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Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out **HISTORY**

After the Degree: Recent History PhDs Weigh In On Careers and Graduate School

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out, a recent survey including a national sample of more than 800 history PhDs, found that 6 to 10 years after degree completion 85% held full-time jobs, with another 13% working part-time, in multiple jobs, or self-employed. Moreover, 2/3 of historians were in tenured or tenure-track faculty positions. But early career employment was insecure. More than 1/3 of history PhDs began careers in non-tenure-track faculty positions. When surveyed 12% remained in non-tenure-track faculty positions. About 16% worked in business, government, or non-profit sectors. The insecurity of early career employment and low salaries, respondents reported, can make it difficult to combine a history career with marriage and parenting.

Respondents reflected upon their doctoral education, giving high marks to their programs for “academic rigor,” and training in “critical thinking” and “data analysis and synthesis.” They also identified areas to target for improvement, including training in writing and publishing reports and articles and in how to teach, as well as providing concrete feedback to students on their progress, socializing students into the academic community and having a diverse student population.

To ensure greater success for their students, surveyed historians advised programs to pay attention to interdisciplinary work, and help students learn pragmatic skills such as grant writing, giving job talks, and negotiating salary. They urged programs to address the fact that the academic labor market cannot absorb all the doctorate holders, to be aware of opportunities for historians outside academia, and to recognize the value to society of historians working in diverse employment sectors. Despite the career challenges, historians were passionate about history. Even knowing what they know now about the history job market, more than 80% of respondents would get a PhD in history again.

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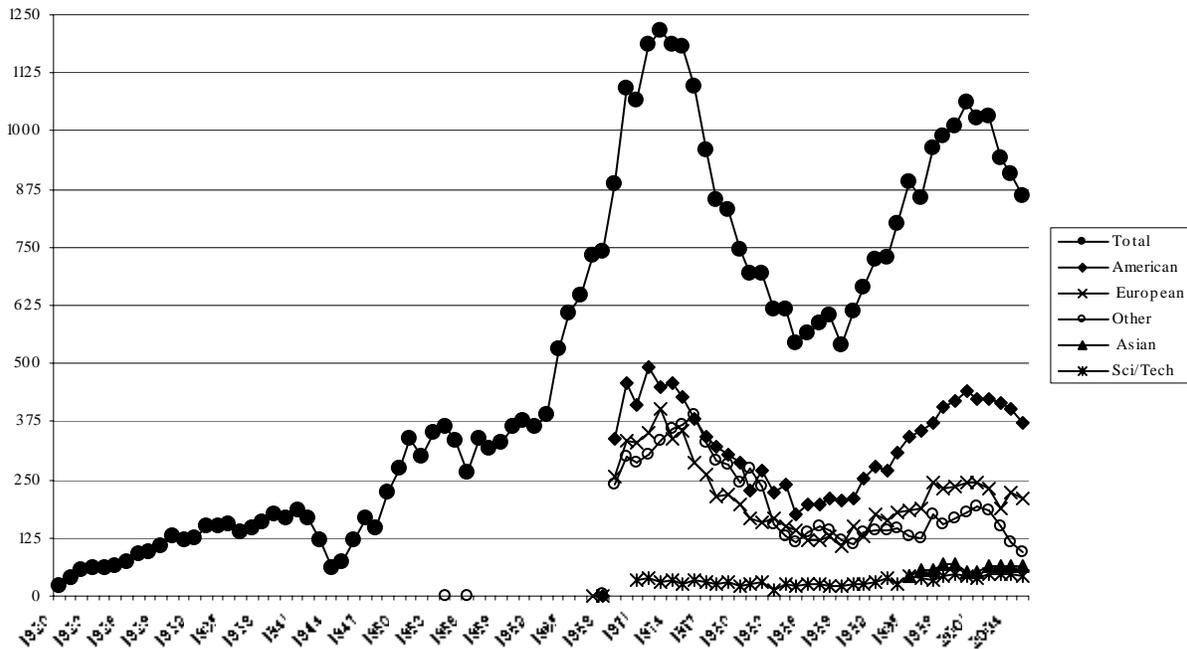
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History PhDs Awarded by Subfield 1920-2004
 (Source: *U.S. Doctorates in the 20th Century*)



INTRODUCTION: IT'S A HISTORIAN'S WORLD

Historians are in demand. Journalists, publishers, and a host of other news and entertainment media call on historians for their perspectives on issues that range from history of religion and politics in the Middle East, to immigrants' experiences in the United States, to analyzing popular culture. Academy-trained historians rightly detest the misrepresentation of the past by history enthusiasts or by people who may alter the facts to increase the entertainment factor. Yet this is exactly why historians should have a voice in public venues. Solutions to international concerns such as a protracted war on terror and the environment begin with historical analyses. To more fully engage in public dialogue, departments and faculty might reconsider the lack of emphasis on careers outside of academia. History PhDs would make a nice fit in numerous government, business, and nonprofit positions that require strong analytical skills and the ability to synthesize information.

History departments have undergone change over the years, particularly after the social

upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, but changes within history departments are slow. Some of the positive changes include the development of African American history, women's history, and social and cultural history that presents the past from the viewpoint of the laboring classes. These developments have transformed the traditional fields of economic and political history. New fields, such as public history have also gained some legitimacy. But for the most part, departments neither discuss the potential for public history, nor offer public history courses. A perusal of the publichistory.org website shows only a handful of universities that offer PhDs in public history, and only Carnegie Mellon offers a PhD in history and policy in an effort to couple historical training to resolving current problems.

Racial /ethnic minorities and women remain underrepresented in history. While almost half of the graduate students are women, female professors still lag behind male professors in achieving tenure or time-to-tenure. A major study by the American Historical Association (AHA)

found that full professors were white (91%) and male (82%). The AHA committee also found that the number of African Americans earning PhDs has declined, while the number of Asian Americans, Latino/a, and Native Americans earning doctorates has increased. The number of women earning history doctorates has also increased over the years. Currently, women make up about 44% of new PhDs, which is up from 15% in 1970 (Bender, Katz, & Palmer, 2004).

Historians pursuing academic careers face obstacles to finding tenure-track positions. Beyond the disparity between the limited number of faculty positions available compared to numbers of doctorates earned annually, the job market demands mobility, which can add to the pressures one faces fresh out of graduate school. The need for mobility, in fact, begins in graduate school, where graduate students are expected to travel to conduct research and present papers at conferences. The demands for mobility only increase after earning a doctorate. Job interviews and one-year appointments keep new PhDs on the move. For the post-modern family, with two income-earners, the job market becomes even more complicated.

Tracking History Careers

In 2006, 973 people earned history doctorates. This marks an upward trend from 924 in 2005 (Hoffer, Hess, Welch, & Williams, 2007, Appendix Table B-1). A recent article in *Perspectives*, the newsletter of the American Historical Association, touted the good news that job openings listed in *Perspectives* kept up with this increase (Townsend, January 2008). Open positions rose from 966 in 2005 to 1,030 in 2006. However, given that it takes three years before most historians have obtained stable employment, the number of people on the job market in any given year includes doctorate holders from earlier cohorts as well. Further, the job listings did not match the areas of specialization. For example 27% of the positions advertised were for U.S. historians, but 40% of all history PhDs conferred in 2006 were in U.S. history. With more than 20% of the PhDs in 2006 awarded in European history, less than

20% of the advertised jobs sought European historians. There were more jobs available than potential candidates in the fields of Asian and African history, and the catch-all category of World, Thematic, or Other history. Latin American positions registered slightly below the number of new Latin Americanists, with 5% of new PhDs specializing in Latin American history and just under 5% of jobs advertised during the 2006–2007 year in *Perspectives* being for Latin Americanists (see also Williams, 2008).

So what happens to the nearly 1,000 people a year who earn a doctorate in history? Would they do it all over again despite the difficult job market? What kinds of jobs do they get? How do they cope with challenges of combining work and family? How well did their graduate education prepare them for their actual jobs?

Tracking doctorate holders' experiences in establishing careers, presenting assessments of graduate school training, and analyzing work and family issues offers valuable information for history departments. Recent studies on graduate education in history include the American Historical Association's study drawing on perspectives of graduate faculty and Golde & Dore's (2001) survey of current students. *Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out* (SS5), a recent national survey including more than 800 historians, adds the perspectives of recent graduates to these studies. The AHA's assessment of history departments' training of doctoral students, published in *The Education of Historians for the TwentyFirst Century* (Bender, Katz, & Palmer, 2004), was the first review undertaken since 1958, when the organization conducted an examination aimed at increasing the number of people earning history PhDs. The new AHA study discusses departmental culture and the state of the field, asserting that "graduate faculties must assume a good deal of responsibility for sustaining a narrow conception of appropriate careers for historians" (8).

Golde and Dore's (2001) *At Cross Purposes: What the Experiences of Today's Doctoral Students Reveal about Doctoral Education* surveyed doctoral students from eleven arts and sciences program (including history) from twenty-seven institutions,

finding that training fell short of students' wants and needs, failing to train them for the jobs they may land after graduate school. Among historians, 70% of the graduate students indicated that they were currently interested in pursuing an academic career, but only 52% believed this goal was realistic. Students also indicated they were drawn to graduate study by their love of teaching, but felt they were not being trained to teach (Golde, 2001).

The SS5 survey differs from both the AHA's and Golde and Dore's study in that it asked PhDs to evaluate their training six to ten years after they earned their PhD, enabling the survey to provide more comprehensive data about history PhDs' preparation for employment in academia, business, government, and the non-profit sector. The survey also provides information on career paths for the essential years of transition from temporary employment to more permanent employment. SS5 collected data on career outcomes, and asked graduates to evaluate their programs as well as to offer advice to history departments and prospective doctoral students.

Survey Methods and Sample Demographics

Social Science PhDs–Five+ Years Out (SS5) is a nationally representative survey of PhDs in anthropology, communication, geography, history, political science, and sociology who earned their degrees between July 1995 and June 1999.¹ Surveyed in 2005-2006, respondents provided evaluations of graduate education, and five or more years of career path data. For the time frame chosen, the survey sample was drawn from all PhDs in the six selected disciplines from 65 doctoral-granting institutions; 3,025 respondents yielded a response rate of 45%. The survey was conducted by the Center for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education

(CIRGE) at the University of Washington, Seattle and funded by the Ford Foundation.

1. SS5 Respondents by Field	
Anthropology	432
Communication	343
Geography	164
History	839
Political Science	701
CIRGE, <i>Social Science PhDs–Five+ Years Out</i>	

Men account for 51% of the respondents, and 87% of respondents reporting race identified as “white” (Appendix Table 1). A non-response analysis comparing the survey respondents to the population of all PhDs from the 65 participating institutions reveals small but statistically significant differences between the sample and non-respondents, suggesting that respondents slightly over-represent women, whites, and the unmarried. There is also an overrepresentation of respondents in academia due to the process of contacting people. For details on methods, survey design and administration and sample demographics, please refer to CIRGE Report 2007-01 (Picciano et al., 2007).

Open-ended questions invited narrative responses. Survey participants offered advice to graduate programs and students considering a doctoral program. They commented on work and family tradeoffs and job satisfaction. These answers offer more detail of people's experiences in graduate school, as well as in the job market, and in careers. Open-ended responses were coded to identify common themes. Profiles of individuals presented in this report are compiled from narrative responses and survey items.

¹ During this time frame, the participating 65 U.S. institutions conferred 10,882 PhD degrees in the six disciplines, making up 69% of all U.S. doctorates in these fields (National Opinion Research Center (NORC), special tabulation.)

Part 1: CAREER OUTCOMES

First Jobs Post-PhD & Jobs at Survey

Historians often began their post-PhD careers in part-time or contingent positions. For instance, at 6 months post-PhD 2/3 of historians reported holding full-time jobs, 13% worked part-time, while another 15% were self-employed or held multiple jobs. Five percent reported being unemployed. After more than five years in the workforce, 85% held full-time jobs and only 3% reported being unemployed (Table 2). Similarly, there was a trend away from non-tenure-track faculty positions into tenured and tenure-track positions in the first 6+ years of post-PhD career. When surveyed, after six or more years in the work force, 35% reported having tenure, while 30% were on track to tenure. Almost 12% of survey participants were working as non-tenure-track faculty; about 13% were working at nonprofits, government, or business jobs. Typically candidates held non-tenure-track jobs for a while, with 36% reporting first jobs in non-tenure-track faculty positions. In the time from

first to last job the number of tenured faculty tripled, while tenure-track faculty remained steady, and non-tenure-track faculty numbers decreased from the first to last job. History PhDs employed in business, government, or non-profit jobs (“BGN”) all increased, cumulatively 16% of the graduates wound up in BGN employment at the time of the survey (Table 3).

3. History—First and Last Jobs		
	First Job (n= 643)	Last Job (n =729)
	% Respondents	
Tenured faculty	8.7	35.3
Tenure-track faculty	30.2	30.4
Non-tenure-track faculty	36.1	12.0
Postdoc	5.8	(2)
Academic other	5.9	5.7
Non-profit	5.0	7.3
Government	4.0	4.5
Business/Industry	4.4	4.6
CIRGE, <i>Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out</i>		

2. History—Employment Status 6 Months Post-PhD and at Survey				
	6 Months Post-PhD		At Time of Survey (6 to 10 years later)	
	%	N	%	N
Full-time	66	484	85	627
Part-time	13	97	5	34
Self-Employed	1	8	2	13
Unemployed	5	35	3	20
Multiple jobs	15	111	6	41
	100%	735	100	735
CIRGE, <i>Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out</i>				

Career Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one measure of educational outcomes. SS5 included an inventory of 18 items to measure career satisfaction. On each item respondents indicated they were “very satisfied,” “somewhat satisfied,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” or “very dissatisfied.” (Not applicable was also an

option.) Factor analysis reduced the 18 items to four indexes: (1) satisfaction with the work itself, (2) with income and resources, (3) work/life integration, and (4) work/family balance (applicable only to coupled respondents). (See the appendix for details on items in indexes.)

Respondent Profiles 1, 2, and 3

1. Getting to Tenure Track. Diana Sims* earned her PhD in just over 7 ½ years. She worked full-time in a non-tenure-track faculty position for two years before finding a tenure-track position. Sims felt her program was “adequate,” but rated the academic career preparation “poor.” In her current position, Sims ranked thinking critically, analyzing and synthesizing data, writing proposals, interdisciplinary work, presentation skills, and working with people from diverse backgrounds as “very important.” Sims noted career satisfaction in terms of the intellectual challenge, job security, and salary. She registered less satisfaction with opportunities for career growth, contribution to society, use of her doctoral education, and prestige of the job. She was satisfied with the career opportunities available to her spouse. In open-ended comments, she stated that when her first book was published, she was “too old to have biological children,” but grateful that her marriage brought with it “terrific” stepchildren.

**Diana Sims is a pseudonym.*

2. Non-Faculty Employment in the Academy. Timothy Reese completed his doctorate in 7.75 years. He spent some of the first year after graduation unemployed before he went to work part-time as non-tenure-track faculty. He then secured employment as an archivist/library staff member. Reese noted that he was “somewhat satisfied” with his current career in terms of the intellectual challenge, the use of his PhD education, and its fit with his ability and interests. He was “very satisfied” with his contribution to society, job security, and the work environment’s tolerance for diverse types of people. Skills “very important” in his work were thinking critically, writing reports and articles, managing people and budgets, and presentation skills.” Reese rated his graduate education “adequate” overall, registering concern that students need to be exposed to a wide variety of career options so they don’t “drift by default into endless adjunct jobs.” Reese and his wife delayed having their first child and his wife moved to accommodate his career.

**Timothy Reese is a pseudonym.*

3. Forging a Career Outside of Academia. Valerie Sanchez* was unemployed for the first three years after earning her doctorate. Since 2000, Sanchez has worked at non-profit organizations. In 2005, she was at her third non-profit job and had been there for two years. Sanchez described her job as very satisfying in terms of the intellectual challenge, contribution to society, autonomy, and potential for growth. She also affirmed that relationships had been put on hold during graduate school and that her involvement in her current career also made having a relationship problematic.

**Valerie Sanchez is a pseudonym.*

Of the four career satisfaction indexes, satisfaction with the work itself was most likely to elicit “very satisfied,” with most responses being at least “somewhat satisfied.” The index reflecting satisfaction with income and resources at work was least likely to elicit “very satisfied” responses, however about 2/3 of responses to this index were at least “somewhat satisfied.” Work/life integration elicited the highest proportion of responses falling on the satisfied side of the scale, with 45% being “very satisfied” and 40% “somewhat satisfied” (see Appendix Table 2).

In general, these aggregate indexes indicate historians are usually at least “somewhat satisfied” with most aspects of their careers. A

closer look at individual items and open-ended responses (see below), however, indicates significant difficulties combining work and family with PhD careers in history.

Income & Debt

Tenure-track and non-tenure-track history faculty earn the lowest annual median salary among the six social sciences: \$50,000 and \$45,000, respectively (Table 4). Persons employed in non-faculty academic work and BGN positions earned substantially more than history faculty. Academic other positions brought in \$56,000 annually, while BGN employees earned \$70,000. Among tenure-track faculty, political scientists

earned the highest median salary at \$62,000 annually. The highest earners came from the BGN sector, where communication PhDs earned \$94,000 annually.

Responses to the open-ended questions of the SS5 survey do not indicate much concern

regarding debt incurred during PhD education. Table 5 shows that almost half of history PhDs leave graduate school with no debt related to their PhD education. But for the 55% who graduate with debt, debt compounds the financial pressure of earning low salaries.

4. Median Annual Income by Field and Last Job				
	Ladder Faculty	NTT Faculty	Academic Other	BGN
Anthropology	55,000	48,800	51,500	55,000
Communication	60,000	60,000	65,000	94,000
Geography	59,000	47,600	45,500	80,000
History	55,000	40,500	56,000	70,000
Political Science	62,000	58,000	73,700	90,000
Sociology	62,000	58,6000	65,000	78,000
Total	60,000	50,000	60,000	75,000
CIRGE, Social Science PhDs–Five+ Years Out				

5. Respondents (%) by Debt Related to PhD Education and Field							
	Anthro	Comm	Geog	History	Pol. Sci	Soc	Total
None	44	48	58	45	47	46	47
≤ \$10,000	18	16	15	20	20	21	19
10,001 – 20,000	12	10	11	12	13	11	12
20,001 – 30,000	10	9	11	10	9	9	10
30,001 – 40,000	7	7	2	6	6	4	6
40,001 – 50,000	4	6	2	3	2	4	3
≥ 50,001	5	4	1	4	4	5	4
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
CIRGE, Social Science PhDs–Five+ Years Out							

Work/Family Tradeoffs

Finding employment and meeting familial needs poses a big problem for history PhDs. When evaluating their satisfaction with various aspects of their careers, historians were likely to claim satisfaction with their contribution to society, but to be only “somewhat satisfied” or “somewhat dissatisfied” with salaries, opportunities for career growth, and opportunities for spouses/partners where they lived. The open-ended “tradeoffs” question elicited impassioned responses. Historians wrote

about postponing children, living separated from partners, and feeling that being involved in family life decreased academic productivity. Because work/life balance has a significant impact on career satisfaction and quality of life, we have included a number of responses below.

My family has been very rewarding, even though my children demand much time and even though my wife travels considerably to serve out-of-state clients. Her professional satisfaction and the added income has

improved our home. As a result, I have not been as productive in the time since completion of my PhD as I believed I would be when I finished. The institution that I work for, however, emphasizes teaching and allows for balance between home and work. I am largely satisfied with my career, and I would rather have a strong home than a stellar publication record and a broken home.

What's to say? They've [work-family tradeoffs] been excruciatingly difficult. For one position, I had to live at a distance of thousands of miles from my partner - with consequences that have still not been fully sorted out. Although I was older and not able to have children when we got together, any notion of even thinking about adopting children was short-circuited by the vagaries of the academic job market. It's not that it was a huge thing - but it would have been nice to feel we had the choice - or, rather, not a lady or the tiger choice.

It took about five years for both my husband and I to secure full-time jobs that we like in one geographic area that we like. However, neither one of us

individually has our ideal job, but the likelihood of collectively finding a better situation seems infinitesimally low. Also, we postponed having a child a bit longer than I would have liked because my husband did not feel secure in his career until recently. In the end, though, I admit the wait may have been good.

I have an academic schedule and my wife has a 9-5 job that often entails early morning meetings, evening events, and periodic business trips abroad. As a result, I do considerably more than 50% of the childrearing and housework. Taking on these roles has severely limited my scholarly productivity over the past three years.

Clearly I have never gone on the national [job] market because I agreed to try first in the area near my husband's job. As luck would have it I found a tenure-track job 20 minutes from home after about three years of working...I got in as a temporary worker first. Clearly there is a trade-off, even more so now that I have children. I limit my overnight travel or I take my girls along. But that clearly makes me a better person even if it limits my options a bit.

6. History—Job-Related Mobility of Respondents and Partners*				
	Did not report a move	Respondent moved for partner's job	Partner moved for respondent's Job	Moved for jobs of both
<i>Partner less educated than respondent</i>				
Women (143)	47%	10%	36%	7%
Men (262)	38%	7%	49%	6%
<i>Partner has prof. or PhD degree</i>				
Women (122)	43%	21%	20%	16%
Men (88)	44%	19%	28%	9%
<i>Total</i>				
Women (233)	45%	15%	29%	11%
Men (361)	38%	10%	44%	7%
*Respondent or partner moved because of the other's job since respondent earned the PhD. Only includes respondents ever partnered, spouse educational status coded since PhD award (1) partner never had professional or PhD degree and (2) partner ever had professional or PhD degree. CIRGE, Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out				

7. History, Gender, Age, and Timing of Relationship and Parental Status by Job at Survey					
	Ladder Faculty	NTT Faculty	Academic Other	BGN	100% (n)
Gender					
Women	68%	13%	6%	13%	100% (335)
Men	64%	11%	6%	19%	100% (410)
Age at PhD Award (years)					
< 30	77%	5%	5%	14%	100% (124)
31 - 40	65%	13%	6%	17%	100% (496)
> 40	60%	17%	6%	17%	100% (137)
Marital Status At PhD Award					
Married/partnered Men	66%	11%	5%	18%	100% (277)
Women	70%	12%	6%	11%	100% (219)
Not married/partnered Men	61%	11%	6%	22%	100% (99)
Women	68%	10%	7%	15%	100% (82)
Marital Status at Survey					
Married/partnered Men	67%	9%	6%	19%	100% (310)
Women	69%	12%	7%	12%	100% (229)
Not married/partnered Men	56%	20%	3%	21%	100% (66)
Women	71%	10%	7%	12%	100% (72)
Parental Status					
Parent before PhD award	58%	17%	5%	20%	100% (163)
Parent at survey (but not yet at award)	73%	9%	5%	12%	100% (254)
Never a Parent	66%	9%	7%	18%	100% (249)

CIRGE, *Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out*

The narrative and numeric data suggest that most academic careers are decidedly not family friendly.

Upward mobility in the academic labor market requires geographic mobility. Job-related mobility of respondents and their partners is marked by gender differences. Among women, 29% reported that their partner had moved for the respondent's career. Fully 44% of men pulled a partner with them to make a job-related move. The educational level of the respondent's spouse also had an impact. Among both men and women, having a spouse with a PhD or other kind of doctorate (e.g., J.D., M.D.) decreased the chance that the partner would move for the respondent's job. The impact on mobility was greatest among men, with 49% of men whose spouses were less educated pulling their partner

along on a job-related move, but only 28% of men whose spouse's were more highly educated doing so (Table 6).

The data in Table 7 suggest that parental status has more impact on productivity and career mobility than gender or marriage. Men and women were about equally likely to be in ladder faculty positions when surveyed. Of those who were parents before earning their doctorate, 58% held ladder faculty positions when surveyed, compared to 73% of those who first became parents after completing their PhD program and 66% of graduates who had not yet become parents. In contrast, marital status was not related to career outcomes. Among both men and women, those who were married or partnered when their PhD was awarded were at least as likely to end up in ladder faculty positions as

their single counterparts. Looking at marital status at the time of the survey reveals that married women were as likely as single women to be in ladder faculty positions, but married men were more likely than single men to hold ladder faculty positions.

This information also points up the fact that departments have not kept pace with changes in family life. It is rare that one parent, for example, can afford to stay at home with the children full-time. This was the wife's responsibility in the past. The wife was also helpful in many other areas that helped support a historian-husband's career. Pick up older history books and thumb through the acknowledgments and the reader will more often than not find that the wife helped with research and editing, and typed various drafts of the manuscript. This contribution significantly boosted productivity. The post-modern family functions with two careers and if children are involved, as the statements above testify, it can slow down productivity and tenure.

Part 2: EVALUATION OF PHD TRAINING

SS5 respondents assessed their training and experiences after working for several years. This approach allowed graduates to evaluate their education in light of their actual careers. SS5 asked respondents to evaluate their PhD programs on specific items such as support in preparing for the qualifying exam, and the quality of advising and mentoring they received from their dissertation chair. Respondents also rated the importance of particular skills in their current work and the quality of training received during their PhD education in those skills. This part of the survey, in addition, asked both open-ended and closed-ended questions to gather multiple kinds of information on the issues surrounding program assessment.

Hindsight: Would History PhDs Choose the Same Path?

Despite the disgruntlement expressed in comments quoted above, 68% of respondents attested that they would still pursue a PhD in the same subfield of history if they had to do it all

over again; 14% would get a history PhD, but choose a different subfield (Table 8). In other words, more than 80% would still get a PhD in history even knowing what they know now about careers in history. Only geography PhDs, with 84% stating they would earn a PhD in the same field, ranked higher among the six social sciences. This underscores the significance of motivations for entering a doctoral program in history: passion for the subject. Most respondents (88.5%) indicated they were motivated to pursue a doctorate in history because they had an intense interest in the field. However, this doesn't mean that job opportunities were irrelevant to them, 57% also stated that the PhD was a necessary credential for their desired career.

SS5 participants' desire to pursue an advanced degree in history seems to alleviate the many challenges and disadvantages that occur once people have their degrees in hand. In light of historians' passion for their subject, what do they think about how well their PhD programs trained them?

8. History—Knowing what you know now, if you had to do it over again, what would you do?		
	%	(n)
Still get a PhD in history and in your subfield.	68	(376)
Get a PhD in history, but in a different sub-field.	13	(74)
Get a PhD, but in a different field.	7	(37)
Get a professional degree instead	8	(44)
Get a masters degree instead	1	(7)
Not get a graduate degree.	2	(13)
Total		(551)
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Using PhD Education on the Job

SS5 asked historians to evaluate the skills they learned in graduate school by indicating which ones have proved useful to them in their careers. One set of questions asked about their use of specific types of knowledge gained during PhD

studies. Nearly half (42%) stated they “often” use knowledge of their dissertation topic in their current job; 32% do so “sometimes”; and 19% claimed they “rarely” use this kind of knowledge; 6% checked “never.” Moreover, specific skills gained during the PhD process were ranked by most to be “very important” in their current work (Table 9). The ability to think critically, present information, and gather, analyze, and synthesize data topped the skills labeled as very important to more than ¾ and as many as 89% of history respondents.

Some of the skills register as almost equally important for the three different job sectors (faculty, academic other, BGN). For instance, critical thinking was rated very important by 90% of those in non-faculty academic positions, 93% of faculty, and 72% of those working in BGN sectors. Data analysis and synthesis likewise registered as very important for 74% of faculty, 81% of non-faculty academic employees, and

69% of those in BGN sectors. Working with diverse groups was also similarly likely to be very important across the three job categories. Like the numerical data, the open-ended responses demonstrate similarities across job types in needed skills. Particular proficiencies in learning to negotiate salary, presenting, and sharpening writing skills benefit those who work inside as well as outside the academy.

There are also notable differences in the skill sets used in each job type. Managing people and budgets is much more likely to be important for those in non-faculty academic positions and for BGN sector work than for faculty. Team work was rated very important by 2/3 of non-faculty academic employees, ¾ of those in BGN sectors, but only 43% of faculty. Writing and publishing articles is more often very important for faculty, and grant writing is least likely to be critical for those in BGN sector work.

9. History—Respondents (%) Rating Skill “Very Important” in Current Job vs. Quality of Training “Excellent” by Job at Survey								
	Faculty*		Academic other		BGN		Total	
	Skill Very Important	Training Excellent						
Critical thinking	93%	86%	90%	85%	72%	75%	89%	84%
Data analysis/synthesis	74%	67%	81%	69%	69%	57%	74%	66%
Research design	37%	33%	36%	29%	27%	19%	36%	31%
Write, publish reports, articles	69%	35%	50%	28%	42%	35%	64%	35%
Working with diverse groups	51%	32%	52%	24%	63%	21%	53%	30%
Interdisciplinary contexts	46%	39%	65%	35%	53%	19%	48%	36%
Presenting	89%	39%	69%	28%	76%	29%	85%	37%
Grant writing	37%	22%	42%	19%	29%	15%	36%	21%
Collaborating in a team	43%	10%	67%	8%	75%	7%	50%	9%
Managing people and budgets	26%	4%	68%	11%	44%	5%	32%	5%

*Includes tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty. Academic other includes all non-faculty academic sectore employment. BGN = business, government, or non-profit sector.
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Respondent Profiles

4. A Non-Traditional Student Looks Back on His Program. Tom Laughlin entered graduate school at the age of 42. Laughlin attested that due to his age and his previous career in the military, most faculty did not believe he was a serious student. He received more guidance from faculty outside the history department. After graduating in 1998, Laughlin worked multiple jobs. Within a year, he was working part-time as non-tenure-track faculty. This later became full-time employment and he was still working at this institution when he took the survey in 2005. He evaluated his program as “adequate” in most categories, although he remarked that the academic rigor and the academic community was “excellent”; he also gave high marks to the program’s encouragement to take his own initiative in shaping his academics. When evaluating his mentor, Laughlin was “somewhat dissatisfied” with the quality of advice he received on his dissertation topic and the guidance he received from his dissertation chair in completing the PhD. He was “somewhat dissatisfied” with the chair’s support of his career decisions and the overall quality of mentoring by his dissertation chair. Laughlin recommended that departments require students to take non-western courses. He also encouraged graduate students to take non-western classes and learn a non-western language. He suggested that focusing on non-western history (U.S. and European history) would give graduates an edge in the job market.

-Tom Laughlin is a pseudonym to protect the respondent’s privacy.

5. Race and Academia.

Finishing his PhD in just under six years, Ron Albertson landed a tenure-track position two years later. He rates his program, overall, as “excellent.” Albertson was “very satisfied” with his mentor’s advice in developing his dissertation topic and the guidance provided to complete his PhD. He also highly rated his chair’s support in finding a faculty position. In terms of his current job satisfaction, Albertson was only “somewhat satisfied” with the intellectual challenge and opportunities of his job. But he was “very satisfied” with the autonomy of his work, his geographic location, and his position’s stability. In the open-ended portion of the survey, Albertson remarked that “racism is a problem,” but it did not prevent him from “achieving goals and accomplishing” what he wanted to. He advised prospective graduate students to “Love what you are doing,” or don’t pursue graduate school. Albertson did not comment on tradeoffs between his academic career and family.

-Ron Albertson is a pseudonym to protect the respondent’s privacy.

Mismatches: Importance of Skills vs. Quality of Training

Comparing the importance rating of particular skills with ratings of the quality of training (formal or informal) during graduate study, reveals some mismatches (Table 9). Although 64% of historians rated writing and publishing reports and articles as critical in their work, only 35% felt the training (formal or informal) they had received as PhD students was “excellent.” Similarly a much higher proportion of historians rated working in interdisciplinary contexts, collaborating in a team, and managing people and budgets as “very important” than rated the quality of training in these skills as “excellent.” Both presenting and writing and publishing could be considered central to goals of traditional PhD education—producing academic historians who successfully fill faculty positions—

so the low proportion of “excellent” ratings on these items is especially troubling.

Falling Short in Teacher Training

History departments appear to fall short in providing teaching training.² More than 90% of history respondents taught at least once during their PhD program. Of these, slightly more than 1/3 (38%) had formal instruction in teaching available to them and fewer than half (46%) had any kind of formal supervision or evaluation of their teaching. For teaching assistants, it could be argued that training and supervision occurs informally through working with the professor

² Golde and Dore (2001) also found students felt they weren’t being trained well in teaching.

responsible for the class. In fact, half (52%) of historians prepared and delivered at least one course on their own during graduate school. Of these, half (51%) reported that formal instruction in teaching was available to them and 2/3 (66%) had experienced some kind of formal supervision or evaluation of their teaching.

Evaluation of Program Elements

Another set of SS5 items asked directly about elements of the PhD program. Table 10 displays the results for historians. Almost ¾ of respondents rated their program “excellent” for academic rigor, nearly 2/3 felt programs were clear on the requirements for the degree, and more than half felt that “overall program quality” was excellent. However, Table 10 also suggests that departments seeking to improve graduate training might begin by making sure graduate students are receiving concrete feedback on their

10. History—Evaluation of Program Elements—% Respondents by Rating (Excellent (E), Adequate (Ad), or Poor (P))			
<i>Support in Learning</i>	E	Ad	Poor
Clear program requirements	59	37	4
Feedback on student progress	35	53	12
Socializing students into an academic community	31	46	23
Preparation for qualifying exam	44	47	9
Support and guidance during dissertation writing	45	39	16
<i>Overall Program Quality</i>			
Financial support	34	46	22
Having a diverse student population	25	53	21
Academic rigor	72	26	2
Overall program quality	51	45	4
<i>Career Preparation</i>			
Academic career preparation	31	42	27
Non-academic career preparation	5	27	69

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Other areas in need of improvement are socializing students into an academic community progress. Only 35% of historians felt their program had done an excellent job in this regard. and increasing the diversity of the student population.

When people were specifically asked about academic career preparation and non-academic career preparation, responses demonstrate that faculty and departments could do more to foster particular skills such as teaching, presentation, publishing, helping students develop connections within the academic community, and creating opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Mentoring by the Dissertation Advisor

About half of PhD historians reflected back upon the mentoring they received from their dissertation advisor and considered themselves “very satisfied” in the following dimensions: advice developing the dissertation topic, guidance to complete the PhD, support in the job search, support of career decisions, and “overall” mentoring. Quality of help in publishing stands out as an area to target for improvement. About 2/3 of respondents were merely “somewhat satisfied,” or “somewhat dissatisfied,” or even simply “dissatisfied” (Table 11).

Satisfaction with mentoring by the dissertation advisor varied by job at survey, suggesting that graduates who did not end up in tenured or tenure-track faculty positions may have received less support or less useful advice in their job search. Whereas 56% of ladder faculty felt “very satisfied” with this type of mentoring, among non-tenure-track faculty and BGN employees only 26% were “very satisfied” as were only 1/3 of respondents in “academic other” positions. Similarly ladder faculty were much more likely to be “very satisfied” with their dissertation advisor’s support of their career decisions than were those in non-tenure-track faculty positions, non-faculty academic and BGN sector employment.

11. History—Satisfaction with Mentoring from Dissertation Chair by Job at Survey—% “Very Satisfied”					
	Ladder faculty	NTT faculty	Academic other	BGN	Total
Quality of advice developing topic	59	46	58	55	57
Quality of guidance to complete PhD	59	49	54	51	56
Quality of help publishing	35	19	23	21	30
Support in job search	56	26	33	26	47
Support of career decisions	60	34	44	35	52
Overall quality of mentoring	54	35	36	44	49
BGN = business, government, or non-profit sector. CIRGE, <i>Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out</i>					

The “Grim Realities” of the Academic Job Market

Not surprisingly, most survey respondents registered dissatisfaction with the “grim realities of the academic job market” in the open-ended section of the SS5 survey. Many lamented that history departments continue to admit too many graduate students and avoid addressing the proverbial elephant in almost every history department: the academic job market will not bear the number of new PhDs. A majority of survey participants articulated some version of what one respondent expressed when urging departments to “either cut down the number of graduate students or start promoting non-academic jobs. American universities are turning out far more historians than they can ever hope to employ.” This person also stated, however, that the number of PhDs was not necessarily negative. “The problem,” he asserted, “is the widespread sense within the university that academic jobs are the only jobs worth having and the only jobs for which the university prepares its graduates.” This sentiment was echoed throughout the narrative responses—usually in emphatic terms, such as the exclamation to “Wake up and smell the miniscule academic job market!”

On the other hand, a tenured faculty survey participant advocated raising the bar for accepting graduate students. According to this respondent, history departments “take too many mediocre students who are unlikely to get jobs.” This occurs because senior faculty feel comfortable with “white, male, fairly traditional subjects.” But he also suggests that departments might “consider interdisciplinary collaborations” and keep in mind that “there are MANY [participant’s emphasis] ways to use a degree in history and only a few of them include university teaching.”

CONCLUSION

Summing Up Advice

This section presents a summation of advice from the open-ended section of SS5. The selections for advice to students and advice to programs were chosen because the advice was repeated in many of the responses and therefore are considered representative in their respective suggestions to students and programs. The quotation included for summing up the graduate school experience demonstrates many survey

participants' urging to programs to train students for jobs outside of academe and also shows the potential for a variety of non-academic employment for a history doctorate.

Advice to students: *A Harvard professor—I wish I could remember which one—said in an interview a few years back that while an advanced degree in other professions (law, medicine) is a ticket to entry in that profession, a Ph.D. is like a lottery ticket. I think that sums it up... For women who want to have children, think about when that would be and when you would be in your first tenure-track job, and look very hard at whether a timing/sequencing that you can live with seems possible. If you do decide to go for a Ph.D. in spite of all this, you have to be very entrepreneurial from the beginning. Think about what kind of institution you would want to teach in, and what fields those institutions hire in. Think about what type of publications will be most advantageous, etc. Stay aware of opportunities in whatever non-academic fields are attractive to you.*

—From “Advice to Graduate Students”; survey participant was employed in a non-tenure-track position at time of survey.

Advice to Programs: *Attention to interdisciplinary study and work would be beneficial to graduate students. Don't short change pragmatic issues: how to write a grant proposal, how to write a letter of application, how to give a job talk, how to negotiate salary, how to get your work published.*

—From “Advice to Programs”; survey participant was employed in a non-tenure-track position at time of survey.

Summing up the Graduate School Experience: *Completing a PhD was the single smartest thing I did. It has given me a critical advantage many times in selecting jobs. It prepared me for a varied career where I can teach, consult, analyze, and write.... [My institution] gave me a tremendous asset for which I am very grateful.*

—From “End” comments; survey participant did not note employment at time of survey.

Historians in the Future

Elizabeth Cady Stanton once observed that “To throw obstacles in the way of a complete education is like putting out the eyes” (Stanton, 1892). The sentiment speaks well to envisioning the future of the field of history. It is time to begin thinking more broadly about historians' place in the world—and therefore how historians are trained. Why keep trained historians so narrowly focused on academe when their skills and insight might serve a larger public purpose? Besides, there seems to be no shortage of history graduate students to fill academic as well as non-academic positions. For future history graduate students perhaps the key terms associated with advanced history degrees will not always be “lottery ticket” and “relocatable.”

History PhDs demonstrate a deep commitment to their field. Despite the “grim realities” they face once they earn their degrees, an astonishing 81% claim they would do it all over again. The results of the SS5 survey show that history departments would benefit from reassessing some program goals and revamping the training of graduate students to suit both academic and non-academic careers. More profoundly, the survey responses signal that history departments need to value non-academic careers equally with those inside the academy. This requires a shift in department culture to envision and institute a wider range of opportunities for PhDs. Such changes do not mean the dismantling of the positive aspects or academic rigor of doctoral education; rather, it means expanding the prospects of PhDs, which in turn expands the role of history departments in society.

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APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS & INDEXES

	% Women (n)	Mean age at PhD in years (n)		% White (n)
		Men	Women	
Anthropology	58 (422)	37.0	37.7	88.1 (360)
Communication	56 (332)	36.7	36.6	86.1 (281)
Geography	34 (158)	37.1	36.1	86.1 (144)
History	45 (823)	35.3	36.2	89.7 (712)
Political Science	37 (681)	33.5	32.0	86.9 (587)
Sociology	63 (532)	35.3	35.4	83.7 (459)
All fields	49 (2,948)	35.2	33.7	87.1 (2,543)

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Principle components analysis of response patterns on 18 job satisfaction items revealed four underlying factors. SPSS varimax rotation method was used; resulting factors met a minimum eigen value criteria of 1.0. Varimax is an orthogonal rotation method that minimizes the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor, which simplifies the interpretation of factors. The items contributing to each of the four factors are as shown below.

Factor 1 – The Work Itself

Use of doctoral education
Intellectual challenge of work
Contribution to society
Level of responsibility
Career growth
Autonomy of work
Prestige of organization
Recognition for my work
Job is a good fit with my abilities and interests

Factor 2 – Income & Resources

Salary
Resources
Job security/stability

Factor 3 – Work-Life Integration

Work-life balance and enjoyment
Flexibility of work

Support/tolerance for all types of people

Factor 4 – Work-Family Balance (only for partnered respondents)

Geographic location
Proximity to extended family
Opportunities for spouse or partner in the area

	Satisfied		Dissatisfied	
	Very	Somewhat	Somewhat	Very
Work	46%	38%	12%	4%
Income & Resources	31%	37%	22%	10%
Work/Life	45%	40%	12%	4%
Work/Family	39%	32%	18%	11%

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Participating Universities

Arizona State University	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	UC - Los Angeles	University of Nebraska at Lincoln
Boston College	Michigan State University	UC - Riverside	University of North Carolina
Brandeis University	New York University	UC - San Diego	University of Oregon
Catholic University of America	Northwestern University	UC - Santa Barbara	University of Pennsylvania
City University of New York	Ohio State University	UC - Santa Cruz	University of Pittsburgh
Clark University	Pennsylvania State University	University of Chicago	University of Rochester
Columbia University	Princeton University	University of Colorado at Boulder	University of Tennessee
Cornell University	Purdue University	University of Connecticut	University of Texas at Austin
Duke University	Rutgers University	University of Georgia	University of Virginia
Emory University	Southern Illinois University	University of Illinois	University of Washington
Florida State University	Stanford University	University of Iowa	University of Wisconsin
Harvard University	State University of New York at Buffalo	University of Kansas	Washington State University
Howard University	Syracuse University	University of Maryland	Washington University in St. Louis
Indiana University	UC - Berkeley	University of Massachusetts	Wayne State University
Johns Hopkins University	UC - Davis	University of Michigan	Yale University
Kent State University	UC - Irvine	University of Minnesota	
Louisiana State University		University of Missouri	

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The Center for Innovation and Research in Graduate Education (CIRGE) at the University of Washington, Seattle is the first U.S. research center devoted to the study of doctoral education. CIRGE's work enables graduate programs to respond effectively to the most challenging issues in graduate education today: accountability, internationalization, interdisciplinary work, and the increase in dual-career couples in the workforce. CIRGE is internationally recognized among program leaders, funders and policy makers as a trusted source of insightful analyses and practical information for improving graduate education.

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Social Science PhDs—Five+ Years Out is the third national survey of doctorate recipients directed by CIRGE Principal Investigator Maresi Nerad. *PhDs—Ten Years Later*, fielded in academic year 1996 - 1997 and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Science Foundation, surveyed biochemists, computer scientists, electrical engineers, English PhDs, mathematicians and political scientists. *PhDs in Art History—Over a Decade Later*, fielded in 2001 and funded by a grant from the Getty Grant Program, surveyed art historians. Results of these studies are available through the CIRGE website at www.cirge.washington.edu.

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