CHAPTER TWO

Political Liberalism and Graduate School Attendance

A Longitudinal Analysis

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Graduate and professional education—the training and certification of students beyond the baccalaureate level—is a crucial part of the American higher education enterprise. As of 2010, more than 1.8 million people were enrolled in graduate or professional degree programs in the United States. The number of graduate and professional degree students grew at a rate of about 4 percent per year over the preceding decade (N. Bell 2010), and data from the General Social Survey (GSS) show that by 2008, the percentage of American adults with advanced degrees had more than doubled since the 1970s, reaching just over 9 percent. These increases have probably been driven by several factors, including declining relative returns to the upper middle class of a bachelor's degree alone, changes in the life course and the temporal structuring of careers, and the continued lure of the United States for foreign students. But they also reflect the coming to maturity of a knowledge economy (Powell and Snellman 2004) and are tied to the proliferation of occupational roles requiring advanced technical knowledge and expertise.

While graduate education is sociologically significant in several respects, in this chapter we examine it from the standpoint of an interest in occupational politics, or the question of why workers in different occupations have the political views and allegiances they do. Although some occupations that require advanced degrees tend to be conservative, such as the medical profession, overall there is a strong association between the political liberalism of a field and the proportion of its workers who have undergone graduate or professional training. For example, GSS data show that of the ten most liberal major occupations in the United States from 1996 to 2008, five required advanced degrees of most workers, and two that did not—authors/journalists and creative artists—nevertheless had rates of advanced degree holding twice that of the general population. These aggregate patterns reflect the fact that liberal self-identification, Democratic Party

affiliation and voting, and more progressive social and economic attitudes are correlated with advanced degree holding at the individual level.

Sociologists have long been aware of such associations, invoking them to help account for the liberalism of "New Class" occupations and the emergence of political cleavages around science and education (Brint 1984, 1985; Gerteis 1998; Manza and Brooks 1997; Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995; Meyer et al. 2007). But the underlying explanations have remained unclear. Is there an intrinsic link between liberalism and intelligence, such that the more liberal views of those with advanced degrees reflect liberals' greater academic potential (Deary, Batty, and Gale 2008; Kanazawa 2010)? Do workers with advanced education tend to be more liberal because further cognitive development occurs with additional years of schooling, leading the intelligentsia to find fault with what they come to see as simplistic conservative ideologies? Does the liberalism of the highly educated reflect a collective effort at differentiation from both the middle-class and business elites (Bourdieu 1988 [1984]; Lamont 1987, 1992)? Or have those with liberal views come to so completely dominate the knowledge work fields that they refuse to hire colleagues with dissenting opinions (Klein and Stern 2009; Rothman, Lichter, and Nevitte 2005)?

To make headway with these questions, we examine the connection between advanced education and liberalism in one important occupation: the American professoriate. As chapter 1 of this volume shows, professors and instructors in higher education, who comprise about 1 percent of the U.S. workforce but exercise social influence disproportionate to their numbers, tend to have political views to the left of other Americans. Although scholars have advanced numerous theories to explain the politics of professors, a recent study by Fosse and Gross (2012), using GSS data, demonstrated that the main factor accounting for professors' politics is simply that most have doctoral or other advanced degrees. This study also proposed a theory to account for the connection between graduate school attendance and liberal political identification among professors: the theory that over the course of the twentieth century, the professoriate acquired a reputation as a liberal occupation, and young liberals today, acting on the basis of this reputation and seeking careers that accord with their political identities, are more likely than conservatives to aspire to become academics and get the education necessary to do so. This theory, highlighting political self-selection into academe, is at odds with most established sociological accounts of professorial liberalism, which focus on class interests or educational socialization. However, neither Fosse and Gross's self-selection theory nor competing hypotheses about the relationship between advanced education and liberalism could be directly tested with the cross-sectional data on which they relied.

Here we use a different data source to assess key claims of their theory. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a study that began in 1994–95 with a nationally representative sample of students in grades 7–12, has 534 respondents who, by the fourth wave of data collection in 2007–8, had either completed PhDs or entered graduate school with the intention of earning a doctorate. We leverage this fact to evaluate three arguments essential to Fosse and Gross's account: first, that young people who are liberal are more likely to self-select into graduate school; second, that this self-selection is not spurious, resulting from the different values held by liberals and conservatives or from cognitive or personality differences between them; and third, that the liberalism of those with advanced degrees does not result primarily from their experiences of graduate education. We find empirical support for all of these claims except the one about personality differences; on this point our findings are more ambiguous. We conclude by discussing the implications of our analysis.

Previous Research

Education and Political Liberalism

A consistent finding by social scientists in the post–World War II era was that education is associated with more liberal social and political attitudes. Much early work on the topic was concerned with macro-level outcomes, arguing that the growth of schooling and literacy in the West over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries eroded traditional social orientations, in so doing laying the groundwork for modern industrial society (e.g., Inkeles 1974; Parsons and Platt 1973). Yet other scholars were interested in the link between educational experiences and attitudes in its own right. Although some studies reported a linear relationship between years of schooling and political liberalism, the bulk of this research focused on educational experiences occurring during what dominant psychological theories of the day portrayed as an essential stage of identity formation in the life course: late adolescence and early adulthood. Newcomb's (1943) longitudinal research at then all-female Bennington College was foundational here, showing that many students arrived on campus with conservative views, shifted positions, and remained more progressive from there on out, supporting throughout their lives those policies and politicians they saw as in line with the values they had adopted as "Bennington Women." Stouffer's (1955) study of political tolerance was similarly influential. Among other things, it reported that Americans who had been to college tended to be less authoritarian, in the

sense of not supporting the political repression of dissidents, than those who had not. The more liberal tendencies of college graduates were also reported in Campbell and colleagues' classic contribution to political science, *The American Voter* (1960). Still other work showed that people with college degrees tended to be less religious, had more coherent political views, exhibited higher levels of political knowledge and sophistication, and participated more in the political process (see Feldman and Newcomb 1969; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, 2005). A variety of mechanisms were posited to account for these findings, including socialization into an Enlightenment culture said to be institutionalized in colleges and universities, the consequent acquisition by college students of more sophisticated cognitive styles, and sustained exposure to diverse peers, thought to call into question people's otherwise taken-for-granted and parental-derived views of the social and political world. On the basis of these key works and other studies, by 1970 it was seen as "almost axiomatic that students become more liberal during their college years" (Chickering 1970, 599).

The focus of this research was undergraduate education. But in the 1970s, some sociologists began looking at the political consequences of graduate and professional training as well. The context was interest in the emerging postindustrial economy. As the ranks of knowledge workers within and outside the service sector swelled, sociologists took up the question of with which social groups and classes these workers would align and, hence, what structural shifts in the economy meant for the future of class relations and politics (D. Bell 1976; Bruce-Briggs 1979; Gouldner 1979; Konrád and Szelényi 1979). Quantitative and historical evidence showed that workers in certain knowledge work fields, such as academia, journalism, and the arts, tended to take liberal stances, favoring redistributionist economic policies and a stronger welfare state, protection for minority rights, and expansive civil liberties protections (Brint 1984; Ladd and Lipset 1976). Scholars debated how radical these stances were, whether they extended to knowledge workers in larger occupations such as engineering or computer programming, and the social origins of the politics of intellectuals, broadly defined. Where some, such as Gouldner (1979), viewed knowledge workers as potentially comprising a distinct class with common interests in the valorization of educational status over economic standing, others, such as Daniel Bell (1976), thought the intellectual stratum too fractured to engage in collective action. Yet both sides in the debate over the "New Class" saw graduate and professional training, which had expanded dramatically in the 1960s, as helping to account for intellectuals' distinctive worldviews. For Gouldner, post-baccalaureate education provided knowledge workers with their unique endowments of cultural capital,

whereas for critics of the New Class thesis such as Bell and later Brint (1984, 1985), the liberalism of intellectuals and of American professionals generally in the post-1960s period reflected, in part, expanding educational requirements and opportunities—which translated into future workers spending more time as young adults in the classroom, where the liberalizing effects of higher education would accumulate beyond what was possible in four years of college.

The Politics of Professors

As we have already indicated, professors figured centrally in these discussions, since both historical and survey data showed the professoriate to be a left-leaning occupational group. Indeed, by the 1950s, it had become clear to many observers, not least conservative critics like William F. Buckley Jr. (1951), that professors stood to the left of the U.S. population.

Scholars such as Ladd and Lipset (1976) were intrigued by these findings, as they were by comparable findings on the liberalism of other knowledge work fields, since they seemed to suggest a problem with traditional theories of class politics: such theories would predict conservatism, not liberalism, among workers in high-status occupations. In the case of professors, Ladd and Lipset sought to make sense of the anomaly by arguing that professors' politics were determined not by class interests but by the centering of much academic work around "intellectualism" and creativity, which they saw as naturally at odds with many strains of conservative ideology. Ladd and Lipset argued that this was not principally a matter of professors' typical personality structures but reflected the academic role professors were called on to enact. They assumed that future professors learn much of that role in graduate school.

Ladd and Lipset's intellectualism hypothesis, however, is not the only theory of why professors tend to be liberal. As noted earlier, many sociologists who have taken up the topic highlight class dynamics, if different dynamics than those posited by traditional class politics accounts. The dominant approach here has been to follow Bourdieu (1988 [1984]) in focusing specifically on the disparity between professors' high levels of cultural capital and their moderate levels of economic capital, which is said to—among other things—generate resentment toward the business classes and the conservative economic policies such classes often favor. Other scholars claim that demographic differences between professors and other Americans, such as the tendency of professors to reside in cities and have fewer children, help account for their liberal politics (Wilson 2008). Still others observe that professors tend to be less religious than average and note that religiosity is associated with greater political conservatism (for a discussion, see Gross

and Simmons 2009). Finally, some social scientists argue that future academics are less materialistic than those individuals who take private sector jobs and are more concerned that their jobs provide them with a sense of meaning. Greater materialism, these authors argue, is tied to support for conservative ideology and the Republican Party (Lamont 1987, 1992; Summers 2007). All of these hypotheses are plausible.

Yet, until recently, few studies had systematically evaluated competing claims by using nationally representative data. The paper by Fosse and Gross (2012) did precisely that. In addition to the theories mentioned above, it examined Ladd and Lipset's intellectualism hypothesis, both directly—using proxy measures for embrace of the intellectual role—and indirectly, by considering, equally in line with the work of Gouldner, Bell, and Brint, to what extent high levels of advanced degree holding among academics explain their liberal views. The data source, again, was the GSS. Fosse and Gross proceeded by asking how much of the politics gap between the 326 professors included in the sample between 1974 and 2008 and other Americans could be accounted for by variables associated with different hypotheses. They found that a model inclusive of variables from all their hypotheses accounted for about 43 percent of the politics gap. Advanced degree holding accounted for about 20 percent of the gap. Other significant factors included relatively high levels of religious disbelief among professors, intellectualism measured as a willingness to give a hearing to controversial ideas, and the disparity between professors' cultural and economic capital.

In puzzling through these findings, Fosse and Gross initially believed they provided support for the idea that professorial liberalism is a function of professors' educational experiences. Having gone to graduate school—during which future academics' cognitive capacities are honed as they learn the culture and practices of their fields—professors might wind up rejecting conservative beliefs, which, some have argued, have a relatively simplistic logical structure and which, around issues like climate change, are inconsistent with established science. To the extent that religious disbelief might also result from prolonged exposure to the educational system, graduate training could offer an additional pathway toward liberalization. Finally, graduate students might learn from their professors that progressive politics are expected of those who enter the academic profession (Menand 2010) and adjust their beliefs accordingly.

On further reflection, however, Fosse and Gross became wary of this interpretation. First, while research by political psychologists demonstrates an association between cognitive sophistication and more liberal politics, the magnitude of

this association is not particularly large. What is more, the history of the right shows that conservatism's success has been dependent on its ability to creatively and intelligently reinvent itself time and again to adjust to changing political circumstances (for a review, see Gross, Medvetz, and Russell 2011). Some rank-and-file conservatives may be dogmatic and small-minded (just as some liberals may be), but there is little historical basis for the assumption that most movement elites have had these cognitive characteristics and hence no reason to see something inherent in conservative ideology that repulses smart, educated people. Second, there have been several historical contexts in which much of the professoriate, including its most sophisticated, elite sectors, has embraced conservative and even fascistic views, as was the case in Germany in the early twentieth century. Third, although it is generally true, as Ladd and Lipset noted, that the higher one looks in the academic hierarchy, the greater the liberalism—a fact suggestive of a possible relationship between intellectualism and liberal politics—there is one academic discipline in the United States whose members are hardly intellectual slouches and whose patterns of party affiliation, at least, come closer to mirroring that of the American electorate: economists. One could certainly construct an account of economics as an outlier case, given its connections to the field of power (see Fourcade 2010), or argue that economists are technicians rather than "true" intellectuals, but at the very least, the politics of economists call into question the simple equation of intellectual sophistication with left-wing views.

But there was an even more significant reason Fosse and Gross came to doubt that exposure to many years of higher education is the main cause of professorial liberalism: the received wisdom that higher education produces more liberal attitudes has recently been challenged. To be sure, questions have been raised around the edges of the finding for some time, with some scholars asking whether the amount and nature of liberalization might depend on highly variable features of the campus environment, others pointing out that while Americans with college degrees tend to have more liberal social views, they often have more conservative economic attitudes, and still others questioning whether observed political shifts in the undergraduate years translate into lifelong political commitments (see Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Yet the past few years have seen more profound challenges: using matching techniques on longitudinal datasets that include respondents who go to college as well as those who do not, researchers have discovered that some—not all—of the long-observed liberalization effect of college attendance is a function of the fact that more tolerant, open-minded adolescents are more likely to pursue and complete bachelor's degrees (Jennings

and Stoker 2008; Kam and Palmer 2008; see also the discussion in chapter 5 of this volume.) Although the issue is not settled empirically, these studies led Fosse and Gross to reconsider the claim that the liberalism of the highly educated results primarily from their graduate school experiences, which take place during what is, for most people, a less formative stage of the life course.

A New Theory of Professorial Liberalism

On the basis of these considerations, Fosse and Gross developed an alternative interpretation of their findings. They theorized that for committed liberal or conservative students, certain occupations fall within the bounds of normative acceptability—understood specifically in terms of identity fit—while other occupations fall outside those bounds, and that students are likely to give little serious thought to pursuing occupations seen as politically inappropriate. Fosse and Gross's argument drew from theoretical and empirical work on occupational sex segregation, which finds that cultural stereotypes associated with different lines of work, such as the view that engineering is an inherently masculine occupation, shape men's and women's educational and career aspirations (Correll 2001, 2004; Marini and Brinton 1984; Marini and Greenberger 1978; Marini et al. 1996). Just as sociologists of gender maintain that jobs can be "sex typed," so Fosse and Gross argued that jobs can be "politically typed." To the extent that the professoriate has developed a reputation for liberalism over the years, through historical processes flagged by Fosse and Gross, conservatives might shy away out of a desire to have a career that they and others would see as fitting, while liberals would be drawn in. According to Fosse and Gross, such a process of self-selection made sense of their finding that possession of an advanced degree is the most important factor accounting for the liberalism of the professoriate: liberals are more likely to go to graduate school with the intention of becoming professors. Since the professoriate might also be "religiously typed," viewed as an occupation poorly suited to fervent religious believers, a parallel process could explain the overrepresentation of religious skeptics among professors, with independent effects on faculty politics. Finally, Fosse and Gross speculated that self-selection processes could explain some portion of the politics gap not accounted for by their statistical models.

Fosse and Gross were not the first scholars to develop a self-selection account of professorial liberalism. One of the earliest exponents of such a theory was Friedrich Hayek (1949). Although, as we have noted, Ladd and Lipset's intellectualism hypothesis emphasized professional socialization, self-selection also figured in their account, in two ways. First, they argued that people with an intellectual disposition, who were more inclined to be liberal, were more likely to become professors, taking up the academic role. Second, Ladd and Lipset noted that members of one religious-ethnic group—Jews—were overrepresented in American academe in the mid twentieth century. The reason for this, they argued, was that intellectualism is prized in Jewish culture, while the American university, despite a history of anti-Semitism, was one of the first high-status institutional domains to become open to Jews. The result was that Jews were more likely than non-Jews to aspire to an academic career, which, given the long-standing commitment to leftist causes in many Jewish families, contributed to professorial liberalism. More recently, Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009) argued that the professoriate tilts left because liberals are more likely than conservatives to go to graduate school—a function, in their view, of the tendency of conservative undergraduates to be "simultaneously more family oriented, less interested in writing original works, more focused on financial success, less interested in developing a meaningful philosophy of life, and less interested in making a theoretical contribution to science" (51). Summers's (2007) argument that academia, as an occupation in the nonprofit sector, selects for workers who are less oriented toward profit making and the market, and hence are less likely to be conservative, is a version of the same theory (for an application of this hypothesis to the teaching profession, see Saint-Paul 2009).

Some of the specific claims made by these alternative self-selection theories are called into question by Fosse and Gross's empirical findings. For example, they found that the overrepresentation of Jews in academe contributes little to its liberalism. As for the idea that professors are more liberal because those who aspire to academic careers care more about meaning than about making money, Fosse and Gross found that variables measuring these job values accounted for little of the politics gap between professors and other Americans. More generally, however, the key difference between Fosse and Gross's theory of self-selection and other theories is this: Fosse and Gross maintain that selection into graduate school and an academic career track occurs *directly* on the basis of politics, through the reputation of the occupation and its perceived fit with political self-identity, and not indirectly through the association of liberalism with other characteristics such as a reduced focus on money making that form the real basis for self-selection.

To be sure, in Fosse and Gross's account, it is not that people decide to go to graduate school and become academics solely or even mostly *because* they are liberal. Future professors invariably have deep interests in their fields and aspire to become microbiologists or chemists or historians because they find those

fields fascinating and hope to spend their careers engaged with them (however much some may also hope that their work will contribute to the social good, as they understand it). Instead, Fosse and Gross's argument was that political identity channels and constrains these interests. First, in general, liberal undergraduates should be more likely than conservatives to bundle their intellectual interests in a field with the aspiration to become professors. Second, in addition to the professoriate as a whole having a political reputation, individual disciplines also have reputations, and the proportion of liberals to conservatives who develop interests in given fields should mirror the reputations of those fields.

Whatever its possible theoretical appeal, Fosse and Gross's account, though emergent from their empirical findings, could not—to repeat—be directly tested with their data. They were able to point to a range of findings by others that lent indirect support. For example, Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009), analyzing data from a nationally representative survey of undergraduates, found that self-identified liberals were twice as likely as conservatives to say they intended to pursue a doctorate. Likewise, Gross and Cheng (2011), examining qualitative data from interviews with sixty-six American professors in six fields, found that most liberal academics recall that their political views were formed before they started graduate school. On the question of the professoriate's political reputation, Gross and Simmons (2006), looking at public opinion data, found that 68 percent of Americans agree that colleges and universities favor professors with liberal views and found that conservatives assign considerably less social status to professors than do liberals.

Some relevant older data also exist. Among many other questions, the 1969 Carnegie Commission survey of the professoriate asked respondents to recall their political views as college seniors. Ladd and Lipset (1976) noted a moderately high correlation between views held in college and professors' current political beliefs. Even more telling are findings from the Carnegie Commission's parallel survey of graduate students. Reported briefly in *The Divided Academy* and in greater detail in a technical report (Fay and Weintraub 1973), this survey showed the distribution of political belief among graduate students to be nearly identical to that of the professoriate. Where 46 percent of professors at the time held left/liberal views, so did 40 percent of graduate students. Where 28 percent of professors were some shade of conservative, so were 30 percent of graduate students (Ladd and Lipset 1976, 26). This amounts to prima facie evidence for self-selection.

Nevertheless, especially as applied to the contemporary professoriate, Fosse and Gross's claims remain untested. We provide such a test here. While our data

do not permit us to scrutinize all the elements of Fosse and Gross's theory—in particular, their core argument that liberals are drawn into academe and conservatives pushed away because of the political reputation of the occupation—we are able to examine three interrelated claims, mentioned earlier, that would have to be true for their theory to be correct. First, liberalism during the college years should be a strong, statistically significant predictor of going to graduate school (although we would not expect it to be nearly as strong a predictor as, say, academic achievement). Second, the effects of prior liberalism on graduate school attendance should be robust and not explained away by variables exogenous to Fosse and Gross's theory. And third, the liberalism of graduate students should not result primarily from the graduate school experience itself. The truth of these three claims would not necessarily mean that Fosse and Gross's theory is right; alternative theories, including those focused on political discrimination or perceptions of bias in the graduate school admissions process and beyond, are equally consistent. But if any of these claims were false, Fosse and Gross's account would be called into question.

Data and Methods

Fosse and Gross could not test their theory directly because their self-selection account hinges on processes occurring over time that are best examined with longitudinal data. Yet none of the existing longitudinal studies examining graduate school attendance, such as the Department of Education's Baccalaureate and Beyond survey, include questions on political orientation. Recently, however, the three authors of this chapter realized that the Add Health dataset could be used to gain some traction on the empirical issues at hand. Add Health originally focused on the health behaviors of adolescents. The study began in 1994–95 with an in-school survey of more than ninety thousand adolescents in grades 7–12, drawn from a stratified random sample of 132 junior high and high schools across the country. About twenty-one thousand of these original respondents were selected for in-home interviews, where their parents or other caregivers were also surveyed; a second wave of in-home interviews, involving about fifteen thousand young people, took place in 1996. Wave 3 of data collection was conducted in 2001–2, when respondents were aged 18–26, and wave 4 in 2007–8, when respondents were aged 24–32. About 80 percent of wave 3 respondents are included in the wave 4 sample. In wave 4, 534 respondents stated that they were currently enrolled in a master's- or doctorate-granting program—not a professional degree program—and intended to complete a doctorate (or in a relatively small number of cases had already done so.) Although politics is not a

central concern of Add Health, in waves 3 and 4, respondents were asked to place themselves on a commonly used liberalism-conservatism scale. Accordingly, we use the data to examine whether political orientation in wave 3 is an important predictor of graduate school attendance in wave 4 and what variables may moderate such an effect.

Given the goals of our study, we restrict the sample in several ways. First, we exclude all respondents who, by wave 4, had not completed a bachelor's degree. We do so because our interest is in the choice to go or not go to graduate school, and graduate school presumes a bachelor's degree. Second, by necessity we include only those respondents who were interviewed in both waves 3 and 4. It is possible that sample attrition has biased our results, but we doubt this bias is significant since attrition is low across the two waves. Moreover, survey researchers have documented that attrition tends to be lowest among well-educated respondents. Third, we exclude the very small number of respondents who were already enrolled in graduate school in wave 3. Finally, to ensure that no one in wave 3 is older than the youngest respondent in wave 4, which would complicate our analysis, we exclude respondents who in wave 3 were older than 24 years.

Our modeling strategy is straightforward: we fit a series of logistic regressions that add different hypothesized predictors of graduate school attendance. All analyses are weighted to adjust for the longitudinal structure of the data as well as the oversampling of certain groups that is a feature of the Add Health design. We deal with the problem of missing data by using listwise deletion. We also ran analyses using multiple imputation, but the findings remained substantively the same.

In our regression models, the categorical outcome variable is wave 4 enrollment in a nonprofessional master's- or doctorate-granting program or having already completed a PhD. As noted above, we imposed the restriction that respondents could score positively on the outcome variable only if, among those without a doctorate, they stated their intention to complete one, as measured in a wave 4 question on educational aspirations. Our reason for this restriction is to distinguish between respondents who would in principle be eligible for academic careers (outside community colleges) and those who plan to go no further than a master's. For purposes of analytic clarity, our models compare doctorate-bound/intended students with respondents with a bachelor's degree only. (Because of missing data, our regression models compare 286 doctorate seekers with 1,777 respondents who stopped at a bachelor's.)

Our main predictor variable is political self-identification, measured in wave 3. The Add Health question asks respondents, "In terms of politics, do you consider yourself conservative, liberal, or middle-of-the-road?" Responses are coded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "very conservative" to "very liberal." Research in political science and political sociology shows that self-identification along a liberal-conservative continuum is associated with a wide variety of social and economic attitudes measures, as well as party affiliation and voting, especially among educated Americans—who make up the entirety of our sample (Baldassari and Gelman 2008; Jost 2006; Jost, Kay, and Thorisdottir 2009; Malka and Lelkes 2010). While it would have been useful to confirm that our findings hold true across other measures of politics, the only other politics question asked in wave 3 (aside from questions on political participation) is a party affiliation question that asks whether respondents are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents, or belong to some other party, with no measure of the strength of their affiliation. We prefer the self-identification variable because it can be modeled as a continuous or ordinal rather than nominal variable, is more theoretically connected to attitudes, has lower levels of missingness in the Add Health dataset, and is measured in both waves 3 and 4, allowing us to assess change over time. We do note that among respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher who answered both the self-identification and party affiliation question, 85 percent of conservatives described themselves as Republican, and 88 percent of liberals as Democrats.

We use several variables to determine whether political self-identification, as a predictor of graduate school attendance, is robust to controlling for other factors. To begin, our models control for gender, age at wave 3, and race. Class background is another obvious candidate for predicting graduate school attendance. Work in the sociology of education has shown that children of well-educated parents and those in professional occupations are more likely to attend graduate school (Mullen, Goyette, and Soares 2003). Research has also demonstrated that levels of liberalism tend to be higher in well-educated, professional class households (Gerteis 1998). Accordingly, we control for parental education and professional status to assess the possible impact on the liberalism–graduate school connection. Parental education is measured as a variable with five response categories in wave 2, separately for each parent. Professional status is measured by a wave 2 question asking respondents about the type of work their parents did at the time. We coded respondents as having professional parents if they reported their parents as having worked in one of two categories of "professional work," as a "manager," or as a higher-status "technical" worker, such as "computer specialist" or "radiologist."

Given research by political psychologists on the relationship between liberalism and intelligence, we also consider whether liberals might be more likely to

go to graduate school because, on average, they have higher levels of general intelligence than conservatives. Waves 2 and 3 of Add Health include a picture-based vocabulary test, the results of which have been shown to correlate highly with other measures of cognitive ability (Zagar and Mead 1983). We standardize the wave 3 scores for this variable around their mean and include the *z*-score as an input in the models. The Add Health study also includes a measure of respondents' overall high school GPAs, taken from their transcripts. Although respondents might have higher or lower GPAs in college than in high school, with college grades being those that matter for graduate school admissions, high school grades are a relatively robust measure of academic preparation and motivation, qualities that should carry through to the college years.

Our models also include several other control variables measured during or after wave 3, when our political self-identification variable was measured. To explore the role of materialism in moderating our findings, we use a wave 3 question asking how important respondents think money is to a successful marriage or relationship. We would have preferred a question asking about job values, but no such question is asked in Add Health. Nevertheless, the variable we use is a reasonable, if rough, measure of how much importance people place on monetary success. Scholars have also theorized that conservatives may avoid graduate school because they prefer to start their families earlier (Woessner and Kelly-Woessner 2009), which would require that they work full-time after college or stay home to raise children. We evaluate this claim using a wave 3 variable measuring whether or not respondents have ever been married. In addition, Fosse and Gross argued that those who are religious are less likely to aspire to become professors, so we include a measure of religiosity in our models. Religiosity is measured with a wave 3 question asking respondents how important their religious faith is to them.

Finally, our models include several measures of personality characteristics, thought by political psychologists to be important predictors of liberalism. In particular, political psychologists have argued that "openness to new experience" is associated with liberalism, while "conscientiousness" is associated with conservatism (Jost and Hunyadi 2005). A key component of openness is "interest in abstract ideas," and it is plausible, as well as consistent with revisionist work on college education and politics highlighting prior selection processes, that this predicts not only liberalism but also the pursuit of an advanced education. It is equally conceivable that low conscientiousness could predict graduate school attendance, since the relatively unstructured nature of graduate school life might not appeal to those who are highly organized. Although our strong preference would have been to measure personality characteristics prior to graduate school attendance, in Add Health, questions designed to measure the "Big Five" personality traits are asked only in wave 4. We include the four-item conscientiousness scale in our models but, for reasons we describe below, disaggregate "openness to new experience" into two two-item subscales: "interest in abstract ideas" and "imagination."

Four caveats must be made about our data and methods. First, although we would have liked to do so, our models do not control for what discipline or type of field the doctorate seekers are in. There is no measure of this in wave 4, and in any event, with a limited number of doctorate-seeking respondents, the cell sizes in individual disciplines would have been too small to generate meaningful comparisons. In wave 3, Add Health did ask respondents who had completed undergraduate degrees what their college major/minor was. Since there is no necessary connection between undergraduate major/minor and graduate school program, we do not use this variable in our main analysis. However, aggregating to broad, multidisciplinary categories such as social sciences/humanities and science/technology/engineering/mathematics (STEM) to deal with the cell size issue, we do make use of undergraduate major/minor in supplementary analyses we discuss below. Second, while the Add Health data are well-suited to our purposes, they include only respondents who spent their adolescence in the United States. But nearly 30 percent of doctoral degree recipients in American universities, and about 15 percent of U.S. professors, were born overseas. Our data do not speak to the politics of this group. Third, while most people begin graduate school in their early twenties, a small number spend considerable time after college in the labor force or engaged in other pursuits before undertaking graduate work. People who fit this profile may be included in our sample, but depending on the timing of their educational experiences, they might show up as non–graduate school attendees. Finally, our outcome variable captures only those respondents who already had PhDs or were enrolled in graduate programs and stated their interest in completing a doctorate at the time of the wave 4 survey. Yet it is possible that some respondents began graduate school with the intention to complete a doctorate but dropped out or set their sights on a terminal master's or some other degree prior to the wave 4 survey. If politics systematically influenced this decision—for example, if conservative respondents were more likely to exit doctoral programs, perceiving the cards to be stacked against them in academe—this could have affected our results. Although we are not aware of any survey data demonstrating such a tendency, it is not outside the bounds of possibility, so additional caution is in order when interpreting our findings.

Results

Before discussing the results of our models, we review the differences in political identification by educational level among the young adults in our sample. Table 2.1 shows the distribution of political self-identification among those with a bachelor's degree only and among graduate students seeking (or already holding) a doctorate in waves 3 and 4 of the Add Health survey. In the fourth wave, among respondents with a bachelor's degree only, 35 percent identified as either liberal or very liberal, 41 percent as moderate, and 23 percent as conservative. In contrast, about 49 percent of doctoral degree seekers considered themselves either liberal or very liberal, 33 percent moderate, and 18 percent either conservative or very conservative.

Two things stand out about these descriptive findings. First, although the Add Health five-point political self-identification scale differs from that used in recent surveys of the professoriate, making comparisons tricky, the proportion of graduate school attendees who are liberal is about the same as the proportion of young professors who are liberal (although conservatives are underrepresented in the academic ranks, and moderates overrepresented, relative to their presence among graduate students). For example, data from Gross and Simmons's 2006 survey show that among professors who hold doctorates and are aged 40 or younger, 45 percent could be classified as liberal, 51 percent as moderate, and 4 percent as conservative. These numbers strongly suggest that professorial liberalism is highly related to who goes to graduate school: filling job openings in academe with a random draw from the pool of graduate students would produce a distinctly left-leaning occupation. Second, the findings are consistent with the line of research discussed earlier on college attendance and liberalism, which

TABLE 2.1
Distribution of Political Views in Waves 3 and 4 by Education, as Percentages

	BA only		Doctoral degree seekers	
Political views	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 3	Wave 4
Very conservative	3.2	4.3	2.1	2.7
Conservative	21.5	19.1	16.4	15.1
Moderate	49.2	41.3	46.0	33.3
Liberal	23.5	27.8	30.5	33.1
Very liberal	2.6	7.6	5.1	15.9
N	2,503	2,980	455	531

Source. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves 3 and 4.
Note. Columns may not add to 100 because of rounding. Analysis excludes respondents who were older than 24 in wave 3. Data are weighted.

demonstrates not simply that those with college degrees tend to have more liberal views at any age but also that *recent* college graduates comprise an especially liberal group (perhaps because most have not yet had the life-course experiences that, as research has shown, would moderate their liberalism, such as purchasing a home or investing in the stock market; see Conley and Gifford 2006; Davis and Cotton 2007). This means, as Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009) have also noted, that the pool of potential graduate students (i.e., young adults with a four-year college degree) is already tilted significantly left, so that some amount of the liberalism of graduate students (and professors) is a result of upstream processes related to the politics of college students. Nevertheless, in wave 3, future doctoral degree seekers are more liberal by 9 percentage points than those who will wind up with only a bachelor's degree.

Compared with the fourth wave, doctoral students in the third wave are less liberal and more moderate. A possible interpretation of this difference is that graduate school attendance causes a significant leftward shift in political identification among young adults. This conclusion cannot be supported by table 2.1 alone, however, since the results are not adjusted for confounders such as gender, race, or class background that might affect both political identification and educational attainment. Moreover, the data are aggregated, making it impossible to assess individual-level effects. Finally, the parallel leftward shift among respondents with a bachelor's degree suggests that the differences between the two waves may be due to factors unrelated to attending graduate school.

To address more directly the question of whether graduate school attendance moves people to the left politically, table 2.2 shows the percentage of respondents in both the graduate school and bachelor's-only groups who became more liberal between the two waves, showed no change, or became more conservative (restricting the analysis to those who were not at the extremes of the distribution in wave 3 and so could change in only one direction). About 42 percent of doctorate seekers showed no change in their politics between waves 3 and 4, 36 percent became more liberal, and 23 percent became more conservative. In contrast, about 52 percent of respondents with only a bachelor's degree showed no change, 29 percent became more liberal, and 19 percent became more conservative. While these numbers are consistent with the possibility of a modest graduate school liberalization effect, more striking is the significant liberalization in both groups. Perhaps this reflects a period effect: between waves 3 and 4 of the study, there was increasing dissatisfaction among young Americans with President Bush and the war in Iraq, as well as growing support for Barack Obama. The difference in liberalization between respondents in the graduate school and bachelor's-only group is

TABLE 2.2
Percentage of Respondents Who Changed Political Views between Waves 3 and 4 by Education

Change	BA only	Doctoral degree seekers
More conservative	19.0	22.7
No change	51.9	41.5
More liberal	29.1	35.8
N	2,116	389

Source. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, Waves 3 and 4.

Note. Analysis excludes respondents who identified as "very conservative" or "very liberal" in wave 3, as well as those who were older than 24 in wave 3. Data are weighted.

7 percentage points—much smaller than the amount of liberalization experienced by the cohort overall—and is offset by more movement to the right among graduate school attendees.[1] Could this relatively small number be a result of the inclusion in our sample of doctorate seekers in all fields, such that a dramatic graduate school liberalization among students in the social sciences and humanities, say, is being offset by less movement among scientists and engineers? Again, we have no measure of field of study in graduate school, but when we recalculated the numbers for table 2.2, restricting the sample to students who had majored or minored as undergraduates in the social sciences or humanities, we found that the proportion who became more liberal was unchanged (35%), the proportion whose political views stayed the same was higher (47%), and the proportion who became more conservative was slightly smaller (18%).

We turn next to our logistic regression analyses, shown in table 2.3. What evidence is there beyond the descriptive statistics that young adults who identify as liberal are more likely to self-select into graduate school? The first four models in the table address this question. In the first model we include no controls. Liberal self-identification in wave 3 increases the log-odds of attending graduate school in wave 4 by 0.258 and is statistically significant. Since log-odds ratios are difficult to interpret, we restate this in terms of predicted probabilities. Given the distribution of the outcome variable, the coefficient for political self-identification in model 1 indicates that, for a case that is average on other characteristics in our data, a unit increase in political liberalism corresponds to about a 2.2 percentage point increase in the probability of attending graduate school versus receiving only a bachelor's degree, or about an 8.8 percentage point increase between someone who is very liberal versus very conservative. Fosse and Gross's claim that being a liberal increases the odds of attending graduate school thus finds empirical support.

TABLE 2.3
Predictors of Doctoral Degree Seeking in Wave 4

Variable	Model 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Wave 3 liberalism	0.258**	0.243*	0.222*	0.204*	0.204*	0.230*	0.228*	0.168
	(2.61)	(0.101)	(0.099)	(0.102)	(0.103)	(0.104)	(0.106)	(0.106)
Female		0.340†	0.403*	0.359†	0.358†	0.327†	0.328†	0.414*
		(0.175)	(0.180)	(0.189)	(0.190)	(0.192)	(0.192)	(0.189)
Age		0.023	0.023	0.040	0.040	0.024	0.024	0.038
		(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.053)	(0.054)	(0.055)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Black		0.542**	0.719***	0.996***	0.994***	0.994***	0.997***	0.985***
		(0.198)	(0.207)	(0.224)	(0.237)	(0.236)	(0.244)	(0.247)
Hispanic		−0.252	0.046	0.237	0.237	0.213	0.214	0.139
		(0.325)	(0.337)	(0.356)	(0.356)	(0.351)	(0.349)	(0.349)
Native American		−0.463	−0.486	−0.475	−0.475	−0.513	−0.512	−0.485
		(0.605)	(0.634)	(0.659)	(0.659)	(0.667)	(0.666)	(0.677)
Asian American		−0.591	−0.523	−0.446	−0.448	−0.452	−0.452	−0.451
		(0.364)	(0.371)	(0.372)	(0.377)	(0.379)	(0.379)	(0.386)
Mother's education			0.117	0.099	0.099	0.102	0.102	0.117
			(0.098)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.100)	(0.098)
Father's education			0.233*	0.217*	0.217*	0.221*	0.221*	0.183†
			(0.094)	(0.097)	(0.097)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.100)
Mother professional			0.280	0.282	0.282	0.289	0.289	0.280
			(0.198)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.201)

(continued)

TABLE 2.3 (*continued*)

Variable	Model 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Father professional			−0.012 (0.195)	−0.052 (0.199)	−0.052 (0.199)	−0.048 (0.200)	−0.048 (0.200)	−0.066 (0.206)
GPA				0.593** (0.181)	0.593*** (0.180)	0.598*** (0.176)	0.599*** (0.176)	0.581*** (0.176)
Vocabulary (*z*)				0.187† (0.104)	0.188† (0.103)	0.189† (0.104)	0.188† (0.104)	0.061 (0.118)
Materialism					0.002 (0.036)	0.003 (0.036)	0.003 (0.036)	0.019 (0.037)
Ever married						0.442 (0.328)	0.445 (0.335)	0.453 (0.330)
Faith							−0.006 (0.109)	−0.011 (0.108)
Conscientiousness								−0.042 (0.048)
Abstract ideas								0.355*** (0.076)
Imagination								−0.052 (0.061)
Constant	−2.623*** (−8.15)	−3.270** (1.162)	−4.606*** (1.238)	−6.891*** (1.471)	−6.898*** (1.448)	−6.717*** (1.466)	−6.703*** (1.493)	−8.712*** (1.626)

Source. National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

Note. Weighted logistic regression models. N = 2,063. Analysis excludes respondents older than 24 in wave 3 and those who had not completed a bachelor's degree by wave 4. Standard errors in parentheses.

†$p < 0.10$, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$

In model 2 we control for basic demographic characteristics: gender, race, and age. In an era when the American academy is becoming increasing female, being a woman increases the odds of graduate school attendance. Consistent with Bowen and Bok's (2000) finding that African Americans who receive bachelor's degrees from highly selective schools are likely to enter professional degree programs, we find that being black increases the odds of graduate school attendance contingent on completion of a bachelor's.[2] Since women and African Americans tend to hold more liberal views, these variables moderate the liberalism effect, though only slightly.

Is the finding on political self-selection robust to additional controls? Perhaps politically liberal young adults tend to be raised in households that are better educated or of higher occupational status, and this accounts for their self-selection into graduate school. With model 3, we control for parental education and occupational status, both measured prior to political identification. The log-odds of graduate school attendance for a unit difference in political self-identification are now 0.222, corresponding with a 1.9 percentage point positive difference in the probability of attending graduate school. Father's education appears to be doing most of the statistical work here. Even with this moderation, however, the liberalism effect remains large in relative terms and statistically significant.

With model 4 we include other background variables: high school GPA (as a proxy for academic orientation and preparation) and vocabulary (as a proxy for cognitive ability). Both are statistically significant, positive predictors of graduate school attendance. While including them in the model further attenuates the liberalism effect, the attenuation is not large, reducing the effect to a 1.7 percentage point per unit positive difference in the probability of attending graduate school, which still translates into a 6.8 percentage point positive difference in the likelihood of graduate school attendance between someone who is very liberal versus very conservative.

The next four models control for variables measured at the same time as or after measurement of the political self-identification variable. Model 5 considers the effect of materialist values. At least operationalized as we have done here, materialism is a small, statistically not significant predictor of graduate school attendance, and including it in the model does not alter the liberalism coefficient. Model 6 includes as an input having been married in wave 3, which has a log-odds coefficient of 0.442. Early marriage corresponds with an unexpected 3.7 percentage point *increase* in the likelihood of pursuing a doctorate, although this effect does not meet classical standards of statistical significance. Relative

to model 5, the liberalism coefficient is now inflated, but only slightly. This inflation makes sense, given that political liberalism and early marriage are negatively associated.

In model 7 we examine the effects of religiosity. Contrary to expectations, we find that the importance of religious faith in a respondent's life has no effect on her or his propensity to attend graduate school. Again, the liberalism coefficient remains largely unchanged.

Model 8 incorporates the personality variables as inputs. Although the coefficient for conscientiousness is negative, as research in political psychology might lead one to expect, it is not statistically significant. As for openness to new experience, in previous versions of the model not shown here, we found that openness—measured in Add Health with an index that combines four items (two measuring "interest in abstract ideas" and two measuring "having an active imagination")—is a large, positive, and statistically significant predictor of graduate school attendance. In our subsequent analysis, however, we discovered that "interest in abstract ideas" was responsible for the entirety of this effect. Accordingly, in model 8 we show the results with the two subcomponents of the openness index disaggregated. Not only does interest in abstract ideas strongly predict pursuing a doctorate, but it is also the only variable in our models that substantially reduces the size of the political identification effect, rendering it statistically nonsignificant by conventional criteria. In model 8 the coefficient for political self-identification is now 0.168, with a unit difference now corresponding to a 1.4 percentage point increase in the likelihood of attending graduate school.

Discussion

What do the findings tell us about the Fosse and Gross theory of professorial liberalism? They are clearly consistent with Fosse and Gross's main self-selection hypothesis. Both the cross-tabulations and the logistic regression models indicate that students who are liberal as young adults are more likely to pursue doctorates than their moderate or conservative counterparts, even after we control for various background variables such as gender and race. Moreover, several alternative self-selection theories receive little support from our data. For example, we find no evidence that liberals are more likely to pursue doctorates because they are less materialistic or less prone than conservatives to early marriage. As well, we find that little of the difference between liberals and conservatives in rates of graduate school attendance stems from differences in parental education levels.

Yet there is one prominent alternative theory of self-selection that we cannot rule out: that liberals self-select into graduate school because of psychological differences between them and conservatives. The findings here are mixed. We find no evidence that the liberalism effect is explained away by an association between conscientiousness or having a fertile imagination and attending graduate school. Cognitive ability and academic preparation do moderate the effect, but only modestly. Regarding an interest in abstract ideas, however, our results show that this aspect of personality is a major predictor of graduate school attendance and one that greatly reduces the political self-identification effect.

Do these findings mean that political-psychological theories of self-selection are correct and that the Fosse and Gross theory, built around the idea of occupational reputation, is wrong? While we do not doubt that cognitive and personality factors have some role to play in explaining professorial liberalism, four arguments counsel against this interpretation of our regression results. First, once again, the effects of cognitive ability and academic preparation on the liberalism coefficient are small. Second, concerning personality, if the finding on abstract ideas were a function of robust personality differences, why would a trait as fundamental to the construct of openness as degree of imagination fail to have any effect?

Third, as mentioned previously, our measure of abstract ideas comes from wave 4 of the survey and was thus taken after our measure of politics. It is therefore possible that political identification *leads* to greater interest in abstract ideas, in turn leading to a higher probability of attending graduate school. For example, we know from other research that liberals are more likely than conservatives to major in liberal arts fields (Porter and Umbach 2006), and it is certainly possible that majoring in liberal arts as opposed to a more applied field could stoke an interest in abstract ideas. Political differences in choice of major could be driven by personality, but there are other explanations.

Finally, while interest in abstract ideas reduced the liberalism coefficient to statistical nonsignificance, the reduction in the size of the coefficient itself is not overwhelming. Specifically, comparing model 7 with model 8, we find that the increased probability of attending graduate school associated with a unit increase in liberalism changes from 1.9 to 1.4. This is to say that while the coefficient for liberalism in model 8 no longer meets classical standards of statistical significance, political self-identification continues to predict graduate school attendance after our two-item measure of interest in abstract ideas is controlled for (although we cannot rule out the possibility that we would have been able to

reduce the coefficient to zero had Add Health contained more extensive and reliable personality measures).

In the light of these considerations, we think that an equally or more plausible interpretation of the abstract ideas finding is that part of the normative social practice of contemporary American liberalism among the educated is to express some interest in abstract ideas (to profess appreciation for conceptual art, for example, or have a copy of *Discipline and Punish* on one's bookshelf), whereas it is part of the normative social practice of conservatism to downplay certain forms of intellectualism and abstraction in favor of an orientation toward more concrete ideas (such that a comparable book display might include more biographies and histories). To the extent that this is so, the finding on abstract ideas would be consistent with the occupational reputation thesis, for it would simply mean that, on average, liberals are more likely to conceive of themselves as intellectually minded—whether they are or not, in some objective sense (on the importance of self-representations of personality in helping to anchor its stability over the life course, see McAdams and Olson 2010). And it would mean that liberals pursue doctorates at higher rates because they perceive that (1) academe is a natural home for those of an intellectual bent, and (2) the intellectually minded, a group widely understood as having more liberal social and political attitudes, fit in well politically in the university.

There has been relatively little research by sociologists and political scientists into mainstream liberalism or conservatism as social practices—a glaring lacuna—but some studies lend credibility to this interpretation. For example, a consistent finding from American and European surveys is that conservatives report higher levels of happiness than liberals (Brooks 2008; Di Tella and MacCulloch 2005; Leone and Chirumbolo 2007; Napier and Jost 2008). Much of this difference is a function of income, religiosity, and marriage, but political psychologists have suggested that some of it is grounded in personality differences. Specifically, some psychologists contend that it is affectively more rewarding to support the status quo than to challenge it. Yet in one of the few pieces of ethnographic research on the topic, Wilkins (2008), studying an evangelical Christian group, found that the group defined itself in part around the happiness of its members—seen by them as a function of their religious commitments—and that group members were under strong normative pressures to engage in "happiness talk" and present themselves to others as content. Insofar as this finding is generalizable to other social settings, the social practices of conservatism, rather than psychological characteristics, could be responsible for the finding of greater happiness among conservatives—just as the finding from political psychology

that the greater conscientiousness of conservatives manifests itself in the neatness of their home and office environments (Carney et al. 2008) could well be a product of different norms of housekeeping in liberal and conservative settings that might or might not have their origin in in-born psychological differences. In the same way, the greater "intellectualism" of liberals might be a function, not of psychology, but of how liberalism and conservatism, as practice-laden social identities, have come to be defined in the contemporary American context.

Although we thus interpret our findings as largely consistent with Fosse and Gross's theory, there is one finding that seems to be in tension: that pertaining to religion. Again, Fosse and Gross found that the lesser religiosity of professors compared with other Americans helped to explain their liberalism and theorized that relatively few people who are religiously devout—who also tend to be more politically conservative—form the aspiration to become professors, given the professoriate's reputation for secularism. Yet our data here show that religiosity does not affect the likelihood of pursuing a doctorate.

There are a number of possible explanations for this disparity. One is that whereas religiosity inhibited doctorate seeking in the past, it no longer does so today—whether because American colleges and universities are recognizing the need to accommodate the faithful (Cherry, DeBerg, and Porterfield 2001) or because certain highly religious groups, such as evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants, have experienced upward mobility in recent decades and are now in a position to support the advanced education of their young people (Greely and Hout 2006). Fosse and Gross's data, which reach back into the early 1970s, may not be recent enough to capture this change. Another possibility is that self-selection out of higher education on the basis of religiosity occurs at the undergraduate stage and is a result not of the irreligious reputation of the professoriate per se but rather of lingering perceptions that the climate on many college campuses is hostile to religious believers. A third possibility is that the religiously devout attend graduate school but tend not to enter the academic profession. The disparity could also result from different ways of measuring religiosity. Whichever of these possibilities is correct, our data do not provide evidence that, in general, people self-select out of graduate school because of their religious beliefs.[3]

Conclusion

We have shown, using longitudinal data, that Americans who are liberal during the typical college years are more likely to attend graduate school than are their moderate or conservative peers. We also demonstrate that this tendency does

not arise because of the most commonly supposed factors and that attending graduate school results in only a modest shift farther to the left in terms of political self-identification. Despite the limitations of our data, which were not collected with the aim of identifying the predictors, political or otherwise, of graduate school attendance, we regard these findings as providing evidence that liberal politics constitutes an important basis for self-selection into doctoral education and the academic profession.

While our findings are consistent with Fosse and Gross's theory of self-selection based on institutionalized political reputation, we wish to reemphasize that several other theories are also compatible. For example, it is possible that in our models, youthful liberalism functions as a proxy for a more bohemian cultural disposition that, notwithstanding our efforts to control for class background and materialism, is best understood from the vantage point of an approach to class analysis, like Bourdieu's, that takes seriously status group dynamics and processes of cultural distinction. Alternatively, that liberalism predicts graduate school attendance could reflect discrimination against conservative students in the admissions process or a calculation on their part that they would face a hostile climate in academe. Our data do not allow us to arbitrate between these competing interpretations.

With that said, our findings do lead us to doubt—especially given the data reported in chapter 4 of this volume—that discrimination against conservatives in the academic labor market is the major cause of professorial liberalism. Some discrimination may occur and might help account for the underrepresentation of conservatives in the academic ranks relative to their presence in the graduate student population, as well as their particular underrepresentation at certain kinds of schools, such as elite research institutions. Yet the fact that just under half of graduate students are liberal seems a much more likely proximate cause of the phenomenon of professorial liberalism overall.

What are the broader sociological implications of our analysis? First, the absence of evidence that doctoral degree–granting programs lead people to become substantially more liberal suggests that the growth of such programs in recent decades has probably not done anything to directly push American society to the left, at odds with what New Class theorists of the 1970s would have forecast. (And in any event, while some attitudinal liberalization occurred during this time among members of the public—for example, around same-sex marriage—there has obviously been no major left realignment for which the expansion of graduate programs could serve as an explanation.) At the same time, while we have not examined here the political dynamics surrounding other, larger categories of

graduate education, such as terminal master's or professional degree programs—because Add Health does not contain measures that would allow us to distinguish cleanly among them—we suspect, given our findings on self-selection, that the expansion of graduate education has had a significant *indirect* effect on the American political system. It has led to an increasing consolidation of liberalism among the highly educated, in occupations requiring advanced degrees, and in cities, states, and regions where such occupations flourish. GSS data show that in the period 2000–2008, nearly 15 percent of self-identified American liberals held advanced degrees of some kind, compared with about 7 percent in the 1970s. Although the percentage of moderates and conservatives with advanced degrees has also doubled, those numbers remain today about what they were for liberals in the earlier period. This means that more than ever before, the highly educated comprise a key constituency for American liberalism and the Democratic Party, one that may have surpassed a crucial threshold size, generating tensions with the working-class base around such issues as religion and the American use of force overseas and rendering the American left recurrently vulnerable to charges of elitism. This situation and the electoral dynamics that follow from it would be different were there no political self-selection into advanced education and had the growth of graduate education been equally distributed across ideological camps.

Second, our findings suggest the need for scholars of class politics to begin attending more systematically to processes of self-selection. Much of the effort that has gone into research on class politics in recent years has been concerned to show that class, variously defined, remains an important predictor of political attitudes and behavior (see Evans 1999; Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995). In most of these analyses, class is presumed to have its political effects through the objective or subjective interests that workers' or families' class positions establish for them—interests that would be best achieved by voting for one candidate or party rather than another. Yet if, as we have shown, there is self-selection on the basis of politics into one occupation—the professoriate—then it becomes plausible to think that political self-selection may also be operating for other occupations. To the extent that this is so, interest-based models of class politics should be rethought, for more complex processes of political affiliation are probably at play for people in such fields. One important strand of class-analytic work that makes theoretical space for occupational self-selection—political and otherwise—is Grusky's neo-Durkheimian theory of class (see Grusky and Sorensen 1998; Weeden and Grusky 2005). But the fact of political self-selection does not seem to us to necessarily point in Grusky's direction so much as toward the

need for a general reconstruction of class-political models with an eye toward dynamic life-course processes of the sort studied by scholars of political socialization (see Shapiro 2004) and, separately, of "vocational choice" (Holland 1984). Such a reconstruction would be all the more important if evidence were found of occupational self-selection by politics across national and historical contexts.[4]

Third, building off this last point, our findings on self-selection suggest the need for American sociologists to begin considering individuals' political orientations not just as outcomes to be explained, whether by reference to class or other factors, but also as predictors of other outcomes. We have shown that political liberalism affects the odds of pursuing a doctoral degree. Does political orientation influence other behaviors of interest to sociology as well, such as volunteerism and civic engagement, consumption, patterns of intergroup contact and travel, or childbearing or parenting styles? If the answer is yes, sociologists would profit by building politics into their explanatory models. In so doing, they might also help shed light on how liberalism and conservatism have become, in contemporary American society, not simply labels referring to clusters of political attitudes but highly meaningful social identities designating distinctive and increasingly irreconcilable worldviews and styles of life—of which the liberal taste for graduate education is merely one sign.

NOTES

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1. Since some respondents were still enrolled in college between waves 3 and 4, a possible objection to the period effect interpretation is that some of the aggregate change in both groups is a result of the liberalizing effects of higher education in general. Among Add Health respondents who had not received a bachelor's degree by wave 4, however, there was also a substantial increase in the percentage identifying as liberal or very liberal between the two waves.

2. NCES data show that African Americans now receive about 10 percent of bachelor's degrees (http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_285.asp), while data from the Council of Graduate Schools show that about 14 percent of graduate students who are U.S. citizens are African American (N. Bell 2010, 40).

3. Once again, however, we note that our data are not discipline specific. Although we think it sociologically unproductive to postulate an inherent tension between science and religious belief, we would not be surprised to find that people do select out of the physical and biological sciences, and perhaps some of the social sciences as well, on the basis of religiosity. Indeed, when we reran our models focusing solely on respondents who had majored or minored in STEM fields, we found that religiosity was strongly and negatively associated with graduate school attendance.

4. Scholars of class politics have not ignored self-selection entirely. For example, Inglehart (1990) posited that "postmaterialist" values influence occupational choice—a claim responded to by Müller (1999, 174) in the German context. On left activism and career choice, see Sherkat and Blocker 1997.