EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

How do academics account for the unfolding of their careers in light of the goals and aspirations that socially situate their profession? What continuities and changes—in aspiration, satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and identification with work—mark the careers of academics? What knowledge do academics acquire about themselves, their institutions, and the academic profession over time? Such questions were examined in a sociological study of 55 contemporary academic careers situated in varieties of the modern American university between 1994-95 and 2004-05. The study demonstrates how institutions shape careers and structure academics’ evaluations of their experience. At the same time, organizational conditions of universities are brought to light by the patterned experiences of individuals.

Specific generalizations can be drawn about careers across cohorts of academics in three main organizational contexts. Diachronic change across the three prototypical academic institutions evinces reversals of career orientation, outlook, and attitude. Faculty at elite research institutions may be most dedicated throughout their careers, but most devastated at the end. Faculty at communitarian institutions that stress teaching may be less dedicated throughout their careers, but most satisfied and positive in their outlooks at the end. Faculty at pluralist institutions stressing both research and teaching exemplify the greatest variability in their careers, but in the end find a satisfaction that overcomes previous ambivalence. Would academics pursue an academic career again? The notable trend is that while many would (as expected), there is also a large fraction of faculty members who say they would pursue another line of work, an indication of a profession’s lack of vitality, conditioned by the circumstances that faculty members confront in their institutional environments.

Such findings pose implications for the advancement of fields of knowledge, the welfare and functioning of academic departments and universities, and the cohesiveness of the academic profession. The picture that emerges is far from sanguine. In what direction do the patterns seem to be headed? It can be argued that
the increasing phenomenon of institutions seeking to embrace the model of the American research university entails a change in institutional expectations for careers that involves a greater emphasis on research productivity, but which does not necessarily bring about greater research opportunity. Taking into account the evidence of this study, organizational changes in institutions documented in the research elsewhere, and the omnipresent scarcity of rewards, we are drawn to the proposition that increased emphases on research will be accompanied by increased probabilities of dissatisfaction throughout the system of higher education and the present conditions of academe favor a decline in the attractiveness of the academic career. On many objective criteria, chances of success in academia across many fields are low and, where won, are hard-fought.

At stake on the one hand are individual satisfaction and moral commitment. When compromised, the institutional goals of the profession fail to be served. On the other hand, the overall welfare and functioning of the profession are at stake. The present work prompts the question of what types of people, with what levels of talent, the academic profession will be able to attract.

INTRODUCTION

What can we learn when we follow people over the years and across the course of their professional lives? This is the question that motivates Lives in Science: How Institutions Affect Academic Careers (University of Chicago Press, 2009), a sociological study of the interplay among careers, identities, and institutions. The author posed the question to U.S. faculty and offers the answers by having tracked fifty-five of them through different stages of their careers at a variety of universities across the United States. In the study—the first longitudinal investigation of academics to be conducted—the author explores academics’ shifting perceptions of their jobs to uncover the meanings they invest in their work, when and where they find satisfaction, how they succeed and fail, and how the rhythms of work change as they age. Based on interviews with the subjects, the study examines the consequences of career goals met and unmet, the frustrations of faculty careers, universities, and the academic profession, and how highly trained professionals deal with boredom and stagnation on the one hand as well as with renown on the other.

BACKGROUND

Lives in Science is part of a tradition of work in the field of sociology that dates to the 1940s and which itself originates from what was called the “Chicago School of Sociology,” which studies how individuals are socially shaped by their occupations (see Bulmer 1984; Hughes 1958; 1971; 1994). The study is also informed by the long legacy of work and protégés produced by the late Columbia University researcher Robert K. Merton, often credited as the father of the sociology of science, a domain of knowledge about the processes that compose science and higher education as an institution (see Cole and Cole 1973; Merton 1973; Zuckerman 1988).

Academics in the present study were originally interviewed in 1994-95. The results of that work were published in The Stars Are Not Enough: Scientists—Their Passions and Professions (University of Chicago Press, 1998). At that time, the subjects were sampled according to early, middle, and late career stages and by one of three types of university in which they were employed. The universities, which form a representative continuum, consist of those stressing research in the presence of teaching and other roles, termed elite. Examples include Harvard, Cal Tech, and the University of California-Berkeley. Institutions that stress research and teaching as well as other roles are termed pluralist. Examples include the University of Kansas, the University of Missouri, and Purdue University. Institutions that stress teaching in the presence of research and other roles are termed communitarian. Examples include the
University of Tulsa, the University of Louisville, and the University of Toledo. Faculty at these institutions are referred to as elites, pluralists and communitarians, respectively, in this report.

The same physicists were again interviewed in 2004-05, creating a longitudinal design from which to study how academics, working in a variety of institutions, age in relation to their work. The sequel thus allows one to see how academics’ perceptions of work evolve with felt costs and rewards, from early to mid career, from mid to late career, and from late to post career.

Age and institutional location provide the structure to analyze individual, subjective careers through diachronic change. Longitudinal data add spatial and temporal dimensions to synchronic study, and we are consequently in a position to answer the following questions about academic careers:

- How do academics account for the unfolding of their careers in light of the goals and aspirations that socially situate their profession?
- What continuities and changes—in aspiration, satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and identification with work—mark the careers of academics?
- What knowledge have academics acquired about themselves, their institutions, and the academic profession in ten years?
- How does this knowledge vary by individual age and type of university?

Professors from one academic field—physics—composed the study, but the results are not limited to them. Physicists were selected because in the wider culture they are perceived to embody the scientific discipline par excellence. They possess a recognizable genealogy of immortals, such as Kepler, Newton, and Einstein, who promote a heroism and define a paradigmatic career for those who follow. Thus if one is interested in seeing how academic aspirations develop and evolve and how careers play out over time, particularly against the backdrop of such exalted company, the field of physics makes an ideal setting. A discussion will follow about how the research findings may be generalized to other fields.

**ACADEMIC PATHS AND PERCEPTIONS**

Specific generalizations can be drawn about careers that represent the major distinctions across cohorts of academics in the three main organizational contexts. Twenty dimensions of academic careers surfaced from data analysis to ground these comparisons. These included:

1. Career Focus
2. Professional Aspirations
3. Recognition Sought
4. Orientation to Work
5. Work/Family Focus
6. Attribution of Academic Workplace
7. Overall Satisfaction
8. Career Progress
9. Work Intensity
10. Object of Satisfaction
11. Peak Satisfaction
12. (Attitude toward) Reward System
13. Definition of Success
14. Work Attitude
15. Prominent Concerns
A focus may be placed on four of these dimensions—overall modal career patterns, overall satisfaction, work attitudes, and whether professors would again pursue an academic career—because they are the most overarching and provide a general accounting of research findings.

OVERALL MODAL CAREER PATTERNS

In passing from early to mid career, elites stabilized and rededicated themselves to academe—to fulfilling the institutional goals of higher education by continuing in their research productivity. An individual put it in the following representative terms:

The dream is to discover some fantastic new effect that knocks the socks off my friends and colleagues, that knocks the socks off the community, so that when I walk down the corridor, the young students know me and say, “There goes [Silverman], he invented the [Silverman] effect.” That’s what I want; I want my effect. I want to be the first person to predict such and such an event (Hermanowicz 2009, 86-89).

By contrast, pluralists experienced a reversal in moving from early to mid career. They questioned their interest and commitment to the profession. They grew disillusioned with academic research, as illustrated by the following scientist:

My attitudes about the job, about me, and about the university have undergone tremendous changes in the past ten years...I’m not sure I want to even submit things to published journals anymore...I’m disgusted by the whole thing...I got tired of getting referee reports...that spend a page talking about the bibliography; they were entirely concerned with whether I cited their work or their friends’ work, and they hadn’t read the paper...I’m in a setting where the last thing people want is honesty...You guys play your game; it’s fine. There are more important things in life than getting grants from the National Science Foundation, getting Nobel Prizes even or any of that stuff. That’s all just a game... (Hermanowicz 2009, 105).

By mid career, most communitarians ceased in research. For communitarians, cumulative disadvantages accrued to the point of shutting down interest and motivation to continue in scientific research. Their career pattern may best be described as succumbing to a stasis—there was no forward progress. An academic, just at mid-career, said:

I certainly have had a lot of distractions around here, and I think I could have been much more successful... I think there’s a lack of support, actually obstacles. I think there’s been an orchestration of people not wanting people to succeed, not wanting to succeed in the department because there are things they can’t do. I see it happen to other people (Hermanowicz 2009, 119)

In their mid to late career transitions, elites remained consistent in their identification with science and in their scientific productivity. Their publication productivity continued to accelerate. Pluralists either attempted to regenerate themselves following earlier fallow periods, or continued in the research that they had been doing. Communitarians entered into a demise; they decreasingly identified with research. In ways consistent with the last passage above, they became increasingly disaffected with their departments and universities, which they saw as having crippled their research aspirations.
In moving from late to post career phases, elites for the first time lessened their intensity and embrace of research. Pluralists characteristically withdrew from work. Communitarians separated themselves completely from it, usually severing all ties with work and their employing organizations. Overall modal career patterns of academics by career stage and institutional type are summarized in table 1.

**TABLE 1**
OVERALL MODAL CAREER PATTERNS OF ACADEMICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>ELITES</th>
<th>PLURALISTS</th>
<th>COMMUNITARIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early to Mid</td>
<td>Stabilization &amp; Rededication</td>
<td>Reversal</td>
<td>Stasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to Late</td>
<td>Continuation</td>
<td>Regeneration or Continuation</td>
<td>Demise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late to Post</td>
<td>Attenuation</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Separation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OVERALL SATISFACTION
Patterns in modal careers are in turn associated with patterns in satisfaction and in attitudes about work. Among elites, satisfaction begins at a medium level and rises through the career. It then drops at the end. Among pluralists, satisfaction starts out on a high and then drops among members of the youngest cohort. It increases to a medium level among the middle cohort and levels off. Finally, it rises at the end, coinciding with a time at which pluralists withdraw from work. Among communitarians, there is a low in satisfaction throughout their careers, until the end. At the end of their careers, for the first time, communitarians experience the greatest high. Coincidentally, it is a time at which they are separating themselves altogether from work. Patterns in overall satisfaction of academics by career stage and institutional type are summarized in table 2.

**TABLE 2**
OVERALL SATISFACTION OF ACADEMICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>ELITES</th>
<th>PLURALISTS</th>
<th>COMMUNITARIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Medium-Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium-High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORK ATTITUDES
Elites possessed positive attitudes toward their work throughout most of their careers. Only in the end do their attitudes turn ambivalent—about what they have done, how much they have achieved, and where they stand professionally. Unlike any previous period in their careers, there is a sense of regret and resignation about their efforts and what they have achieved. One academic put it in the following terms:

Maybe there is some self-delusion in feeling that you’re being a significant contributor to science. It’s just [pause] you have been trained, you know this field, when you’re an expert in something, you tend to take pride in it, and you tend to continue doing it. But I don’t think it’s always very significant in the grand scheme of things...I could have worked harder to become a better professional physicist...At some stages of my career,
I could have easily done better. It would have made a difference. It might well have been a significant difference... If I had worked harder, it would have given me a little more status. I would have accomplished more in the field... (Hermanowicz 2009, 192-193).

Pluralists are, by turn, positive. Asked about a particular period in their careers thought to be the most positive, the following illustration was given:

...Now. This is it. Yes, absolutely. There's no question about it...I'm a little older, and I've had the opportunity to look back and see how great it has been over the years, to see the whole career collectively and appreciate how lucky I've been to do all the things I have done. That's a good feeling, and it's like, wow, this has been great (Hermanowicz 2009, 200)

Communitarians feel detached from work and institution. Their attitudes are far from the negative ones that were most common among them at earlier points in their careers.

There really wasn't much else to look forward to. [Right now, I'm] not working as hard. I'm not doing research anymore. I had two or three pretty good ideas during the course of my career, and I haven't had any since. I really don't keep up with the literature...I think early on, even though I did some fairly decent work, both as a graduate student and in the beginning of my career, I never was satisfied. I always thought that I could have done better or sooner or more. In more recent years [near and in retirement], I have become content, not only with what I was doing, but also how much. I think this is a reflection of my coming to like myself more (Hermanowicz 2009, 207).

Patterns in the work attitudes of academics by career stage and institutional type are summarized in table 3.

### TABLE 3
**WORK ATTITUDES OF ACADEMICS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>ELITES</th>
<th>PLURALISTS</th>
<th>COMMUNITARIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early to Mid</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Preponderantly Negative</td>
<td>Preponderantly Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to Late</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Ambivalent; Positive</td>
<td>Neutralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late to Post</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Detached</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**WOULD ACADEMICS PURSUE AN ACADEMIC CAREER AGAIN?**

Many would not. The notable trend is not that many would, as is also the case: one might anticipate that long training and preparation for a profession would coincide with commitment and satisfaction, indicated by a strong desire to pursue the same profession were people given the chance to start over. By contrast, what is noteworthy is the large fraction of faculty members who say they would pursue another line of work, an indication of a profession's lack of vitality, conditioned by the circumstances that faculty members confront in their institutional environments.

Elites are most adamant in desiring an academic career again, despite the leveling in satisfaction they derive from their careers in late and post stages, as indicated above. Their sentiments evolve only slightly, and then only in late to post career stages, when positive adamancy turns into a milder “yes.”

Pluralists indicate a greater variation in attitudes. They are most variable in the transition from early to mid career, but remain ambivalent throughout the duration of their careers.
Communitarians are the most in agreement about not again pursuing an academic career. Also notable is the pattern of this attitude emerging strongly in early stages of their careers. The pattern is slightly variable as communitarians pass from mid to late career stages, perhaps owing to greater career stability. Their attitudes about academic careers turn wholly negative in late to post stages. The overall negative attitude that communitarians develop toward the prospect of pursuing an academic career again may be best explained by the cumulative disadvantages that they experience in their work, particularly in their research roles. They perceive their institutions as blocking an ability to realize professional goals.

Patterns in academics’ attitudes toward pursuing an academic career again, by career stage and institutional type, are presented in table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**WOULD ACADEMICS PURSUE AN ACADEMIC CAREER AGAIN?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASES</th>
<th>ELITES</th>
<th>PLURALISTS</th>
<th>COMMUNITARIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early to Mid</td>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>No; Maybe; Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid to Late</td>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>Maybe; Yes</td>
<td>No; Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late to Post</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maybe; Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diachronic change across the three prototypical academic organizations evinces reversals: reversals of career orientation, outlook, and attitude. Elites may be most dedicated throughout their careers, but most devastated at the end. Communitarians may be less dedicated throughout their careers, but most satisfied and positive in their outlooks at the end. Pluralists exemplify the greatest variability in their careers, but in the end find a satisfaction that overcomes previous ambivalence.

**IMPLICATIONS ACROSS ACADEMIC FIELDS**

To what extent do the observed patterns pertain to practitioners in other academic fields? To answer the question it is important to consider both the universalities and particularities of physics.

With regard to universalities, one may take note of the fact that these physicists are academic physicists whose careers have been studied within the contexts that structurally and culturally situate the system of U.S. higher education institutions. Their careers are substantially structured, and acquire significant meaning, by way of reward systems of universities. Reward systems of universities apply as much to physicists as to classicists, sociologists, biologists, and philosophers.

Since these identities are organizationally based, and because they convey general sets of institutional conditions for careers, one may deduce that, *in general*, careers in varieties of fields will transpire *in roughly* equivalent fashion as those found here. The major point: in all fields, academic careers are typically begun with high expectations. High expectations are compatible with fulfilling institutional goals of science, which are parallel to the institutional goals of any academic field in higher education—to extend socially certified knowledge.

What of the particularities of physics that may make career patterns of physicists distinct from those of other academic fields? A source of possible answers lies in the phenomenon of codification, examined by sociologists of science and higher education researchers. Codification refers to “the consolidation of empirical knowledge into succinct and interdependent theoretical formulations” (Merton and Zuckerman 1973, 507). Academic fields and specialties within them vary in their extent of codification. Generally, highly mature fields are said to be highly
codified, less mature fields, less codified. Comparatively, fields such as physics and chemistry are recognized as highly codified. Fields such as sociology and history are recognized as weakly codified. Fields such as psychology and biology may be recognized as possessing an intermediate degree of codification.

An important aspect of codification is consensus, the extent to which practitioners of a field agree (see Braxton and Hargens 1996). Agreement may be understood to have many referents: problem choice, methods for research, theory selection to explain phenomena, and the like. One can surmise that another referent of agreement consists of a collective definition of career success. That is, the extent to which members of a field agree on what constitutes a successful career and on which members of the field are successful, given the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of their achievements. Following this logic, one would expect physics, as a high consensus field, to possess members with relatively clear and delimited definitions of success in the field. Correspondingly, one would expect low consensus fields, such as sociology and history, to possess members with relatively ambiguous and varied definitions of success in their respective fields.

One would expect members of high consensus fields, such as physics, to offer among the severest judgments about their careers. One would expect members of low consensus fields to find the greatest latitude in the judgments they could render on their careers. Put differently, members of low consensus fields have more chances to define themselves as successful because they can more easily find a sanctioned reference group against whom they favorably measure up. Members of high consensus fields have the chips stacked high; career success hinges on an ability and opportunity to satisfy relatively rigid collective understandings of achievement.

One might also therefore predict that low consensus fields offer the greatest opportunity for professional satisfaction; practitioners can do almost anything and find an outlet to be recognized for it. Professional satisfaction in high consensus fields is a scarcer commodity, since it is traded for scarcer talent. These formulations point out a further irony: the chance of disappointment is greatest in fields with the clearest collective minds, whereas the chance of disappointment is lowest in fields in disarray.

The resource-dependence of physics is another means by which it achieves particularity. To do their physics, physicists need money. Money is necessary for numerous components that comprise research in physics: laboratories, equipment, supplies, staffs of post- and pre-doctoral researchers, professional travel, release time from teaching, and an array of indirect costs.

Not all academic fields, of course, are resource dependent in the same ways or degrees. Other fields in the hard sciences, such as chemistry and biology, will approximate conditions of physics. Fields in the humanities are significantly less resource dependent or relatively resource independent. Fields in the social sciences compose a mix of resource dependence and independence. For example, anthropological work that relies on data obtained in distant field sites carries greater resource demands than sociological work that relies on observational data obtained on inner city street corners. There are also variations by specialty area within fields, some more resource dependent than others. Experimental social psychology, for instance, imposes greater resource demands than most research in the sociological study of social movements. Moreover, theorists in all fields are less resource dependent than experimentalists or other types of primary empirical researchers.

In addition, academic fields differ in their mutability, that is, the capacity of a researcher to change direction or research area entirely to a less resource dependent project should a more resource dependent line of research fail. Relatively speaking, sociology, for example, is highly mutable. In the absence of funding, most sociologists can turn to other projects that are less resource contingent, and often may be able to do so with few or no career costs. By
contrast, physics is relatively immutable. Virtually all physics research, save a fraction of purely theoretical work, is resource dependent. Doing physics of almost any kind requires a significant financial infrastructure.

Together, the high resource dependency and immutability of physics establish notable constraints on academic careers in that field and in fields like it. One would again expect practitioners in such fields to offer the severest judgments about their careers because, when these contingencies fail, the consequences for careers are likewise severe. But even when contingencies remain intact, the risk and anxiety about their collapse remains high, since practitioners can easily anticipate the consequences of failure. Even in good times, one is apt to find physicists (and academics like them) on edge because everyone knows money will run out at some point, and sometimes prematurely, and must be renewed through successive rounds of highly competitive and taxing grant application.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION**

The picture that emerges is far from sanguine. In what direction do the patterns seem to be headed? Research on academic institutions offers a first step toward an answer.

Alternately called “mission creep,” “academic drift,” and “institutional upgrading,” the increasingly widespread phenomenon in which institutions of many types seek to embrace the model of the American research university has become a subject of higher education research (Finnegan and Gamson 1996; Henderson and Kane 1991; Neave 1979). The research emphasizes institutional benefits derived from this status change, including enhanced status and prestige that in turn can marshal additional resources, such as attractively credentialed faculty, students, and monies from legislatures, foundations, and other funding agencies; greater program offerings and correspondingly greater market shares of students; and increased tuition revenues and alumni giving.

By one view, these substantial changes in the organizational make-up of higher education institutions in the U.S. may spell greater research opportunity for individual academics than existed within the population of institutions at a prior point in time. This remains an empirical matter that merits systematic treatment. For example, while there may be a positive net change in research opportunity, this of course does not mean that there is congruency between the research expectations of individual academics and those of their employing institutions. This prompts a more general point.

While we cannot safely conclude that mission creep brings about greater research opportunity, we can say safely that it does entail a change in institutional expectations for careers. And the change, unsurprisingly, involves a greater emphasis on research productivity. This evolutionary process toward a more intensified stress on research has taken place amidst other changes in academe. Academics of all generations note a heightened competition for research funding. Pressures to publish are now more intense as tenure and promotion procedures have grown more formalized throughout the higher education system, and as the supply of labor replacements has increased, making it easy to substitute faculty members whose records prior to tenure may be deemed good, but not good enough to satisfy present-day performance realities. These conditions, already having become or well on their way to becoming institutionalized as to enter habits of thought and behavior, have altered what it means to lead an academic life (see also Blackburn and Lawrence 1995; Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster 1998; Schuster and Finkelstein 2006).

Taking into account the longitudinal evidence of the study, organizational changes in institutions documented in the research cited above, and the omnipresent scarcity of rewards, we are drawn to the following proposition: increased emphases on research will be accompanied by increased probabilities of dissatisfaction throughout the system of higher education. As research is more greatly stressed, by institutions as by individuals, career expectations rise, in accord with attempting to satisfy external reference groups that are consistent with fulfilling the institutional goals of academe. As expectations rise, the likelihood of satisfying them decreases, because the expectations are defined by
that not yet achieved and, ultimately, by the unachievable. These conditions favor dissatisfaction and disaffection for the academic career, much as this study has found among the many academics who would seriously question seeking one again.

The present conditions of academe favor a decline in the attractiveness of the academic career. On many objective criteria, chances of success in academia across many fields are low and, where won, are hard-fought. They are also arguably more difficult to obtain across institutional types than in any other historical time in the profession: obtaining regular employment, obtaining tenure, obtaining promotion through standard ranks, publication, citation of work, competitive salary and competitive salary growth.

At stake on the one hand are individual satisfaction and moral commitment. These are significant stakes. When compromised, the institutional goals of the profession fail to be served. On the other hand, the overall welfare and functioning of the profession are at stake. The present work prompts the question of what types of people, with what levels of talent, the academic profession will be able to attract.

One scenario is that the profession will attract less talented individuals. More talented individuals, seeing the conditions under which academic careers are experienced, may increasingly enter other professions. It is conceivable that less talented individuals would possess lower expectations for achievement, thus muting the effects of dissatisfaction and leaving them more contented with work, and the profession “more stable” at a reduced performance threshold. But at such a reduced performance threshold, the net quality of academic work would decline. Public value assigned to the profession would erode further. This effect would also have to overcome the processes of induction, training, and socialization that are aimed at inculcating moral commitment and associated high levels of expectations, as well as organizational and professional norms that press for productivity. Short of organizational change, conditions appear to have developed to create an enduring crisis of meaning about work and satisfaction in the American academic profession.
REFERENCES


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph C. Hermanowicz is Associate Professor of Sociology and a Fellow in the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Georgia. His research focuses on academic careers, the academic profession, and the study of reward systems in organizations. In addition to Lives in Science: How Institutions Affect Academic Careers (Chicago, 2009), Hermanowicz is the author of The Stars Are Not Enough: Scientists—Their Passions and Professions (Chicago, 1998), College Attrition at American Research Universities: Comparative Case Studies (Agathon, 2003), and an edited volume, The American Academic Profession: Changing Forms and Functions (Johns Hopkins, Forthcoming).