



The Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship:

A Review of Three Decades, 1981-2011


THE WOODROW WILSON
National Fellowship Foundation

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation
5 Vaughn Drive, Suite 300 • Princeton, NJ 08540 • www.woodrow.org

The Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation
35 Park Place • Princeton, NJ 08542 • www.newcombefoundation.org

The Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship:

A Review of Three Decades, 1981-2011

May 2011



THE WOODROW WILSON
National Fellowship Foundation

**The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation
5 Vaughn Drive, Suite 300 • Princeton, NJ 08540
609-452-7007 • www.woodrow.org**

for
**The Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation
35 Park Place • Princeton, NJ 08542
609-924-7022 • www.newcombefoundation.org**

At the time of this report's publication, the Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship is administered at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation under the purview of James W. Fraser, Senior Vice President for Programs. Cynthia R. Daniels serves as Program Director. Susan E. Billmaier, Assistant Program Director, developed the survey on which this report was based, collected and analyzed additional data, and authored the report. Appropriate citation of this report is as follows: *The Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship: A Review of Three Decades, 1981-2011* (Princeton, NJ: The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, May 2011).

Introduction

The Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship is intended both to encourage the study of religious and ethical values in all fields of the humanities and social sciences and to support students in the humanities and social sciences in their final year of dissertation writing on these topics, reducing attrition, encouraging completion, and shortening the length of time doctoral students remain in school. The Woodrow Wilson Foundation has endeavored over the past 30 years to carry out the vision embodied in the program's design by finding and rewarding the nation's best new humanists and social scientists whose dissertations address, as a central focus, topics of religious or ethical concerns. These scholarly projects often look to more than ideal or esoteric values; many consider seriously human action in the world to generate more meaningful and ethical relationships. Topics have included:

- *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Elizabeth Anderson CN '86)
- *The Politics of Affect in the Victorian Novel* (Ann Cvetkovich CN '86)
- *Women's Visions, Men's Words: The Portrayal of Holy Women and Men in Fourteenth-Century Italian Hagiography* (Catherine Mooney CN '87)
- *The Limits of Charity: Poverty and the Definition of Community* (Lisa Daugaard CN '88)
- *Speaking Democracy: American Oratory, 1760-1865* (Sandra Gustafson CN '91)
- *Possession and the State: Deviation and Mental Health in the People's Republic of China* (Nancy Nuchun Chen CN '92)
- *Moral Disagreement and Shared Meaning* (David Merli CN '01)
- *Immaculate Perception: Mary, Media, and Modernity* (Deirdre De La Cruz CN '03)
- *God After Metaphysics: A Theological Aesthetics* (John Manoussakis CN '04)
- *Wal-Mart World: The Christian Free Enterprise Ethos from the Ozarks to the Panama Canal* (Bethany Moreton CN '06)
- *Our Mosques Are Us: Rewriting National History of Bosnia-Herzegovina through Religious Architecture* (Azra Aksamija CN '09)

More than simply funding these projects, the Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship provides these emerging scholars with encouragement, validation of the quality of their work, and uninterrupted time for writing and completing projects that they may otherwise not have had. The Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship has become "a beacon of hope and a strong example of what can be accomplished in ethics with adequate financial investment" (Diana Fritz Cates: Newcombe Fellow 1989, former Preliminary Selection Committee Member, Final Selection Committee Member 2008, and survey respondent). To date, including the 21 Fellows named in 2011 during the program's 31st annual competition, 1,107 Newcombe Fellowships have been awarded.

The last extensive report on the progress of Newcombe recipients and the overall success of the Fellowship was in 1995, at the program's 15-year anniversary mark. At that time, Judith Pinch, Director of the Newcombe Fellowship at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation from 1981 to 2003, sent a survey to 614 Fellows and analyzed data based on 322 responses (a 53 percent return rate). Since 1995, four other surveys have been conducted, collecting employment data and notable accomplishments.

In late 2010, just after the 30-year milestone, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation once again conducted an extensive survey of the Fellows. Now, after 30 years, there is an even greater opportunity to observe the Newcombe Fellowship's impact not only on individual Fellows, but also on the broader areas of religion and ethics in the humanities and social sciences.

The survey was sent to 924 Newcombe Fellows, a number that reflects all Newcombe Fellows named prior to 2011 but does not include those listed as deceased or missing in the Woodrow Wilson Foundation's records. Five overarching questions guided the survey:

- Where are Newcombe Fellows currently (geographic area), who have remained teaching and researching in the area of higher education?
- What are Newcombe Fellows doing?
- What was the impact of the Newcombe Fellowship for respondents personally and professionally?
- What, in the respondents' opinion, has been the broader impact of the Newcombe Fellowship, and have the needs of the Fellowship changed?
- What would respondents like to see changed, improved or added either to the network of Newcombe Fellows, or from the Foundation itself?

The survey elicited responses from 400 Fellows, a 43 percent return. This report will address the demographics, the status and accomplishments of Newcombe Fellows, as well as how they themselves have experienced the impact of the Newcombe Fellowship within their lives, their fields, and the study of religion and ethics overall. They furthermore offer insights about new ways in which different kinds of support could help connect Newcombe Fellows with each other, providing more opportunity for expanding the breadth and depth of scholarship on religion and ethics.

The Purpose and Effectiveness of the Newcombe Fellowship

Nationally, students in the humanities and social sciences continue to have high attrition rates, and even for those who finish their doctorates, the average time to completion remains between six and nine years. Only 36 percent of students in these fields earned their doctorates after six years; at 10 years, only 56 percent had completed their doctorate, which means that 44 percent of graduate students did *not* complete their doctorate, even after 10 years.¹ As one survey respondent indicates, "Universities are being forced to cut back on support for doctoral education, and rarely support students through the entire process of doctoral education. As a result, many students take longer than they should to finish, many incur exorbitant debt to finish, and many do not complete at all."

Funding for graduate work in engineering and hard sciences remains more stable than in social sciences or the humanities, because there is more state and federal money for research in these fields, and often these technically oriented fields are perceived to be the areas that drive the economy. As one Fellow indicates in the survey, "I think that any fellowship award makes an enormous difference for the pursuit of the social sciences and the humanities, since there is less funding in these fields than there is in the sciences. To the extent that [the Newcombe] Fellowship emphasizes the study of religious and ethical values, it encourages research in that direction." Another reiterates this sentiment: "By providing funding sources for areas of the humanities that do not have the cachet or deep pockets found in the sciences and social sciences, or even more trendy areas of the humanities, the Charlotte Newcombe Fellowship enables scholarship to progress."

Against this national backdrop, Newcombe Fellows offer a sharp contrast. In the first 15 years of the Fellowship, between 50 percent and 60 percent of the Fellows completed the doctoral degree within two years of receipt of the Fellowship; this 15-year trend reached its peak among the 1985 Fellows, of whom 78 percent finished the Ph.D. within two years.² In the program's past 15 years, this number has become even more impressive: Almost 71 percent of Fellows since 1985 have received their degree within two years³, with high points of 85 percent and 89 percent for the 2005 and 2007 Fellows, respectively.⁴ Overall, Newcombe Fellows dramatically outperform their peers: In the past 30 years, 964 Newcombe Fellows—88 percent of all the Fellows—have completed their doctorates. Currently, only 122 Newcombe Fellows (9 percent) have not received doctorates. Of these, 44 still identify as graduate students. Thus, if at any given time the percentage of Newcombe Fellows still working on attaining the PhD is approximately 4 percent, the overall completion rate can be projected to be 93-96 percent.

¹ <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2007/12/07/doctoral>

² Pinch, Judith. *Fifteen years of Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships, 1981-1995*.

³ Regarding the few fellows who do take more time to finish, there are several factors that can be considered. One of the most common comments from Newcombe Selection Committee members is that the proposal is "excellent, but the candidate has just applied too early." When the selection committee recognizes this, the candidate is deemed ineligible. Despite careful evaluation of timelines, recommendation letters that attest to the students' completion, it does happen that students and advisors simply miscalculate the amount of time necessary to complete a dissertation. Furthermore, current graduate students often choose to stay within the shelter of their institution for an extra year, teaching, polishing their dissertations, writing articles or perfecting job-talks, as the job market following the economic decline, has not yet recovered. Finally, students most frequently cite illness, family or personal tragedy, or pregnancy as other reasons that delay completion.

⁴ These numbers do not take into account Fellows who have received the award for the 2 years prior to these statistics, for both the first and second 15 year period.

Of the 964 Newcombe Fellows who have received their doctorates since the beginning of the program, 112 (11.6 percent) are deceased or their status is unknown. Of the remaining Fellows, 755 (78 percent) have remained in institutions of higher learning as professors, teachers and researchers. Another 40 (4 percent) are not teaching, but are employed in such academic or academic-related positions as museum curators, center directors, institute directors, or archivists. Beyond the academy, 18 (2 percent) of the Fellows self-identify as independent scholars or writers, while 45 (5 percent) are employed outside of academia altogether.

Newcombe Fellows Beyond the Academy

While this report will focus on the Newcombe Fellows who have been at the leading edge of religious and ethical studies in academe over the past 30 years, a brief look at the few who chose to leave academia is also telling. Even outside of academic institutions, Newcombe Fellows excel, and they continue to influence their communities—indeed, the world—in their career trajectories. Fellows who did not pursue careers in higher education have positions such as lawyers, ambassadors, priests, librarians, and directors of non-profit organizations. Here are just a few examples of these Fellows outside of academia:

Kay Turner CN '82, who wrote her dissertation on *Mexican-American Women's Home Altars*, is now the Folk-Arts Director at Brooklyn Arts Council. Her Ph.D. in folklore and anthropology serves her in working with traditional artists across a range of disciplines—music, dance, material arts and narrative.

Bernard Unti was awarded a Newcombe Fellowship in 2000 for his dissertation on *Humane Concerns: A History of Organized Concern for Animals*. He is now Senior Policy Adviser and Special Assistant to the President of the Humane Society of the United States. He has published more than a dozen articles relating to the topic of his dissertation.

Elizabeth Napper CN '83, co-directs the Tibetan Nuns Project, which finds long-term solutions to the problems of securing housing, medical care and education for refugee nuns. Her dissertation, *Special Insight: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Madhyamika*, links her academic pursuits with her humanitarian profession.

Robert F. Worth received a 1995 Newcombe Fellowship for his dissertation "*Republic or Empire: The Spanish-American War and American Literature*". He began as a journalist for the *New York Times*, then became the Middle East correspondent, and now is the Beirut Bureau Chief for the *Times*.

These four notable Newcombe recipients are neither isolated nor discrete examples of the types of success that Newcombe Fellows have achieved outside of academia. Many others work in areas that are direct extensions of the work that they accomplished as Ph.D. students. They serve the larger world in areas that directly link ethical and religious values to practical concerns. Their humanitarian actions in local, real-life situations challenge human progress toward ethical ends in very personal ways. One Newcombe Fellow and survey respondent who left the academy to be a full-time mother eloquently states, "Currently, aside from being a parent, I volunteer with organizations that work with the Latino immigrant population and the _____ Soup Kitchen in _____. I will always be interested in the ways in which non-profits partner with religious institutions to impact positive change within socioeconomically disenfranchised populations."

Several other Newcombe Fellows have become independent scholars: Though they are not in traditional scholarly careers, they continue to produce important scholarly contributions to the study of ethics and religion. One survey respondent offers a poignant example:

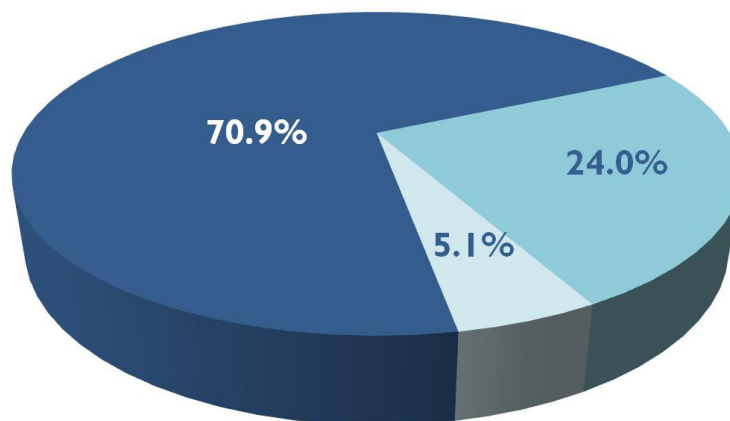
"I have not followed a typical tenured teaching and research path, and the 'products' of my career are not articles and books. They are documentary film, oral history, archival documentation, and public history... For example, a documentary film I produced on midwestern leaders of twentieth-century feminism included women religious leaders, both Catholic nuns and an African American minister... That film has been used extensively in college classrooms to illustrate the deep and diverse roots of women's organizing... I seek out the personal papers and organizational records of women whose experiences and ideas warrant saving for posterity... I [have] an antenna for those who are likely to remain under the radar. Thus, the Sophia Smith Collection [a famed women's history archive at Smith College] is now preserving the records of a women's community-based spirituality group as it incorporated feminism into its thinking; the records of an alternative Jewish feminist community; the records of WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual); and the papers of a Mohawk midwife whose childbirth practices weave indigenous spiritual customs into political struggles for tribal sovereignty and environmental justice."

Newcombe Fellows in the Academy

The vast majority of Newcombe Fellows do, however, follow an academic trajectory. As mentioned above, a total of 755 Fellows—78 percent of all Fellows who completed their Ph.D.s—have secured positions in the academy, teaching and researching. Of these Fellows in the academy, 535 (70.9 percent) have tenure (4 of whom are emeritus); 181 (24.0 percent) have tenure-track positions; and 39 (5.1 percent) are in "early career positions" such as lecturer, post-doctoral fellow, or research associate (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Newcombe Fellows' Academic Positions

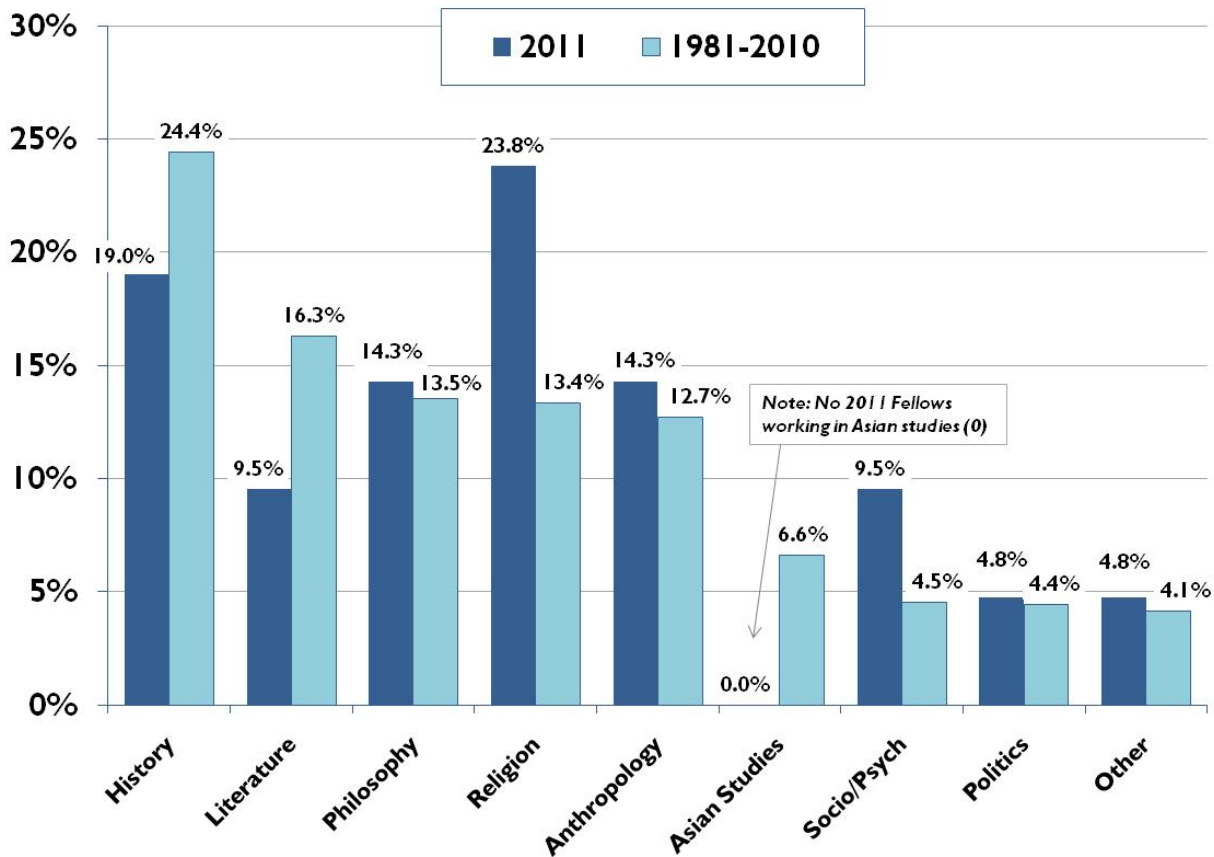
■ **Tenured** ■ **Tenure-track** ■ **Non-tenure-track/ "early career"**



Fellows' scholarly work remains concentrated in five primary areas—history, literature, religion, philosophy, and anthropology—although many other fields are

represented. One Fellow comments, "I think it has helped to keep people who have some interest in religious and ethical values focused on these topics, which has in turn greatly benefited the scholarly discussion around them. In my own field of anthropology, it is noteworthy how many Newcombe recipients have gone on to shape the field." While these areas of concentration have largely remained consistent over the 30-year period, a snapshot of the most recent competition as compared with the 30-year overview (Figure 2) captures

Figure 2: Newcombe Fellows' Fields of Study, 1981-2010 and 2011

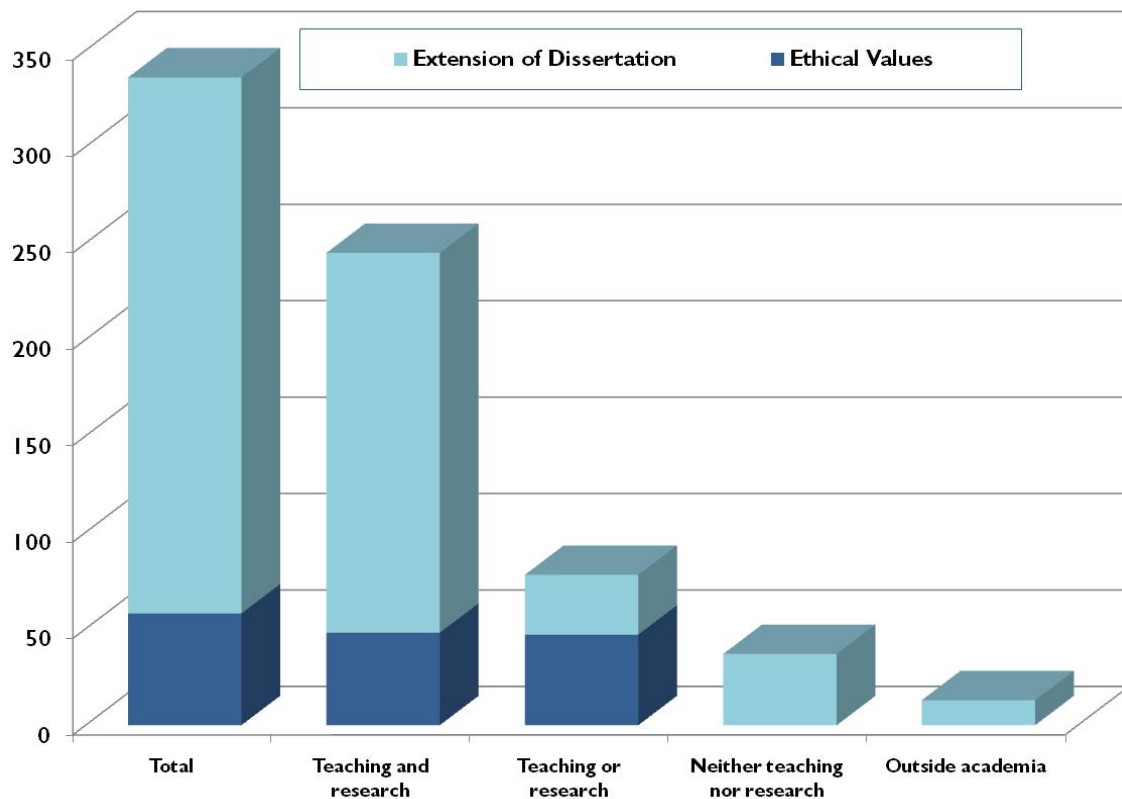


several recent trends. History and literature, long the largest fields in the competition, have more recently been eclipsed by religion, religious studies, and theology; the proportionally smaller representation in history and literature may simply represent an explicit migration to the growing field of religious studies who might previously have housed their work in one of the more traditional disciplines. Sociology and psychology were also more fully represented in 2011 than has been the case in previous years; Asian studies saw no finalists in 2011 (though the competition had 11 entries in this field, and two 2011 Fellows are working on Asian topics, respectively, within the fields of history and literature). Fields within the "other" category include such areas as architecture, music, art, geography, or education.

Newcombe Fellows stand for the principles upon which the Fellowship was created. They carry their focus on religious and ethical concerns to broader communities, linking scholarship with action, influencing students, scholars, and the larger public. Many of the Fellows who completed the survey indicate that they continue to be involved with and influenced by questions of religious and ethical values. Among the 400 Fellows who

responded to the survey, 245 (61 percent) who have careers in higher education indicate that their teaching *and* research still pertain to ethical and religious values. Of these, 197 continue to teach and research on their dissertation topic. An additional 78 indicate that they still *either* teach *or* do research on subjects involving ethical or religious values, and of these, 31 continue working in the area that their dissertation addressed. The remaining 37 indicate that they neither teach nor conduct research in areas of ethical or religious values, but the work that they do is an extension of their dissertation. An additional 13 respondents who currently work outside of academia indicated that their work still pertains to that which they started in their dissertations. Thus, all told, 336 of the respondents (84 percent) still work directly with topics of religious and ethical values, and 278 (69.5 percent) do work that is directly related to the dissertation that the Newcombe Fellowship supported. (See Figure 3, below.)

Figure 3: Pertinence/Persistence of Newcombe Fellows' Dissertation Work



Geographic Distribution of Newcombe Fellows in Academe

Clearly, Newcombe Fellows have been among the nation's most promising and best prepared doctoral students, and the majority of them have forged academic careers as teachers, researchers, and leaders in their fields. Are there patterns among the institutions at which they have prepared, and among the institutions at which they are now working? We turn now to the answers to these questions.

The 10 institutions that have produced the largest number of Fellows have, in fact, produced 62 percent of all Newcombe Fellows (Table 1). As has long been recognized in the

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of Fellows Named</u>	<u>Percentage of All Fellows, 1981-2011</u>
University of Chicago	132	12.2%
Harvard University	88	8.1%
University of California, Berkeley	84	7.7%
Yale University	74	6.8%
Columbia University	69	6.4%
Princeton University	69	6.4%
University of Michigan	52	4.8%
University of Wisconsin	40	3.7%
University of Virginia	36	3.3%
Cornell University	28	2.6%
Total, Top Ten Institutions	672	62.0%

administration of the Fellowship, the University of Chicago has produced a disproportionately large share of Fellows, due not only to its excellence but also to its unique structure for doctoral support. The next tier of top producers of Fellows includes four of the most respected Ivy League institutions, as well as the University of California, Berkeley; three more of the nation's leading public universities, along with Cornell, round out this leading group.

Figures 4 and 5 (next page) show the geographic distribution of the top institutions producing Newcombe Fellows, as well as the way in which Newcombe Fellows are clustered professionally at certain institutions across the United States. The schools that currently employ the highest number of Newcombe Fellows are the University of Notre Dame and the University of Michigan, with 15 Fellows at each. Eight other universities employ 10 or more Fellows; with the addition of Duke University, which employs nine Newcombe Fellows, fully 16 percent of Fellows are teaching and conducting research at these 11 universities. These institutions are noted by red dots in Figure 5, and listed in Table 2. Another 27 schools that employ between five and eight Newcombe Fellows, comprising an additional 20 percent of all Fellows. These schools are noted by pink dots in Figure 5 and listed in Table 3.

Table 2: Institutions Employing the Largest Number (9+) of Newcombe Fellows

<u>Institution</u>	<u># Fellows Employed</u>
University of Notre Dame	15
University of Michigan	15
New York University	13
University of Wisconsin	12
Harvard University	11
University of California, Berkeley	11
University of Chicago	11
Stanford University	10
University of California, San Diego	10
Yale University	10
Duke University	9
Total	127 (17%)*

*Percentage based on Fellows in academic positions as of 2010.

Table 3: Institutions Employing Significant Numbers (5-8) of Newcombe Fellows

<u>Institution</u>	<u># Fellows Employed</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u># Fellows Employed</u>
Brown University	8	University of Rochester	6
Indiana University	8	University of Washington	6
University of California, Los Angeles	8	Cornell University	5
University of Pennsylvania	8	Emory University	5
Dartmouth College	7	Princeton University	5
Georgetown University	7	Rutgers University	5
Northwestern University	7	St. Olaf College	5
Arizona State University	6	University of California, Davis	5
Boston College	6	University of Georgia	5
Columbia University	6	University of Minnesota	5
George Washington University	6	University of North Carolina	5
Tufts University	6	University of Toronto	5
University of Illinois	6	University of Texas, Austin	5
Total		Total	161 (21%)*

*Percentage based on Fellows in academic positions as of 2010.

Newcombe Fellows also reside in 23 countries outside the United States, as shown in Table 4. Of these internationally based Fellows, 95 percent are employed in academic positions.

Table 4: Countries Outside the United States Where Newcombe Fellows Reside			
<u>Country</u>	<u># Fellows Resident</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u># Fellows Resident</u>
Canada	24	Scotland	2
United Kingdom	15	Brazil	1
Israel	6	Central African Republic	1
Greece	3	China	1
Hong Kong	3	Indonesia	1
Australia	3	Tibet	1
France	2	Turkey	1
Germany	2	Japan	1
International (mobile)	2	Netherlands	1
Ireland	2	New Zealand	1
Pakistan	2	Rwanda	1
Singapore	2		
Total			78 (10%)*

**Percentage based on total number of Fellows as of 2011.*

The Influence of the Newcombe Fellowship

Because it is offered at a late stage of dissertation work, the Newcombe Fellowship speaks primarily to individuals who have already formulated questions of value, ethics or religious interests; it attracts people who already attend to such topics. When asked in the survey why they had applied for the Newcombe Fellowship, Fellows' number one response was that it was aligned with their dissertation topics. (For more on why Fellows applied, see next section.)

When this is the case, the Fellowship tends to broaden or deepen or strengthen the original force of their research. As one Fellow notes, "My engagement with religion and ethics has deepened since finishing the thesis." Another primary outcome, for those Fellows whose work already aligns with the intent of the Fellowship, is to expand their research to include more diverse areas of study, as these Fellows indicate:

"If anything, my interest in religion and ethics has only grown since completing my thesis. I am working to develop that aspect of my work and am hoping to make a contribution through integrating the religion aspect of my work with the gender and law aspects of it."

"I have expanded out of the study of education and religion, to study religious ritual, attitudes to tobacco in the Orthodox Church, and public penance in Russia. Thus, I still study religion, but from a variety of angles, different from the one I started on."

There are, however, some Newcombe Fellows whose original conception of their dissertation projects was less focused on religious or ethical questions. One recent Newcombe recipient states, "My work did not address religion or ethics directly, but it does draw its force from the study of ritual. I appreciate that this study of ritual has enabled me to make connections—between creativity and spirituality, violence and the sacred, the beautiful and the grotesque—that I would not have made had I proceeded with my previous project." Another Fellow comments, "It made me focus more on the ethical issues of my subject, which then became a lifetime endeavor." A third writes, "Intellectually, the grant also pushed me to frame the questions I was asking of my subject in terms of ethical and religious belief, which I might not have done at such an early stage otherwise. I think I would have come to this perspective ultimately, but writing the fellowship application for the Newcombe was a kind of 'aha!' experience for me in this regard." These comments reflect the attitude of several survey respondents who made stronger ethical and religious connections in their work as a result of applying to the Newcombe Fellowship, and who then were thankful for the productive opportunity to elucidate those aspects. For this group, the Newcombe Fellowship provided the ground through which a new ethical seed could be planted within their scholarship. As such scholars become more aware of the relationship of religion or ethics to their work, these areas become a valuable part of their continuing scholarship.

A third group of Newcombe scholars had at the heart of their dissertation topic questions about certain areas—values, cultural difference, the impact of certain behaviors, political decisions—which were certainly ethical questions, but had not previously been defined as such either within their field or within the academy itself. Projects such as these lie at the forefront of ethical scholarship.

For example, Mary Condren's work, which developed out of her dissertation *The Role of Sacrifice in the Construction of a Gendered Social Order and Gendered System of Representation* (Harvard Divinity, 1994), was "way ahead of its time." In the dissertation, Dr. Condren explored how the role of sacrifice, as conceived in the religious sphere, had been transferred into the military and the state, looking specifically at how the image and significance of Christ's sacrifice had become a cultural overlay on the sacrifices made by soldiers. "Not until 9/11 did the importance of this issue begin to become apparent more widely, and now requires ongoing work and critique," Dr. Condren writes. She adds that "[The Newcombe Fellowship] has enabled scholars such as myself to expand the horizons of the discipline beyond what otherwise might have been possible. In my case, it allowed me the independent space which would otherwise not have been available."

It is a boon to the Newcombe Fellowship to maintain the spirit, rather than the letter of the terms "ethical and religious values." This broad range of interpretation has allowed for innovative, creative, bold, and purposeful projects that begin to unravel aspects of ethical and religious questions from all angles. As one Fellow states:

The Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship is one of the few that directly supports the study of values. To the extent that the Fellowship award committees have interpreted values broadly, they have succeeded in making a significant impact on the social sciences and humanities, where discourses of values proliferate yet are often expressed in subtle ways. It would be a mistake to reward only a narrow canon with respect to scholarship on values.

Fellows' Recognition and Publications

Approaching such questions from so many diverse angles and across so many different topics, Newcombe scholarship has extended the reach of what is considered "ethical" or "religious", and the scholars themselves have often been rewarded for their thoughtful and innovative work. Newcombe Fellows excel, achieve, and advance; they exemplify success both in and out of the academy.

The 2010 survey of Newcombe Fellows shows that 322 of the 400 respondents have won awards in their field. For 53 of the 400 respondents, a question about academic recognition and publication was not applicable, as those respondents are still either in graduate school, or not in academia. Thus, for those to whom this question is applicable, almost 93 percent of respondents have won awards in their field. More than 26 percent have won at least six awards. Some common themes among Fellows' responses to a question about which award they are most proud of: "Best Book," "Best First Book," national and local teaching awards, Fulbright Fellowships, Guggenheims. Many also state that the Newcombe Fellowship is the award, or one of the awards, of which they are most proud.

Newcombe Fellows also publish productively. Of the respondents, 66 percent did have or will have their dissertations published. Beyond this, 94 percent have had scholarly articles published and 67 percent have had non-scholarly articles published. Notably, one in every seven has published more than four books—a fairly significant number, and one which may suggest that the Fellows from early in the program, now thirty years into their careers, have continued to publish well.

Benefits of the Newcombe Fellowship

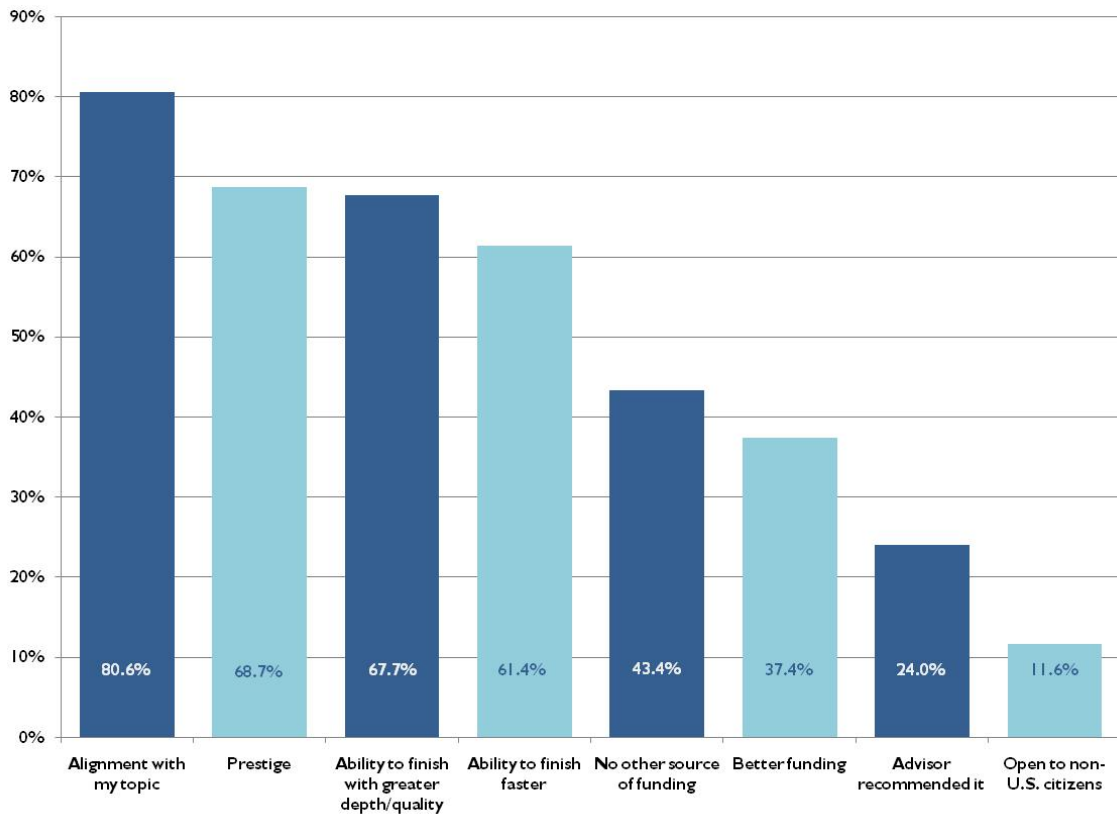
Since its inception, the Newcombe Fellowship has consistently sought to select the *best* dissertation proposals which focus on religion and ethics. This emphasis has created its own twofold reward: A pool of scholars who remain consistently on the leading edge of scholarship in religion and ethics and an enormous prestige for the Fellowship itself and for its recipients. The precedent set by the excellence of the early Fellows drove the expectation of quality for future Fellows. Now perhaps the only national fellowship related to religion and ethics, the Newcombe Fellowship is competitive with other national dissertation fellowships, such as the ACLS/Mellon and the Harry Frank Guggenheim. Indeed, some Fellows have turned down those awards in favor of the Newcombe, for the very reason of its known quality and selectivity (for instance, only 3 percent of the 2011 applicants went on to receive Fellowships). Survey respondents indicated that the prestige of the Fellowship, along with its alignment with their topics, was the second most important reason why they applied to the Newcombe Fellowship (see Figure 6, next page). High-quality scholars are drawn to the Fellowship and continue their work in its spirit, imbuing it with ongoing prestige.

Hence, the Newcombe Fellowship offers recipients significant non-material benefits, such as this level of prestige, as well as funding and related benefits that are crucial during the award year. It also offers many Fellows the much-needed emotional support and academic legitimization that boosts their motivation and productivity.

Regarding the direct benefits of the stipend itself, Fellows emphasize that the Newcombe Fellowship offers an entire uninterrupted year for writing—which many, once

entering the job market, teaching or accepting a tenure-track position, never again experience. As one respondent says, "That year of writing was heaven!" Another comments, "It gave me a taste of what uninterrupted, independent scholarly work was like. Outstanding!"

Figure 6: Reasons for Having Applied for the Newcombe Fellowship

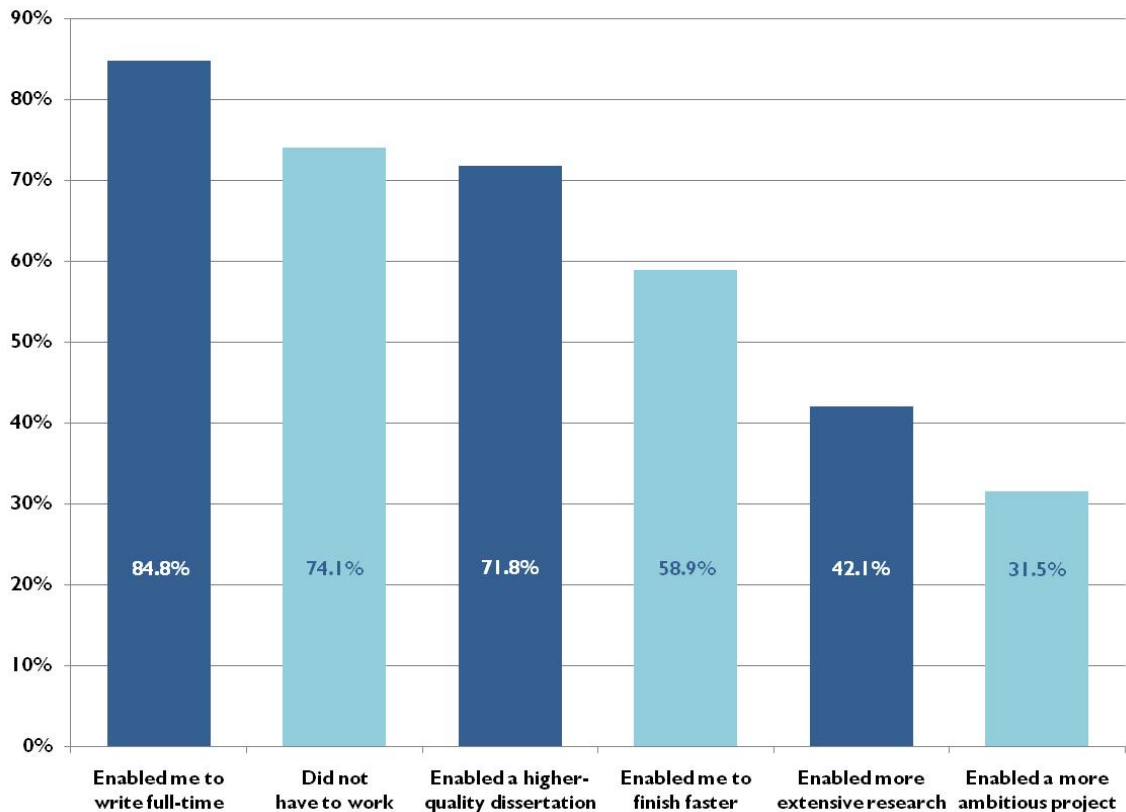


Several Fellows express the connection between the ability to focus intensely on their projects for that one year, and the long-term rewards that it gave them. "In the short term, it allowed for a year of dissertation writing where I did not have to work for pay. In the longer term, it demonstrated the promise of my work." Another Fellow's story is more specific and personal:

Throughout these years, the best stipends at Chicago were minimal and I worked two days a week in a restaurant for much of the time. With the more generous funds of the Newcombe, I was able to spend my final year writing, with only one short day a week working in a book store. (It sounds silly, but not having to do restaurant work made a huge difference!) Maybe without the Newcombe I could have worked 2/3 time and written the dissertation in two years, but I can't imagine what it would have been like, frankly. I was also able to write a much *better* dissertation than I might otherwise have been able to do. I did new research for my first book, so it still took a while to move from the dissertation to the book, but the quality of the first book, which received a major prize in my field, was dependent on that fellowship year.

Figure 7 (next page) shows these indirect benefits affected by receiving the monetary award.

Figure 7: Indirect Benefits of the Newcombe Fellowship



The emotional impact of the Newcombe Fellowship plays an equally important role for many of the Fellows. It offers validation, encouragement, and legitimation to young scholars that their work is valuable and necessary. As one Fellow states:

I received the award at a time when I desperately needed confirmation that my work was/might be significant. There were very few people working in the field; it felt at times like I was working on a 'taboo' topic. I think that receiving the Newcombe Fellowship made me appreciate that my work was considered important. I remember so clearly the feeling, I felt like I was walking on air... In the time since my book was published this field of Irish religious history has really taken off, and I find myself at the head of some very exciting developments right now. I never cease to be appreciative of the faith that the Newcombe committee invested in my work by awarding me a fellowship.

The Newcombe provided substantial and much needed financial support and, far more importantly, engendered a strong sense of self-confidence and academic worth. These intangibles were essential to my degree completion, as I was prepared to leave the profession prior to receiving the award. The Newcombe was invaluable for strengthening my commitment to the academic profession.

Fellows also cite confidence, motivation and encouragement as added benefits of receiving this award. "It boosted my confidence and legitimated my belief that a scholarly project in cultural history can have an important ethical issue at its core without sacrificing objectivity—in other words, that one can and should approach history and literature from a moral perspective without sacrificing the contingenced nuances of the past." "Receiving the fellowship was a tremendous encouragement and a real boost to my confidence as a scholar." Table 5 reflects these sentiments, covering all of the 400 respondents.

Table 5: Fellows' Responses Regarding the Personal/Professional Impact of the Newcombe Fellowship				
"When I received the Newcombe Fellowship..."	Total	Strongly Agree	Agree	Total Response Count
...I felt encouraged about my work.	97.7% (387)	83.1% (329)	14.6% (58)	396
...I gained in overall self-confidence.	96.7% (380)	67.7% (266)	29.0% (114)	393
...the quality of work received recognition.	89.5% (348)	54.0% (210)	35.5% (138)	389
...I had greater incentive to continue.	78.9% (307)	52.7% (205)	26.2% (102)	389
...I felt that my project had been legitimized.	85.1% (331)	49.9% (194)	35.2% (137)	389
...I was motivated to produce a higher-quality dissertation.	76.8% (296)	44.9% (173)	31.9% (123)	385
...my advisors demonstrated more confidence in me and my work.	47.0% (182)	21.2% (82)	25.8% (100)	387

The Newcombe Dissertation Fellowship not only funds a year of dissertation writing, it also has a lasting influence on its recipients. It leaves an enduring impression on Fellows and has a sustained relevance as these scholars advance in their careers, as summed up by these three survey respondents:

Given the quality of the dissertation the fellowship enabled me to write, I was able to secure both ACLS and Monticello Foundation fellowships as an assistant professor, which enabled me to revise the dissertation for publication. Finally, the publicity the fellowship provided for my manuscript among publishers meant that my first book was published by a first-rate university press. Not only did that secure me tenure, it also opened the door for many other professional opportunities. In short, the Newcombe was a decisive factor in my career.

When I was in a position to participate in hiring, I requested and received a list of Newcombe Fellows (this was about 1988 or 89) so that we could contact them and invite them to apply for post-doctoral positions in the Honors College at the University of Houston. We hired more than one Newcombe Fellow by this means in the late 80's and early 90's. One, Rob Zaretsky, is now a full professor in a joint appointment with the Honors College and the Department of History. We used the Newcombe list because these graduate students had been vetted by the selection process and because the "ethical and religious values" orientation was consistent with

our approach to teaching in our signature course, "The Human Situation" (a modified or "open" great books course).

I went out on a limb in several ways in choosing my dissertation topic and my advisor (who was a junior professor at the time). The Newcombe award provided external validation for my project and for my advisor at a time when we both really needed it. The impact of this grant on me and my career and by extension on my advisor's status (I was her first dissertation student) is almost beyond measure. That's how important it was.

For many Fellows, such early validation of their scholarship becomes a lifelong career enhancement—a first acknowledgment that may promote later confidence and intellectual risk-taking. Current academic settings give preference and validation to technology, pharmaceuticals, and the hard sciences, while the humanities and social sciences fight harder for recognition and to be seen as "valuable." Within this setting, topics of religion and ethics are even more marginalized. Newcombe Fellows tend to explore topics that run counter to dominant academic trends, and the Fellowship helps give them courage to do so.

The Newcombe and Changes in the Humanities and Social Sciences

One premise of this recent survey is that, after a 30-year period, the social, economic, and political conditions current at the outset of the Fellowship may no longer be present, or may have changed during this time. The survey asked if Fellows could recognize ways in which the Newcombe Fellowship has, over 30 years, helped to change the face of the social sciences or the humanities—and if they felt it was still adequately aligned with the changing needs of graduate students, as well as changes in graduate education and funding structures.

With respect to the question of whether the Newcombe had contributed to reshaping scholarship, there are potentially two angles of approach: First, what societal and international changes have taken place that Newcombe Fellows are in positions to explore precisely because of the research that the Fellowship supported? Second, what direct or indirect influence has Newcombe-supported scholarship had on the study of ethical and religious values?

While the survey focused on the latter question, a few respondents did comment on the importance of topics addressed by Newcombe Fellows. The Fellowship has helped put in place the intellectual capital to address diverse and varied international religious questions that have only arisen in recent years. As one respondent says, "The more trained minds are brought to bear on [global religious and ethical situations], the better."

Several survey respondents emphasized that one of the Newcombe Fellowship's greatest benefits and strengths was the diversity of religious and ethical issues its recipients encompass, across and well beyond the scope of single denominations, religious traditions, or perspectives. One Fellow wrote, "The Newcombe recognized and appreciated—in my view—the diversity of ethical and moral worldviews in the world today. No one paradigm of ethico-moral subjectivity, it would seem, can account for such diversity, though this does not preclude meaningful comparative analysis. The Newcombe contributes to our fields by deepening our understanding of this diversity." Another commented, "The Newcombe pulls on common threads of research and writing among scholars in a range of disciplines, making it relevant beyond just history, religious studies, sociology, or anthropology alone."

Interestingly, in those fields where Newcombe Fellows are most numerous (history, religion, philosophy, anthropology), the fields have grown more explicitly to reflect interest in religious and ethical values. Several survey respondents note that for the first time, the American History Association's largest subfield was religious history, and that religious studies "is now the #1 choice of topic for entering Ph.D. students in history." In addition to giving personal value and legitimation to religious and ethical works of graduate students individually, as we saw above, the Newcombe Fellowship has certainly tracked a broader trend in the humanities and social sciences, and may well have helped to shape this trend:

- I think it has raised the profile of the study of religious and ethical values in the academy. As you surely know, the largest self-identified subfield in the AHA last year was religious history. That represents a big change over the past twenty years. Obviously world events have much to do with this, but the Newcombe helped to give the seal of scholarly approval to history, literature, etc. projects dealing with religion or ethics.
- I cannot name a particular area of study which has benefited more than others, but I do know that in my field of history, the Fellowship has supported a number of cutting-edge projects which have influenced the way scholars think of the role of religion in social and cultural history and have helped to further our understanding of religion's multifarious roles in human social and cultural development over time.

The direct experiences of several survey respondents indicate the value of the Newcombe Fellowship in their own professional development and in their experience of their fields' development over the past 30 years:

- In the acknowledgements of many of the books in the social scientific study of religion that I read, I find that they are based on a dissertation that was supported by a Newcombe Fellowship. I treat that as a mark of quality that moves me to continue reading, and as a sign that without the fellowship, much of the work that I rely on in my teaching and research may not exist.
- I often discover that the scholarly books that interest me have been written by former Newcombe Fellows.
- I know so many fine anthropologists who have received the Newcombe, and I have to say that they are all excellent scholars who have also become great teachers. I can't speak for the largest part of academe, but I can say that anthropology has benefitted greatly from this support. A lot of people have made it through one of the hardest parts of graduate training—writing up—because of the Fellowship. These are among my closest colleagues, and they have enriched the anthropology of religion greatly in the years since the late 1980s.
- There are two Newcombe Fellows in my department, and we both teach ethics. We both were hired when the department launched an Ethics Minor Program. There is a continuing effect, therefore, in this ongoing program. My guess is that similar things have happened at other universities.
- I can only speak to philosophy, but there are a number of prominent philosophers who have won the fellowship.

Changing Needs of Humanities and Social Sciences Students and Faculty

With more than 1,100 Fellows productive in the world at large, what are their needs, what do they see as the needs of emerging scholars, and have those needs changed over 30 years? What ongoing services would Fellows like to see facilitated by the Newcombe Foundation and/or the Woodrow Wilson Foundation that will assist them in identifying other Newcombe Fellows, representing the Newcombe Foundation and its mission, or continuing to make an impact on religion and ethical studies at higher levels of scholarship?

As a final focus, in the hopes of assisting the Newcombe Foundation with a vision for the future, we asked survey participants if, in their view, the need for the Newcombe Fellowship has changed significantly, and if they might recommend that the Newcombe Fellowship change in any way today to better address current needs. One respondent described the change in academic climate succinctly:

As the ratio of tenure-track to contingent faculty has shifted from 2:1 to 1:2 over the last generation, the publication requirements for assistant professorships are ever more stringent, and students who were allowed an additional year of research produce much more complex, competitive dissertations (as much as I hate to have to express it in those terms). The change has to come from the universities as employers: they can't demand that their graduate students produce quickie scholarship while simultaneously only hiring from among the tiny minority who secured funding for more complex, time-intensive work. Until they accept this contradiction and change policy, however, fellowships like the Newcombe become more valuable every year.

Overwhelmingly, when asked whether graduate students' needs changed and whether the Newcombe Fellowship should change to meet those needs, the response was simply, "The need is as great as ever, if not more so" and "Just keep doing what you're doing so well!" Many respondents encouraged increasing the number of Fellowships available, and a few people added to this basic theme that the Fellowship should consider focusing on providing "needs-based" funding, and making explicit efforts to expand the Fellowship's reach among diverse populations.

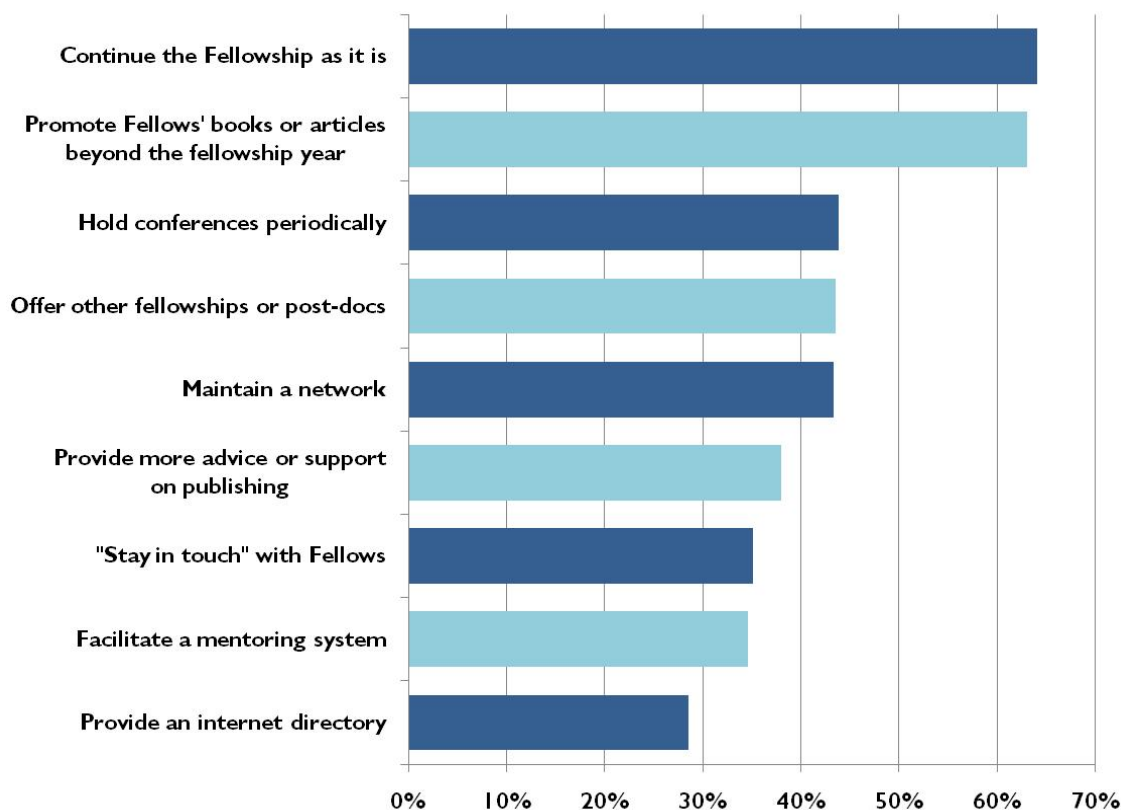
One problem that was identified is particular to the current economic climate and its effect on graduate students: The time between receiving the Ph.D. and getting a job has grown. New Ph.D. recipients struggle to find post-doctoral work, teaching positions, even research positions. Several respondents suggested either extending the length of the Fellowship by one year or adding a second, post-doctoral Fellowship. One respondent notes, "I am a department chair presently reading 500 plus applications for one tenure-track job. It seems that as long as scholars stay in a graduate program (especially as many are being downsized) they can find support. It's the interval between degree and job and the jobless market that frightens me." All respondents were cognizant of the financial strain in all areas—including the generosity of private foundations. They recognized that any "additions" would be dependent upon the financial considerations of the Newcombe Foundation. If post-docs were made available, one respondent suggests, "support for revision and publication of the dissertation would help to maximize the impact of the fellowship."

Beyond this, respondents made several suggestions about expanding the "support services" available to Newcombe Fellows. Some such suggestions:

- developing a late-career award or fellowship to identify and reward a Newcombe Fellow who is in the late-stages of their career (“I’m not so sure that senior faculty who have a spent a lifetime deliberating on religious and ethical issues might not deserve equally funding to make a more profound impact on the nature of Humanities scholarship in religion and ethics. My dissertation was a substantial piece of work, but I feel that the work I am now doing, primarily with internal funding, is far more important.”);
- holding a triennial conference of Newcombe Fellows;
- facilitating networking or interdisciplinary communication or connections between Newcombe Fellows;
- offering support for publishing beyond the dissertation;
- offering counsel and support for those recipients who are facing the reality of the reduction of humanities jobs; and
- offering some award or recognition to Fellows who are independent scholars; establishing a job network.

Many Newcombe Fellows seem to wish genuinely to remain connected both with the Newcombe Foundation/Woodrow Wilson Foundation and with other Newcombe Fellows. Several respondents acknowledge that they always enjoy receiving the semi-annual

Figure 8: Suggestions: How Might the Newcombe Fellowship Better Assist Fellows/Improve Services?



Woodrow Wilson newsletter. Many express a wish to become more connected, through conferences, professional networks, and/or job-search networks. Various other suggestions are reflected in the chart above (Figure 8).

All of these wishes only serve to highlight that Newcombe Fellows remain proud of their award and its recognition. These “extra” services that they suggest highlight the one basic wish: to continue the Fellowship and the good work done by the Newcombe Foundation. “It was hard to ask about the continuing relevance of the award to my career, as without it I would never have been able to finish the Ph.D. in the time of one year, and everything after—jobs, the publication of my first book, articles—hinged on that moment. The most important thing for me—and I think continues to be the most important thing for most students—is having a fully funded year for completing the dissertation. I would not want to see resources taken from the project of providing as much financial support to as many students as possible.”

Summary and Conclusion

The results of the 2010 survey indicate that the Newcombe Fellowship has, over the past 30 years, accomplished much—and that it continues to serve key purposes. The Fellowship has supported completion of the Ph.D. among doctoral candidates who might otherwise have had difficulty finishing their dissertations; it has particularly assisted emerging scholars who go on to become intellectual leaders in the study of religious and ethical values. Fellows have a much stronger than average track record of timely completion, as well as remarkable records of accomplishment after the Ph.D.

The Newcombe Fellows go on to work, teach, and conduct research nationwide and around the world. Within and beyond the academy, they are helping to shape their fields and advance our society’s approach to ethics and values in a time when the need for greater thoughtfulness in these areas is urgently apparent. Indeed, Fellows are able to build, persist in, and succeed in their careers in no small part because of the Fellowship’s early encouragement, and as they advance, they advance their fields. And, when those in the academy seek out their next generation of colleagues or their next sources of scholarly insight, they often look to other Newcombe Fellows, creating networks of excellence in religious and ethical values.

Fellows consider their own Newcombe Fellowships to have a lasting value, and they encourage that the opportunities the Fellowship offers continued to be extended to others—and perhaps even form the basis of new means of professional connection. Such suggestions offer a glimpse of potential new avenues for the Newcombe Fellowship as a means of facilitating collaboration among current Fellows, as well as an ongoing support for emerging scholars.

For the past 30 years, the Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship has given remarkable gifts to Fellows; it has made significant material, emotional, psychological, and professional contributions in their lives. A great many of them achieve exceptional successes, helping to shape contemporary thought, encourage ethical action, and prepare the next generation of citizens and scholars. To that extent, they mirror the commitments and the contributions of Mrs. Newcombe herself, in her own dedication to her values, to the needs of others, and to the next generation.

The value of the Newcombe Fellowship does not end with the tenure of a Fellow’s award. Indeed, the award year is just the beginning. The lasting value of the Newcombe Fellowship has continued to grow in the life and work of more than 1,100 Fellows over three decades, and Mrs. Newcombe’s legacy likewise continues in every life or career that a Fellow touches.