



## Scholarly elites orient left, irrespective of academic affiliation



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### ABSTRACT

I substantiate a parsimonious delineation between liberals and conservatives: liberals demonstrate greater consideration toward the less represented, whether the less represented constitute minority demographic segments or alternatives to orthodoxy. Highly intelligent individuals are more likely to engage in both kinds of consideration toward the less represented because of their greater tendencies to perceive an external control ideology, to empathize and to trust. I argue that, contrary to Carl (2015), the liberal prevalence in academia is not attributable to bias by discrimination or self-selection. I also review evidence that scholarly elites orient predominately toward the left, irrespective of academic affiliation, and I introduce additional evidence supporting this point. Carl (2015) argued that a U-shaped relationship between intelligence and Democratic Party affiliation was unreflective of a general relationship between intelligence and leftism due to the Democratic Party's economic centrism on a global scale. However, a similar, U-shaped relationship is obtained from data from multiple countries. Additionally, the empirical findings presented by Carl (2015) and others demonstrate a U-shaped relationship between intelligence and liberal positions across many issues and establish the turning point of the U-shaped curve relating intelligence and left-wing party (and ideological) affiliation in the United States to occur at roughly the 80th intelligence percentile. While Carl (2015) acknowledged accordance with Solon (2014) on many non-economic and economic results, Carl (2015) presented data for some economic issues in support of an apparent association between intelligence and non-left-wing positions, for which I present four explanations that are consistent with a general correlation between intelligence and prosociality.

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## 1. Introduction

In a well-researched, helpful comment, Carl (2015) questioned a couple of Solon's (2014) findings. In review, Solon primarily advanced three related hypotheses:

- 1) The liberal<sup>2</sup> and conservative political classifications, into which individuals in many countries cluster, are most parsimoniously characterized by greater consideration demonstrated by liberals than conservatives toward the less represented, whether the less represented constitute minority demographic segments or alternatives to religious, governmental, or cultural orthodoxy.
- 2) The relationship between intelligence and liberal political inclination is monotonically positive on individual issues (i.e., intelligent people are more likely than others to demonstrate consideration toward minority segments and/or consider alternatives to orthodoxy), unless a demographic for which rights are at issue exhibits lower-than-average intelligence (e.g., an economic or racial minority), which leads to a U-shaped relationship between intelligence and leftism that also carries over to issue composites (e.g., party affiliations, general elections).
- 3) The greater support by a demographic segment for the allocation of rights to its own segment (e.g., the greater support by economic or racial minorities for issues or parties that allocate rights to them) has been traditionally attributed to self-interest influence but instead owes primarily to personal experience influence, which is significant even in the absence of self-interest, while self-interest influence is weak in the absence of personal experience.

Solon also showed that evidence advanced to support intelligence-moderation (Dutton, 2013a, b; Dutton & Lynn, 2014; Rindermann, Flores-Mendoza, & Woodley, 2012), political typing (Gross & Fosse, 2012) and costly signaling (Millet & Dewitte, 2006) hypotheses are accommodated by the above.

Carl (2015) argued, in accord with Solon (2014), that individuals of moderate intelligence more frequently orient toward social liberalism and economic conservatism than those of lower intelligence, but he argued, in contention with Solon, that 1) highly intelligent individuals in the United States do not necessarily prefer the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, and that 2) even if highly intelligent individuals in the United States orient toward the Democratic Party, they do because the Democratic Party is center-right on a historical scale and not because their Democratic orientation is reflective of a global leftist orientation by highly intelligent individuals. This is consistent with Carl's (2014a) previously articulated suggestion that intelligence is associated with classical liberalism (i.e., social liberalism and economic conservatism). These positions are examined below.

## 2. Liberals demonstrate greater consideration toward the less represented

Carl (2015) began his analysis by examining the concept of the political left. There is, heretofore, no consensus (including the citations provided by Carl, 2015) regarding the common elements of the liberal and conservative position clusters into which individuals in many countries have assembled. Indeed, Carl (2015) cited McLean and McMillan (2009), who noted, "What it is to be 'left(-wing)' varies so much over space or time that a definition is very difficult ... " Solon (2014) delineated<sup>3</sup> between liberals and conservatives in the following

<sup>2</sup> Though Carl (2015) asserted that Solon (2014) used "liberal" and "leftist" synonymously, the tendency by less intelligent individuals to disproportionately identify as ideological moderates (social conservatives and economic liberals) but affiliate reliably with leftist parties (e.g., Democrat) motivated the distinction made by Solon between "liberal" (i.e., adherence to left-wing ideology, in the sense used in the United States) and "leftist" (i.e., adherence to a left-wing party).

<sup>3</sup> While liberals and conservatives differ in other ways (e.g., their artistic, musical and reading preferences: Carney et al., 2008), the above delineation characterizes their differences on political issues.

manner: "Compared to conservatives, liberals are characterized by a tendency to demonstrate consideration toward the less represented, whether the less represented comprise minority demographic segments (e.g., homosexuals on gay marriage, pregnant women on abortion, convicted criminals on capital punishment, the poor on fiscal policies and health care, immigrants on immigration, citizens of other countries on foreign policy issues) or less represented alternatives to religious, governmental, or cultural orthodoxy."

The first part of this delineation appears consistent across issues: liberals exhibit greater willingness to impart rights to segments that are less represented from the observer's perspective<sup>4</sup>—which results from their more external control ideology<sup>5</sup> (Levenson & Miller, 1976; Silvern & Nakamura, 1971; Thomas, 1970), empathy (Hirsh, DeYoung, Xu, & Peterson, 2010) and trust (Solon, 2014) held for less represented<sup>6</sup> segments. However, the second part of this delineation—the notion that conservatives adhere more to orthodoxy—is challenged by multiple counterexamples. The term "orthodoxy" was used to refer both to the greater conservative acceptance of popular authorities (e.g., religious, governmental, historical) and the greater conservative adherence to traditional laws and practices (i.e., a greater aversion to change). However, the most consistent authoritative influence on political opinion is religious, since governmental authorities have most credibility with conservatives on foreign policy matters and historical authorities (e.g., the Founding Fathers in the United States) are not directly at issue on most contemporary matters. Those who accept religious authorities demonstrate lesser consideration toward minority segments even on issues minimally related to religion (e.g., immigration) or for which religion is liberalizing (e.g., torture: see Malka & Soto, 2011). Evidently, adherents to religious orthodoxy are willing to deemphasize religious teachings in order to demonstrate lesser consideration toward minority segments. These patterns suggest that the positive relationship between religion and conservatism is primarily correlative, rather than causal: those of lower intelligence are both more likely to a) be religious (Zuckerman, Silberman, & Hall, 2013) and b) demonstrate lesser consideration toward segments to which they do not belong (see below and Solon, 2014).

The greater conservative adherence to traditional laws and practices was also identified via meta-analysis by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003a), who concluded that resistance to change is a defining feature of conservatism. In response, Greenberg and Jonas (2003) noted anecdotally that some left-wing governments have been repressive and intolerant of dissent and that political movements led by Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini represented change. However, policies employed by governments are often representative only of small samples of individuals and not necessarily reflective of the differences between left-wing and right-wing individuals in an aggregate population. Additionally, Greenberg & Jonas cited findings indicating that Communist adherents are high in authoritarianism. However, according to Solon's (2014) discussion regarding the different types of political extremity, adherence to Communism reflects extreme left-wing economic orientation but is not necessarily indicative of left-wing extremity (or even left-wing orientation) on other positions. Indeed, many individuals of lower income and lower intelligence orient toward the economic left as a result of their income and the non-economic right as a result of their intelligence (Solon, 2014). These individuals tend to self-identify as ideological moderates but vote for leftist parties. Thus, Communist adherents are not necessarily liberals (in the U.S. sense) and Communist

<sup>4</sup> The observer's perspective is critical. Consistent with Solon (2014), both liberals and conservatives tend to be more willing to impart rights to segments with which they have personal experience.

<sup>5</sup> Following Gurin, Gurin, and Morrison (1978), it is necessary to distinguish between locus of control, the respondent's belief in his or her own ability to influence life outcomes, and control ideology, the respondent's belief in the average person's ability to do the same.

<sup>6</sup> Conservatives' tendency to be more skeptical toward less represented segments does not appear to extend to skepticism toward the average person (Pew Research Center, 2007a; Pew Research Center, 2014, June 26).

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