never have flourished—a point easily missed if conservatism is equated with cognitive rigidity (e.g., Brennan 1995; Coontz 2000; Diamond 1995; Himmelstein 1983; Pierson and Skocpol 2007; Shulman and Zelizer 2008).[8]

[8] Of course, a political movement could exhibit creativity at the ideological and organizational level and still be characterized by rigidity among the rank and file. Among political psychologists

Nevertheless, we make a preliminary effort to evaluate the hypothesis. First, lacking more direct measures, we examine whether professors may be more intellectual than other Americans in the sense of being willing to give a hearing to ideas that most people would regard as abhorrent, and whether this helps to explain their liberalism. Critics of "political correctness" in the academy (e.g., Downs 2005; Hamilton 1995) may scoff at the notion that professors believe in an unrestricted marketplace of ideas, but commitment to rational deliberation in the sense outlined by Habermas (1984-1986), in which no ideas are excluded a priori, is clearly part of what Lipset had in mind by intellectualism. Second, we examine how far professors' superior average performance on a vocabulary test may go toward accounting for the political gap between them and others. Intellectualism and intelligence, which vocabulary tests are often seen as proxies for, are distinct, as Hofstadter (1966) famously noted, but inasmuch as an important component of intellectualism is verbal ability, then a vocabulary test seems a reasonable measure, particularly after controlling for education.

Hypothesis 4:The religious characteristics of professors may explain their liberalism. Mid-twentieth-century social scientists studying the relationship between religion and politics in the U.S. focused on political consequences of affiliation with the Jewish or Catholic faiths and mainline Protestant denominations. Jews were seen to have liberal

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there is growing attention to the relationship between personality and political orientation, with a number of studies, reprising themes of the "authoritarian personality," reporting a negative association between "openness to new experience"—one of the "big five" personality factors—and political conservatism (Gerber et al 2009; Mondak and Halperin 2008). We are suspicious of these findings not simply on the grounds identified by Martin (2001) with respect to the authoritarian personality thesis—that the entire project may be politically biased—but also because some measures of openness to new experience may be *de facto* measures of liberal ideology. We would have liked to include personality measures in our analysis but they are not available in the GSS.

views and to support the Democratic Party. Catholics were seen to hold relatively conservative social views but typically to vote Democratic. Mainline Protestants were seen as a key constituency for the Republican Party (for review see Wuthnow 2007). Social scientists sometimes invoked these tendencies, in part reflecting ethnic and class compositions of different faiths, to explain occupational politics, including the politics of professors. For example, Ladd and Lipset noted that after decades of discrimination, Jews entered American academe in large numbers following World War II. By the 1960s, the college enrollment rate of Jews was twice that of non-Jews, and by 1969 Jews made up 9.8 percent of professors and were "heavily represented on the faculties of Ivy League schools and other elite private universities" (Ladd and Lipset 1976:150). According to Ladd and Lipset, the liberalism of American professors could therefore be traced in part to religious composition. Such claims rested on assumptions about how faith and religious community shape political views and behavior, and also about how members of particular faiths tend to pursue certain occupations, not least because of ethnic and immigrant niching in the labor market.

With the revival of American conservatism in the 1970s, a group not often considered in these analyses—theologically conservative Protestants, many of whom lived in the South and had long voted Democratic—became a significant political force. Mobilized into a diverse conservative coalition through their churches, their worldviews at odds with major cultural shifts of the 1960s, conservative Protestants soon proved key to the success of conservative Republican candidates. By the mid 1990s, Protestant religious orthodoxy had become a consistent and important predictor of party affiliation and voting; mainline and conservative Protestants were realigned, with Republican

support dwindling among the former and gaining dramatically among the latter (Manza and Brooks 1997, 2002; Layman 1997; Woodberry and Smith 1998). Nor could these tendencies be explained away by other variables (Manza and Wright 2003; Miller and Hoffmann 1999). Sociologists of religion observed that conservative Protestant politicization had important implications for occupational politics. On the one hand, the strength of theologically conservative Protestantism in lower-middle- and working-class communities may have pushed many occupations centered in those communities in a politically conservative direction, creating "social values" voters whose politics were at odds with their own economic interests, conventionally understood. On the other hand, religious belief may have constrained educational aspirations and occupational choices (Darnell and Sherkat 1997), so that some occupations became normatively out of bounds for conservative Protestants.

The professoriate has three distinctive religious characteristics that may incline it toward greater liberalism. First, what was true in Ladd and Lipset's day remains true today: Jews are overrepresented among professors (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006:460). The intervening period has witnessed the growth of a dynamic Jewish wing of the Republican Party, but Jews are still much more likely than non-Jews to be Democrats and liberals (Mazur 2007). Second, although evidence suggests that conservative Protestants are beginning to make their way into knowledge work fields like academia and journalism (Lindsay 2007; Schmalzbauer 2002), they remain significantly underrepresented among professors, especially at elite research universities (Gross and Simmons 2009); academia is an occupation in which, among the faithful, mainline Protestants predominate. Third, although a majority of American college and university

professors are religious believers, many surveys have documented that religious skepticism is far more common among professors than within the U.S. population (e.g. Ecklund and Schietle 2007). To the extent that the American conservative movement and Republican Party have defined themselves partly around issues of religious faith, professors who claim no affiliation with any religion may be predisposed toward liberalism, accounting for some of the political gap between professors and other Americans.

Hypothesis 5: The liberalism of professors is explained by their class positions. Although we treat the politics of the professoriate as important in its own right, most work on the topic has been under the banner of class analysis. On the one hand, insofar as sociologists have looked at occupational politics in general, it has been chiefly to understand how occupations aggregate into politically aligned classes or class fractions; how occupations with rising or falling memberships and economic fortunes exert pressure on the political system; or what political alignment by occupation reveals about class as social cleavage.

On the other hand, a high proportion of the work sociologists have produced on the liberalism of intellectuals specifically proceeds from class-analytic assumptions. A core issue in this research is whether intellectuals in modern societies form a cohesive class or stratum with its own interests, as argued by Weber (see Sadri 1992) and theorists of the “New Class” such as Gouldner (1979) and Konrád and Szelényi (1979); or whether, located close to the poles of social and cultural power but farther from the pole of economic power and internally differentiated in terms of class background and area of expertise, intellectuals are best thought of as a “free-floating” group (Mannheim 1949) or

as occupying one of a number of "contradictory class locations" (Wright 1978, 1985). Working from one or another of these assumptions, and on the basis of varying conceptions of class, scholars have developed theories of the likely effects on intellectuals' political views and behavior.

Of these theories, the most influential has been that of Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, intellectuals are defined structurally by their possession of high levels of cultural capital and moderate levels of economic capital. This structural position, Bourdieu asserts, shapes their politics, though he also insists that, for intellectuals, "the connection between position in the class structure and political activity is mediated by participation within cultural fields" (Swartz 1997:234). Deprived of economic success relative to those in the world of commerce, intellectuals are less likely to be invested in preserving the socioeconomic order, may turn toward redistributionist politics in the hopes of reducing perceived status inconsistency (see Goffman 1957; Vaisey 2006), and may embrace unconventional social or political views in order to distinguish themselves culturally from the business classes (Lamont 1987). At the same time, many intellectuals owe whatever material success they have found to the social functions they play for the economic elite in terms of maintaining the realm of high culture on which elites rely to legitimate their dominance, and, in the case of teachers and professors, granting educational credentials, a phenomenon also wrapped up with the reproduction of social inequality (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979; Collins 1979). Bourdieu theorizes that this indebtedness imposes a constraint on intellectuals' radicalism.

In *Homo Academicus*, Bourdieu ([1984] 1988) extends these insights into a theory of how political views may vary within the intellectual stratum. He argues that under

normal democratic political conditions,[9] artists and independent journalists as well as aspiring academicians who find their mobility blocked—being subject to the fewest of these constraints—do tend toward radicalism. Among professors, Bourdieu suggests that progressive views should be most common in social sciences, humanities, and natural science fields because scholars in such fields tend to come from less elevated class positions than do professors in law, medicine, or business. Where the latter, because of their background, current class position, and even direct social function, will tend to exhibit "a taste for order," "identifying unreservedly with the status quo," the former "reject… everything which profoundly ties the maintenance of social order to the most insignificant practices of social custom… the hierarchies which they evoke, the vision of social divisions which they imply" (51). Even within each of these fields, Bourdieu theorizes, class position—understood from the standpoint of his multidimensional account of social stratification—should be correlated with political outlook. Bourdieu finds empirical support for these claims in a 1971 survey of tenured faculty in Paris.

In light of the influence of Bourdieu's theory, we test whether the fact that there is a disjuncture between professors' educational levels and their income helps to account for their liberalism. We also consider the significance of differential levels of confidence in business between professors and other Americans, a measure of symbolic distinction from the business classes. In addition, we evaluate the Bourdieu-inspired claim that professors may be liberal because they are more likely to come from highly educated families that encourage their children to value cultural over economic capital.

[9] Bourdieu (1991) gives a different account of these dynamics when considering the case of pre-Nazi Germany.

We also consider three other class-related possibilities. First, as Lamont (1987) and others have argued, "new class" workers in the government and nonprofit sector may have direct economic stakes in liberalism inasmuch as it entails greater state support for education, social services, the arts, and so on. Accordingly, we evaluate how much of the political difference between professors and others is a function of the fact that many professors are public employees.[10] Second, a variety of approaches to class analysis put self-employed workers front and center, understanding them to hold key positions in the class structure and to have distinctive economic interests. In Goldthorpe's view (2007), for example, the self-employed are unique because "the maintenance of their class positions may well appear best guaranteed not through educational attainment…. but rather through their direct inheritance of family businesses as going concerns or through the intergenerational transmission of capital sufficient to enable them to start up enterprises of their own" (173-4). These interests should lead the self-employed to favor low inheritance and other taxes and on these grounds to favor conservative economic ideology. Since there are obviously few self-employed professors, we examine whether their low levels of self-employment help to explain their liberalism. Finally, we test whether professors may be more liberal because they tend to have relatively high rates of unionization. While progressive views among workers should foster union growth, the causal arrow may run in the other direction as well as large and active unions, long courted by the Democratic Party, nurture liberalism among workers.

[10] No measure is available in the GSS of whether respondents are located in the broader nonprofit sector. While a substantial number of American professors teach at private institutions and might benefit more indirectly from the largess of the state, if the new class direct economic interest hypothesis were robust the high percentage of professors who are public employees should substantially reduce the political gap between professors and other Americans.

Hypothesis 6: Intellectualism aside, professors have distinctive "job values" that influence their politics. In a recent paper, Summers (2007) argues that during and after college young people bound for middle- and upper-middle-class lives face many choices about what careers to pursue. Echoing themes advanced in another context by Inglehart (1990), Summers suggests that a key distinction is between those who feel comfortable with the world of commerce and see the main purpose of a job as being to provide as much income as possible, and those who find business distasteful and put higher value on the meaningfulness of work, its social utility, and so on. The former will gravitate to careers in the for-profit sector; the latter may become teachers, social workers, and professors. All else being equal, according to Summers, people with a taste for business and making money tend to hold more conservative views and support the Republican Party, a fact that might go some way toward explaining the liberalism of professors and other workers in the nonprofit sector. We test this hypothesis by examining how much importance professors place on the meaningfulness of work as opposed to other aspects like remuneration, and whether this accounts in part for their liberal views.

The Role of Meso- and Macro-Level Factors

Before turning to an empirical examination of these hypotheses, we issue one caveat. In our discussion of professorial politics so far, there is an entire category of factors we have not considered: meso- and macro-level variables of the sort that figure centrally in the class-inflected approaches to the sociology of intellectual life mentioned above. For example, Wright (1978), building on the contradictory class locations thesis, seeks to identify the conditions under which intellectuals' interests align more with the proletariat

than the bourgeoisie, finding one of the most important to be the degree of proletarianization of intellectual labor. Similarly, Brym (1980), cleaving to a more Gramscian line, argues that intellectuals' politics depend on their "social origins"; on "the group character of the education they receive"; and on "the opportunities with which intellectuals are presented for becoming occupationally and politically tied to a variety of social groups during or after their formal education" (60). Likewise, Karabel (1996) claims that intellectuals tend toward radicalism when there exist in society "well-organized and politically radical subordinate social groups;" when society lacks "a strong business class;" when there is "a high ratio of 'relatively unattached' intellectuals to those employed by large-scale organizations;" when ruling regimes "lack… the means and/or the will to stamp out dissent;" when there is "weakness or division… within the ruling group;" when states cannot adequately protect their citizens from "encroachments" by other states; and when there exist "sharp boundaries… separating intellectuals from non-intellectuals" (211-3).

Some of these claims seem plausible to us; others less so. But since ours is neither a cross-national study nor concerned to explain aggregate changes in professors' political views over time, there is no way to systematically integrate factors such as these into our quantitative analysis. Instead, we assume they may be among the unexamined background conditions by virtue of which the factors we do consider become operative.

DATA AND METHODS

To test our hypotheses we analyze GSS data pooled from 1974 to 2008. As mentioned previously, 326 respondents in the GSS have non-missing values on our outcome variable

and occupational codes indicating that at the time of the interview they were working as professors or instructors in higher education.[11] We pooled across years to ensure that the largest possible number of professors would be included in the sample, not because we are examining change over time. Accordingly, all models include year dummies to absorb time-dependent exogenous shocks that would otherwise bias results.

As an alternative to the GSS we considered using the ANES. However, since the ANES has fewer consistently repeated measures it could not be used to adequately test all our hypotheses. In addition, because of sample size differences, the ANES has less than half the number of professors than the GSS, decreasing statistical power and increasing the probability of spurious findings.

To estimate the size of the political gap between professors and non-professors, we focus on one of the most widely used measures of political orientation: self-identification along a continuum from liberal to conservative. Although this measure has been criticized on various grounds (e.g., Bishop 2005; Luttbeg and Gant 1995), it has also been vigorously defended, particularly by political psychologists who have demonstrated that, especially in the contemporary United States, self-identification in terms of liberalism or conservatism functions as a powerful cognitive and affective structure that helps to organize social and political attitudes and behavior (Jost 2006; Jost, Kay, and Thorisdottir 2009). In the GSS, political self-identity is measured with a seven-point

[11] Of these 326 respondents, 10.7 percent are social scientists, 24.5 percent are humanists or in the fine arts, and 7.7 percent are physical or biological scientists, with the remainder located in other fields. Extrapolating from nationally-representative surveys of the American faculty conducted in 1975, 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1998, we would expect 11.7 percent of respondents to be social scientists, 24.1 to be humanists or in the fine arts, and 20 percent to be physical or biological scientists (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006:447). While physical and biological scientists thus appear to be somewhat underrepresented in the GSS data, on the whole these numbers are so close as to increase our confidence in the representativeness of the professors subsample.

Likert item asking respondents to locate themselves on a scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. (In the analyses below we reverse the direction of the scale.)

Our hypothesis testing involves six sets of predictor variables. For our first hypothesis on sociodemographic traits, we consider membership in the boomer cohort (defined by the U.S. Census as having a birth year between 1946 and 1964), the number of children respondents have, being female, having lived in a big city at the age of 16, living at the time of the interview outside the South (defined as the East South Central and South Atlantic U.S. Census regions), having lived in another country at the age of 16, and being foreign born. For our second hypothesis on education, we consider whether respondents have any degree beyond a bachelors. We operationalize intellectualism, our third hypothesis, with a scale measuring the number of words respondents score correctly on a 10-word vocabulary test. We also consider the willingness of respondents to tolerate the expression of controversial ideas. To do so, we created a summated, standardized scale of six items: answering "yes" or "no" to the questions of whether racists and militarists should be allowed to speak, teach, or have a book in a library. We chose these items over others from the Stouffer tolerance scale, such as those pertaining to "communists" or "homosexuals," since the latter may capture aspects of liberal ideology rather than tolerance for controversial ideas per se. Although consisting of only a few items, the scale exhibits a high level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.8215, above the standard benchmark of 0.700 (Nunnally 1978). In addition, principal components factor analysis indicates that the scale displays unidimensionality, loading primarily on one (unrotated) factor with an Eigenvalue of 2.6851.

Our fourth hypothesis on religion examines whether respondents identify as Jewish, not religiously affiliated, or members of non-theologically conservative Protestant denominations according to the coding scheme developed by Smith (1990).[13] Some sociologists of religion have questioned whether Smith's scheme is a reliable measure of Christian conservatism generally as opposed to more strictly fundamentalist identity (Steensland et al 2000). But alternative coding schemes have come in for criticism as well (see Hackett and Lindsay 2008), and when we experimented with one of these—the scheme developed by Steensland and colleagues—we observed patterns in the representation of conservative Protestants in academe at odds with expectations based on prior research (e.g., Schmalzbauer 2002). Accordingly, we rely on Smith's long-established measure (which, in only slightly modified form, forms the basis for Greeley and Hout's [2006] definitive study of Christian conservatives.)

A core component of our fifth hypothesis, dealing with class position and mobilization, examines levels of cultural and economic capital. Here he follow the lead of scholars of status inconsistency like Hope (1975), first standardizing years of education and constant household income and creating a variable that is the sum of the two—a measure of respondents' total level of cultural and economic capital; and second creating a variable that reflects the difference between standardized education and standardized income. Both variables are included in our model so that we examine the effect of status inconsistency holding constant overall position in the class structure.[14] To avoid multicollinearity with the advanced degree variable, however, we do not include it and the Bourdieu status inconsistency variable in the same model.

[13] Our dummy variable here codes for whether respondents are Protestants and members of liberal or moderate denominations.
[14] We are grateful to Omar Lizardo for suggesting this approach.

Hypothesis 5 also considers whether professorial liberalism may be a function of higher rates of parental advanced degree holding. To measure differentiation from the business classes, we use a dummy variable indicating whether or not respondents have "hardly any" confidence in major American businesses. Also related to class position and mobilization, we consider whether respondents are public employees, self-employed, and union members. Our sixth hypothesis focuses on job values, which we measure using an item asking respondents if "meaningful work" is the most important thing to them in a job versus its income potential, degree of job security, or whether it affords opportunities for promotion.

Not all of the items we use to construct our predictor variables were asked during every GSS year. To deal with the problem of missing data we multiply imputed values using Rubin's (1987) rules, fitting our models on each of m = 20 imputations and running the appropriate post-imputation averaging procedures to obtain the final point estimates and variances.[15] Following the suggestion of Von Hippel (2007), we included the outcome variable in our imputation models, and then dropped cases that were originally missing on the outcome variable when conducting our analysis. Multiple imputation is one of the most effective ways of handling missing data, and is less likely to lead to bias than other approaches, including mean substitution, dummy variable adjustment, and hot-deck imputation (Allison 2001). Nevertheless, since not all questions were asked each year, several variables—namely, our measures of verbal ability, openness to controversial ideas, union membership, work in the public sector, confidence in business, and job values—had levels of missingness above 25 percent and in a few instances over 60

[15] For those interested in replication, the specifications of our imputation model —including the random seed—are available from the authors.

percent. Notwithstanding the reliability of multiple imputation, and the fact that we retained a very large overall sample size of 44,029 cases, we urge some caution in interpreting the coefficients for these variables.[17]

To assess our hypotheses we use a variant of the counterfactual decomposition technique developed by Oaxaca (1973) and Blinder (1973). Commonly used by economists to isolate the contributions of individual predictors to the gap on some outcome (e.g., wages) between dichotomous groups (e.g., men and women)—and used with increasing frequency in sociology as well—in this study we use the technique to assess how much of the politics gap between professors and non-professors is accounted for by each of our variables. We compute results from the decomposition based on reference coefficients from a pooled model over both groups and, following the recommendation by Neumark (1988), include the group indicator as an additional control variable. We adjusted decomposition results using the standard GSS weight variable.

RESULTS

Exactly how large is the political gap between professors and non-professors? Over the 34 years of our study period professors are on average 0.571 points more liberal than non-professors on the seven-point political self-identification scale.[18] Although 0.571 might seem small, in relative terms the difference is substantial. One way to put the gap in perspective is to compare it to differences between other groups. The difference in political self-identity between professors and other Americans is over 1.5 times that

[17] As a check on the reliability of the imputation procedure, we reran all the models reported below excluding imputed cases for the six variables with high levels of missingness. Results were substantively unchanged.

[18] This is the size of the gap for which the regression decompositions attempt to account. The number shown in Table 1 is slightly smaller because the data there are unweighted.

between blacks and whites (0.352), over twice as great as that between the bottom and top deciles in constant household income (0.251), and more than seven times larger than that between women and men (0.078).[19]

What might account for the gap? As a first step toward assessing our hypotheses, we examine how professors score on the predictor variables. Table 1 compares their values to those of non-professors. As expected professors tend to have fewer children, are more likely to have resided in an urban area or foreign country while growing up, and are more likely to be foreign born. However, despite recent shifts women remain underrepresented in academia for the period as a whole. Professors are very similar to other Americans in terms of membership in the boomer cohort and residence outside the South.

More striking differences are found with respect to education, intellectualism, and religion. Compared to other Americans, professors are 12 times more likely to have advanced degrees. In addition, they have above-average verbal ability and exhibit considerably higher levels of tolerance for controversial ideas. As well, Jews and those with no religious affiliation are overrepresented in academia, while conservative Protestants are underrepresented.

Professors are also fairly distinctive when it comes to class. Compared to other Americans, they tend to come from better-educated families and exhibit a greater disparity between their education levels and their income, in line with Bourdieu's theory.

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[19] For the period 2000-2008, 42.3 percent of professors in the GSS sample stated their political identity as "extremely liberal" or "liberal," and 8.7 percent as "extremely conservative" or "conservative." The fact that these numbers are extremely close to the 44.1 versus 9.2 percent numbers from Gross and Simmons's (2007) survey further enhances our confidence in the reliability of GSS data for studying the politics of professors.

They are much more likely than other Americans to be employed in the public sector, and much less likely to be self-employed. Professors are somewhat more likely to belong to unions than are other Americans, but, contrary to the expectations of some new class theorists, they are no more likely to say they lack confidence in big business.[20] Finally, although 80 percent of professors state that meaningful work is among the most important qualities they look for in a job, nearly 60 percent of other Americans feel the same.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Although informative, the statistics in Table 1 are unadjusted and accordingly cannot indicate to what extent these variables predict the gap in political self-identification between professors and other Americans. The decompositions in Table 2 provide estimates of the relative contribution of each variable in explaining the political identification gap. Because of problems with multicollinearity, Model 1 includes the advanced degree variable but excludes the variables related to status inconsistency, while Model 2 includes status inconsistency but excludes advanced degree. Overall the variables in Model 1 account for about 43 percent of the politics gap between professors and non-professors, whereas the variables in Model 2 account for about 27 percent.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

[20] This is consistent with the findings of Gross and Simmons (2007), who report that, on average, professors are somewhat more likely than other Americans to believe that business corporations make a fair and reasonable profit, however much most professors also favor government action to reduce income inequality.

Beginning with an assessment of Hypothesis 1, the decompositions provide only modest support for the notion that sociodemographic factors help account for professors' liberalism. Adjusting for other predictors, the only sociodemographic factors that account for more than one percent of the political gap are number of children and living in an urban area at age 16. Together these factors explain about 5.6 percent of the gap. Gender increases the size of the gap—as a main effect—given the underrepresentation of women in academe. There is greater evidence for Hypothesis 2: after controlling for other predictors, graduate degree holding among professors accounts for about 19.8 percent of the gap. As for Hypothesis 3, dealing with intellectualism, the decompositions show that ceteris paribus the greater average verbal ability of professors actually increases the political gap between them and others by a small amount (again as a main effect). In other words, the data reveal a weak negative relationship between verbal ability and political liberalism. Yet the tolerance scale, our other measure of intellectualism, accounts for about 10.3 percent of the gap between professors and other Americans. Turning to Hypothesis 4, the data support the theory that religious differences between professors and non-professors help to account for political differences. All three variables examined here are statistically significant—with lack of religious affiliation being the most powerful—and together they account for about 14.7 percent of the gap. As to Hypothesis 5, on class, there is mixed support. The Bourdieu status inconsistency variable, denoted in the table as the relative composition of capital, is large and statistically significant, accounting for about 13.0 percent of the gap. While most of the other class variables are significant, together they account for only a small proportion of

the gap in political self-identification. All else being equal, preference for a meaningful job—the variable we use to test Hypothesis 6—increases the political gap between professors and others.[21]

ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

Recently sociologists have demonstrated that differences in model specification can dramatically alter the results of quantitative research (Western 1996; Young 2009). To assess the robustness of our findings we considered several alternative ways of specifying our models. In particular, we examined how results changed after reducing the set of conditioning information, predicting a binary version of the outcome variable, and including various interaction terms.

First, we sought to determine whether the coefficients for our main findings were sensitive to the particular set of conditioning information we included in our models. Thus, in two other models (not shown) we retained only those variables (besides the time dummies) accounting for at least 2 percent of the political gap in Models 1 and 2, respectively. None of the coefficients changed direction or size to a substantial degree. Moreover, for both models the total amount of the gap explained was largely unchanged.

Second, we checked for robustness by using a different version of our outcome variable. Specifically, we wondered whether some of the observed political gap between professors and non-professors might be a function of the fact that, given their high levels of education, professors could be less likely than others to locate themselves near the midpoint on a politics scale. To address this possibility, we dichotomized the outcome

[21] Alternative versions of the model using different specifications of this set of GSS variables—for example, whether the respondent thinks high income is the most important aspect of a job—found no substantively meaningful associations.

variable so that it distinguished liberals from everyone else and reran Models 1 and 2 using Fairlie decomposition, which allows for nonlinear outcomes (see Fairlie 2005). The percentage of the politics gap explained increased somewhat in both models. Had systematic tendencies toward the extremes in survey response among professors biased our models, we would have expected the percentage of the explained gap to decrease.

Finally, we examined how results changed when we included various interaction terms. Of the interaction terms we examined, the only ones that were consistently large and statistically significant involved advanced degree holding. Due to problems of multicollinearity and interpretability of the coefficients, we could not include multiple interaction terms with advanced degree holding in the same model. Table 3 therefore summarizes the results of a number of models with interaction terms run serially. The table shows that several of the hypotheses that received only minor support from Model 1 receive much stronger support when considered in conjunction with advanced degree holding. In itself, the number of women in academe does nothing to explain the politics gap, but the number of women with advanced degrees explains 10.5 percent of the gap, which could only be because women with advanced degrees, who compose nearly all women in academe, tend to be more liberal than men with equivalent educational credentials. Likewise, verbal ability does not reduce the gap, but verbal ability combined with advanced degree holding accounts for a remarkable 59.4 percent of the gap. Tolerance combined with advanced degree holding accounts for 19 percent of the gap. There are also interesting interactions with religion. Americans who are non-religiously affiliated and have advanced degrees, and non-conservative Protestants with advanced degrees, are more liberal than advanced degree holders with other kinds of religious

profiles, and accordingly both interaction terms decrease the politics gap between professors and non-professors.

Although we thus find interaction terms with several variables that are large and statistically significant—and that demand theoretical interpretation—in no instance did the inclusion of an interaction term with education meaningfully alter any of the non-interacting coefficients. As well, none of the interaction models we considered accounted in total for more of the political gap than did Model 1. Our results therefore have a reasonable level of robustness.

TOWARD A NEW THEORY OF PROFESSORIAL LIBERALISM

Although the results from the regression decompositions are large, statistically significant, and robust to a number of variations in model specification, there are nevertheless limitations to our analysis. For instance, while we are reasonably confident that our professors subsample is representative of the larger professorial population, a larger number of professors in the GSS data would have increased confidence in our findings. Similarly, even though we exploited the rich set of data in the GSS to operationalize our main hypotheses, there are no doubt other variables that differently minded researchers would have included but that we did not. And, as is the case with all empirical research, measurement error has affected our findings to an unknown degree. Of even greater theoretical significance, however, is that, as in nearly all quantitative, non-experimental studies, there are multiple ways to interpret our findings. On the one hand, multiple underlying mechanisms could be driving the observed associations. For example, concerning advanced degree holding, it could be that advanced degree holders

tend to be more liberal than others because cognitive upgrading occurs in graduate or professional school that leads individuals to question conservative ideology or the values that underlie it. Alternatively, better-educated Americans may embrace liberalism to distance themselves culturally from other status groups (although not presumably from the business classes, since our models include a measure of such differentiation). On the other hand, the question arises of how all the findings—including the large interactions with advanced degree holding—should be thought of together.

Out of a commitment to the notion that comprehensive, synthetic, intermediary-mechanisms-focused explanations are what social science should aim for (Gross 2009)—and to the related idea that this requires a dynamic interplay between theorization and empirical research in which new and improved theories are continually constructed on the basis of empirical examinations of established approaches—we turn next to the elaboration of a new theory of professorial liberalism that is emergent from our empirical investigations. The theory we advance—which, we contend, ranks highly in terms of comprehensiveness, realism, and parsimony—holds that the liberalism of professors is a function not primarily of class relations, but rather of the systematic sorting of young adults who are already liberally- or conservatively-inclined into and out of the academic profession, respectively. In terms of the generic social mechanisms for occupational politics discussed previously, our theory emphasizes direct and indirect political self-selection, processes of social closure, and institutionalization. Given space constraints, all we can do here is provide a thumbnail sketch of the theory.

A core component of the theory is the notion of educational and occupational aspirations. A key insight of research in the "Wisconsin" status attainment tradition is

that in societies characterized by meritocratic ideologies and regimes of employment law, the class-reproductive sorting of workers into occupations is a function not simply of the direct effects of differential resource availability, but also of indirect effects involving the formation of educational and occupational aspirations (Sewell et al 1969; Sewell et al 1970; Sewell and Hauser 1972, 1975; Hauser, Tsai, and Sewell 1983). Pursued from a different theoretical vantage point, aspirations—as elements of class-based habitus—also figure prominently in the work of Bourdieu and his followers on social reproduction (see Jacobs, Karen, and McClelland 1991).

While these lines of scholarship highlight socioeconomic background, other research examines aspirations to help explain different dimensions of inequality, notably gender. Scholars working in this vein have tracked the correspondence between women's occupational aspirations and heavily female jobs (Marini and Greenberger 1978) and noted the link between aggregate changes in aspirations and declines in occupational sex segregation (Marini and Brinton 1984; Marini et al 1996). Others have considered how women's educational and occupational aspirations and choices evolve over the life course in response to shifting historical and biographical circumstances (Gerson 1985), and have modeled the dynamics by which beliefs about women's competency in domains like mathematics alter small-group interactions, influencing educational and occupational trajectories (Correll 2001, 2004). An explicit assumption in much of this research is that women and men hold beliefs about different jobs and their gender appropriateness and form aspirations accordingly. The idea that jobs may thus be "sex typed" presumes the existence of both gender ideologies and widely held "vocational stereotypes" (Holland 1984) or "occupational images" (Gottfredson 1981)—cultural representations of the

nature of various lines of work.

Building on these insights, we theorize that political reputation is an analytically neglected but important feature of the cultural images of a number of occupations. Some occupations are more liberal or conservative than others in terms of worker attitudes; and, somewhat independently, some occupations are widely *seen* to be more liberal or conservative than others. Just as men or women may form the aspiration to enter certain fields, and pursue the education necessary to do so, in part because of a perceived fit between the reputations of those fields and their gender identities, so too may educational and occupational choices be shaped by political identity.

We argue that the professoriate, along with a number of other knowledge work fields, has been "politically typed" as appropriate for and welcoming of people with broadly liberal political sensibilities, and as inappropriate for conservatives. This reputation leads many more liberal than conservative students to aspire for the advanced educational credentials that make entry into knowledge work fields possible, and to put in the work necessary to translate those aspirations into reality. In our view, the fact that advanced degree holding is the individual variable that does the most in Model 1 to account for the political gap between professors and non-professors likely reflects such a process of self-selection. The interaction terms with education are also suggestive in this regard (though they too can be interpreted multiple ways). For example, while it is possible that attaining an advanced degree would make women even more liberal than it makes men—perhaps as women experience discrimination in academe or delve deeply into feminist scholarship (see, for example, Ferree, Khan, and Morimoto 2007)—it seems to us more plausible that liberal women are simply more likely than their conservative

female counterparts to pursue advanced degrees and become professors, perhaps because conservative women have other life priorities or different sensibilities about appropriate career tracks. Similarly, the fact that verbal ability is small and negative in the main effect in Model 1 but matters greatly and positively in conjunction with advanced education suggests that liberals with academic potential are much more likely to pursue advanced degrees than are conservatives with academic potential, and that the most liberal of the former are more likely to become professors. We also suspect that—differences in educational attainment between liberals and conservatives aside—the greater propensity of liberals than conservatives to aspire for a professorial career specifically accounts for some portion of the political gap that remains unexplained by our models. Finally, building on the work of Darnell and Sherkat (1997), we theorize that, in a related process, very religious students tend to steer clear of academia because it has a reputation for secularism, which further contributes to the liberalism of the professoriate. When it occasionally happens that conservative students do form the aspiration to become professors, they are likely to run up against barriers involving both self-concept incongruence and negative judgments from peers and occupation members.

Research on job values (e.g., Halaby 2003), much of it influenced by rational choice theory, would suggest the underlying mechanism here is the taste liberals and conservatives have for specific features of the work environment—tastes reflective of their political ideologies and worldviews. However, beyond the fact that we found no evidence that a preference for meaningful work (or prioritization of high income) accounts for any of the politics gap between professors and non-professors,[22] we are

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[22] Consistent with our findings in this regard, Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009:55) report, using data from the 2004 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) survey, that while

suspicious of the assumption that young people forming educational and occupational aspirations typically have the full range of possibilities arrayed before them and make choices based on the desire to maximize on a politically-informed preference. Although adolescents and young adults have limited cultural exposure to a wide array of occupational models (Schneider and Stevenson 1999), research suggests that their social circumstances constrain the number of options they seriously consider pursuing and the strategies they undertake to pursue those options (e.g., Hallinan and Williams 1990; Kao 2000; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). Along parallel lines, we argue that for young people whose political identities are salient, liberalism and conservatism constrain horizons of educational and occupational possibility. Because these identities involve cognitive schemas and habitual patterns of thinking that filter experience (Lieberman, Schreiber, and Ochsner 2003), and because they can serve as organizing principles of social networks along which information about and social support for career choices flow, most young adults who are committed liberals would never end up entertaining the idea that they might become police or corrections officers, just as it would never cross the minds of most who are committed conservatives that they might become professors, precisely because of the political reputations of these fields. As we see it, identity and the social psychology of identity (as in Burke 2004; Gecas 2000)—not rational choice—drive the process, in conjunction with interactional dynamics pertaining to occupational recruitment.

In advancing this claim, we do not intend to suggest that the political typing of occupations is a more important determinant of educational or occupational choice in

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conservative students are somewhat more oriented toward making money than liberal students (2.46 versus 2.56 on a four point scale measuring the desire "to be well-off financially"), it is moderate students who are the most materially oriented (2.73).

general than those traditionally studied by scholars of social stratification. First, although research on politics and the life course shows that for most people core political views, identities, and tendencies form and stabilize in late adolescence and young adulthood (Alwin and McCammon 2003; Highton 2009), there is considerable cross-generational variation in the proportion of young people for whom political identity is salient. To the extent that rates of voting can be taken as an indicator of this, evidence would suggest that in recent years less than forty percent of young American adults have been politically engaged (with higher rates of engagement evident among college students). Since we would not expect the processes flagged by our theory to have any effect on those for whom politically identity is not salient, other determinants of educational and occupational choice will be more important for the majority of young persons. Second, it is probably the case that only a relatively small number of occupations are politically typed. Third and finally, we assume that for politicized young adults political identity functions to shape aspirations and possibilities in conjunction with variables like socioeconomic background, race, and gender. While being politically liberal may increase one's chances of becoming a professor, so does being white, male, coming from a highly educated family, and so on.

To a certain extent political identity itself may reflect some of these same background variables. But in studies of political socialization—a once vibrant area of research in political science that fell out of favor in the 1980s and 1990s and is only now staging a comeback (Shapiro 2004)—such factors have been found to only go so far in predicting ideology and party preference, with family, religion, and network dynamics, along with other contingencies of individual biography and history, playing equally

important roles (Owen 2008). Accordingly, we conceive of political constraints on aspiration formation and occupational choice to be analytically distinct from—if empirically present alongside—processes to do with the reproduction of inequality, and more generally treat the ultimate origin of political identities as exogenous to our theoretical model.

Consistent with this point, the general thrust of our approach is away from the influential idea that class and class interests play a major role in shaping the politics of American professors today. Unlike scholars like Clark and Lipset, we do not generalize from the case of professors to draw the conclusion that class politics is massively in decline. Research shows that in general wealthy Americans still tend to be more conservative and poor Americans more liberal (e.g., Brooks and Brady 1999; Gelman et al 2008). But class interests do not appear to explain the bulk of professorial liberalism.

First, while our Bourdieu status inconsistency variable was significant and robust in Model 2, in itself it explained only a modest proportion of the political gap between professors and non-professors. Furthermore, the total amount of the gap explained by Model 2 was only two thirds that explained by Model 1, so that by the criterion of parsimony we should prefer a model focused on advanced degree holding versus one that complexly combines education and income. Even if the variable is retained, however, we think a plausible interpretation of it is that many status inconsistent jobs—though not all—are knowledge work fields that have been politically typed as liberal, and that will naturally draw liberals into them. Second, specialized surveys of professors, repeating the findings of Ladd and Lipset, consistently report that professors at elite institutions—who tend to have the highest incomes, the most status, and come from the most privileged

social backgrounds—tend to be not the least, but the most liberal (Gross and Simmons 2007; Rothman et al 2005). Third, the class backgrounds of American professors contribute little to explaining their politics. In other unreported models we find that when class background is measured as father's SEI, it increases rather than decreases the gap, since professors tend to have higher social class origins. As Table 2 shows, that many professors have parents with graduate degrees, who might value cultural more than economic capital, explains away only a minute portion of their liberalism. Fourth, studies of professorial politics that go beyond self-identification show that while professors do have more liberal economic attitudes than other Americans, it is their social attitudes that are truly distinctive (Gross and Simmons 2007)—for example, their views of gender, homosexuality, abortion, and so on. One could construct an argument as to how such attitudes would have a basis in class interest, as Lamont did by suggesting that liberal social views among new class workers reflect efforts at differentiation from the business classes. But beyond the fact that such an argument represents a watering down of the classic assumption of direct connection between material conditions and political views, our models show that class differentiation pressures, at least as measured as lack of confidence in American business, do not help to account for professorial liberalism. Sixth, that many American professors are public employees who have a direct economic stake in liberalism does little to account for their politics.

We do not agree with the claim originally made by Karl Mannheim that the reason professors are removed from class politics is that, no matter their individual class backgrounds and interests, their training gives them a broader, more perspicacious view of society. Instead, we think that class exerts a relatively modest influence on American

professors' politics because processes of occupational recruitment tend to draw into the professorial ranks academically-minded liberals whose political identities, in conventional liberal-conservative, Democratic-Republican terms, happen to be far more salient than whatever class-political identities they may have (however much class may be inscribed in their other social practices).

Once again, our data provide no direct evidence that our theory of professorial liberalism is correct. But evidence from other studies lends a prioi support. For example, Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009) find that twice as many liberal as conservative college students aspire to complete a doctorate.[23] In interviews, Binder (2009) finds that conservative students at a major public university regard faculty members disparagingly and do not seek to emulate them in any way. Ecklund (forthcoming), studying the religiosity of academic scientists at elite schools, finds that high levels of religious skepticism result not from professional socialization, but from the greater tendency of religious skeptics to become scientists, a finding that echoes Finkelstein's (1984) earlier review of the evidence. Gross and Simmons (2006), analyzing public opinion data, find that conservatism, Republican Party affiliation, and evangelical identity are associated with less confidence in higher education and diminished evaluations of the occupational prestige of professors. And Gross and Cheng (2009) find, from interviews with 66 American professors in six disciplines, that 81 percent of liberal professors report that their political views were formed when they were growing up or in college—well before class interests associated with their future academic work could plausibly have exerted an effect.

[23] Woessner and Kelly-Woessner's (2009) argument that the "academic pipeline" leaks conservatives is broadly consistent with the theory we develop here.

How might the American professoriate have acquired its reputation for liberalism, becoming politically typed? This is a complex historical question tied a variety of macro- and meso-level developments that we do not have space to broach, but we argue that the answer has much to do with "public dramas" (Gusfield 1984) over secularization and academic freedom that accompanied the birth of the American research university and that reflected on the ground processes by which long-term dynamics such as institutional differentiation played themselves out (Parsons and Platt 1973); with the diffusion to the U.S. of social-critical notions of intellectualism that had their origins in Dreyfus-era France (Eyerman 1994); with the fact that higher education was a crucial micromobilization context for a number of left social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, which further enhanced the institution's liberal reputation; with concerted cultural efforts by American conservatives, especially from the 1950s on, to build a collective identity for their movement around differentiation from various categories of "liberal elites," not least liberal professors; with restricted opportunities for Americans on the far left to enter other institutional spheres; and with self-reinforcing processes by which self-selection into the academic profession by liberals resulted in a more liberal professoriate whose reputation for liberalism was thereby maintained or enhanced.

Turning briefly to a final aspect of the theory, we consider how it might begin to explain political variation among professors—in particular variation across disciplines and institutions. Here we build on ideas developed by neo-institutionalist scholars working on higher education (Frank and Gabler 2006; Meyer et al 2007), coupled with the renewed attention to processes of contestation and negotiated order associated with recent calls for an "inhabited institutionalism" (Hallett and Ventresca 2006). Disciplines

and higher education institutions construct collective identities and organizational reputations not simply around formal intellectual and organizational mandates, but also around cultural templates that include idealized images of intellectual personhood: understandings of the qualities and characteristics that make someone an exemplary sociologist or economist or biologist or an outstanding teacher at a liberal arts or community college. Which images disciplines come to embrace depends on, among other things, the outcomes of struggles between academic factions within them (Frickel and Gross 2005), while institutional variation depends in large part on how images of intellectual personhood are understood to fit with operational exigencies in competitive and dynamic organizational fields. Building on a point that Weeden and Grusky and others have made, we theorize that, within the general constraint that more liberals than conservatives will aspire for advanced educational credentials and academic careers of any kind, liberal students will be far more inclined than conservatives to enter fields that have come to define themselves around left-valenced images of intellectual personhood. Over the course of its twentieth century history, for example, sociology has increasingly defined itself as the study of race, class, and gender inequality—a set of concerns especially important to liberals—and this means that sociology will consistently recruit from a more liberal applicant pool than fields like mechanical engineering, and prove a more chilly home for those conservatives who manage to push through into graduate school or the academic ranks. Against Bourdieu—who also sees self-selection to be a crucial mechanism in social life—we view processes of self-selection based directly on politics as more important than those to do with class background in explaining political variation across fields. In terms of variation by institution, our theory would explain the

greater prevalence of professors with left/liberal views at elite institutions by noting that elite schools are under strong pressures to hire scholars who are not only productive, but will also be seen by their peers and other constituencies as leading academicians who embody the qualities and virtues definitive of the academic role. To the extent that that role has been socially defined as tied to liberal politics, elite institutions—simply in offering positions to scholars who are seen as exemplary—will end up with a more liberal professorial workforce.

CONCLUSION

Based on a synthesis of a variety of theoretical and empirical literatures, in this article we identified six hypotheses about the origins of professorial liberalism. Using data pooled from the GSS from 1974 to 2008, we found that our hypothesized predictors accounted for a large amount—approximately 43 percent—of the difference in political views between professors and non-professors. In particular, we found that professors are more liberal than other Americans because a higher proportion have advanced educational credentials, exhibit a disparity between their levels of education and income, have distinctive religious profiles, and express greater tolerance for controversial ideas. We then outlined a new theory of professorial liberalism based on our findings that links occupational reputation with individual aspirations. To our knowledge, this is the first study to use nationally-representative data on all American adults to systematically test theories of professorial liberalism, and to use empirical findings rather than a priori or ad hoc assumptions as the basis for constructing a comprehensive, integrative theory of professorial politics.

Notwithstanding, our analysis is only the beginning for future work. The next step entails developing our theory more fully and testing it systematically. Concerning the latter, prior research has demonstrated that a higher proportion of liberal than conservative students aspire for advanced degrees. However, no research has examined whether liberal self-identification increases the likelihood of graduate school attendance or completion when other variables are taken into account, or established definitively that political views are associated with which courses of graduate study people pursue. There are at least two reasons such research has not been undertaken. First, scholarship on the predictors of graduate school attendance (e.g., DiMaggio and Mohr 1985; Mullen, Goyette and Soares 2003; Perna 2004)—like much scholarship in the sociology of higher education (see Stevens, Armstrong, and Arum 2008)—has focused heavily on issues of social stratification rather than politics. Second, to our knowledge none of the existing longitudinal datasets with sample sizes large enough to allow researchers to determine who goes to graduate school and who does not, such as the Department of Education's Baccalaureate and Beyond survey, contain any questions on political orientation. A rigorous test of our theory would require both new longitudinal data and a re-orientation by scholars toward issues of political identity.

But other aspects of the theory demand empirical scrutiny as well. For example, we suggested that elite institutions employ more liberal professors than nonelite schools because the former select for individuals who are seen to fully embody societal images of the academic role. We do not think this selection process usually takes the form of a direct vetting of political belief, but the precise nature of the intersubjective evaluations involved, the ways in which judgments of academic excellence may be tacitly linked to

politics, and the embedding of such judgments in a variety of organizational contexts and exigencies, merits close study (for other research in this vein see Lamont 2008). Research is needed, too, on how the American professoriate acquired its reputation for liberalism and secularism, how this reputation has grown and changed over time—in dynamic interplay with the American conservative movement—and how specific fields may, as a result of internal and external dynamics, be pushed in particular political-intellectual directions with consequences for their political reputations and long-term political composition. In light of evidence that professors in many other countries are liberal as well, it would be extremely useful to consider commonalities across nations in the institutionalization of the academic profession that might have led to widespread political typing, and whether we may be witnessing increasing political convergence today in light of the diffusion of "world society" cultural models (Drori et al 2002; Lechner and Boli 2005). More generally, a key aim of research on the theory must be to assess whether the reputation-based self-selection mechanism at its core accounts for the empirical findings we report in this paper, or whether other underlying mechanisms are at work.

If our theory withstands empirical scrutiny, and especially if the mechanism of the political typing of knowledge work occupations turns out to have cross-national relevance, the implications would be significant. For one thing, a fair amount of scholarship on the sociology of intellectuals would have to be revised. As noted above, much of this scholarship proceeds from class analytic assumptions. Intellectuals are assumed to have the political views they do because of their standing in ever shifting systems of class relations, and insofar as intellectuals' politics have major implications for social change—for example, by helping to seed democratic revolutions or social

movement activity (Calhoun 1994; Eyal 2003; Kurzman and Owens 2002)—then the ultimate source of that change is to be found in class dynamics or exogenous shocks that set them in motion. While we focused exclusively on American professors, our theory suggests a very different account of the social origins of intellectuals' politics, and—while we have not developed it here—a correlatively different account of intellectual-led social change processes. That account would view capture of institutions of knowledge production along partisan and ideological lines, and the control over cultural understandings of what it means to be an intellectual that helps make such capture possible, as vital stakes for political movements of the left and right.

At the same time, if our theory ends up explaining the politics not just of intellectuals, but of workers in a variety of other politically typed fields as well, there may be important implications for studies of class politics generally. Recent years have witnessed a spate of research responding to claims that class voting in the advanced capitalist democracies may be in decline (see Evans 1999). The overall finding from these investigations is that class voting remains a significant force many countries, a fact obscured by some earlier scholars' reliance on poor aggregate measures, inadequate conceptualization of class, and failure to take into account ecological and other variables (for discussion see Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995). Focusing on the professoriate, we suggested that once an occupation becomes politically typed, it draws people into it whose conventional political identities are more salient for their politics than their class identities. If this were true of other occupations as well, it would suggest three things. First, sociologists may want to study the people who enter such occupations to determine the experiential bases for this identity hierarchization, explore the cultural practices

through which it is enacted, and uncover more fully its links to perceived occupational aptitudes. Second, scholars of class voting should consider disaggregating voters who are in politically-typed occupations from those who are not, on the assumption that the former are outliers whose presence in a sample may mask the extent to which class location and vote choice remain correlated for most people. Third, the political typing of occupations could figure as a neglected cause of whatever aggregate declines in class voting may have occurred, alongside conventional explanations like value change, educational expansion, declines in union density, and sectoral shifts in the economy.

A final set of implications comes back around to the controversy over "liberal bias" in higher education. On one side, our theory challenges the assumption of some conservative critics that rampant discrimination against conservatives in hiring and promotion is the main cause of the liberal tilt of the faculty. Some such discrimination may occur—it is not difficult to find professors who freely admit they would be uncomfortable voting to hire a conservative colleague—and we have built tacit judgments of political fit into our theoretical model. But our theory is capable of accounting for the general tendency of professors to be liberal without making recourse to instances of explicit discrimination. On the other side, our findings contravene an explanation for professorial liberalism commonly given by liberals—that professors tend to be liberal because liberals are smarter than conservatives. If anything, our theory of occupational reputation and aspirations suggests that American society is increasingly selecting professors not on the basis of intelligence or insight alone, but rather on the basis of a conjunction of perceived academic potential and liberal politics—a

development long in the making that might, depending on one's point of view, be seen as having positive or negative consequences for scientific and scholarly creativity.

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Table 1. Univariate Statistics, Professors vs. Non-Professors, 1974-2008

	Professors				***Non-Professors***			
Variable	*Mean*	*Min.*	*Max.*	*Std. Dev.*	*Mean*	*Min.*	*Max.*	*Std. Dev.*
Outcome								
Political Self-Identification	4.45	1.00	7.00	1.51	3.89	1.00	7.00	1.36
Hypothesis 1: Demographics								
Baby Boomer	0.37	0.00	1.00	0.48	0.39	0.00	1.00	0.49
Number of Children	1.44	0.00	6.00	1.46	1.92	0.00	8.00	1.77
Lived in an Urban Area at Age 16	0.52	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.41	0.00	1.00	0.49
Female	0.41	0.00	1.00	0.49	0.55	0.00	1.00	0.50
Lives Outside the South	0.76	0.00	1.00	0.42	0.74	0.00	1.00	0.44
Lived in a Foreign Country at Age 16	0.13	0.00	1.00	0.34	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.23
Born in a Foreign Country	0.13	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.08	0.00	1.00	0.27
Hypothesis 2: Educational Attainment								
Graduate Degree	0.72	0.00	1.00	0.45	0.06	0.00	1.00	0.24
Hypothesis 3: Intellectualism								
Verbal Ability	8.04	0.00	10.00	1.93	6.01	0.00	10.00	2.14
Tolerance Scale	0.47	-2.05	2.91	0.58	0.01	-3.34	4.03	0.73
Hypothesis 4: Religious Affiliation								
Jewish	0.06	0.00	1.00	0.24	0.02	0.00	1.00	0.14
No Religious Affiliation	0.20	0.00	1.00	0.40	0.10	0.00	1.00	0.30
Protestant, Non-Conservative Christian	0.50	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.40	0.00	1.00	0.49
Hypothesis 5: Class Position and Mobilization								
Mother with a Graduate Degree	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.22	0.02	0.00	1.00	0.15
Father with a Graduate Degree	0.18	0.00	1.00	0.39	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.22
Total Composition of Captial (Bourdieu)	2.10	-4.75	6.83	1.40	0.05	-7.32	7.97	1.61
Relative Composition of Capital (Bourdieu)	1.20	-5.58	5.89	1.12	0.02	-5.52	6.68	1.09
Union Member	0.18	0.00	1.00	0.39	0.13	0.00	1.00	0.34
Public Sector Employee	0.50	0.00	1.00	0.50	0.17	0.00	1.00	0.38
Self-Employed	0.03	0.00	1.00	0.16	0.12	0.00	1.00	0.32
Low Confidence in Business	0.14	0.00	1.00	0.35	0.14	0.00	1.00	0.35
Hypothesis 6: Job Values								
Meaningful Work is Most Important	0.80	0.00	1.00	0.40	0.57	0.00	1.00	0.49

Notes: GSS, 1974-2008. N = 326 professors; N = 43,703 non-professors. Univariate statistics are calculated over *m* = 20 multiple imputations. Sampling weight not shown.

Table 2. Oaxaca-Blinder Twofold Pooled Decomposition of Political Identity for Professors and Non-Professors, 1974-2008				
Mean Political Identity of Professors	4.4521			
Mean Political Identity of Non-Professors	3.8813			
Professors vs. Non-Professors Gap	0.5708			
	Model 1		***Model 2***	
Hypothesis 1: Demographics	*Coefficients*	*% of Gap Explained*	*Coefficients*	*% of Gap Explained*
Baby Boomer	-0.0015*	-0.26%	-0.0018*	-0.32%
	(0.0006)		(0.0007)	
Number of Children	0.0204***	3.57%	0.0189***	3.31%
	(0.0009)		(0.0009)	
Lived in an Urban Area at Age 16	0.0114***	2.00%	0.0123***	2.15%
	(0.0008)		(0.0008)	
Female	-0.0207***	-3.63%	-0.0170***	-2.98%
	(0.0010)		(0.0009)	
Lives Outside the South	0.0018***	0.32%	0.0017***	0.30%
	(0.0004)		(0.0003)	
Lived in a Foreign Country at Age 16	0.0015*	0.26%	0.0029**	0.51%
	(0.0008)		(0.0008)	
Born in a Foreign Country	0.0030***	0.53%	0.0034***	0.60%
	(0.0005)		(0.0006)	
Hypothesis 2: Educational Attainment				
Graduate Degree	0.1129***	19.78%	--	
	(0.0045)			
Hypothesis 3: Intellectualism				
Verbal Ability	-0.0264***	-4.63%	0.0057**	1.00%
	(0.0016)		(0.0017)	
Tolerance Scale	0.0588***	10.30%	0.0662***	11.60%
	(0.0014)		(0.0015)	
Hypothesis 4: Religious Affiliation				
Jewish	0.0212***	3.71%	0.0231***	4.05%
	(0.0016)		(0.0017)	
No Religious Affiliation	0.0463***	8.11%	0.0439***	7.69%
	(0.0025)		(0.0024)	
Protestant, Non-Conservative Christian	0.0164***	2.87%	0.0171***	3.00%
	(0.0011)		(0.0012)	
Hypothesis 5: Class Position and Mobilization				
Mother with a Graduate Degree	0.0045***	0.79%	0.0050***	0.88%
	(0.0006)		(0.0006)	
Father with a Graduate Degree	0.0036**	0.63%	0.0069***	1.21%
	(0.0010)		(0.0010)	
Total Composition of Captial (Bourdieu)	--		-0.1125***	-19.71%
			(0.0025)	
Relative Composition of Capital (Bourdieu)	--		0.0741***	12.98%
			(0.0020)	
Union Member	0.0059***	1.03%	0.0077***	1.35%
	(0.0006)		(0.0008)	
Public Sector Employee	0.0076***	1.33%	0.0141***	2.47%
	(0.0013)		(0.0013)	
Self-Employed	0.0103***	1.80%	0.0078***	1.37%
	(0.0005)		(0.0005)	
Low Confidence in Business	-0.0013	-0.54%	-0.0011	-0.19%
	(0.0010)		(0.0008)	
Hypothesis 7: Job Values				
Meaningful Work is Most Important	-0.0218***	-3.82%	-0.0181***	-3.17%
	(0.0009)		(0.0008)	
Time Dummies	0.0121	2.12%	-0.0069	-1.21%
All Covariates	0.2467	43.22%	0.1535	26.89%

Notes: GSS, 1974-2008. N = 326 professors; N = 43,703 non-professors. Point estimates are calculated over *m* = 20 separate imputations; standard errors are unadjusted. P<0.05*, P<0.01**, P<0.001***

Table 3. Interactions with Graduate Degree using Oaxaca-Blinder Twofold Pooled Decompositions of Political Identity for Professors and Non-Professors, 1974-2008		
Mean Political Identity of Professors	4.4521	
Mean Political Identity of Non-Professors	3.8813	
Professors vs. Non-Professors Gap	0.5708	
Interaction with Female	*Coefficients*	*% of Gap Explained*
Graduate Degree	0.0344***	5.33%
	(0.0058)	
Female	-0.0182***	-3.26%
	(0.0009)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Female)	0.0604***	10.51%
	(0.0032)	
Interaction with Verbal Ability		
Graduate Degree	-0.2069***	-36.51%
	(0.0182)	
Verbal Ability	-0.0324***	-6.55%
	(0.0016)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Verbal Ability)	0.3428***	59.37%
	-0.0192	
Interaction with Tolerance Scale		
Graduate Degree	0.0603***	4.85%
	(0.0051)	
Tolerance Scale	0.0540***	13.02%
	(0.0013)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Tolerance Scale)	0.0681***	18.99%
	(0.0037)	
Interaction with Public Sector Employee		
Graduate Degree	0.1248***	20.97%
	(0.0055)	
Public Sector Employee	0.0094***	2.05%
	(0.0014)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Public Sector Employee)	-0.0181***	-3.05%
	(0.0048)	
Interaction with Baby Boomer		
Graduate Degree	0.1031***	16.75%
	(0.0059)	
Baby Boomer	-0.0014*	-0.23%
	(0.0006)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Baby Boomer)	0.0074**	1.70%
	(0.0029)	
Interaction with Jewish		
Graduate Degree	0.1076***	18.08%
	(0.0046)	
Jewish	0.0199***	3.42%
	(0.0015)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Jewish)	0.0069***	1.16%
	(0.0014)	
Interaction with Protestant, Non-Conservative Christian		
Graduate Degree	0.0526***	8.16%
	(0.0059)	
Protestant, Non-Conservative Christian	0.0152***	2.59%
	(0.0010)	
(Graduate Degree) x (Non-Conservative Christian)	0.0676***	12.12%
	(0.0046)	
Interaction with No Religious Affiliation		
Graduate Degree	0.0799***	13.07%
	(0.0047)	
No Religious Affiliation	0.0432***	7.41%
	(0.0023)	
(Graduate Degree) x (No Religious Affiliation)	0.0549***	9.86%
	(0.0032)	

Notes: GSS, 1974-2008. N = 326 professors; N = 43,703 non-professors. Point estimates are calculated over *m* = 20 separate imputations; standard errors are unadjusted. Each interaction estimated from a separate Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition. Other variables included in decompositions are identical to those in Model 1, Table 2. P<0.05*, P<0.01**, P<0.001***