



# Why do academics oppose the market? A test of Nozick's hypothesis

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**Abstract**

In this article, the authors explore why academics tend to oppose the market. To this intent the article uses normative political theory as an explanatory mechanism, starting with a conjecture originally suggested by Robert Nozick. Academics are over-represented amongst the best students of their cohort. School achievement engenders high expectations about future economic prospects. Yet markets are only contingently sensitive to school achievement. This misalignment between schools and markets is perceived by academics – and arguably by intellectuals in general – as morally unacceptable. To test this explanation, the article uses an online questionnaire with close to 1500 French academic respondents. The data resulting from this investigation lend support to Nozick's hypothesis.

**Keywords**

Academics, attitudes, justice, the market, Nozick

**Introduction**

For the past four decades, governments have been implementing educational reforms to increase performance. These reforms promote market-like features such as decentralization, accountability or competition, in line with a more general trend of 'neoliberal

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reforms' (Au and Ferrare, 2015). Educational reforms and, especially, higher education reforms have been particularly numerous in many countries following an overall similar logic (Broucker et al., 2016). They have triggered strong opposition from teachers' unions, who have become the main political adversaries of such new policies (Moe and Wiborg, 2016), reflecting academics' strong hostility toward 'neoliberal' ideas. Based on a survey conducted just before substantial reforms in France, François and Magni-Berton (2015) find that the large majority of academics strongly reject reforms enhancing university decentralization (57%), accountability (60%) and competition (65%). Interestingly, this opposition does not seem fully consistent with their material interests, and Adam (2012) argues that such a rejection can be explained by an epistemic conflict between academic identity and the neoliberal paradigm.

This statement is not surprising as academics tend to view the free market with suspicion and to locate themselves on the left of the political spectrum. Abundant evidence substantiates this observation. In the United States the pattern holds across time (Gross, 2014; Gross and Simmons, 2014; Klein and Stern, 2005; Ladd and Lipset, 1975; Lazarsfeld and Thielens, 1958; Rothman et al., 2010). Likewise for the United Kingdom (Halsey, 2005; Halsey and Trow, 1971), Canada (Brym and Nakhaie, 1999; Nakhaie and Brym, 2011), Sweden (Berggren et al., 2007) and France (François et al., 2016; Judt, 1992). These studies mainly focus on the analysis of left/right political affiliation. Although these notions are fuzzy, they are strongly associated with specific attitudes vis-a-vis the role of equality in society, the scope of free markets and the justification of capitalism (Noël and Thérien, 2008).

In this article we tackle the issue of academics' attitudes vis-a-vis social justice and explore a hypothesis originally suggested by Robert Nozick (1997). The idea behind this hypothesis is that academics – and intellectuals in general – having done particularly well at school, feel insufficiently rewarded by the market. Consequently, they perceive market-outcomes as non-meritocratic. We claim that this theory sheds light on an important but neglected psychological factor in the development of political attitudes – the role of educational attainment in the formation of normative expectations.

School can be regarded as a microcosm of society in which practices of distributive justice are an important factor in the future development of students' values and attitudes (Pretsch et al., 2016; Resh, 1999; Saha, 2017). Tyler and Smith sum up the main assumption as follows: 'judgments about what is "just", "fair" or "deserved" are central social judgments that lie at the heart of people's feeling, attitudes, and behaviors in their interactions with others' (1998: 595). These judgements rest, at least implicitly, on general principles of justice. When these principles are not stated, they can be deduced from a set of individual non-contradictory judgements. The principles consistent with this set of judgements may be considered as those which are 'at the heart of people's feeling, attitudes, and behaviors'. This article aims to identify not only the causes, but also the moral principles which drive the academics' rejection of the market.

An important contention of this article is that academics' anti-market attitudes rest on an implicit theory of distributive justice. Yet this implicit theory of justice departs from mainstream accounts in political philosophy. Rawls (1971) argues that the basic institutions of society should be devised in such a way as to maximize the life prospects of the most disadvantaged members of society, which is not the case for markets. Frankfurt

(1987) focuses on the eradication of poverty, which is not guaranteed by the market. Temkin (1993) and Cohen (2008) emphasize the importance of equality in the assessment of social institutions, including the market. However, the thrust of Nozick's hypothesis is that academics do not reject the market for the philosophical reasons cited above, but on meritocratic grounds. Their focus is on merit using a school-based metrics.

By focusing on principles, we take seriously the moral reasons explaining academics' attitudes. Early research points to several explanations for such attitudes, but none of them identifies something like a theory of justice proper to academia. For example, some accounts argued that intellectuals develop a special psychological predisposition to rational criticism that is naturally at odds with the conservative mindset (Ladd and Lipset, 1975; Lazarfeld and Thielens, 1958). Other commentators interpret this phenomenon as the expression of the ideological coming of age of a larger social group – the new class (Bruce-Briggs, 1979; Burris, 1983). This so-called new class is composed of different social and cultural specialists, artists, journalists and social scientists, who increasingly gained a louder voice in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (Bazon, 1967; Bell, 1976). Yet a third approach uses more traditional class analysis to account for the phenomenon, making political ideologies a function of social class (Brym, 1980; Gouldner, 1979). Finally, some authors have suggested that the concentration of liberal attitudes in the academic *milieu* is either due to discriminatory hiring and promotion (Duarte et al., 2015; Rothman and Lichter, 2008) or a consequence of self-selective choices (Gross, 2014; Gross and Cheng, 2011). In contrast with these explanations, Nozick's hypothesis tries to explain academics' attitudes by their judgements about what is fair, unacceptable or deserved and argues that these judgements are developed through the personal experience of most academics.

In this article, there are two different ways of testing this hypothesis. The first of them consists in collecting two samples: one from the general population and another from the population of academics. The objective is to compare them, and to spot the differences. The other way consists in analysing the sample of academics in order to unravel how individual differences in that population can be explained. In this article, we mainly focus on the second strategy, because most of our measures are specifically designed to test Nozick's hypothesis and similar questionnaires are not available in existing literature. However, anti-market attitudes are measured using well-known questions, which also allows us to display evidence about differences between academics' and non-academics' attitudes. The null hypothesis is that, on the one hand, the perceived discontinuity between schools and markets is not statistically associated with anti-market attitudes, and, on the other hand, it is not predicted by school performance compared with professional performance.

In the next section we present the general explanatory framework, and we provide a method and data-analytic plan to test it. In the third section we describe the data used as evidence for testing the theory. In the fourth section we present the empirical results. Finally, we discuss some issues related to the topic of this article.

## Hypotheses

Nozick's explanation of negative attitudes toward the market is developed and tested through four hypotheses. Our objective is to highlight the congruence between what

academics have experienced (high levels of performance in school compared to their social achievement), what they believe (discontinuity between schools and markets), what they feel (economic frustration) and what they morally claim (school-based meritocratic society).

The first step we propose can be laid out in the following way. Academics are over-represented among the best students of their cohort. Bright students expect to receive economic returns commensurate with their performance in school. The organization of the educational system predisposes individuals to believe that their record in school will be used to assign future economic rewards. In the case of academics, however, these expectations are thwarted. The market allocates economic returns according to marginal contribution, not to performance in school. Consequently, academics perceive that they have been duped by the system; the original meritocratic promise – ‘work hard at school and you will be rewarded accordingly in the future’ – has simply not been honoured by the market.

Our *first hypothesis* states that, among academics, those who perceive discontinuity between school achievement and future income tend to oppose the market more.

Such a disappointment can trigger frustration, which is sometimes considered as the kernel of Nozick’s explanation (Pincione and Tesón, 2006). We rather follow a different interpretation, developed by Ríos and Magni-Berton (2003). Academics are certainly disappointed by market-outcomes, but this disappointment is not the *cause* of their rejection of the market. Frustration theories do not provide a normative machinery to account for academics’ moral attitudes to the market. They may explain why academics *dislike* the market, but not why they feel the market is *morally unfair*. Academics reject the market on normative grounds; we consequently need to identify the normative theory structuring their practical reasoning. Bankrupt entrepreneurs are frustrated, but they do not end up believing that markets are unfair; frustration alone does not deliver a moral rejection of the market.

We argue that a specific and implicit ethical theory is engendered within the school system and explains *both* academics’ frustration *and* their rejection of the market as a morally acceptable distributive institution.

Therefore our *second hypothesis* is that economic frustration (a) does not predict negative attitudes vis-a-vis the market; and (b) is predicted by the perception of discontinuity between school achievement and future income.

Our key explanatory variable then is the perception of discontinuity between school achievement and future income. Why is this perception widespread inside academia? High achievers in the educational system expect to be rewarded in accordance with their performance. Two possible situations might arise from this general rule. Either the market satisfies or it does not satisfy the expectations engendered at school. In the first case, market-outcomes are perceived as continuous to school-outcomes; both institutions are perceived as sanctioning the same distributive results. This is arguably the case of liberal professions: its members have been good at school and they do quite well in the market; they would probably conceive the market as being meritocratic. This should also be the case for high-income academics. In the second case, market-outcomes are perceived as discontinuous with school-outcomes. Most academics have precisely this perception, because their income does not reflect their high performance in school. In their eyes the market is an erratic distributive institution or, worse still, an evil institution that

systematically distorts the school pecking order violating evident and fundamental ethical principles.

This leads us to develop our *third hypothesis*: we expect that academics' perception of discontinuity between school achievement and future income is (a) negatively correlated with their success in school and (b) positively correlated with their income.

The main difficulty in testing our conjecture lies in elucidating the reasons explaining academics' anti-market attitudes. The problem is that while attitudes toward the market have been systematically registered in different surveys, the underlying theory of distributive justice has never been scrutinized. In this article, we pinpoint the details of this theory. With this in mind, we introduced in the questionnaire specially tailored questions to elicit the doxastic components of this theory of distributive justice.

Markets and schools are distributive institutions regulated by different principles. Schools can be conceived as computing a function that takes performance in school as an input and delivers grades in accordance with relatively objective meritocratic metrics. There is a central authority, the teacher, who is, generally, responsible for ensuring the proper application of these meritocratic principles. Markets follow a completely different logic. Market-outcomes are the result of an endogenous exchange process that only computes marginal contribution. There is no exogenous criterion to assess the justice of the market-outcomes. Since academics' qualities have been more acknowledged in the school system, academics wish to substitute market-regulated institutions with school distributive principles. The more educated should earn more and high position employees have to be selected by procedure based on objective competences. Therefore, our *fourth hypothesis* is that the negative attitudes toward the market and perception of discontinuity between school and the market are associated with the belief that school-based procedures and outputs are fairer than market-based ones.

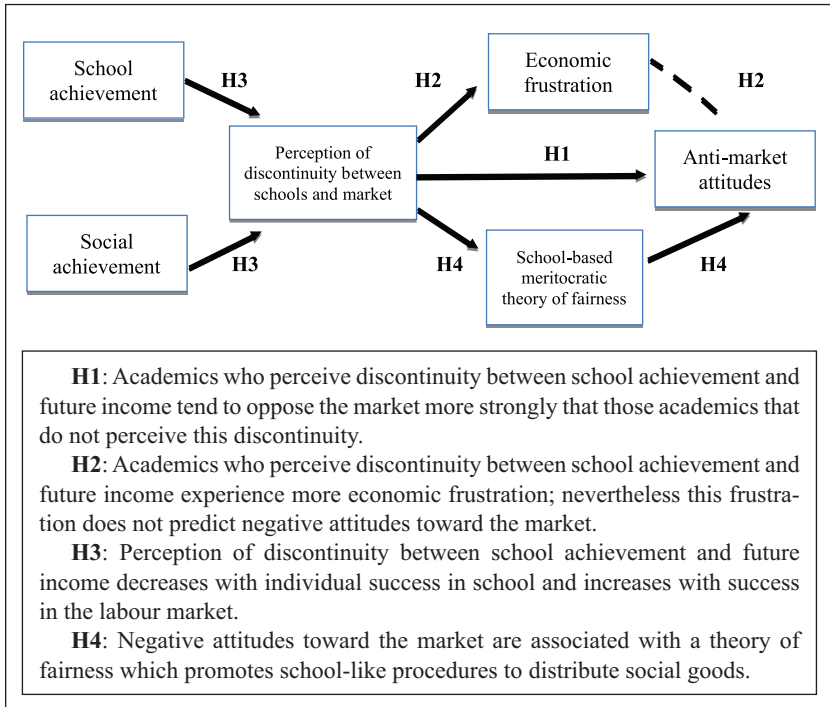
Figure 1 sums up the general mechanism we have described.

## Data and methods

### *General features of the sample*

The data that we use to study academics' attitudes and opinions result from a six-month survey that was carried out in France from February to July 2011.<sup>1</sup> The Academic Opinions survey was initially designed to assess the opinions of academics toward a set of reforms of the university system. Since then, these reforms have been approved and, part of them, implemented. As expected, they triggered a massive opposition among academics (Renaudie, 2018). In this respect, these data reflect an historical period in which major higher education reforms were starting. Survey answers have to be understood as oriented to future likely changes, and not as a reaction to actual reforms. For our purpose, this period captures well the basic moral intuitions of French academics, as details of reform implementation were not yet known.

The survey used an online questionnaire sent to French academic associations which, in turn, sent the questionnaire to their members through email.<sup>2</sup> All in all, about 1500 academics answered the questionnaire. Potentially, 57,000 individuals were contacted.



**Figure 1.** The general mechanism of Nozick's hypothesis.

This means that the sample response rate is quite low (3%). We must assume that more cooperative or available people are over-represented, and other typical systematic bias could be present as well (see Sue and Ritter, 2012).

However, since our population is highly educated, the most important bias besetting online surveys (the under-representation of less educated people) is absent. Comparing the sample against the general census provided by the National Council of Universities, there are two notable differences. First, natural sciences are slightly over-represented compared to the humanities and the social sciences. Second, in our sample females are more numerous than males. Beyond that, the sample does not differ considerably from the general population, as far as information is available (François and Magni-Berton, 2015).

The sample is composed of 35% women and 65% men. Age-wise, 36% of the respondents are younger than 40 years old; 49% are between 40 and 59; and 15% are 60 and older. Career-wise, 17% of these academics are full professors, 32% are assistant professors, 14% are senior researchers, 22% are junior researchers and 14% have a non-tenured status.

In the questionnaire, we asked academics about their socio-demographic characteristics and careers as well as their beliefs, values and opinions, notably in the economic field. A large number of questions are taken from national and international surveys to make comparisons with other sources easily tractable.

## Anti-market attitudes among academics

We now introduce our key variables. The first dependent variable used for this article is *Anti-Market Attitudes*. The snag with the word ‘market’ is that it can easily be misinterpreted. It does not have the same meaning for everyone, and we have no guarantee that academics understand this concept the way the theory requires. To this intent, we sharpen the definition in two dimensions: first, in relation to the support for private ownership which provides individuals with incentives to innovate; second, in relation to the existence of competition between suppliers as the cause for the emergence of innovations (Shleifer, 1998). In a nutshell, the market, then, is the place where private suppliers compete with each other to trade products or services.

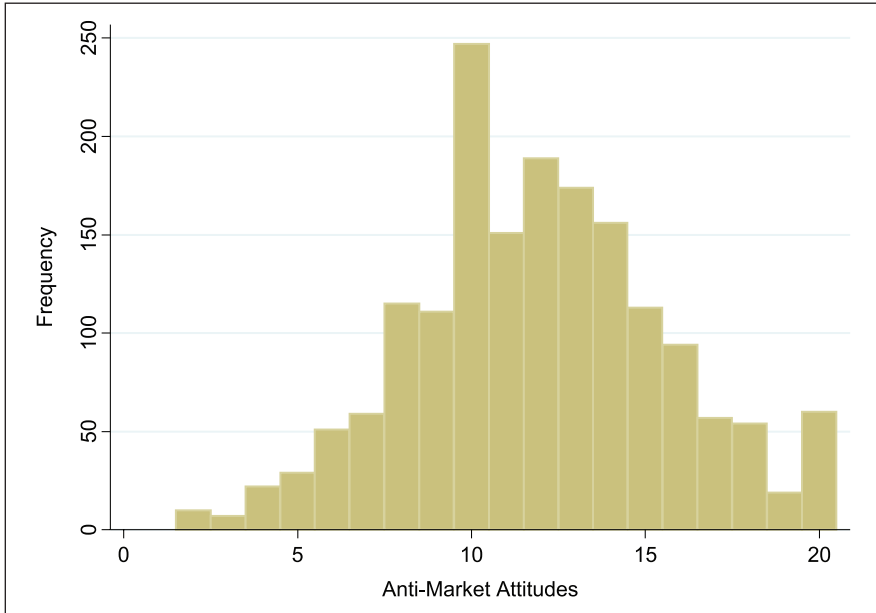
Then we introduced two questions from the French dataset of the European Values Survey (EVS) 2008 ( $n = 3071$ ).<sup>3</sup> The latter includes a set of questions to measure economic attitudes, among them one is specific to the French part of the survey. These questions are currently used as an additive index (e.g. Gonthier and Matthews, 2015) and they are rather consistent (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.71). In the questionnaire for the French academics, the two questions used are on private ownership and on competition. The answers to these two questions are on a 10-point scale. The responses to these questions are highly correlated ( $r = 0.59$ ) and internally consistent (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.74).

The first of these questions opposes private to state property: it runs from (1) Private ownership of business and industry should be increased to (10) Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.

The second question, specific to the French part of the EVS, aims to assess the social consequences of market competition. The 10-point scale goes from (1) ‘competition benefits consumers and economic growth’ to (10) ‘competition leads to a waste of resources and provokes hard social problems’.

The sum of both questions provides a 1–20 scale measuring *Anti-Market Attitudes*. Figure 2 describes the distribution of responses in our sample. While the modal answer is just in the middle, the responses are clearly skewed to the right side.

However, to claim that academics oppose the market more than other people we need to compare their answers with those of the general French population. Indeed, we know that, among Europeans, the French are among the most hostile toward the market economy, with Spaniards coming immediately behind (François, 2013). Table 1 compares academics’ responses (in general, but also for each discipline represented in our sample) with those given by the general French population in 2008. We observe the following pattern. Academics oppose the market about 2 points more than the French in general, which is significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) but not, at first sight, remarkable. In each discipline, anti-market attitudes are more common than in the French population as a whole, except among economists.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this difference is particularly striking when we compare academics with the broader social category to which they belong: the upper class, which includes managers and the intellectual professions. On average, people belonging to this class are more favourable to the market than is the general population. A similar pattern is observed with regard to education. Respondents with no education or primary school oppose the market, on average, 1.6 points less than the academics. This difference further increases when academics are compared with MA or PhD respondents (2.1 percentage points). Thus, academics’ opinions are in stark contrast with the prevalent opinions in the



**Figure 2.** Academics' anti-market attitudes.

social group they belong to, given their criticism of the market is high. In this respect, academics are more similar to low-income and less educated individuals than to people enjoying the same social status as they do. When academics are compared to manual workers, the former, on average, also oppose the market more. This holds true for almost every discipline (except economics and law). This evidence confirms academics' stable and clear aversion to the market.

### *Specific questions to test our hypothesis<sup>5</sup>*

The first step in our explanation lies in the fact that academics perceive particularly well the discontinuity between school-outcomes and market-outcomes. To measure their perception, we asked academics whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement: 'In the current society, school achievement is an important predictor of individuals' income'. A quarter of them perceive discontinuity. But we cannot say whether this percentage differs from that of the general population. This variable is named *School–Market Continuity*.

The second step consists in linking the perceived school–market continuity with academics' past school achievement and with their current social and economic situation. The fact they have been among the top students, compared to their current place on the social ladder, should influence their opinions about the continuity between school and the market. We have used a direct question to pinpoint how academics perceive their own performance as university students, in which they could describe themselves as very bad,



**Table 1.** Academics (by discipline) and their attitudes vis-a-vis the market.

Disciplines	Mean anti-market attitudes (SE)	N	%
Astronomy	12.3 (0.34)	136	7.1
Physics	12.4 (0.24)	193	10.1
Biochemistry	11.6 (0.35)	134	7.0
Biology	12.4 (0.27)	201	10.5
Earth science	12.2 (0.26)	210	11.0
Chemistry	10.9 (0.25)*	173	9.0
Mathematics	12 (0.39)	103	5.4
Computer science	12.2 (0.35)	136	7.1
Engineering	11.3 (0.26)*	199	10.4
Political science	11.3 (0.59)	38	1.9
Anthropology	13.6 (0.71)	28	1.5
Literature	12 (0.73)	30	1.5
Law	10.3 (0.59)*	72	3.7
History	12.9 (0.50)	57	3.0
Geography	12.5 (0.46)	22	1.2
Economics	9.9 (0.51)*	59	3.0
Sociology	12.5 (0.62)	55	2.9
Linguistics	14.5 (0.85)*	28	1.4
Other humanities	12.1 (0.51)	100	5.1
<b>Academics</b>	<b>11.9 (0.09)</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Population<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>10 (0.07)</b>	<b>2999</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Upper class<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>8.8 (0.22)</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>9.5</b>
<b>Working class<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>26.3</b>
<b>High education<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>Low education<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>26.6</b>

Source: Academic opinions survey, 2011, <sup>a</sup>European Values Survey, 2008.

\*Significantly different from the mean in biology ( $p < 0.05$ , ANOVA test).

bad, average, good, very good or excellent students. The *University Achievement* variable reveals that academics are over-represented among good students. School achievement has to be compared with the social achievement of each academic. To this end, we use as a measure a self-assessment question on the social ladder expressed in quintiles (variable *Social Achievement*). This measure has two advantages. First, it is subjective, in line with the question about university achievement. Second, it identifies the rank of respondents rather than their effective income. Note that university achievement and social achievement are significantly but very weakly correlated ( $r = 0.06$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

The third step measures economic frustration. The variable *Economic Satisfaction* helps us to distinguish between two possible explanations for the phenomenon. On the one hand, economic frustration might be the cause of academics' critical stance toward the market; on the other hand, it could be conceived as a mere consequence of poor rewards. The question is a simple four-point scale about salary satisfaction.

In the fourth step, we aim to measure the scholastic theory of justice which we hypothesize academics have in mind. To this end we use question 6, which asks respondents' opinion on the best selection criteria to choose a high-income employee (see the Appendix for the precise wording of this question). Of the six criteria listed, two are market-based moral principles: a vote by the firm's shareholders and the employer's personal preference. In both cases the choice of candidate would depend on the preference of the owner/employer of the company. Anti-market attitudes are expressed in the different distributive mechanisms reflected in the other four criteria in this question – written examination, lottery, future subordinates and first come/first served. Of these four options, the preference for written examination is crucial for the purposes of this article because it assumes that the employer must choose according to meritocratic school-based criteria. An examination sets constraints on the actual operation of the market; it establishes standards against which candidates are compared and ultimately selected. Interestingly, the written examination procedure was the most popular choice in our sample: it was chosen by almost 58% of respondents. *Competitive Exam* is a dummy variable: it equals 1 when respondents chose examination and 0 when people chose market-based moral principles. Thus, the variable *Competitive Exam* designates a pro-school type of anti-market attitude.

Finally, academics have a meritocratic theory of justice that has been engendered within the educational system. In order to unravel the specific content of this implicit theory of distributive justice, we introduced a further question into our questionnaire, in which four distributions of income between academics and basketball players have to be considered. Comparing academics to basketball players is one way to examine what academics think about people who presumably are very low in the school hierarchy but who fare well on the market. These distributions ground different normative principles. Distribution 1 is strictly egalitarian. Distribution 2 is a hard, school-based meritocratic distribution: it puts basketball players below academics, in line with the school-based hierarchy. While in this distribution academics earn less than in the others, but they maximize the gap between them and the basketball players. Distribution 3 represents a softer meritocracy. Basketball players are slightly below academics, but academics earn more than in the two previous distributions. Finally, Distribution 4 encapsulates other mainstream theories of justices. It embodies the Rawlsian Distributive Principle (Rawls, 1971), as it maximizes the income of the worst-off. It is also the utilitarian solution for both the ordinal and cardinal variants because it maximizes the size of the 'social cake' (Hammond, 1992). Finally, it maximizes the income of academics taken separately. But in this distribution, basketball players earn more than academics.

## Results

### *Anti-market attitudes, economic frustration and school–market discontinuity*

The first estimate aims to test whether perceiving a discontinuity between school- and market-outcomes predicts both anti-market attitudes and economic frustration. To this end, we propose an OLS regression for *anti-market attitudes*, which is quasi-linear and

**Table 2.** Determinants of anti-market attitudes and economic satisfaction (unstandardized coefficients).

	Anti-market attitudes	Anti-market attitudes	Economic satisfaction
School–market continuity	−0.57***	−0.60***	0.24***
Economic satisfaction (reference: assistant professor)		0.25*	
Full professor	−0.60*	−0.66*	0.39***
Junior researcher	0.17	0.16	0.14*
Senior researcher	−0.1	−0.11	0.33***
Other status	−0.27	−0.32	0.38***
Gender	−0.03	−0.03	−0.05
Age	0.03***	0.03***	−0.00
Not tenured	1.16**	1.18**	−0.13
Born outside France	−1.09***	−1.02***	−0.19**
Income	−0.09	−0.12*	0.15***
Disciplines	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	13.86***	13.42***	0.15/1.36/1.74
N	1304	1296	1304
(Pseudo) R <sup>2</sup>	6%***	6%***	5%***

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

which displays a near to normal distribution. For *economic satisfaction*, which has four items, we use a polynomial ordered regression. Our explanation takes into account our main independent variable – *school–market continuity* – which is controlled for *age*, *gender*, *professional status* at university (in 5 categories), *income* (in 9 categories) and being born in France. Fixed effects per discipline are included.

For *anti-market attitudes*, we have produced two models: in the second, *economic satisfaction* is used as an independent variable. This allows us to control for the direct effect of economic frustration on academics' attitudes toward the market.

The results clearly confirm hypothesis 1. The variable *anti-market attitudes* rises significantly when academics perceive school- and market-outcomes as discontinuous. Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed: *economic satisfaction* does not produce *anti-market attitudes*. The coefficient even goes in the opposite direction, although it is barely significant (at the 10% level). Note furthermore that *anti-market attitudes* increase with age, job instability and the fact of being born in France.

Next, consider the case of economic frustration (column 3, Table 2). Again, *school–market continuity* has a significant impact on *economic satisfaction*. The more school- and market-outcomes are perceived as continuous, the more satisfied academics are with their income, which is also consistent with hypothesis 2. High status (being full professor or senior researcher) and income also have an obvious impact on *economic satisfaction*. More surprisingly, being born in France is also associated with more satisfaction.

The results highlight that perceiving a discontinuity between school and the market predicts both *anti-market attitudes* and *economic frustration*. Thus, frustration is a by-product of the perceived discontinuity between outcomes in the market and the

educational system and does not have a significant impact on *anti-market attitudes*. This suggests that perceiving a difference between school- and market-outcomes fosters both suspicion about the morality of market-outcomes and economic frustration. But the market is not rejected because academics are frustrated.

### *School–market continuity and personal achievement*

We have just shown that believing that markets are insensitive to school achievement pushes academics to reject the market. We will now test the reasons for this belief. Most academics over-achieved at school and experienced downward mobility when they entered the market. They were high fliers at school, but not so in the job market. This experience is expected to push academics to see a discontinuity between school and the market (hypothesis 3).

To test this conjecture, we use *school–market continuity* as a dependent variable. We perform two estimates. The first is based on a polynomial ordered regression. The second uses a logistic regression in which the dependent variable is a dummy variable. 1 means that respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement: ‘school achievement is an important predictor of individuals’ income’ and 0 otherwise. Both estimates deliver the same results.

According to hypothesis 3, *school–market continuity* should be negatively associated with university achievement (measured by question 4) and positively associated with *social achievement* (measured with question 5), after controlling for our previous variables (age, gender, professional status within university, tenure and native<sup>6</sup>) and including disciplines’ fixed effects.

In both models, *university achievement* is not associated with *school–market continuity*. *Social achievement*, in contrast, has a positive and significant coefficient. This means that the higher on the social ladder academics perceive themselves to be, the more they tend to perceive school- and market-outcomes as continuous.

These results suggest that social achievement is clearly associated with believing that schools and markets do not deliver coextensive outputs. Yet success at school, taken alone, does not predict a clear opinion about school–market continuity and this prevents hypothesis 3 from being fully confirmed. This could be due to the fact that the measure we use does not correctly capture what is at stake in hypothesis 3. Academics may not self-assess their level of university achievement in reference to the same group as they do with their perception of success in school. Compared to non-academics, academics are all high achievers since whatever their past school achievement, they are all past PhD students. This result is discussed more extensively in the conclusion section.

An alternative way to assess whether school achievement influences expectations about what people deserve is to rely on the educational level of respondents in the general population survey. We would expect that, like academics, respondents in general surveys roughly perceive continuity between market and school outputs and this perception is shaped by their school and social achievement. However, no question measuring school–market continuity is available. Therefore, we have to skip this step, and directly test the statistical relationship between school/social achievement and

**Table 3.** Determinants of the perception of school–market outcome continuity (unstandardized coefficients).

	School–market continuity	
	Polynomial ordered regression	Logistic regression
Social achievement	0.30***	0.37***
School achievement (reference: assistant professor)	0.09	0.08
Full professor	0.51***	0.42*
Junior researcher	0.14	0.07
Senior researcher	0.46**	0.59**
Other status	0.34	0.61**
Gender	−0.21*	−0.35**
Age	−0.00	0.00
Not tenured	−0.54*	−0.67**
Born outside France	−0.11	−0.22
Disciplines	Yes	Yes
Constant	−2.1/−.35/2.72	−0.28
N	1279	1279
(Pseudo) R <sup>2</sup>	3%***	6%***
Predicted cases		74%

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

anti-market attitudes/economic frustration (see Figure 1). Thus, we should observe that, *ceteris paribus*, social achievement should reduce anti-market attitudes and economic frustration, while school achievement should increase them. In simple terms, school-achievers develop high expectations which are likely to be unfulfilled.

The 2008 wave of the European Values Survey allows us to perform such a test. The variable anti-market attitudes is identical to that of the Academic Opinions questionnaire. Economic satisfaction is measured using a 10-point question on respondent satisfaction with their job. Among the independent variables, respondents' highest level of education (in 12 items) measures school achievement, and respondents' income measures social achievement (in 14 items). Note that – as shown in Table 1 – both income and education are negatively correlated with anti-market attitudes. However, we hypothesize that the second correlation is spurious. Given that education is a predictor of income, it is also associated with low levels of market rejection. When income is controlled for, we expect the sign of education to be negative. While there is no evidence in the literature concerning anti-market attitudes, studies on job satisfaction offer mixed evidence. Some articles find a negative relationship with higher educational attainment (Green and Zhu, 2010; Leuven and Oosterbeek, 2011), but some of them find no relationship (Lee and Sabharwal, 2016). As shown in Tables 2 and 3, we control for gender, age and nationality. We also control for job permanence, profession, region of residence and the size of the town. Table 4 displays the main results.

**Table 4.** Determinants of anti-market attitudes and economic satisfaction in the general population (OLS, unstandardized coefficients).

	Anti-market attitudes	Satisfaction with job
Social achievement	-0.16***	0.04**
School achievement	-0.04	-0.02
Gender	0.60***	0.02
Age	-0.01	0.00
Born outside France	0.49	0.04
Constant	10.06***	6.94
N	2685	1456
R <sup>2</sup>	6.2	4.2

\* $p < 0.10$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

For space reasons, coefficients of size and type of regions and professions are not displayed.

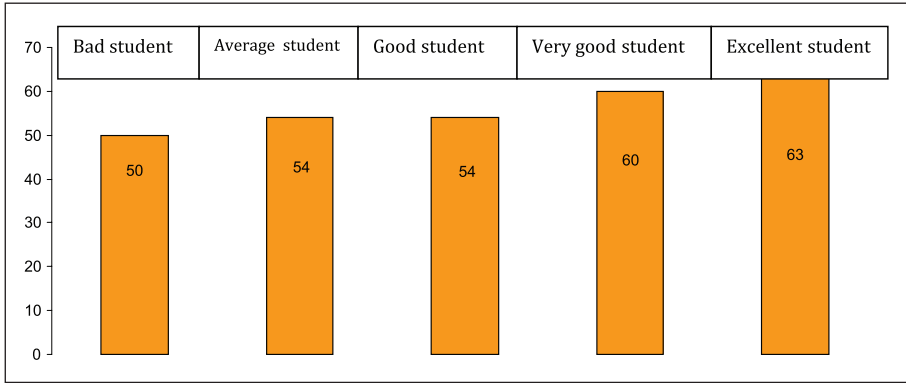
As shown in Table 2, income predicts anti-market attitudes and professional satisfaction. However, in line with the results shown in Table 3, we do not find any relationship between our measures of school achievement and our output variables. Therefore, Tables 3 and 4 only partially support hypothesis 2. Success in school – whatever the measure – does not seem to increase the likelihood of opposing the market and being unsatisfied. Only professional achievement robustly follows the pattern described in Figure 1.

### *School-based fairness and meritocracy*

So far we have shown that behind academics' anti-market attitudes are the consequence of believing that school- and market-outcomes are not coextensive. Now we need to show that academics use the school system as a benchmark against which other distributive systems have to be assessed (hypothesis 4). Replies to question 6 are coherent with this expectation since they indicate that 58% of academics believe that a competitive exam is the procedure by which an employer can best select an employee for a high-income job. Market-based principles (owners' preferences) are chosen by 13% of respondents, while principles which are both anti-market and anti-school (lottery, first in the queue or subordinates' choice) are preferred by 29% of the sample.

Also, although those who have chosen the school-based criterion oppose the market more than those who prefer market-based criteria (11.8 vs 10.3, along our 20-point scale measure of anti-market attitudes), they oppose the market less than people who reject both school-based and market-based principles (12.8). These simple descriptive data suggest that school-based principles are not the only explanation for anti-market attitudes within academia.

We argue that the prevalence of school-based principles among academics is due to their own achievement at school. Academics have seen that school rewarded their effort and this experience leads them to believe that people's merit is correctly captured by the school system. Figure 3 displays the percentage of respondents who chose the school-based criterion (competitive exam) according to their past performance at university. The



**Figure 3.** Choosing competitive exam according to university achievement (%).

**Table 5.** Preference for outputs among academics.

Distributions	%	Anti-market attitudes (mean)	Competitive exam (%)	Perceived school–market continuity (mean)
Egalitarianism	14	12.6	50	2.84
Hard meritocracy	20	12.5	64	2.76
Soft meritocracy	36	12.0	59	2.80
Other theories	30	11.1	56	2.81
<b>All</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>2.80</b>

findings confirm our expectation: successful students tend to believe that the academic system provides better metrics than markets to assess individuals' effort and to determine economic rewards.

This preference for the competitive exam measures a penchant for a school-like procedure. According to our hypothesis, this procedure is preferred because it delivers the right output. Question 7 measures output preference, by profiling academics according to the income distribution they have chosen. Table 5 displays the percentages of responses per distribution, and the mean of *anti-market attitudes*, of perceived *school–market continuity* and the percentage of respondents who prefer the examination to the other criteria for employee recruitment.

As a quick reminder, in the egalitarian distribution, academics and basketball players earn the same income. The hard meritocratic distribution maximizes the advantage of academics over basketball players. The soft meritocratic distribution introduces inequality in favour of academics, but it offers a better salary. Finally, the last distribution should be chosen if respondents are utilitarian, Rawlsian or simply selfish.

Let us briefly describe the results obtained in Table 5. Hard and soft meritocratic distributions have been chosen by 56% of the sample. As expected, academics choosing distribution 2 – the hard meritocratic distribution – are characterized by the desire to make the competitive exam a more common way of selecting employees in the labour

market and by a particularly low perception of the continuity between outputs at school and in the market. They also tend to oppose the market more than the others, like the 'egalitarians' who are also fairly sceptical about the market. Academics that choose the soft meritocratic distribution have a similar, but less pronounced profile. They also tend to perceive school–market discontinuity and to choose the examination, but to a lesser extent than hard meritocratic respondents. Finally, while egalitarians strongly oppose the market, they differ from people with meritocratic attitudes because they also oppose school-based principles: they choose the written examination relatively less and they perceive a relatively high continuity between market and school. Yet there are few individuals of egalitarian persuasion in our sample (14%). Hypothesis 4 is also consistent with our data.

All this evidence, taken together, suggests that Nozick (1997) is on the right track: academics would like society as a whole to be grounded on meritocratic, school-based normative principles. A fair society, for them, is a society where scholastic merit is central. Social stratification should be made according to school grades and taking account of educational achievement.

## Discussion and conclusion

Academics largely oppose the market. Their anti-market attitudes are more widespread than in other social categories, including manual workers. The article brings new evidence to this fact and offers preliminary support for the explanation initially developed by Nozick (1997). Having done better at school than in the market, academics tend to perceive a discontinuity between hierarchies produced by each institution; they also have a strong preference for a school-based theory of justice. The pattern is robust enough to predict internal variation within the group of academics. However, we do not find evidence that high achievement at school favours either the perception of a discontinuity between school- and market-outcomes or a rejection of market principles. Even in the general population, high education is not associated with anti-market attitudes. What success in school rightly predicts is the propensity of academics to support a school-based theory of justice. These mixed findings may be explained by the fact that the mechanism we highlighted is not the only one at work. While we estimate that around 58% of academics support a school-based theory of justice, approximately 29% of them oppose the market for other reasons and, in particular, 14%, because they are strongly egalitarian. The latter declared they had not been as brilliant at school as the others. Their existence contributes to explain why success in school does not predict general attitudes, but only some specific normative beliefs – grounded in the school-based theory of justice – that justify such attitudes.

More generally, the Nozick hypothesis is grounded on specific social mechanisms, but provides some original statements that allow us to develop more general social implications.

First, the role of schools in developing people's values and attitudes is not new. Parsons (1959), then Dreeben (1968) already saw schools as the reference institution in which people develop their ideas of social justice. This conjecture has been largely documented in recent accounts on the influence of experiences of injustice in school on



psychological engagement and achievement in school (Berti et al., 2010; Molinari et al., 2013; Pretsch et al., 2016), but also later in the job market (Saha, 2017). The link between perceiving fairness in school and achievement is a fundamental assumption of the Nozick hypothesis: academics have massively experienced the virtuous circle in which feeling fairness in school produces achievement and vice versa. However, while the literature focuses on the continuity between what happens in schools and in the job market, the Nozick hypothesis highlights the discontinuity between both distributive systems. Empirically, schools and markets outputs are globally continuous. However, conceptually, the principles of distributive justice are considerably different in both institutions. This conceptual difference is likely to be noticed by people who have experienced that markets and schools do not value the same skills to the same extent. Academics are certainly among them, as are other over-educated people. This is confirmed by Saha and Dworkin (2009), who use the Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth data to analyse how the experience in the school system steadily influences people's behaviour and perceptions of fairness. They find that respondents who reported a negative discontinuity between academic achievement and occupational attainment (education greater than occupation) felt they were cheated by the system, while those who perceived a positive discontinuity (occupation greater than education) felt that they had beat the system. This result is consistent with Nozick's hypothesis, but does not directly test its implications on perceptions of justice among academics. The originality of our research also consists in exploring the implicit theory of justice that academics have in mind when they have to arbitrate between ethical dilemmas.

Second, the situation in which academics are has already been identified by what Lenski (1954) call status-crystallization. Academics resent low status-crystallization because they find themselves confronted by inconsistent frames of reference – the school and the market – providing them with contradictory assessments of their own performance. As Lenski points out, 'the more frequently acute status inconsistencies occur within a population the greater would be the proportion of that population willing to support programs of social change' (1954: 411). The case of academics' political attitudes is a specific illustration of this statement. According to Lenski, the existence of low status-crystallization fosters change and helps society to resolve its conflicts. Lenski argues that a society with a large proportion of people whose status is poorly crystallized is in an unstable condition and generates – through marginalized members' search for change – its own forces for correction (Lenski, 1954: 412). Beyond his functionalist wording, this thesis can explain why academics display strong revolutionary attitudes (François et al., 2016). However, as we noted at the beginning of this article, in some situations the lack of status-crystallization among academics leads them to resist social change when its direction is not consistent with their moral principles. While communism was highly supported in academia (Caute, 1964), neoliberalism is strongly rejected. We suggest that the former attitude can result from academics' support for a society more resembling school – especially through the importance of centralization and knowledge in planned economies. In contrast, the latter opinion – especially as reflected by New Public Management – reflects an opposition to see schools organized like markets. In this respect, neoliberalism has transformed academics into a group who, instead of promoting social change, resist it. This interpretation

sheds new light on the debate on the link between the neoliberal drift and the crisis of intellectual engagement (McClennen, 2010).

Our data have severe space and time limits which have implications on the generalizability of our results. Above all, they only describe French academics and their validity in other countries or university systems is debatable. On the one hand, French intellectuals are known for opposing any form of liberalism (Boudon, 2004; Cauté, 1964). On the other hand, as we noted above, high levels of leftist radicalism among academics have been observed in many countries and their rejection of neoliberal reforms is also largely documented worldwide. Moreover, no French specific context has been assumed in the hypotheses tested. In this respect, France can be considered as an extreme but illustrative example of the social process we describe. The second issue lies in the fact that the data were collected in 2011 and the context has changed considerably since then. In particular, a set of reforms planned at that time have now been implemented. Is there a chance that academics' answers would be different today? Two reasons lead us to answer this question in the negative. First, teachers' unions have strongly mobilized during the last few years against educational reforms, exactly as they did between 2007 and 2009, when a first set of reforms were being implemented (Guinaudeau and Saurugger, 2018). Second, a comparable survey on 250 academics conducted in Paris 10 years before, in 2001, showed that answers to similar questions were essentially the same (Ríos and Magni-Berton, 2003). This information supports the idea of a continuity in academics' attitudes across time.

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### Notes

1. Basic results are available in François and Magni-Berton (2015).
2. Only medicine schools have not been targeted, because the large majority of their members work in hospitals and not at universities.
3. Data and description are available at [www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/](http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/)
4. This confirms what Klein and Stern (2005) found in the US.
5. Descriptive results are given in the Appendix.
6. Income is not included because of its collinearity with social achievement.

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### Résumé

Dans cet article, nous cherchons à comprendre pourquoi les universitaires ont tendance à s'opposer au marché. Pour ce faire, nous utilisons la théorie politique normative comme mécanisme explicatif, en commençant par une conjecture suggérée à l'origine par Robert Nozick. Les universitaires sont surreprésentés parmi les meilleurs étudiants de leur cohorte. La réussite scolaire suscite des attentes élevées quant aux perspectives économiques futures. Pourtant, les marchés ne sont sensibles aux résultats scolaires que de façon contingente. Ce décalage entre l'école et les marchés est perçu par les universitaires – et sans doute aussi par les intellectuels en général – comme moralement inacceptable. Pour vérifier la validité de cette explication, nous utilisons un questionnaire en ligne réalisé auprès de près de 1.500 universitaires français. Les données issues de cette enquête viennent étayer l'explication de Nozick.

### Mots-clés

Attitudes, justice, le marché, Nozick, universitaires

### Resumen

En este artículo, exploramos por qué los académicos tienden a oponerse al mercado. Para este propósito utilizamos la teoría política normativa como un mecanismo explicativo, comenzando con una conjetura originalmente sugerida por Robert Nozick. Los académicos están sobrerrepresentados entre los mejores estudiantes de sus promociones. El rendimiento escolar genera grandes expectativas sobre las perspectivas

económicas de futuro. Sin embargo, los mercados solo son contingentemente sensibles al rendimiento escolar. Esta falta de correlación entre sistema educativo y mercado es percibida por los académicos, y posiblemente por los intelectuales en general, como moralmente inaceptable. Para testar esta explicación, utilizamos un cuestionario *online* con cerca de 1500 encuestas a académicos franceses. Los datos resultantes de esta investigación prestan apoyo a la explicación de Nozick.

### Palabras clave

Académicos, actitudes, justicia, el mercado, Nozick

## Appendix

### Question 1

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How would you place your views on this scale?

- 1) Private ownership of business and industry should be increased  
 10) Government ownership of business and industry should be increased
- 

### Question 2

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How would you place your views on this scale?

- 1) Competition benefits consumers and economic growth  
 10) Competition leads to a waste of resources and provokes hard social problems.
- 

### Question 3

---

In the current society, school achievement is an important predictor of individuals' income

- [1] Disagree strongly (6.2%)  
 [2] Disagree (20.2%)  
 [3] Agree (60%)  
 [4] Strongly agree (14%)
- 

### Question 4

---

How would you best describe yourself as a university student?

- [1] I was a very bad student (0.4%)  
 [2] I was a bad student (0.2%)  
 [3] I was an average student (11.1%)  
 [4] I was a good student (36.4%)  
 [5] I was very good student (33.2%)  
 [6] I was an excellent student (18.7%)
-

### Question 5

If you compared your current income with that of the French population, you would consider it:

- [1] Among the 20% lowest (1.1%)
- [2] Between the 20% and the 40% lowest (6.1%)
- [3] Between the 40% and the 60% lowest (21.3%)
- [4] Between the 60% and the 80% lowest (26.5%)
- [5] Among the 20% highest (45%)

### Question 6

An employer has to choose an employee for a high-income job. There are several candidates for this job. Among the following criteria, which is, in your opinion, the one that this employer should favour when selecting the candidates?

- [1] Make the candidates take a written examination. (57.5%)
- [2] Organize a lottery amongst the candidates. (0.7%)
- [3] Request the shareholders of the firm vote (1%)
- [4] Seek advice from future subordinates of the employee (28.6%)
- [5] Follow his own (the employer) personal preferences (12.2%)
- [6] Stick to the rule 'first come, first served' (0%)

### Question 7

Suppose that you have to choose among these four distributions of income between academics and basketball players (other sources of income are kept constant). Which one would you prefer?

	Distribution 1	Distribution 2	Distribution 3	Distribution 4
Academics	32,000	30,000	35,000	40,000
Basketball players	32,000	20,000	30,000	45,000

### Question 8

Are you satisfied with your salary?

- [1] I am not satisfied at all with my salary (14.7%)
- [2] I am not really satisfied with my salary (37.2%)
- [3] I am rather satisfied with my salary (39.1%)
- [4] I am very satisfied with my salary (9%)