



Leaving the Ivory Tower: The Causes and Consequences of Departure from Doctoral Study

Barbara E. Lovitts

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Graduate schools have faced attrition rates of approximately 50 percent for the past 40 years. They have tried to address the problem by focusing on student characteristics and by assuming that if they could make better, more informed admissions decisions, attrition rates would drop. Yet high attrition rates persist and may in fact be increasing. Leaving the Ivory Tower thus turns the issue around and asks what is wrong with the structure and process of graduate education. Based on hard evidence drawn from a survey of 816 completers and noncompleters and on interviews with noncompleters, high- and low-Ph.D productive faculty and Directors of Graduate study, this book locates the root cause of attrition in the social structure and cultural organization of graduate education.

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