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THE SOCIAL POSITION OF ACADEMICS IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY: SOME OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVES*

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Whether he be king or clergyman, lawyer, soldier, physician, professor, merchant, dealer or artisan, he is worthy of his wage, and he need not blush to claim it, if only this is not his highest reward.[1]

In 1860, this statement by the Rev. Dr. John Woolley, the first Professor of Classics at the University of Sydney, paid service to the egalitarian ethos of Australian society. It is ironic that in the early years of Australian university life, it was an academic who argued for an equality of status for all occupational endeavours. However, throughout the years, the egalitarian ethos has been declared a myth. Then, as well as now, academics in Australia have held positions of high status, along with other members of the professional community. This prestige has been called "disproportionate", "desperately courted", and "distasteful to many thinking Australians".[2] Yet, apart from the fleeting comments of journalists and social commentators, the social position of academics has rarely been, if ever, studied directly or systematically.

It can no longer be doubted that occupations in Australia, as indeed elsewhere, are differentially valued and receive unequal status and prestige by the general population. The cumulative evidence from empirical research suggests considerable consensus about the social ranking of occupations, even with the precise measurement instruments and conceptual refinements of contemporary social science research.[3] However, little research has been done about the consequences of differences in prestige on recruitment and career patterns by individuals in those occupations.

The Importance of Social Position

One important theory in sociology argues that recruitment to and the performance of occupational roles is directly related to the rewards accruing to those occupying those roles. The argument contends that career patterns are more or less a matter of choice, and that the decision to pursue a particular career is the result of a rational assessment of the costs and benefits a particular career might be expected to provide. Furthermore, the rewards which accrue to certain careers is held to be the result of societal consensus, which implicitly allocates those rewards on the basis of the "need" that certain occupations be chosen and performed at a high standard. Thus the benefits of a career in medical practice are seen as the results of the costs of becoming a medical practitioner (in terms of training time and forgone benefits) as well as the societal need for a constant supply of committed medicos. The theory also suggests that the level of performance of the duties, skills and responsibilities of careers is also affected by the reward structure. It is clear, according to this perspective then, that recruitment to a career and the quality of career performance are a function of the social position of the career in the society.

Career reward structure includes many dimensions. The most obvious and that which receives most attention is monetary reward. Jobs and occupations are often regarded in terms of the salaries or income attached to them. Thus a career which results in a high income is generally regarded as being highly valued, important and necessary for society. In addition most occupations involving high income also require longer training periods than most, and thus involve larger costs. However, another dimension of the reward structure which does not involve money is that of prestige or social position. Often high social status and prestige will be attributed to an occupation even though the monetary rewards may be low. This is most frequently the case with jobs involving traditional roles in society, for example, religious or some political careers.

Academics represent persons holding a unique position in this context. The social role of the man of knowledge in society has been explored by social scientists.[4] However, in more precise contexts, academics provide additional services in society because of the emergent multiple roles of universities and colleges. Universities and other similar tertiary institutions not only provide havens for society's intellectuals and social commentators, but also represent important training grounds for certain professions and vocationally specific careers.

Academics, however, do not simply hold jobs; they are also members of a professional community. As such the reward structure is related to both monetary rewards and prestige in society generally, as well as other more professional rewards, such as professional standing and professional advancement. Academics generally argue that the latter are more important than the former, and that ultimately the intrinsic satisfaction of academic work, be it teaching or research, supersedes both of the above.[5] However,

*This is a revised version of the paper presented to the 50th ANZAAS Congress, Section 22, Symposium on the Academic Profession, Adelaide, May 1980.

it is difficult to imagine that academics are completely oblivious to their social image and standing, and it is possible that during the current decline of tertiary funding and the "steady-state" operations of most tertiary institutions throughout the world, they will be more sensitive to social rewards. Recruitment and commitment to the profession may be affected.

Academics in the Australian Context

Although aspects of the Australian academic profession have been researched, little is known about their relative position in society as a whole. Generally it appears that academics in Australia are not drawn from a cross-section of the general population, but tend to come from middle and higher social origins; this pattern, however, varies by discipline and probably by university. Staff in the professional faculties tend to come from higher social backgrounds, as do staff from the older and more prestigious universities. Australia is not unique in this regard, as similar findings have been reported in other countries, particularly in the United Kingdom.[6] Yet there is little evidence to suggest that either because of social origins or the intrinsic nature of academic activity, academics represent an elite group in society which would automatically command high respect, status or influence.[7]

Studies of occupational prestige, however, show that academics do hold relatively high social positions in the overall occupational hierarchy. Early studies of occupational prestige in the United States found that in both 1947 and 1963, university teachers came eighth in a ranking of ninety occupations.[8] Although academics ranked below physicists and government scientists in prestige, they were given higher status than lawyers, architects and representatives in the US Congress. However, there has been mixed interpretation about the social position of American academics during recent decades. For example in one 1969 study, 58 percent of US university teachers felt that respect for academics had declined in the previous twenty years. Yet in 1977 a poll indicated that the general US public still ascribed considerable influence and power to academics. This finding is consistent with a more recent statement by Logan Wilson, a long-time observer of American academia.

> *In their role as transmitters, advancers, and appliers of organised knowledge, academics have in the main gained rather than lost status in recent decades. They influence vastly more students than they once did, and serve as credentiallers for a larger and larger array of occupations; and in addition the interpenetration of their thought modes into the extramural world has been greatly extended. Compared with government, business and labour leaders they are not 'men of power', as Parsons and Platt have observed, but as indirect shapers of basic social decisions and actions their long-range influence is certainly appreciable.* ***Their social status, accordingly, is and undoubtedly will continue to be, a respected one.***[9]

The above observations are not unique to American society. In a comparative study of occupational prestige, there was considerable uniformity in the rankings between different countries, with academics being consistently regarded as having high prestige. The authors attributed this consistency to the structural similarity of complex societies, but added that "cultural variation from society to society may cause inversions in the relative positions of physician and college professor, although in every society these two occupations are among the most highly regarded".[10]

Australian studies of occupational prestige do not depart much from these findings. Congalton, for example, found that student rankings of occupations placed professors second and lecturers ninth in a ranking of 134 occupations.[11] Furthermore, Congalton found that female respondents ranked academics higher in prestige than did males, and respondents from upper status backgrounds ranked them higher than those from more modest social origins. Otherwise there was very high consistency in the rank ordering among the various categories of respondents, which included both university students and a typical man-in-the-street sample.

In perhaps the most detailed investigation of occupational prestige in Australia, Broom *et. al.* developed occupational status rankings with various degrees of precision. Whereas the code developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics gave academics rankings of 41-42 out of 865 occupational categories, Broom *et. al.* ranked them fourteenth.[12] In other words, the empirical evidence suggests that Australian academics enjoy very high prestige compared with other occupations.

Consistent with these observations Higley, Deacon and Smart, in their study of 370 Australian elites, found that academics were noticeable by their strong positions of influence regarding decisions and policies of national importance: " . . . as advisers and consultants to government, business, trade unions and numerous other organisations, academics exerted considerable influence on national policy formulation in many areas". During the Whitlam period of government, up to 14 percent of senior ministerial staff were academics, and there were 42 senior university teachers working on various commissions and enquiries. At the same time, however, only four of the top seventy "most central national leaders" in 1975, as seen by the elites themselves, were academics, and all were economists.[13]

It seems fairly clear, then, that the high level of prestige enjoyed by academics in Australia is almost equally matched by their participation and influence in the elite decision-making circles of the society. However, it is one thing to measure prestige and status objectively and another to perceive it subjectively. For ultimately, the important question is whether Australian academics perceive their positions to be of high prestige, and further, whether they think they enjoy a social position comparable to that of their overseas colleagues. These are the questions to which our attention will turn, using in the process some empirical data on perceptions of prestige by a sample of Australian academics.

In the remainder of this paper some data will be presented and discussed to illustrate relevant patterns in subjective aspects of academic prestige and status. These data, this aspect of which has never before been reported, are from a survey of Sydney University academics conducted in the late sixties as part of a larger study of academic orientations and performance. In-depth interviews were held with 140 full-time academics in the faculties of arts, science and engineering, and represented a random sample of more than one-third of the full-time staff, lecturer and above, at that time.[14] The study was conducted during a period of university growth and expansion in Australia.

Perceptions of Academic Prestige in Comparative Perspective

The objective indicators suggest that academics hold positions of high prestige in at least most complex societies, but how do Australian academics view their social standing in Australia as compared to that of their colleagues in other societies? The question raised here is one of relative perception of academic prestige, which to some extent represents one dimension of the social position of academics in a society.

During the interviews, respondents were asked a series of questions concerning their perceptions of academic prestige in Australia compared to that in the US and the UK. In their own words, some academics were keenly aware of prestige differences between the countries. For example, an arts reader volunteered the following comment:

> *I think the prestige here is rather high, especially after visiting the US. In the US university teaching is seen as a service job. Here there is a mixed attitude — an anti-intellectualism and a certain respect for university teachers, People do not know how to treat them.*

Several other academics were not so certain about the relative high social standing of Australian academics, as the following indicate:

> *The prestige here is not terribly high. It is much higher in Italy (arts lecturer).*
> *It is not very high. I had more in England before coming here (engineering senior lecturer).*

In addition to their open-ended comments, the respondents were asked to actually rank the countries in terms of academic prestige. In Table 1, the comparison of the prestige with US academics is found, differentiated by faculty. Of immediate interest are the totals for each column. Here we find

Table 1
Perception of Academic Prestige in USA and Australia, by Faculty

	Higher in USA	Same as USA	Lower in USA	Don't know	TOTALS
Arts	17.7 (11)	21.0 (13)	25.8 (16)	35.5 (22)	100.0 (62)
Science	13.3 (6)	15.6 (7)	11.1 (5)	60.0 (27)	100.0 (45)
Engineering	27.3 (9)	9.1 (3)	12.1 (4)	51.5 (17)	100.0 (33)
Total Sample	18.6 (26)	16.4 (23)	17.9 (25)	47.2 (66)	100.0 (140)

The number of respondents are in brackets.

that the proportion of respondents who feel that academics in America enjoy higher prestige than in Australia is about the same as those who feel the reverse, 18.6 and 17.9 percent accordingly. What is particularly noticeable, however, is the large category of respondents who claim ignorance of the relative ranking of academic prestige in these two countries. The faculty differences are quite apparent in the figure, with the engineering respondents most likely to perceive Australian academics as having lower status than the Americans, and the science respondents as least likely, the percentages being 27.3 percent and 13.3 percent respectively.

Turning to comparisons with UK academics, the figures show quite a different pattern. To begin with, the totals in Table 2 show that a relatively large proportion of the sample, 38.6 percent, felt that academics in the UK have higher prestige than in

Table 2
Perception of Academic Prestige in UK and Australia, by Faculty

	Higher in UK	Same as UK	Lower in UK	Don't know	TOTALS
Arts	45.2 (28)	6.5 (4)	25.8 (16)	22.6 (14)	99.9 (62)
Science	40.0 (18)	13.3 (6)	8.9 (4)	37.8 (17)	100.0 (45)
Engineering	24.2 (8)	27.3 (9)	12.1 (4)	36.4 (12)	100.0 (33)
Total Sample	38.6 (54)	13.6 (19)	17.1 (24)	30.7 (43)	100.0 (140)

The number of respondents are in brackets.

Australia. This is in clear contrast to the US figures already discussed. On the other hand, the proportion who saw UK prestige as lower than Australia were about the same as for the US figures, 17.1 percent. Of some significance is the fact that the "don't know" responses for the UK perceptions are lower, suggesting that for this sample at least, there is a clearer perception of the social position of academics in the UK than in the US.

Turning to the faculty breakdown, the pattern again is in contrast to perceptions regarding the US situation. The arts respondents, closely followed by science, were most likely to perceive prestige to be higher in the UK, with 45.2 percent falling in this category. Conversely, the engineering staff were the least likely to hold these perceptions.

From these two tables it appears that the academics at Sydney perceive the social position of academics to be higher in the UK, but roughly the same for Australia and for the US. Furthermore, the former observation seems to be particularly true of staff members in arts and sciences, who probably see these disciplines as traditionally 'belonging' to British universities and thus more a part of British intellectual life.

To further place these perceptions in total perspective, each respondent was asked to rank the three countries simultaneously in terms of academic prestige. Table 3 shows the result of this ranking in terms of the proportion of first place responses by faculty.

Table 3
Proportion Ranking Country Highest in Academic Prestige, by Faculty

	UK	USA	Australia	Other	Don't Know	TOTALS
Arts	30.6 (19)	8.1 (5)	14.5 (9)	4.8 (3)	41.9 (26)	99.9 (62)
Science	20.0 (9)	4.4 (2)	4.4 (2)	6.7 (3)	64.4 (29)	99.9 (45)
Engineering	12.1 (4)	18.2 (6)	3.0 (1)	12.1 (4)	54.6 (18)	100.0 (33)
TOTAL SAMPLE	22.9 (32)	9.3 (13)	8.6 (12)	7.1 (10)	52.1 (73)	100.0 (140)

The number of respondents are in brackets.

For all academics, it is clear that UK academics are seen as having the highest prestige, followed by the US and Australia in close second and third order. The first place rankings were 22.9 percent, 9.3 percent and 8.6 percent in that order. A very large proportion of the respondents either claimed that they did not know enough to do the ranking (43.6 percent) or did not answer the question (8.6 percent). The rankings by faculty showed some variations in the order. For the arts respondents, Australian academics were seen as having higher prestige than American academics, while for the engineering staff, the latter were seen as having higher prestige than either the UK or Australian academics.

Two observations can be made at this point in our discussion. Firstly, while the objective indicators suggest that Australian academics enjoy high prestige relative to other occupations and professions in Australian society, academics nevertheless perceive themselves as having less prestige than their counterparts in the UK and the US. Secondly, there are striking differences between faculties in perception of academic prestige. To this extent, it seems clear that the academic career is not a homogeneous profession in that perceptions of its social standing in Australia, as compared to two other societies in the English-speaking world, are quite disparate. These faculty differences are consistent with those reported previously concerning job attraction and job satisfaction where the engineering staff were found to differ from those in arts and science on both attraction to and satisfaction with the academic career.[15] Thus it may be erroneous to speak of one academic profession, but rather perhaps several, with a multiplicity of recruitment, performance and career patterns. The identification and consequences of these differences might have important implications for the academic profession in the present university context.

Perceptions of Academic Prestige in Australia

Perhaps more important than the perception of academic prestige across societies is that within one's own society. It may be true that academics identify with a discipline and an international profession, but at the same time they live their lives in a local context with day-to-day interactions, and to a large extent their local social position is the one with which they must deal in much of their professional and career behaviour.

As already indicated, the respondents were asked in their own words to describe their perceptions of the prestige of academics in Australia. The responses, with few exceptions, generally reflected a perception of high prestige, although with some traces of ambiguity. A couple of examples are illustrative in this regard:

> *In the public mind it is very high, higher than academics deserve (engineering lecturer).*
> *It is a prestigious position, even though people may regard you with contempt or awe. There is an anti-intellectualism in Australia (arts senior lecturer).*

However, as is apparent in Congalton's study of occupational prestige, the prestige of academics is inversely related to the social status of the respondents. Some academics were aware of this variability in prestige. Consider, for example, the following comments by two arts staff members:

> *Socially, he does enjoy a fair amount of prestige among the bourgeoisie. I am not sure his image is quite as high among the working-class folk. He is regarded with awe, with a certain amount of indifference. For those who are monied, perhaps he is regarded as a poor sap who is smart enough for a degree but not smart enough to make it in the world. These latter have more money.*
> *Generally, the university teacher holds a high place among the educated classes. Among others there is some antipathy. They see us as disrupting society.*

In a more structured part of the interview, the respondents were asked to rank five different career-oriented occupations, all of which represented fairly high level groupings in the Australian context: the public servant, the lawyer (specifically the barrister), university teacher, government scientist and the medical practitioner. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to rank the occupations three times: (1) according to their own prestige ranking, (2) as they perceived students to rank them, and (3) as they perceived the man-in-the-street to rank them. The purpose of this set of questions was to examine disparities in the three rankings and investigate possible implications of these should they occur.

The data for the respondents' own prestige imputations are given in Table 4. The scores represent the average sum of the rank values, with the lowest score signifying high imputation of prestige.

Table 4
Respondent Mean Rank Scores for Five Occupations, by Faculty

	Arts	Science	Engineering	Total Sample
Fed. Parliament Member	3.43 (56)	3.59 (39)	2.96 (26)	3.50 (121)
Government Scientist	2.80 (56)	2.77 (39)	2.85 (26)	2.80 (121)
Lawyer	3.70 (56)	3.23 (39)	3.50 (26)	3.50 (121)
Medical Doctor	3.13 (56)	2.54 (39)	2.73 (26)	2.85 (121)
University Teacher	1.57 (56)	1.77 (39)	1.73 (26)	1.67 (121)

The number of respondents are in brackets.

As perhaps would be expected, academics tended to rank their own occupation the highest, irrespective of faculty. The government scientist came second, followed closely by the medical practitioner, with both the lawyer and parliament member tied for fourth place. This pattern generally prevailed between the faculties with two exceptions: both the scientists and the engineers tended to rank the medical practitioner higher than did the arts respondents. Commenting on their own ranking, many arts respondents stated that they thought the prestige accorded the medical practitioner in Australian society was "overrated" and not merited.

Irrespective of their own ranking, the academics' perceptions of student rankings of the same occupations were different (See Table 5). According to this sample, the students would rank the medical practitioner first in prestige, followed then by the university teacher, lawyer, government scientists, and finally the Federal parliament member. Variations in this order by faculty are that the arts and science academics reversed the ordering of lawyer and university teacher, while the engineers, oddly enough, felt that the students would impute highest prestige to the university teacher.

Table 5
Respondent Perception of Student Prestige Ranking: Mean Rank Scores by Faculty

	Arts	Science	Engineering	Total Sample
Fed. Parliament Member	4.16 (45)	4.59 (45)	3.74 (23)	3.87 (95)
Government Scientist	3.31 (45)	3.33 (27)	3.00 (23)	3.24 (95)
Lawyer	2.77 (44)	2.70 (27)	3.09 (23)	2.82 (94)
Medical Doctor	1.67 (45)	1.39 (28)	2.44 (23)	1.77 (96)
University Teacher	2.96 (45)	2.71 (28)	1.87 (23)	2.62 (95)

The number of respondents are in brackets.

Turning to perceptions of the man-in-the-street's prestige ranking in Table 6, academics almost unanimously felt that the medical practitioner would be accorded the highest prestige, followed by the legal profession. There was almost complete agreement that the university teacher would come third, although the arts respondents felt that the government scientist would be held in higher regard, a view certainly not held by the engineers who ranked them much lower.

Table 6
Respondent Perception of Man-in-the-Street Prestige Ranking: Mean Rank Scores by Faculty

	Arts	Science	Engineering	Total Sample
Fed. Parliament Member	3.95 (59)	4.19 (42)	3.69 (29)	3.98 (130)
Government Scientist	3.42 (59)	3.60 (42)	3.72 (29)	3.55 (130)
Lawyer	2.64 (58)	2.55 (42)	2.55 (29)	2.59 (129)
Medical Doctor	1.29 (59)	1.14 (42)	1.41 (29)	1.27 (130)
University Teacher	3.55 (58)	3.41 (42)	3.35 (29)	3.46 (129)

The number of respondents are in brackets.

A summary of the total sample rankings for the three perspectives are given in Table 7.

Table 7
Respondent Perceptions of Self, Student, and Man-in-the-Street Prestige Rankings of Five Occupations: Mean Rank Scores of Total Sample

	Self	Perceived Student	Perceived Man-in-Street	Total Sample Number
Fed. Parliament Member	3.50 (4)	3.87 (5)	3.98 (5)	130
Government Scientist	2.80 (2)	3.24 (4)	3.55 (4)	130
Lawyer	3.50 (4)	2.82 (3)	2.59 (2)	129
Medical Doctor	2.85 (3)	1.77 (1)	1.27 (1)	130
University Teacher	1.67 (1)	2.62 (2)	3.46 (3)	129

The numbers in brackets indicate the column rank order.

The variations in the rank orders provoke some comment. First of all, these academics rank their own profession higher than they think students or the society as a whole rank it, a phenomenon similar to what sociologists call "occupational egoism".[16] Furthermore, they perceive non-academics to hold the medical practitioner in highest regard, and the parliament member in the lowest of the occupations considered. The perceived disparity between the academics' own views about the academic profession and their perceived views of the rest of society prompts several observations.

Firstly, this disparity may be consistent with Australian academic perceptions about the status of academics in the UK and the US, and suggests that Australian academics do not think of themselves as enjoying a comparatively high position in Australian society. The second observation concerns the possible implications of this disparity. As reported in a previous paper prestige and income seem to have little importance in the attractiveness of an academic career.[17] Yet the disparity could affect the nature of and extent to which academics either choose or are allowed to have an input into debates or decisions concerning wider social or political issues.

Some Correlates of Perceived Prestige

It is not clear from the data available whether there are background or behavioural correlates of perceptions of prestige. In other words, to what extent are there identifiable groups of academics who tend to regard the prestige of their profession as high, either in their own eyes or in the eyes of others, and how do these perceptions correlate with other professional characteristics?

Already we have seen that there are faculty differences, with the arts and engineering staff being most divergent. However, an analysis of other staff characteristics produced only a few important systematic differences. For example, there seemed to be a slight tendency for research-oriented staff to regard British academics as enjoying higher prestige than their American or Australian counterparts ($r = .24$).[18] Likewise, older academics and academics who had published more tended to impute more prestige to the profession than younger or less productive academics ($r = .13$ and $.15$ respectively). The same tendency was true for academics with more years of service at the university ($r = .17$). In general these latter correlates, though weak, seem to suggest that those who have been in the profession longer, and thus have made a heavier commitment to it, regard that career more highly in terms of prestige. This is clearly what we would expect. However, it is interesting that this pattern did not emerge in perceptions of how others on the outside, namely students and the man-in-the-street, viewed the profession.

Conclusions

The subject area discussed in this paper has been largely ignored in previous research on the academic profession. Yet the possible implications of changing social position for recruitment, satisfaction, performance and overall influence in the wider society by the profession could be significant, and certainly merits close research attention.

The objective indicators of the social position of Australian academics indicate that it has been and continues to be high. However, from the limited data reported here, there appear to be clear disparities in the perceptions by academics of their social standing, both between societies (i.e., the UK, US and Australia), and within Australian society. Clearly these subjective perceptions are somewhat problematic since they were collected at a time when there was optimism about the future of universities, and probably about the academic profession as a career goal. Yet they document patterns which are no less important today. We know little or nothing about how the present conditions of budgetary constraints, steady-state operations, the tight academic job market, and the general economic conditions have affected the academic profession, both within the profession itself as well as how it is regarded from the outside.[19] This paper represents only a first step in what could be a useful direction for further study of the academic profession in Australia.

For the most part academics, like members of most professions, require social rewards. This is true whether their interests and tasks lie primarily in teaching, research or administration. One could argue, however, that these rewards must be perceived in order to be real and thus are very much contingent on social circumstances. As such, the effects of negative perceptions of the opinions of others is a valid area for serious study of the profession. Even in the years of optimism, a science respondent in the Sydney study expressed a dim view of academic prestige and social relevance.

> *I am a cynic. I don't think the rest of the community gives a damn about university teaching or teachers. The university is just a place on the hill.*

One wonders to what extent and with what effects similar comments would be made by Australian academics today.

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3. There have been a number of studies of occupational rankings in Australia. The first of these which ranked 20 occupations was by Ron Taft, "The Social Grading of Occupations in Australia", *British Journal of Sociology*, IV (1963): 181-187. Another which examined 135 occupations was that of A. Congalton, *Status and Prestige in Australia*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969. The most recent sophisticated study has been based on two national surveys conducted by the Department of Sociology, RSSS, Australian National University. See Leonard Broom, P. Duncan Jones, F. Lancaster Jones, and Patrick McDonnell, *Investigating Social Mobility*, Canberra: The Australian National University, 1977.
4. Intellectuals and so-called "men-of-knowledge" have long held a fascination for social scientists, in particular for their potentially influential positions. See, for example, Florian Znaniecki, *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968.
5. In the North American study, Leonard Goodwin ("The Academic World and the Business World: A Comparison of Occupational Goals", *Sociology of Education*, 42 (1969): 170-187) found that academics were concerned with money only to the extent that it be "sufficient . . . for their work", but that success in life was not defined in terms of its acquisition. This was quite different from business men, who tended to regard money as a "symbol of success". L. J. Saha ("Job Attraction and Job Satisfaction: A Study of Academics in an Australian University", in D. Edgar (ed.) *Sociology of Australian Education*, Sydney: McGraw Hill, 1975: 373-386) found roughly the same patterns among a sample of Australian academics. For them, salary and prestige were the least important factors contributing to the attractiveness of an academic career. At the same time, among those same factors, they expressed greatest satisfaction with their salaries.
6. For example, available figures from the UK suggest that about 50 to 60 percent of the academics come from professional or white collar backgrounds, the figure rising to over 70 percent for Oxford and Cambridge, (A. H. Halsey and Martin Trow, *The British Academics*, London: Faber and Faber, 1971). In Australia, the comparable figure from the University of Sydney study by Saha was about 50 percent for arts and science staff, but over 70 percent for engineering staff.
7. Indeed in one study in the UK, it was found that many academics were reluctant to admit that the prestige of the profession was high. See Gareth Williams, Tessa Blackstone, and David Metcalf, *The Academic Labour Market: Economic and Social Aspects of A Profession*, Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1974, p. 308.
   The reader should also note that one could approach the study of academics from a perspective quite different from that developed here. For example, one could argue that academics enjoy their positions precisely because they are part of society's elites and the bourgeois class. Since universities are important institutions in the maintenance and dissemination of "cultural capital", they are rewarded accordingly.
8. Robert W. Hodge, Paul M. Siegal and Peter H. Rossi, "Occupational prestige in the United States: 1925-1963", in R. Bendix and S. Lipset (eds.), *Class, Status and Power* (2nd edition), New York: The Free Press, 1966.
9. Logan Wilson, *American Academics: Then and Now*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. The italics have been added.
10. Robert W. Hodge, Donald J. Treiman, and Peter H. Rossi, "A Comparative Study of Occupational Prestige", in R. Bendix and S. Lipset (eds.) *Class, Status and Power* (2nd edition), New York: The Free Press, 1966.
11. A. Congalton, *op. cit.* p. 106.
12. L. Broom, *et. al., op. cit.* p. 103.
13. John Higley, Desley Deacon, and Don Smart, *Elites in Australia*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979, pp. 63-64, 253-254.
14. Because of the large sampling fraction and the representativeness of the sample, the data are regarded here as a population, and the differences as real.
    For additional information and findings from the survey, see the following: L. J. Saha, "Teaching and Research: A Real or Imagined Conflict", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 9 (2) (1973): 22-77; L. J. Saha, "Recruitment Trends and Academic Inbreeding in an Australian University", *The Australian Journal of Higher Education*, 5 (1), (Dec 1973): 3-14; L. J. Saha, "How Divisive are Left-Wing Academics? — An Australian Test", *Sociology of Education*, 49 (Jan. 1976): 80-89; and L. J. Saha and C. M. Atkinson, "Insiders and Outsiders: Migrant academics in an Australian University", *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, XIX (3-4) (1978): 203-218.
15. L. J. Saha, 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 378-382.
16. The notion of "occupational egoism" is based on the phenomenon that people tend to have a higher opinion of their own occupation than others, who are not pursuing that occupation, have of it. The difference here, however, is interesting and important. Whereas previous studies have compared respondents' own rankings with the actual rankings by others, here the academics **acknowledge**, by their **perceived** rankings of others, their own "occupational egoism", and indeed the disparity between theirs and others' opinions of academic prestige. For a discussion of "occupational egoism", see Anthony P. M. Coxon and Charles L. Jones, *The Images of Occupational Prestige*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1978, pp. 53-55.
17. L. J. Saha, 1975, *op. cit.*, p. 378.
18. The Pearson correlation coefficients reported here are based on an N of 121. A matrix of 16 background and behavioural variables, including those relating to perceptions of prestige, are available from the author.
19. For preliminary results of a study into some effects of the "steady state" on academics, see J. P. Powell and V. S. Shanker, "The Impact of the 'Steady State' on the Professional Lives of Academic Staff", paper presented to the 50th ANZAAS Congress, Adelaide, May 1980.