MAKING AN ACADEMIC CAREER IN THE POSTMODERN ERA: WHAT IS IT TO PASS, WHAT IS IT TO BUILD, AND WHAT IS IT TO BEAR?

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies academic careers and career-making activities with respect to their main aspects and general pathways. First is an examination of all the requirements an academician has to fulfill in his or her career-making process. Second comes an investigation of all the elements an academician has to develop and build in his or her career structure. The third part focuses on the consequence career-making has for individuals as well as the social system. In light of the analysis presented in the paper, career-making is neither an individual undertaking that builds upon personal willingness, diligence, and initiatives, nor a private pursuit that engenders an autobiography of specialties, positions, honors, tenure, and pride. Instead, it is a social production that serves the dominant authority in established institutions. It creates and reinforces social dominance and ideological hegemony that in the end will overwhelm and overshadow all career-making individuals and their initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Career-making is a basic social phenomenon in the modern and postmodern era. Making an academic career, one first learns to speak a specialized language known to the members of a field. One then formulates an agenda, develops one’s contributions, and engenders an autobiography of specialties, positions, honors, and tenure which may be followed by other academicians beyond one’s physical existence (Baudrillard 1988; Perkin 1996; Lewis 1998; Darley, Zanna, and Roediger 2003).

In a broader context, mass production necessitates a knowledge enterprise to continually prepare personnel and supply software (Reich 1988; Walters 1997). The knowledge enterprise branches out rapidly into disciplines, fields, and specialties, creating demand for routine maintenance as well as continuing expansion by career academicians (Becher 1989; Kreiswirth and Cheetham 1990). To the extent that the knowledge enterprise serves the needs of mass production and supplies means for individual socialization, academic career-making contributes to the reproduction of the capitalist social process (Weber 1930; Perkin 1996; Torres 1998; Bornstein 2004; Berry 2005).

This paper examines academic careers and career-making activities with respect to their main aspects and general pathways. First is an
examination of all the requirements one has to fulfill in one's career-making process. Second comes an investigation of all the elements one has to develop in one's career structure. The third part focuses on the consequence career-making has for individuals as well as the social system. Reflectively, the paper attempts to explore how individual potentials and efforts translate into socially effective forces, and how established social forces and institutions dominate, manipulate, and oppress individuals and their talents, creativity, and productive endeavors.

WHAT IS IT TO PASS: CAREER-MAKING PROCESS?

Postmodern academia is a world filled with modernist residuals and postmodernist creations (Elliott 1996; Malpas 2005). The modernist conquest, in the spirit that nothing in the universe should remain off-limit to human inquiry, has led to the establishment of every possible field across the academic landscape. The postmodernist liberation, upon the modernist demarcation of substance, brings about dynamic diversity that features not only interdisciplinary interaction, but also intra-disciplinary differentiation. The joint legacies make career-making in postmodern academia a lengthy yet uniform process that leaves only limited room for individual choice and initiative.

Education. The process begins with education. The goal of education is to inculcate in prospective entrants basic values, common codes of conduct, historical legacies, established theories and methodologies, institutional arrangements, and current developments of a discipline in particular and of the whole academic community in general. Compared to the time of Plato or to the Middle Ages when apprenticeship under a spiritual master was deemed enough to prepare a person for philosophical or theological undertakings, the education required for an academic career in the contemporary era takes as long as about one third of one's lifetime (Kogan, Moses, and El-Khawas 1994). First is the K-12 education, a standard socialization process assumed for common citizens in modern society. Then comes a four-year undergraduate study, a general social requirement designed for middle-class employment and lifestyle under affluent capitalism. Next is a three-year master's-level graduate education, where one either lays a foundation for one's academic pursuits or prepares oneself for technical, managerial, or professional employment (Shaw 2002).

The standard for career academicians is doctoral education. Despite learning at previous levels, doctoral students still spend an average of six years to complete their work for a Ph.D. With the degree, they only meet a minimum requirement for practice in academia. In fact, as the academic labor market remains a strong buyer's market, the entry requirement regarding education shifts to an even higher level. More and more institutions now recruit only those Ph.D.s who have postdoctoral training or work experiences in other similar organizations (Abel 1984; Griffiths 2005).
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In academic career-making, education plays the dual role of both gatekeeper and track-setter. As gatekeeper, education screens in only those who are able to survive its pedantic procedure. An enrollee has to take many tests to prove that he or she has commanded all necessary knowledge and skills for academic undertakings in a discipline. In addition, one has to submit to a myriad of exercises to demonstrate that one has internalized all appropriate rules for practice in academia. As track-setter, education predesignates what subject one is to delve into, what perspective one is to take on, and what product one is to turn out in one's academic career. It also preassigns where in the academic world one is to play one’s role and build one’s influence. A graduate under the mentorship of a prominent scholar from a leading department in an elite university has a totally different network waiting for him or her than one graduated from an institution deemed mediocre.

The faculty directory, which by convention includes information about a faculty’s graduate school and academic interests, showcases how graduate school sorts out academic hopefuls, feeding them into different institutions in higher education. In California, for example, graduates from elite schools, such as Harvard and MIT, fill positions in prestigious universities, such as Stanford and Caltech, University of California (UC) campuses, and sometimes the California State University (CSU) system. Graduates from leading UC campuses, such as Berkeley and UCLA, feed less prominent UC campuses, the CSU system, and sometimes community colleges. Graduates from UC campuses dominate the CSU system and major community colleges. It is rare that graduates from a less prominent UC campus take positions in leading UC institutions, much less in elite schools.

Is the track-setting influence of graduate education grounded on facts? More pointedly, do graduates from elite schools undergo more rigorous training in a discipline so that they possess a greater potential for contributions to the academic enterprise? Top graduate programs are considered elite mainly because they have the best known scholars on their faculty. Preoccupied with their own research, these scholars are less likely to spend a lot of time with students. Another factor is size. Many top programs attract a large number of students in their graduate population. Still another factor is that top programs, as they stand top and secure, tend to care less about whether they turn out a few poor-quality products. On the other hand, lesser known programs are likely to be new and small; their faculty members are therefore highly motivated to prepare students with all necessary skills and knowledge in a discipline. Each graduate student, among the few on the program, may receive a great amount of supervision
and scrutiny. As a result, graduates from some lower-ranking programs may, in fact, be better prepared for work and contribution in academia.

**Institutional Employment.** A prospective academician who has fulfilled all educational requirements has yet to locate an academic institution through which he or she can earn a living and make connection to the established academic mainstream. Institutional affiliation therefore becomes another necessary condition for an academic career. However, not every degree holder is able to secure a safe institutional base in the world of scholarship.

First, the institution provides a secular job by which a career-making academician earns his or her living. In the era of organizational employment, it is rare for a scholar to be able to build a reputable career by either taking a nonacademic job or selling his or her products directly to a buying market. Social perception dictates that one falls under the general division of labor and belongs to a systematic operation of the academic enterprise. In leading universities, faculty members not only receive higher salaries but also are better equipped for supplementary income through grants and consulting. In less prestigious institutions, on the other hand, faculty may have to engage in off-semester teaching to increase their often meager salary. Gap in the level of income translates directly into qualitative difference in scholarly output. Better-paid scholars have more time to do research, show higher productivity in publication, and enjoy more visibility in scholarly influence. In contrast, lower paid academic professionals spend more time on teaching, have less time for research, turn out fewer publications, and are hence more likely to fall into obscurity in the academic community.

Second, the institution provides an indispensable environment in which a career-making academician develops scholarly ideas and products for academic circulation (Clark and Lewis 1985; Coiner and George 1998). Academicians need to use books, journals, and other materials in libraries; they need to work in laboratories if they specialize in experimental science; they need to attend professional workshops and conferences; they need to consult with colleagues, students, and other qualified participants; and they need to obtain secretarial support and utilize computers and other research tools. In small or remote institutions, one may not be able to find most of one’s needed references from a small library on campus or in the whole area. In institutions lack of academic stimulation, people may shun each other on scholarly matters. While there are not a good many of activities on campus, faculty may face various constraints in making contacts with colleagues in other institutions and attending professional conferences elsewhere. It is a totally unfair game for a career-making scholar in a resource-impoverished, academically backward university to compete for recognition with his or her counterpart in a resource-rich, academically stimulating institution.

Third, the institution connects a career aspirant to a disciplinary establishment in particular and the academic mainstream in general. The
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academic enterprise is a well-differentiated operation. Questions lie under defined subjects. Subjects fall into recognized fields. Fields belong to established disciplines. Disciplines are institutionalized in academic organizations through centers, departments, and colleges. To raise questions, develop solutions, and make breakthroughs on academic matters, individual scholars have to enter an academic organization, work in a specific division, and delve into a particular domain of activity. In other words, academic tasks are socially defined, assigned, and executed through organizational establishments. No matter how many ideas and talents they have, individual academicians may only fall into obscurity or deviance if they fail to place themselves properly in institutions in the academic enterprise. There are a few disciplines, such as philosophy and ethics, that are least dependent upon the laboratory, the grant, and the community of science formed and sustained within and among academic institutions. However, in the ever-changing postmodern era, how far can a philosopher or ethicist go if he or she stays out of an academic institution without access to the literature, the logistical support, and the oftentimes institutionally or socially created and maintained debates on issues?

Finally, the institution serves as a sorting mechanism for social placement. Within the academic community, it determines how one as well as one's activity are coded into the knowledge enterprise. There exists not only a system of knowledge in terms of subject, field, and discipline, but also a hierarchy of academicians according to their position, seniority, and institutional affiliation. An academic institution grants positions and honors to individuals who are affiliated with it. An individual and his or her academic products are then identified by his or her institution as well as the position he or she has earned from it. It is natural for editors, funding agencies, and other academic participants to use one's institutional affiliation as a primary basis to decide whether or not to give one's manuscript or research proposal serious consideration for publication or funding. For example, graduate students keep rushing to seminars conducted by professors from elite institutions even though they often find such seminars disappointingly lack of substance and rigor. The academic brand names are just so eye-catching and seem to work in the unconsciousness of most academicians.

Outside academia, institutional affiliation provides an academic professional with social legitimacy, identity, status, and impression in interaction with friends, neighbors, and other members of the community. Social legitimacy concerns one's qualification to practice in the world of scholarship. Social identity dictates how one is addressed in social communications. One is called “Professor X” when one holds a professorial position in a university. Social status determines how much respect one receives from one's social network. Friends and relatives may look up to one for advice on matters of importance to them. Finally, social impression confers one with a general social image by which one is perceived and treated in the community. It is a generalized social property one possesses
out of one's legitimacy, identity, and status in occupational and other critical pursuits.

**Networking.** Employment by an institution is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition. To attain what is expected of an academic career, prospective participants have to build a professional network for continual research funding and continual publication of their research products. While it is often seen as developing common interests and fostering professional congeniality, networking is actually a mode of adaptation for one to explore human relationships for the benefit of one's scholarly career (Van den Berghe 1970; Lewis 1997).

For funding sources, there are private and public agencies, national and international organizations, practically and theoretically oriented programs, as well as various foundations under different philosophies (Karsh and Fox 2003). While funding decisions are mostly based upon the scientific merit of proposals through peer review, one cannot afford to underestimate the importance of human connections in the whole process. First, one needs to foster a cooperative relationship with the office of sponsored research at one's institution. The office may add one to information networks so that one can receive announcements from various funding sources. The office can assist a researcher to pass through the human subjects review, develop a research budget, write up sections on institutional support, and ship the complete application to a funding agency. During the execution of a funded project, the office can help the researcher maintain contacts with the funding agency, manage the budget, and keep schedules for various milestones in the research process.

Second, an academician needs to cultivate a constructive relationship with his or her major funding sources. For large funding agencies, one may have to smoothen relationships with different departments overseeing the receipt of applications, the review of proposals, the management of project funds, and the evaluation of research products. The most important relationship is with the program officer in the funding agency. An applicant can certainly benefit from the program officer's insights into the agency's funding priorities as well as the review panel's theoretical orientations and methodological preferences. A constructive relationship with the program officer and other stakeholders in the funding agency may even help a researcher with special funds when needed.

Third, an academician needs to establish peer recognition for his or her research agenda. Proposals are reviewed by scientific experts who are peers working in similar areas of specialty. An applicant who has made himself or herself known through a net of professional contacts may have a better chance to be reviewed by peers who know him or her personally. Reviewers, when they know an applicant, may give him or her the benefit of the doubt in some weak spots identified in his or her proposal. It ought to be pointed out that the rule of conflict of interest used by funding agencies in selecting reviewers does not usually prevent personal connections among academic professionals outside their institutional affiliations. It is
possible that a set group of reviewers used by several major funding agencies in a field cross-review each other's grants, lend support to each other's projects, and therefore perpetuate a research paradigm over a period of time. There might be no concerted effort on the part of individuals. But the situation still qualifies as something approaching a conspiracy that showcases elitism and exclusionary practices in the world of funded research.

As far as publication is concerned, journals, bulletins, and magazines, as well as books, monographs, and edited volumes all serve as outlets for research. Each outlet publishes different academic products and enjoys a different reputation in the eyes of academicians (Alonso et al. 2004; Thompson 2005). Journals publish research articles, work notes, and book reviews, use in-house editorial or outside peer reviews, cater to scholars in a specific field, and may be considered by concerned practitioners as top, middle, or low-ranking outlets for their scholarly products. Books may report specialized research, propose or elaborate theories or methodologies, review major developments in a discipline, or present current knowledge for educational and other purposes. Publishers may select manuscripts using judgments by in-house editors or outside reviewers. Books published may receive different ratings upon sales in the market and reviews from the media.

While publication correlates with the scientific merit of a scholarly product, networking with editors and publishers provides an academician with information, access, opportunity, and encouragement for publishing his or her contributions. Information can be general and specific. General information includes what one knows about all publication outlets, their respective aim, submission procedure, review process, readership, and reputation, in the field. Identifying a suitable outlet is critical once a scholarly product is finished. Months of time can be wasted if a product is sent to the wrong outlet. Specific information refers to what one knows about a special issue edited by a journal, a monograph series launched by a publisher, and a thematic volume compiled by other scholars. These topic-specific issues, series, or volumes may serve as prime outlets for highly specialized work that would be normally rejected by conventional academic media.

Access and opportunity determine much in an academician's participation in publication activities controlled by his or her professional associations and employment institution. One who serves on a publication committee or an editorial board at one's professional association or employment institution is more likely to receive requests to edit a book series by a publisher, take charge of a special issue for a journal, or contribute an article to a volume. For example, in editing a volume for papers presented at a meeting, an editor may not only include his or her own products by writing some chapters, but also claim his or her copyright and royalty for the whole volume even though most of the articles were written by individual contributors. To avoid conflict of interest, some
editors may choose not to publish their own products in publications under their editorship. But the fact that they control an outlet may still render them better access and opportunity for putting in print their own products. For example, editor A may publish editor B’s products from his or her controlled publication in exchange for publishing his or her own products through editor B’s outlet.

Encouragement is necessary for academicians who strive to actualize themselves through publication. Publication is a painstaking process. From research design to fieldwork, from data analysis to theoretical exploration, from writing to editing, from submission to review, and from acceptance to publication, each part usually takes months to complete and may fail at any time in the process. For example, one may have to wait several months to see the peer reviews of one’s paper and may have to experience one or two such lengthy reviews until seeing one’s paper in print. Given the tremendous uncertainty in publication, it is not difficult to see how being approached to write and edit a piece of work with guarantee of publication could change the balance of the game.

Finally, specific relationships with the editor and editorial staff may influence the outcome of a manuscript submitted. The editor makes decisions on whether to accept the manuscript for peer review, to whom to send it for evaluation, and how to interpret the comments by reviewers. In some cases, one may explain one’s research rationale, suggest a list of referees to avoid or to include in the review, and argue for a new round of reviews if the first round turns out to be negative. The editorial staff handle the manuscript, collect comments from reviewers, and prepare the final draft for print. In smooth relationships with them, one may easily check the status of the manuscript, expedite the process of review, and give the best possible form to the final product prior to publication.

**WHAT IS IT TO BUILD: CAREER-MAKING STRUCTURE?**

Through the standardized career-making process, accomplishments in each phase crystallize into recognizable components to form a uniformly patterned structure of the academic career. The curriculum vitae, an individualized record kept by academicians to cultivate a self-image as well as to establish a social impression in the community of scholarship, miniaturizes essential components and their structural relationship in the whole existence of a postmodern academic career.

**The Degree.** As the end product of education, the degree carries all the information acquired through the educational process as well as all the commands held by the educational establishment. To some extent, a degree holder is supposed to behave in a way expected of him or her by the university that confers the degree. For example, a graduate from a little known university could stir a surprise across a field if he or she solves a long unsolved problem. A graduate from an ivy-league institution could be held
in contempt if he or she performs below the normal expectation. To emphasize the differential value inherent in an academic degree, academicians normally include the name of the degree, the year in which the degree was obtained, and the institution that conferred the degree in their curriculum vitae. Institutions also selectively focus on those variables to present their faculty in the organizational directory or public briefing for the purpose of attracting students and convincing funding sources. The doctoral degree has also become an established indicator in statistics compiled by the government and academic associations (Conley 1997).

**Position.** Position is earned by academicians through individual effort. It determines what and how much they do in their career-making process. Academic beginners usually earn their position by the doctoral degree they achieve from education. In their junior position, they can only engage in certain activities and are likely to face various constraints even in their limited area of work. Seasoned academicians, on the other hand, earn their position either by years of service or by substantive contributions. In their senior position, they may perform a variety of tasks and are likely to receive assistance in a range of functions. The unequal distribution of tasks and responsibilities leads directly to the unequal share of benefits and rewards, differentiating academicians into various stages and statuses in their career-making pathways (Ginther and Hayes 2003; Berry 2005).

There are different positions for academicians to acquire and take in various domains. Employment-related positions may lodge in temporary versus permanent, part-time versus full-time, tenure-track versus tenured, probationary versus permanent, and junior versus senior jobs. Entering academicians may start with temporary jobs to accrue experience. When they land full-time jobs, they are likely to be in junior, probationary, or tenure-track positions. Seasoned scholars, on the other hand, are likely to be tenured in senior positions. Although they have full-time, permanent jobs, they may take part-time, temporary positions, such as consultants and visiting professors, to diversify their work and life experiences. Temporary, part-time positions, in this regard, have totally different effects for entering and seasoned academicians. For the former, they are uncertain, exploitative, and indicative of a low status. For the latter, they are assuring, complementary, and status-enhancing. In fact, they serve for many senior scholars as an indicator of recognition, power, and influence.

Institution-granted positions clearly mark the rank and status achieved by academicians in their career. In universities, there are assistant, associate, and full professors. In research institutes, there are junior and senior associates, analysts, or scientists. These titles have specific responsibilities and rewards associated with them. Academicians have to meet specific requirements or complete certain years of service to move from lower to higher levels (Tierney and Bensimon 1996).

Association-designated positions come from professional associations that are formed by academicians to exchange ideas, advance common interests, and make a social impact. Associations serve members
in their academic pursuits, providing members with opportunities to gain status. The presidency and vice-presidency of associations are usually reserved for scholars with outstanding achievements. In addition, associations may use their newsletters and annual meetings to award members with such honorific titles as distinguished career contributor and scholar of the year.

Discipline-based positions may include various voluntary and honorary roles that support the life of a discipline. There are journal and book editors and reviewers who control and maintain the flow of information within the discipline. There are grant reviewers and project evaluators who decide the distribution of resources among practicing academicians in a field. There are conference organizers, session moderators, and panel discussants who perform on public stages in a subject area. There are also founders, inventors, and discoverers whose names are affixed to a theory or method in a field and are honored from time to time in the discipline. Obviously, assuming a secular position as editor or reviewer enhances one's status. Being deified as a classical figure may even extend one's academic career beyond the limit of life to the evolving progression of human knowledge.

It ought to be pointed out that the position achieved in one domain may affect the way one participates in the activities of other domains. For example, one who holds assistant professorship in one's institution is not likely to assume the presidency of a well-recognized academic association. Also, there are reinforcements among positions held in different domains. Being recognized by an established academic association as distinguished scholar, one may gain enhancements in one's professorship by some tangible benefits from a one-time award to a permanent increase in salary.

**Publication.** Publication is the standard medium by which knowledge is recorded and shared throughout the academic community. To individual academicians, publication presents the basic channel through which they participate in scholarly activities and make contributions to the knowledge enterprise (Thompson 2005). There are essentially two types of publication: academic and nonacademic. Nonacademic publications may include commentaries and feature articles academicians write for newspapers, magazines, and other mass media. They may also include information pamphlets, consumer guidebooks, and educational materials academicians write for practical purposes. They are nonacademic because they do not present any new knowledge or at most involve only the application of academic knowledge to a practical field in life.

Among academic publications, a basic distinction is made between the refereed and the non-refereed. Although the distinction is used widely, it holds no absolute meaning. First, a manuscript always has to go through some review by the editor or an editorial board before its acceptance into publication. The editor, as he or she is “trusted” to control an outlet, is likely to be an expert in an area. His or her review serves as a peer review by default. Second, since peer-review is stressed as a standard, most outlets
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Tend to lay claim to the procedure even though they may make their decisions by will or convenience. Third, peer-review is a procedure that can be used with a range of subjectivity. For example, an editor may use potentially friendly or hostile reviewers to accept or reject a manuscript about which he or she has already made a decision in his or her own review.

Peer-reviewed publications themselves differentiate in terms of coverage, importance, and influence. A specialty publication may focus on a specific field and cater to scholars in that field. A discipline publication may cover a whole discipline and address all academicians in the discipline. A publication covering a domain of knowledge may synthesize knowledge in each domain and attend to the whole community of scholars in that domain. There are even publications that approach issues of interest to academicians of all disciplines and all domains of knowledge. For each type of publication by topic and audience, there are also different ratings by importance and influence. Discipline journals in sociology, for example, may divide into the prestigious, the important, and the ordinary. A group of articles published in ordinary journals may not garner so much influence as does one article appearing in a prestigious journal on the same topic in the same discipline.

Because of the value differential in publications, individual academicians tend to frame their publishing efforts as well as place their publication products in a hierarchical order. They work on academic publications regularly and respond to nonacademic projects only occasionally. They use refereed outlets mostly and turn to non-refereed sources only when the latter become the last resort to put their findings in print. They focus on the outlets of their specialty but always aspire to reach a wider audience through the more general academic media. They aim high at the prestigious media but oftentimes may have to be content with ordinary choices. Overall, individual academicians take pride if they publish widely in different classes of academic media. They may also easily develop a sense of failure and inadequacy if they are not able to publish anything at all.

Teaching. Teaching, in essence, is a lively process of enlightening students with facts, ideas, and reasoning (Fairweather 1996; Bianco-Mathis and Chalofsky 1999; Tice et al. 2005). But some outcomes of teaching can crystallize into measurable deeds in an academician's career. For example, one can record how many content courses one has taught, how many students one has served in class or in one-on-one advisement, what distribution one has in scores from student evaluations, and how many awards in teaching one has received from recognized sources.

More substantively, a few academicians, upon establishing themselves as prominent figures in a field, may be able to turn their teaching into influence instantly. Every word of theirs counts. Some of their faithful students carefully record their lectures, edit them into volumes, and publish them after the academicians' death. The practice started when apprenticeship was a norm of training for new scholars. It continued over
time but has become less and less common in the postmodern era. As mass production has long replaced apprenticeship in education, academicians in contemporary time can expect to be recognized for teaching only after they have established themselves through publication. In the most likely scenario, a well known academician attracts students from different places to study under his or her mentorship; some of his or her students achieve considerable visibility in academia and are able to credit their success in some degree to him or her in formal media; and toward the end of his or her life, if he or she continues churning out creative ideas through teaching and if he or she is unable to organize those ideas in publishable format by himself or herself, some of his or her students may take action in recording them for possible publication at a later time. Being acknowledged by famous students in formal media is certainly a deed of success in teaching for an academician. It is a matter of achieved honor when his or her lectures are recorded and published by students before and after the end of his or her academic career.

Presentation. Presentation is confined to a particular time and occasion. Influence is usually limited to the audience who are present at the presentation. Also, because of various constraints inherent in oral expression, presentation is not so detailed, accurate, and lasting as publication in the communication of academic materials. On the other hand, presentation is quick and direct in spreading new ideas and findings. More and more conference organizers invite public media to their meetings and publish conference proceedings for larger circulation. Presentation can therefore become an effective means to report and share most recent developments across a discipline.

Presentation may serve as a barometer of the level of activity in which an academician engages in his or her academic career. In the individual profile, presentations may be identified by the conference in which it is made: local, national, and international or field-specific, discipline-wide, and interdisciplinary conferences. It may also be classified by the form in which it is made: roundtable, poster, oral, or thematic. There are also differences in whether a presentation is invited or unsolicited, made to a specific session or a thematic plenary, and regarded as a regular or keynote speech. Keynote speeches to plenary sessions at major academic conferences are normally reserved for only a few outstanding contributors who have established their position through publication.

Service. Service, as perceived by most academicians in their institutional context, fulfills two important functions. One is citizenship. Academicians run committees, review grants and manuscripts, organize meetings, and participate in various other activities. By taking charge as responsible practitioners, they maintain the life of their institution or discipline through self-governance and communal spirit. The other function is application. Academicians apply their knowledge to the real world to improve spiritual and material conditions in the larger society. To the community and society in which they live, academicians exemplify good
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Taking an academically ethnocentric perspective, academicians may divide service into two categories: professional and community services. Professional service centers on academic activities that promote an academician's standing in his or her discipline. Specifically, it includes such activities as reviewing manuscripts, editing journals or monograph series, evaluating grants, organizing conference programs, and assuming association offices. Community service, on the other hand, may originate from an academician's professional affiliation or specialty but does not necessarily advance him or her in professional development. As far as activities are concerned, it can range from serving on a college personnel committee, to working as an advisory board member for a community organization, and to appearing on a news report to offer expert opinions.

How is service coded by an academician into his or her autobiography of career achievements? There are essentially two approaches: outcome-oriented and activity-based. In an outcome-oriented approach, one looks into the result of one's service: "What difference do I make in the life of the people I serve, the culture of the institution in which I work, and the scholarship of the discipline in which I specialize?" However, since outcome is difficult to measure in the flux of change within an institution, community, or discipline, most academicians opt for an activity-based approach. They record all the services in which they engage in their career pathway and take pride in just being part of their community, institution, and discipline through service.

Grant. Scientific research in the postmodern era is seldom an individual pursuit. Research on a subject often involves investigators in different specialties over a period of time. Cost easily goes beyond the regular budget of an academic institution. Academicians thus need to craft grant proposals seeking support from various funding agencies in their career (Karsh and Fox 2003).

A grant is in essence a means toward an end. Obtaining a grant, however, is now more and more considered as an achievement in itself. First, competition is intense in the quest for a grant. A funded grant is in most cases a well-crafted scientific piece. It includes literature review, theoretical arguments, methodological design, proposed procedures, and expected outcomes on a specific topic. Second, a grant makes it possible for a group of researchers to work cooperatively on a project. It promotes the spirit of community among career-making scholars. Third, a grant is an indispensable resource in scientific research. With funding, data are collected, ideas are developed, and publication is produced. Fourth, grants are economic capital that empowers academicians in both their academic and secular positions. With knowledge, one may command only respect. With grants, not only can one advise fellow academicians, but one can also hire and manipulate them. The power inherent in grants can translate into control, influence, and a sense of accomplishment for academicians.
How is obtaining a grant chronicled in an academicians career record of achievements? At the outset, there are numbers of grants in one's career pathway. The more grants one receives, the more distinguished one's academic career looks. Grants can be differentiated by their sources as well. Being funded by a prestigious foundation may by itself carry a significant weight in the eyes of academicians. In compatibility with commercialism in postmodern society, it now becomes more and more a convention that a grant is simply measured by the amount of money received. While a larger amount attracts bigger attention, it does not necessarily entail more contributions to knowledge.

**Award.** Compared to the grant, an award in most cases is given to an academician for what he or she has done. The distinction, of course, is not a clear-cut one. A grant for a promised research is usually based upon the principal investigator's demonstrated achievements. An award sometimes may be given to one to carry out a yet-to-be-fulfilled activity.

An academician obtains awards in three different ways. Award by application requires that one effectively demonstrate one's deservedness for the award through a well-prepared application. For example, a university provides merit awards for all full-time faculty members to apply in the end of the year. Award by contest usually focuses on an aspect of academic life. Candidates demonstrate their special talents by performing a specified task. For example, they write a paper, make a speech, or engage in other activity to become a grand, second, or third winner as stipulated by the sponsor. Award by nomination generally applies to distinguished performance or lifetime service in an institution or discipline. To receive an award, a candidate is first well known for his or her contributions to scholarship; because of his or her general reputation, he or she is nominated by other academic participants for the award; and upon nomination, he or she may be asked to submit proper documentation for formal consideration by an expert panel. The award itself may be as general as a distinguished career award or as particular as an outstanding book award.

Most academic awards bring about dual benefits to their recipients. First is recognition. An award gives one a title or honor to identify oneself. For example, a merit award generates an image of outstanding performance. A distinguished career award gives one's academic life a special distinction. Second is compensation. An award recipient usually receives monetary benefits. Without any string attached, he or she can dispose of the fund at his or her will: furthering research, expanding the career, or just improving the quality of life.

**Membership in Academic Associations.** In the spirit of mass inclusion and commercialism, most academic associations are now open to people who pay membership dues. Qualifications are no longer seriously questioned in the membership application. On the part of career-making academicians, however, membership in academic associations still gives them a sense of belonging and professional pride. It provides them a forum
to communicate their research, a network to gather feedback, and a community to nurture themselves for continual academic pursuits.

There are also a few elite organizations that offer membership as an honor to those who have demonstrated extraordinary worth to the knowledge enterprise. For instance, national academies of science, engineering, or medicine in many countries award their membership only for exceptional contributions. Membership in those exclusive organizations not only generates a pride of accomplishment and influence for a few outstanding performers, but also provides a source of inspiration and encouragement for many ordinary practitioners in their academic careers.

Tenure. The majority of academicians gather in universities. Universities award tenure to their full-time faculty (Tierney and Bensimon 1996; Diamond 2004). Tenure is essentially a job security against the market dynamics. As far as their academic careers are concerned, tenure may represent a turning point for many academicians. On the one hand, it concludes an initial path of success and promise since tenure is awarded on the basis of substantial contributions in teaching, research, and service. On the other hand, it lays a solid foundation for continuous endeavor and excellence because tenure is given with the expectation of a long-term commitment to scholarship.

There is only one tenure to attempt or possess in one's academic career. Many academicians do not make mention of their tenure status in the public presentation of themselves. “Tenured” or “tenure-track” does not seem to appear in the business card, curriculum vitae, or self-introduction by academicians. However, academicians working within and without universities all care dearly about tenure. Before they obtain tenure, they fight for it as their ultimate goal. After they have tenure, they use it either as a foundation for an aggressive advance into research or as a safe heaven from any serious scholarly pursuits. Academic clichés, such as “publication for tenure” and “teaching for tenure,” offer testimony that tenure shapes behavior for many academicians in their career pathway.

In all, the degree, position, publication, teaching, presentation, service, grant, award, association membership, and tenure are key elements in an academic career. Each element is important in its own right and takes a significant part, if not the whole, of a career-making process to develop and substantiate. In the meantime, these elements combine to form the structure of a career that builds into an academician’s self-identity in his or her career-making endeavor. For instance, publication by itself is a record to build for a lifetime. It relates to all other career components or in the mind of many scholars serves as a leading force to organize other aspects in the structure of academic life. A publication-centered career structure affects how a scholar defines priorities, pursues research, and maintains a public image throughout his or her career-making journey.
WHAT IS IT TO BEAR: CAREER-MAKING CONSEQUENCE?

Career-making in postmodern academia is not only an individual undertaking, but also a social process (Van den Berghe 1970; Macdonald 1995; Finkelstein, Seal, and Schuster 1998; Rossides 1998). It impacts individual academicians as they meet requirements, secure resources, find opportunities, follow procedures, and build structures to make their careers. It has consequences for society as it establishes institutions, opens markets, provides media, creates values, and enforces rules to connect individual academicians and their products to the larger social system.

Career-making versus Personal Domains. A scholarly career involves attainment of academic degrees, positions, publications, awards, and tenure. In secular terms, these attainments symbolize an assurance of job security, a realization of professional goals, a reification of ego, and an actualization of personal potential. A career, however, is not a given. Even a mediocre career is often made at the expense of personal relations and other fundamental interests in a lifestyle. If there exists a personal domain, career-making may destroy important segments of it to the detriment of the individual and his or her long-term development.

First, academic career seekers have to submit themselves to the diplomacy, morality, and ideology of a discipline in particular and the whole community of scholarship in general. There are standardized images and models for academic practitioners to internalize and follow. These images and models prescribe what and how one sees, hears, and thinks as a scholar. Early during their educational preparation, prospective academicians are taught how to wash much common sense from their brain and reconstruct the universe, society, and their inner worlds according to disciplinary concepts, theories, and methodologies. Prospective academicians must also change their individual personalities or private domains into those of the disciplinary scholars they aspire to become, such as physicists, philosophers, and sociologists. Infractions and deviations lead to condemnations or objections from the academic mainstream, and in extreme cases the expulsion from a discipline.

Second, career-making academicians have to withhold their personal likes and dislikes in the service of scholarly conventions and etiquettes. Papers are written in abstract language. Presentations are made in a solemn tone. Transactions with editors, publishers, and other academic authorities are conducted in an atmosphere of non-solicitation, non-agitation, and non-irritation. Revelations of nonacademic intentions are considered a menace to academic impartiality and purity. An academic practitioner puts his or her career in jeopardy if he or she lets his or her personal emotions and feelings govern in the conduct of scholarly business (Johnson 1988; Diamond 2004).

Third, academic career enthusiasts may have to abandon their familial and communal life as they are often unable to compromise their aspirations for an academic career with their innate inclinations for familial
and communal attachment. It is common that young students give up their adolescent desire for beauty, love, and sex in quest of a somewhat abstinent, Spartan, and pale academic career. It is also true that new entrants, such as assistant professors and junior research scientists, put off their marriages, set aside their family lives, and commit all their time, energy, and resources for their academic career dreams.

Finally, career academic practitioners have to dedicate their whole lives, their whole intelligence to disciplinary specialization, isolating themselves from the mass media, popular fashions, and social currents. An academic discipline itself is a self-sufficient knowledge enterprise, with its own repertoire of concepts, theories, techniques, and tools. Academic practitioners, under disciplinary self-sufficiency, can easily develop a false impression that the disciplinary world is the real world and feel that it is unnecessary to go anywhere beyond their disciplinary boundary in life pursuits (Jacoby 1987; Becher 1989). But as a complete human being, one needs to reach out to different points of view and opportunities across society for his or her full self-actualization.

Academic life, as it has been characterized as squatting in the ivory tower and roaming in the desert of abstract concepts, is pale, stoical, and monotonous. Living an academic life, individual practitioners may have to make sacrifices or change various qualities in their personal domain.

**Individual Career-making versus Social Authority.** Although it demands determination, creativity, and the sacrifice of individuals, academic career-making is a social process that supports and sustains the educational system, the research industry, the cultural consumption market, and the entire knowledge enterprise (Clark 1987; Walters 1997; Rossides 1998; McNally 2001; Bornstein 2004; Thompson 2005; Tice et al. 2005). With respect to individual career academicians, it essentially does not matter who enters, who leaves, who succeeds, and who fails. What is important is that people flock in, group by group, cohort by cohort, and generation by generation, to keep a maximum level of competition required for a full functioning of the postmodern academic system.

What is the postmodern academic system? If it does not advance individual understanding, enjoyment, and actualization, why does it draw hundreds of thousands of people as its voluntary or involuntary career contributors? If it is not simply geared toward reason, truth, and knowledge, what purpose does it serve in contemporary society? Does it essentially serve the interests of those who establish universities and research organizations, who run foundations and publication networks, and who utilize knowledge products to reproduce social processes? In a nutshell, does individual career-making reinforce the existing social establishment and its domination over individuals?

First, individual career-making sweeps thousands of intelligent people into the knowledge enterprise. With massive manpower, academic areas, fields, disciplines, and domains open up, expand, deepen, and run in full scale. An academic area may be discovered by one explorer. But once it
is recognized, it can attract hundreds of academicians as its consumers, producers, or keepers. An academic field may be identified by a few visionaries. But once it is established, it can draw thousands of scholars as its promoters, contributors, or protectors. An academic discipline may emerge from a system of theories and methodologies developed by a score of pioneers. But once it takes shape, it can absorb hundreds of thousands of academic practitioners as its devotees, loyalists, or worshipers. The more academic areas, fields, and disciplines there are in existence, the less likely new areas, fields, and disciplines are to be discovered and established in the future, even by an ever expanding mass of scholars. It is thus inevitable that the disciplinary establishment grows larger and larger while individual scholars become less and less important in the knowledge enterprise.

Second, universities, research institutes, publishing houses, and cultural consumption markets operate with maximum intensity and attractiveness as areas open, fields develop, and disciplines emerge across the academic landscape (Popkewitz and Fendler 1999; Berry 2005). Institutional establishments in the knowledge enterprise are maintained and supported by academicians and their productive activities. But once they are in existence, they become objective social entities or forces to control and dominate individual academicians. Ivy league institutions are made famous and elite by generations of scholars. But as they become elite, they make it more difficult for individual academicians to break open their gates or to survive within their walls. The more institutions there are on the academic scene, the less likely it is for new institutions to come into being. The fewer new institutions appear on the horizon, the more likely it is for existing institutions to become authoritative and manipulative in dealing with individual practitioners in academia.

Third, knowledge produced by individual career academicians in various disciplines across the humanities, social sciences, engineering, and natural sciences provides legitimization and know-how for established institutions and dominant practices in the social system. For example, scientific discoveries and findings are used to exploit natural resources and to control nature. Technological inventions and innovations are employed by corporate management to turn human and material capitals into maximum profit. Theories, methods, policy strategies, and procedural tactics are developed by power holders to deal with people and to rule society. Social process is hence expanded. Social authority is therefore strengthened.

Fourth, an ever-expanding social process deems individuals more and more unimportant. An ever-strengthening social dominance makes individual forces more and more insignificant. A standard socialization emerges. It imposes standard knowledge upon newborn individuals, turning them into all-alike products in the capitalist mass production line. A mass of similar thoughts and acts forms and expands as people join in the crowd out of socialization and stay in the crowd with the current of resocialization. Fashions come and go, from time to time. Vogues gain
currency and lose force, from place to place. They altogether not only entertain but also exhaust individuals, their energy, intelligence, and wealth. A lifestyle mainstream appears hand in hand with an ideological hegemony that is directly based on and constantly fueled by mass media, educational curriculum, and political propaganda. Individuals become universally standardized, gradually muted, and eventually lost in the mass as they are swept into a standard way of thinking, acting, working, and living that is, in essence, informed, dictated, and supported by science and technology.

In all, the vitality of the academic establishment serves not only to prove the strength and prosperity of the postmodern social machinery, but also to invite submission and devotion from more and more people in the general population (Jacoby 1987; Harvey 1989; Sanbonmatsu 2004; Berry 2005). Career-making academicians in the knowledge enterprise obviously make most contributions to modern and postmodern socialization, mass identification, fashion and vogue, lifestyle mainstream, and spiritual hegemony. It is a great irony that academicians, supposedly most emancipated, produce most conditions and means to fetter not only themselves but also all other individuals in contemporary society.

**CONCLUSION**

Academic career-making is an emergent phenomenon of modern and postmodern capitalism. It is made possible by large-scale production and mass consumption. Without need and demand for knowledge, information, and trained personnel from the political-military-industrial complexes, the present system of education, research, and publication organizations would not have existed. Without money supplied by corporate businesses and knowledge consumers, professors, researchers, editors, and all other career professionals would not have arrived on the academic scene.

Career-making was originally an individual undertaking that built upon personal willingness, aspirations, initiatives, and diligence. In modern and postmodern social conditions, however, it has become more and more a social process that serves the dominant authority in established arrangements. Personal success and self-actualization are by-products that randomly fall upon only a few of God's favorites. The real end results are the social dominance and ideological hegemony that not only belittle and negate career academicians themselves, but also overwhelm and overshadow all other human beings and their creative potentials.

There then comes an ever-tightening cycle in postmodern academia. The more career-making academicians there are, the more they contribute, the stronger the knowledge enterprise is to become; and the stronger the knowledge enterprise becomes, the more dominance the academic establishment holds upon its individual participants, the more
career-seekers are to be rallied around to make yet greater contributions. Is this cycle evil or golden or, perhaps, both?

REFERENCES


