

**BRINGING DISCIPLINES TOGETHER IN GRADUATE EDUCATION:
THE MELLON INTERDISCIPLINARY FELLOWS PROGRAM,
INCITE @ COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

**Wm McAllister
Senior Research Fellow
Incite @ Columbia University**

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PRÉCIS

For ten years, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation funded (what is now) Incite @ Columbia University to carry out an arguably rare initiative: Bring together doctoral candidates in the humanities and the social sciences for intense intellectual engagement and felicitous completion of their dissertations. This document reports briefly on that effort and its accomplishments but mostly essays what I think we learned about how and why our program worked. I also suggest some implications for doctoral education and training.

Despite its “interdisciplinary” title, a critical purpose of this program was to bring together students from diverse fields so they could learn from disciplines other than their own even as they remained rooted in their home field. Doing so, we gambled, would enable students to incorporate into their work the substance, concepts, or methods of other fields and to better appreciate their own field by more acutely understanding disciplinary differences. That is, our program did not eschew disciplinary differences but built on them. A second purpose was to further the professional development of fellows by, most importantly, facilitating their completing their dissertations in a timely manner, but also by learning academic, collegial exchange and interaction.

We tried to accomplish these goals in diverse ways by providing open-plan adjacent offices for the approximately 20 fellows (at any one time), holding bi-weekly dissertation seminars, funding research and professional opportunities, offering intellectual and professional mentoring, and establishing methodological and substantively relevant short courses. Conceptually, these features were built on two principles: cross- (rather than inter-) disciplinarity and sociality. Both aimed to foster fellows’ capacity to incorporate into their work the knowledge of disciplines distal from their own.

Our goals concerning the professional development of fellows were, I think it’s fair to say, well-met. Table 3 in the Appendix shows over 80% of fellows completed their degrees within two years of program entry (an explicit goal of the initiative), almost 85% held positions in academic or research organizations up to ten years after graduating the program, and their research output was prolific during their time with us. Fellows’ exit-reports (Table 6 in the Appendix) and intellectual exchanges during the program suggest its cross-disciplinary value was, to a qualified extent, realized. We believe these results are qualified, in part, because the program ran late in fellows’ graduate training—the writing stage—rather than, say, prior to or just after the prospectus, in addition to the siloed disciplinary pull against which our program pushed.

In the essay, I articulate what we learned about what we did, with an eye to its utility for PhD education and training, in either stand-alone initiatives or departmental programs. I focus on the two principles mentioned above: cross-disciplinarity and sociality.

In my articulation, cross-disciplinarity brings disciplines together to facilitate incorporating the concepts, methods, and/or substance of one or more distal disciplines into a home discipline. To take an example, an economics fellow learned from historian and anthropologist fellows the utility of explicitly incorporating into his research elements of the historical moment he was using to test a model. Cross-disciplinarity differs from inter-disciplinarity by valuing, rather than eroding, disciplinary difference, and differs from the intellectual siloing of multi-disciplinarity by looking to change the knowledge base of the home discipline. In these ways, our program's cross-disciplinarity not only created the opportunity for fellows to strengthen their work but for them to understand more acutely their own disciplines.

Concomitantly, we valued the sociality of collaboration rather than the isolation of individualism. The formal organization of doctoral courseload, class time, studying, and writing—especially dissertation writing—emphasizes the individual developing her capacities in a goodly degree of isolation from peers and faculty. We implemented our program in ways which made sociality—advancing individual interest by associating people in a cooperative entity—a crucial principle. Specifically, our initiative drew fellows together to actively rely on one another to foster their intellectual (e.g., dissertation conceptualization) and professional (e.g., dissertation completion) development. And the two principles are congruent: Sociality induces the kind of collaboration which helps generate cross-disciplinarity.

We instantiated these principles through the program elements previously mentioned. In particular, the arrangement of fellows' offices and the dissertation seminars were crucial. The seminars provided a centripetal element which brought fellows together in one place every other week while our particular open-plan office arrangement provided a more centrifugal element which allowed fellows to move between working collaboratively and solitarily as their needs and desires determined. Our office space contrasted strongly with the highly individualized spaces universities commonly provide graduate students and, by implication, with the argument that such spaces are necessary for dissertation research and writing.

As I just observed, the two principles abet one another. When we develop knowledge by locating innovation from distal fields in the capacity of individual students, for instance, we expect each student to acquire a fair degree of knowledge of distal fields. This is a tall order and, frankly, unlikely to be sufficiently accomplished. Locating the desired capacity relationally—across people in different disciplines, as our program tried to do, rather than in individuals—can be both more effective and more useful for generating knowledge. Sociality was thus an avenue to cross-disciplinarity, and, in its structure, our program relied on an “architecture of serendipity” to forge the necessary relationships.

In turn, cross-disciplinarity was particularly crucial to sociality and its engendering collaborative behavior by mitigating individualism. Key is that cross-disciplinarity brought together students who, for the most part, were not competing with each other, i.e., within departments or within disciplines—not competing for awards, for postdocs, for faculty

attention, for academic appointments, or for departmental benefits. The absence of competition, combined with specific programmatic features, allowed fellows to collaborate with one another. We can grasp this dynamic by understanding that the initiative's cross-disciplinarity "used" sociality as a mechanism to produce intellectual and professional benefits.

By activating these principles, our program accomplished a variety of possibilities. Most importantly, we have some evidence that suggests it expanded and deepened our fellows' research, heightened their understanding of their own fields, improved their teaching ability, and enhanced their ability to be successful faculty members in the next stage of their careers. We like to think that through their cross-disciplinary-informed research our fellows helped their fields innovate and that through sociality the program mitigated common departmental issues graduate students often face (e.g., competition for department attention) and made the experience of earning the doctorate the intellectually and socially enjoyable experience they may have imagined it could be when they chose to earn a PhD.

Our effort, then, holds some implications for doctoral programs. An obvious one is that because it is possible and useful to incorporate knowledge from distal disciplines without eroding disciplinary boundaries, programs should actively create such opportunities. Another is that because programmatic individualism is not only unnecessary for producing productive scholars but perhaps harmful, programs should create elements which aggressively bring students together, especially after the coursework stage. An important third implication is that programs should provide greater structure, from coursework through dissertation-writing, if they want more timely completion of degrees as well as a more generally fruitful doctoral experience.

It may seem unlikely that bringing together such divergent fields as we did—from the substantive concerns, formal methods, and epistemic grounds of economics and political science to those of classics and languages—can intellectually and educationally "work." I like to think it did, and this report and essay not only make the case but, in doing so, challenges the more common intellectual and organizational instantiations of doctoral education and training.

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Origins are usually murky, though we pretend otherwise. Part of the origin of this document was a conversation I had a while ago with Mariët Westermann, then the Executive Vice-President at The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. For ten years, Mellon had supported an unusual graduate student program at Incite which each year brought together up to 20 PhD candidates from Columbia's humanities and the social sciences who were at the dissertation-writing stage. The two basic purposes of our program were to nurture cross-disciplinary influence and to foster professional development. Mariët and I thought it would be useful for me to provide a summative statement of program elements and accomplishments and to essay my reflections on the initiative. This document attempts to do both. I begin by sketching the program concept and its specific aims and very briefly outline the elements through which we tried to realize that concept and achieve those aims. I then articulate my understanding of what we were doing and what we learned over those years.² Some of my experience confirmed our initial intuitions, though I am now able to put them on a more firm intellectual foundation, e.g., the value of building on rather than eschewing disciplinary differences. Other programmatic qualities we came to appreciate as we better understood what made the effort vital, e.g., its collaborative-work properties. I convey this intellectual foundation in the form of principles describe how we instantiated them, and develop some implications for doctoral programs.

I. Program Concept, Elements and Accomplishments Synopsis

Our program's animating idea had two features. One was to bring together dissertation-writing graduate students from disparate fields in the humanities and the social sciences so they could be intellectually influenced by fields not their own. The other was to facilitate their professional development, most importantly, but not only, by completing the PhD in a timely manner. In doctoral programs, the first is a contended value (e.g., Boden et al. 2022; Bergen et al. 2020); the

¹ I thank Coleman Sherry for his research assistance and for his exceptionally careful and corrective reading of recent drafts, Peter Bearman for his attentive reading of an early draft, and Emily Grace Kerman for her research assistance. And, of course, we thank the Mellon Foundation for its support, in particular Mariët Westermann and Harriet Zuckerman.

² I also lean a bit on, but do not report on, our programmatic forbear to the Mellon initiative, the ISERP Fellows Program. This had fewer elements and involved doctoral candidates only from the social sciences. The Mellon Program was initially housed at Columbia's Institute for Social and Economy Research & Policy, before moving to what is now the Incite Institute @ Columbia. Peter Bearman and I co-directed both efforts; this essay reflects my experience and understanding. We could not have run both initiatives without the exceptional abilities and good cheer of Neela Chakravartula, Bethany Kell, Caitlin Bertin-Mahieux, and Audrey Augenbraum.

second is a general, agreed upon issue (Menand 2009; Ehrenbert et al. 2009; Cassuto and Weisbuch 2021).

To accomplish the first, we accepted as fellows students whose research agendas, as reflected in their dissertation projects, spoke to or would benefit from the conceptual, methodological, or substantive scholarship of disciplines different from their own. We also hoped such exposure would help fellows better understand their own disciplines and the place of their scholarship in their disciplines. As these show, building on disciplinary difference was a bedrock principle of our program, so much so that, as I explain in a bit, I came to understand our program as being “cross-disciplinary,” and not “inter-disciplinary,” in the way the latter is often understood, i.e., as an eroding of disciplinary boundaries.³

We made real the possibility of cross-disciplinarity by selecting students whose work was conceptually vital *and* had empirical components which fellows from other disciplines could more or less easily engage. A fellow from the French Department, for instance, studied how language abetted and confounded the confessionally- and politically-based divisions before and after the 1957 Lebanese civil war, thereby enhancing and undermining the possibility of a Lebanese nation. Because her argument combined language and confession to study nation-state formation, it engaged and drew ideas from fellows in departments of English, Religion, Sociology, and Political Science. To cite another instance, a theorist from Political Science, studying “constituent power” when constitutions are ratified, focused on the importance of the historical moment to analyze the Berkshire Constitutionals in Western Massachusetts. He learned from contributions of fellows from History and Sociology.

Our intuition in developing the program’s second aim, cultivating professional development, was to bring fellows together at one site and provide specific support at a particular moment in their graduate training—dissertation-writing. We hoped locating fellows in one office would generate peer pressure that sped their writing. We expected bi-weekly seminars, at which fellows presented their research, would spur cross-disciplinary exchange. And we thought financial support, intellectual and professional mentoring, and short courses on writing, methods, and other dissertation-related matters which spanned disciplines would nurture their professional development, as would encouraging them to devise uses for program resources to such ends.

³ To be sure, this is only one, if frequent, way inter-disciplinarity is understood. I soon say more about this. Perhaps the strongest expression of this idea of inter-disciplinarity is its institutional expression in the myriad inter-disciplinarity centers at U.S. universities. See Jacobs 2017. More generally, as Ash (2019: 621) points out, “there is in principle no limit to the varieties of interdisciplinarity.” Also see Graff 2015.

The Appendix to this statement details these diverse elements, provides summary statistics on disciplinary recruitment, and quantitatively and textually portrays major accomplishments. With this overview of our aims and elements in mind, I now consider what we learned about bringing together diverse disciplines in doctoral training.

II. Cross-disciplinarity and Sociality

Fundamental to our effort was thinking relationally, both about disciplines and about fellows. Cross-disciplinarity requires thinking relationally about disciplines; sociality requires thinking relationally about students. For each, our premises were simple, if culturally and ontologically contested: Disciplines, *as disciplines*, can relate usefully to one another, and fellows achieve more working collaboratively rather than individually.⁴

Regarding disciplines, we eschewed, as noted, conceptualizing fields as more or less isolated entities, e.g., siloed disciplines fitted inside siloed departments producing siloed PhDs. Rather, we assumed that substantively and methodologically different, even diverse, fields can have—*because* of these variations—intellectual utility for one another. Programmatically, this meant instantiating the principle of cross-disciplinarity by creating an environment where doctoral students can learn what those useful things are and integrate them into their thinking and into their professional lives.

Regarding fellows, we eschewed conceptualizing fellows as atomized scholars. Rather, we assumed some kind of collaboration was more intellectually and educationally useful. Programmatically, this meant constructing formal and informal ways to instantiate sociality, i.e., to advance individual interest by associating people in a cooperative entity.

These conceptualizations of the relationality of disciplines and of fellows abet one another. Conceiving disciplines as mutually useful means students from different departments can help each other without risking perceived individualized benefits, e.g., departmental awards, disciplinary grants, faculty largess, and the like. Conceiving fellows relationally means they can be open to what fields other than their own have to offer.

To conceptualize cross-disciplinarity, I next contrast it with inter- or multi-disciplinarity, and explain why our initiative opted for cross-disciplinarity and how we instantiated it. I then conceptualize sociality by contrasting it with individualism, describe how we instantiated this principle, and explain how these two principles worked together. I end by suggesting some broad implications for doctoral programs in the humanities and in the social sciences.

⁴ More radically, it may be that student goals and the goals of doctoral programs can be better achieved working collectively, not just collaboratively, but I just here note this possibility and do not develop it.

Bringing disciplines together: Cross-disciplinarity

By disciplines, I broadly mean entities concerned with producing specific kinds of knowledge. In Kuhn (1996 [1962]), for instance, disciplinary communities are understood to be critical to the academic production of knowledge and share “theoretical beliefs, values, instruments and techniques, and even metaphysics” (Bird 2022). Kuhn describes a “disciplinary matrix,” that, in Bird (2022), “suppl[ies] puzzles for scientists to solve and ... provide[s] the tools for their solution.” Relevant for my purposes, Ash (2019: 622) expands this conceptualization slightly, but importantly, so that “‘discipline’ refers to a single, relatively well-defined field of knowledge, ... concerned with the advancement, but also, indeed primarily, with the certification of knowledge.” The latter is particularly relevant for our Mellon initiative as certification has to do, in part, with training and approving entrants into a discipline, i.e., doctoral programs.

When two or more disciplines are brought together in research or in education, scholars and educators commonly describe the effort as inter-disciplinary, even as the form and content of these initiatives may be quite dissimilar (Frodeman 2014; Klein 2010; Jacobs 2013). In the early-1970s, efforts to classify forms of interactions between disciplines differentiated between multi-, pluri-, inter-, and trans-disciplinarity, but, since the 1970s, “other labels [have] followed, resulting in a profusion of jargon some have likened to a tower of Babel” (Klein 2017: 21; Ash 2019). Here, I rely on our programmatic experience to differentiate these terms in order to acutely characterize the ground of our initiative.⁵

Though we initially titled our effort “inter-disciplinary,” I came to better appreciate it’s cross-disciplinary character. Here’s why. Our guiding premise was always that disciplinary difference is intellectually and educationally valuable. Not only did we not intend to ignore such differences, we expected to help fellows benefit from the concepts, methods, or substantive content of disciplines foreign to their own. Differences in these are integral to disciplinary distinction.⁶ Our approach contrasts with the idea, central to much inter-disciplinary conceptualization and practice, of eroding, if not eliminating, disciplinary boundaries, whatever the bases for those boundaries (Frodeman 2014). This way of bringing disciplines together

⁵ For instance, as I hope becomes clear, what I characterize as inter-disciplinarity has been termed trans-disciplinarity, i.e., a unity of knowledge that includes disciplinary knowledge but transcends disciplinary boundaries (Nicolescu 2002; 2008). In other research, however, trans-disciplinarity describes work akin to what I mean by multi-disciplinarity (Ash 2019; Klein 2010). In general, research and education literature on pluri-disciplinarity suggests great variation in terms to describe the same process. In this essay, I seek only to make clear how our program conceptualized disciplinary relations, not to enter into a broader discussion on how to characterize different efforts at pluri-disciplinarity.

⁶ Such distinctions are founded on ontological and epistemological differences in concepts, methods, and substantive content as well as on the relative importance of each in disciplines. For instance, methodological differences between sociology and political science may not be sufficient to distinguish them but differences in concepts and especially content arguably do.

argues that no one discipline, as currently constructed, sufficiently determines concepts, methods, or content, but rather that a new, coherent *mélange* of these can usefully advance knowledge, even, perhaps, on ontological grounds differing from those of current disciplines (Bammer 2013, 2017). (Indeed, the logic of this conceptualization seems to argue for a discipline of inter-disciplinarity.⁷) What the mix of elements and the ontological ground look like may vary, depending on what disciplines are brought together, thus producing a variety of inter-disciplinarity, hybrid disciplines, or “interdisciplines” (Klein 2017). A look at the diversity of recent and extant inter-disciplinary initiatives in higher education appears to support this surmise (Jacobs 2017; Jacobs and Frickel 2009; Leahey et al. 2019).⁸ This was not the ideation and practice of our program, hence my moving away from the term.

Rather, we better understood our project to be cross-disciplinary in that the research of a fellow in her home discipline incorporates concepts, methods, or content of one or more foreign disciplines (O’Rourke 2017).⁹ The resulting research is recognizably located in the home field, but crucially integrates material recognizably from the foreign discipline(s). To cite one example from our program: A historian who studied eleventh century Mediterranean trade routes used an archive of contemporaneous letters of an Alexandrian (Egypt) merchant to identify major and minor trading ports. She wanted to show how these ports connected to each other, how strong these connections were, and how they changed over time. Through her time with us, she learned to incorporate ideas and techniques from sociological network analysis to express their network characteristics. In particular, these tools allowed her to identify positions in a system of relations, allowing these new objects to come under historical scrutiny, changing the field. She did not eschew being an historian in how she argued and in what she considered evidence to opt for a half-way house which combined some sociology with some history. She simply used a tool from the latter to create an object which suited her aims as a historian.

Cross-disciplinarity can also work subtly. Matters understood as one kind of thing in a field may be re-conceptualized in a different field to make it useful to the latter. For instance, another fellow from history generally treated social science quantitative analyses as a form of rhetoric, rhetoric being a major methodological device of historians. He did not see statistical findings as definitive statements about the world as do, say, positivist social scientists. Rather, for him, they

⁷ See, for example, Bammer 2013. Other leading scholars of inter-disciplinarity argue against this prospect. Robert Frodeman, for instance, argues that “interdisciplinary knowledge production is limited by its need to be relevant to a specific problem or need at hand” (Frodeman 2014: 3-4), and that there has been an unhealthy “preoccupation with epistemology—or as it appears in the literature, ‘method’” (Frodeman 2017: 4).

⁸ Jacobs (2017: 36) found that “each of the top 25 research universities on average has more than 100 research centers, most of which claim to be interdisciplinary in scope.”

⁹ What I’m describing as cross-disciplinarity seems akin to what has been described as multi-disciplinarity (e.g., Ash 2019 and his depiction of the field of cognitive science), a term I describe shortly to help better distinguish what I want to mean by cross-disciplinarity.

are simply one of many ways to construct a discourse having a distinct syntax, grammar, and the like, by which scholars can interpret and make meaning. Thus, the historian did not have to accept the philosophical premises which usually generate quantitative analyses in the social sciences to see a utility in that kind of analysis for history.

To sharpen this conceptualization of cross-disciplinarity, consider the third term I mentioned, often used to describe bringing disciplines together: multi-disciplinarity. Here, experts from different disciplines join forces to respond to an issue, which response, it is thought, benefits from what each discipline has distinctly to offer. This conceptualization is not based in incorporating disciplinary concepts, methods, or content, in the manner of cross-disciplinarity, or in eviscerating disciplinary boundaries, in the manner of inter-disciplinarity. In multi-disciplinarity, each field stays in its own epistemological and ontological lane and is thereby valuable.

Multi-disciplinarity seems to operate in addressing “real-world” problems. The intellectual argument is often that the perceived complexity of an issue means no single discipline has sufficient wherewithal to create a successful response. Trying to, say, mitigate effects of climate change in an urban area “necessarily” involves climatologists, civil engineers, economists, and sociologists, among others.¹⁰ An organization, like a government agency interested in such mitigation, brings together diverse experts so each can uniquely contribute to a response which can work climatologically, has sound engineering, and is economically viable and socially feasible, as determined by each discipline's knowledge and standards. Neither cross-field incorporation nor disciplinary breakdown is the goal. Each disciplinary expert contributes what she can on her discipline's own terms, and the disciplines as such remain intellectually and practically siloed despite contact with intellectual and practical diversity.

By contrast, we wanted fellows to not just be “exposed” to disciplines other than their own but also to realize opportunities in these other disciplines for their own work and, thus, for their field. In this way, cross-disciplinarity also creates opportunities for generating disciplinary knowledge, a point I later develop. I note, importantly, that these opportunities are ontologically and epistemically bounded. Whatever specific elements from other disciplines are available to be incorporated into a focal discipline—particular concepts, specific methods, distinct knowledge—actual incorporation is limited by the degree to which specific content conflicts with the ontology or epistemology of the focal discipline.¹¹ Bringing into one's field

¹⁰ A more common way of stating this may be that the *nature* of the problem means no single discipline has the wherewithal to address it. I do not use this construction because what's called the nature of a problem depends on how it is defined and on what its constituent elements are taken to be, both of which are socially constructed. Problems do not have “natures” independent of those who get to say what a problem is and, thereby, what its elements are.

¹¹ To speak of *the* ontology or epistemology of a discipline overstates the general acceptance of philosophical grounds within disciplines, maybe even within departments. How much quantifiers in

some feature of another cannot violate philosophical assumptions grounding a field, or this feature has to be turned into something consistent with those assumptions, as our historian did regarding statistical analysis.¹²

Thus, attempts to breach a foundational boundary may not be helpful yet, in that breach, cross-disciplinarity can be further understood through its limits. For instance, a fellow from classics argued we can understand how the ancients theorized the natural world by analyzing their technologies. His talk focused on how Greek water-delivery systems told us how Plato and others understood the movement of blood and other bodily systems in humans. To oversimplify, he did this by comparing his analysis of these ancient water-delivery systems to prominent writing at the time. A political scientist suggested he refashion his research strategy to construct a quasi-experimental design, complete with a comparison group! The classicist demurred. Such an approach may not have produced what his field would recognize as useful knowledge; it also would not have enabled him to address deeper issues of grammatical forms of comparison (analogy, simile, and metaphor), an issue in the value of “technological heuristics” for how ancient theorists explained the world. Our experience with the Mellon Program was that fields can incorporate much from each other before reaching these foundational boundaries.

Other instances in our program show both different ways disciplines can cross-pollinate and that such pollination is bounded. In showing both, these instances suggest that just because the latter holds does not mean the former cannot occur. And it may not be clear in the abstract when cross-pollination can and cannot happen. Perhaps we only learn in the practice of bringing disciplines together in a cross-disciplinary fashion.

sociology share similar grounds with its ethnographers is not clear; something similar may be said for modelers, quantifiers, social constructivists, and philosophical theorists in political science. To the extent disciplines have a plurality of such foundations, cross-disciplinarity becomes more exciting and useful.

¹² As suggested in the previous footnote, some disciplines seem to rely on more than one epistemology, even as their ontology may remain consistent. Sociology comes to mind. Epistemically, its ethnography bets on understanding individuals and its quantifying on explaining collective behavior. Yet researchers of both kinds take reality to arise from some combination of individual biography and social structure. Economics may be another example. Modeling is epistemically based on constructing relationships among minimally necessary features under a set of assumptions; empirical analysis relies on collecting information from the world. Yet researchers of both kinds ground their work in their shared reality of a *homo economus*. This modeler/empiricist distinction may also be akin to what occurs in some natural sciences (Stinchcombe 1978) as well as within the epistemology of experimentation (Galison 1997). The arts and humanities are too epistemically vast to do justice in a footnote to their breadth, from the vital role of the senses in the fine and performing arts to the rationality assumptions of the textual historical archive, but, broadly speaking, they may share an ontology wherein humans are “essentially creatures made in symbolic exchange, created in the process of sharing intentions, values, meanings” (Booth 1974).

Bringing individuals together: Sociality

However it came about that earning a PhD was conceptualized as an act to be performed by individual persons, this conception has structured education and training accordingly. The formal organization of courseload, class time, studying, and writing—especially writing the dissertation—emphasizes the individual developing her capacities in some degree of isolation from peers and faculty. This places too much emphasis on the solitariness of individualism in graduate education and ignores the utility of sociality. We implemented our program in ways which grounded it in sociality.

I borrow the concept from evolutionary biology, where sociality refers to the degree to which individual animals in a population associate in social groups and form cooperative societies to enhance *individual* survival.¹³ In our program, sociality concerned the degree to which we formally and informally drew fellows together to actively rely on one another to abet their intellectual and professional development, i.e., for inducing the kind of collaboration important for cross-disciplinarity and for making the work experience socially enjoyable. Here I discuss several ways our initiative tried to instantiate sociality; in the subsequent section, I discuss specifically how sociality and cross-disciplinarity abet each other.

Office structure. Perhaps the spatial arrangement of fellows' offices best shows how we tried to foster sociality and, thereby, mitigate individualism. I first briefly describe the kinds of work spaces commonly available to advanced graduate students, observing how they reflect individualism,¹⁴ in order to then contrast—in more detail than the reader may think necessary—how the structure of fellows' office space fostered sociality.

For advanced graduate students as for faculty, the quality of work space is crucial.¹⁵ For these students, university libraries provide several kinds of spaces: Students can sit by themselves in chairs, at carrels open to the rest of the library, or at tables with others typically not doing cognate work. At each, social interaction is not only not valued but is thought problematic, mostly, perhaps, because interaction generates “noise” levels which distract students from accomplishing cognitive tasks such as reading or writing. The individual student is conceived

¹³ The term and its meaning come from research on non-human animals. See Clutton-Brock (2009). For a social science discussion regarding humans, see Crespi (2001); for a discussion in evolutionary biology of how it develops, see Van der Post, et al. (2015).

¹⁴ I discuss how these elements are more or less formally structured by universities and their departments. Students on their own may do things differently, including how they informally use university space, e.g., self-organizing study groups which meet at some location on campus. Such self-organizing supports my argument: Students recognize the importance of sociality but have to put it into practice themselves because their formal opportunities do not.

¹⁵ Student office space may be thought a trivial element in the scheme of doctoral education, and in running the Mellon Program we encountered such thinking. To show it is not trivial, consider how much importance faculty place on the physical setting they want, even demand, to carry out research, reading, writing, and teaching—the exact same activities advanced graduate students carry out.

as having nothing to gain—work-wise—from interacting with those around her. Another kind of space, sometimes in a library, sometimes in classroom or office buildings, are enclosed or semi-enclosed cells, often adjacent but not necessarily.¹⁶ These may be chambers, with floor-to-ceiling walls and a door or, frequently, cubicles, with “half-height” dividers on three sides. These extend the logic of library spaces which separate and isolate people to reduce distraction. These arrangements imply that, for a doctoral student trying to accomplish her cognitive tasks, having others close by is problematic, presumably either because they make the mind wander or generate explicit external stimuli, such as a noise or speech. And research has found that attention does require some absence of potential distraction (e.g., on writing: Unsworth and McMillian 2014; on reading: Cauchard et al. 2012), but perhaps not as much as these traditional spatial arrangements imply. The semantic aspect of speech has been shown to affect writing, for instance, but not the acoustic quality of speech (Sörqvist et al. 2012), and certain kinds of background speech interrupt writing but not others (Van d Poll and Sörqvist 2016). And it seems that perhaps more people talking in a larger space mimics the effect of a space with no speech (Banbury and Berry 2005).¹⁷

Our everyday lives suggest the value and utility of doing cognitive work around others. People—couples, families, friends—read in the same room precisely because they think it enhances the reading experience, intellectually and otherwise. Café reading and writing is a strong tradition across cultures, which recent generations of students have updated by writing and researching on computers in public, wi-fied settings which serve food and drink. These traditions suggest that not only does doctoral training not require the severely individualized work arrangements schools construct, but that sociality may be more useful for dissertation-production than those individualized arrangements (Mantai 2019).¹⁸

¹⁶ I am perhaps putting too fine a point on it by pointing out that graduate students at Columbia refer to a space fitting this description as the “suicide” room.

¹⁷ Research on what constitutes attention and distraction regarding accomplishing cognitive tasks and on what factors contribute to the relationship between these is too extensive and specific for me to do justice to it here. If I can make a general statement, it seems “background” sound, such as speech, can have deleterious effects on individuals performing cognitive tasks, but this can vary greatly depending on kind, quality, amount, and other characteristics of speech. A twofold conclusion I draw is that the extreme bluntness of isolated work spaces is not necessary for cognitive work and that properly contoured spaces can be more effective by incorporating the social and by relying on technology, such as earphones. Also, because this research only concerns the relationship between sound and cognitive performance, it does not consider non-cognitive benefits of having others working nearby. Our Mellon fellows seem to have appreciated these benefits, as indicated in Table 6 of the Appendix.

¹⁸ Also, because of the seemingly ever greater penetration of diverse media and associated technologies in student’s lives—and their desire for such penetration—students may have developed reading and writing habits which allow them to work better in more, rather than less, socially active spaces.

Our Mellon Program tried an approach that differed greatly from common thinking about office structure. Each fellow had a work space in an expansive “open” office, with an exceptionally large foot print and an exceptionally high ceiling. Each work space contained a large desk, file cabinets, and book shelves. Low glass partitions—rising only slightly above seated eye level—separated adjacent desks. No partitions or barriers enclosed fellows. Each space was sufficiently large so that fellows could vary their social separation as they thought their work required at a particular moment. All in all, the structure fostered sociality without losing the individualism also needed for cognitive work.¹⁹ Fellows’ post-program comments on the office arrangement, in Table 6 of the Appendix, attests to this.

Our site also had a kitchen, a lounge, a seminar room, and access to a program director’s office. The first two may seem like “conveniences,” nice to provide, but not essential for achieving our goals. This view is mistaken. The kitchen and lounge were collective spaces which fostered fellows running into each other, part of the “architecture of serendipity” that is important for intellectual and professional exchange.²⁰ They also reduced the pressure on such exchanges having to occur amid office space.

As these sites embedded sociality, the seminar room and access to a director’s office embedded individualism. This read as privacy to a fellow wanting to talk one-on-one with another fellow, someone from their department, a student in a course he was teaching, or to have professional interactions, such as phone job interviews.

In their year-end reports and in conversations with me, fellows remarked on the value of sociality (though they never used that word). Entering into a space where they immediately saw others like themselves doing precisely what they were trying to accomplish—writing their dissertations and becoming professional academics—helped lessen their career-stage anxieties. And being easily able to interact with scholars from fields other than their own fostered professional and intellectual collaborations they otherwise would not have even conceived, no less thought possible.

¹⁹ In our work-space arrangement and in other ways reported in the Appendix, pp. A-1-2, our program was not indifferent to the value of individualism. I emphasize sociality since it was key to our program and generally seems under-valued in doctoral training. Regarding work space, for instance, individualism was instantiated by having very large desks (much larger, apparently, than Columbia’s bean counters thought appropriate for graduate students), and in the desks being curved, which allowed fellows to work in two different positions relative to their neighbors, one with more privacy than the other. The size of the walkway between rows also allowed trading productively between sociality and individualism.

²⁰ I take this term from Sunstein (2017) where it has the same meaning though employed in a different context.

Further instantiations. While office architecture was a mainstay of how we tried to foster sociality, we did so in other ways as well. We provided material support for fellow-initiated intellectual, professional, and social activities, for instance. These fostered sociality by making the fellows responsible for utilizing resources in ways that necessarily engaged other fellows in activities generally valuable to the group.

Aside from these material elements, we induced sociality normatively. Most important was expected participation in our bi-weekly seminar. Attendance was a program requirement, to be sure, though, to be frank, we all know ways can be found to circumvent such requirements. Over the years, only five or so fellows consistently violated this requirement. This is because the norm of responding to other fellows with whom one shared work space, talked about research or teaching, and ate lunch in the lounge was strong. A concomitant norm was that of participating in the seminar in a way that furthered the work of the presenting fellow. This meant, on the one hand, not commenting merely to be critical or to show off one's intellectual skills, and, on the other hand, not pulling punches in some intellectually misguided notion of congeniality. Fellows wanted responses that would help them clarify, deepen, test, or better support their arguments. Responding to these norms grew easily out of and furthered sociality.

Sociality and Cross-disciplinarity Correspondences

Though sociality and cross-disciplinarity are distinct principles, they furthered each other, as the discussion has generally suggested. Here I want to be more specific.

Sociality abets cross-disciplinarity. Over time, we came to understand how sociality can help generate knowledge relationally: Intellectual gains from cross-disciplinarity can inhere in the relationships between and among scholars as much, or more, than in the individual capacity of a particular scholar. We usually think to develop knowledge by locating what's new or different in the capacity of individuals; "breakthroughs" of one sort or another are thought to result from the native talent, trained ability, and professional experience of *a* scholar or scientist. Consistent with this thinking, we structure our doctoral programs to train individuals *qua* individuals.

It follows, then, that bringing fields together to train PhDs has usually meant expecting each scholar to learn, hopefully deeply, the different fields she is expected to combine. In turn, our broader expectation that whatever advancement in knowledge we hope to achieve by this combining occurs only through the intellectual ability of each scholar. Imagine a program, for instance, that brings together religion, history, and politics in the Middle East and promises that a successful PhD will be recognized as a historian, a political scientist, and a religion scholar of the Middle East to academics in each of these fields.²¹ Achieving this is a tall order and, frankly, unlikely to be accomplished.

²¹ I witnessed this expected recognition when fellows from self-described inter-disciplinary departments applied for assistant professorships.

Another problem is that training individual scholars in this way may cause crucial, useful ontological and epistemological differences to be ignored, perhaps eroded, leaving the scholar and scholarship bereft of sound philosophical foundations. And, last, programmatically, this approach depends on identifying certain, “right” people who have the capacity for such field combination. Achieving the right cross-disciplinary relationships seems easier.

Locating the desired capacity relationally—across people in different disciplines, as our effort aspired to do—can be more effective and more useful for generating knowledge.²² Sociality was thus an avenue to cross-disciplinarity, and, in its structure, our program relied on the previously referenced “architecture of serendipity” to forge relationships. We did so by establishing the bar for intellectual discourse at a sufficiently conceptual level that scholars from diverse disciplines could recognize themselves and their disciplines in that discourse, and we limited divergence by admitting fellows whose work was in some way empirical.²³ These were major, but not the only, features which “serendipitously” engendered fellows finding others on whom they could cross-disciplinarily depend.

A programmatic instance is apposite. A historian studying school desegregation and a sociologist studying racial and economic integration in schools forged a relationship that uniquely contributed to each other’s research. The sociologist quantitatively studied poor students in an affluent suburb, but wanted to make the case that her findings in one site were relevant to suburbs nationally undergoing similar workforce and demographic changes. Rather than employ the usual social science strategies to generalize her findings, she worked with a fellow from history to use archives to document national trends in suburban economies and demographic change and to incorporate recent developments in the sub-discipline of American suburban history and the most important historical research in the field. Concomitantly, to meet the historian’s research goals, they worked together to correctly assemble statistics about the school system the historian was studying and to access and download school-level data from a national dataset. They together plumbed Census data to develop profiles of neighborhood population characteristics and to conceptualize how best to chronicle multi-faceted, over-time demographic shifts in neighborhoods. In these ways, the historian and the sociologist fundamentally relied on each other’s knowledge and capacities, rather than try to become a “junior” member of the other’s discipline. Neither fellow knew each other before entering the

²² This argument is obviously also consistent with our founding notion that disciplines as disciplines are important and useful for generating knowledge. Indeed, from the perspective of a discipline (as opposed to, say, that of a business, government, or some other non-academic entity), disciplines are not only important but necessary as, broadly speaking, and as I previously observed, they get to define what constitutes new knowledge (Jacobs and Frickel 2009).

²³ Of the roughly 200 students we had over the years, including those in our predecessor to the Mellon Program, perhaps no more than five did work which could not be so described.

program; by the time they left, the sociologist said she expected to work with the historian “for the rest of [her] professional life.”²⁴

To be sure, some fellows from certain fields found it difficult to be broadly relational. How much this had to do with individual limitations or with disciplinary boundaries, or some combination of the two, is unclear.²⁵ But the program generated anecdotal evidence that sociality-induced cross-disciplinarity could be more foundational to doctoral training than is currently the case. These stories suggest faculty may train their students to think in disciplinary-restricted ways even if they themselves do not necessarily do so. They may value concepts, methods, and content from other fields but fail to communicate this to their students. Our most telling experience was a fellow from economics who tested his model by employing historical data. At his Mellon seminar presentation, historians and an anthropologist suggested he was assuming characteristics of the time and of the people that he should investigate, i.e., that he should become more of an historian and more of an anthropologist. The presenting fellow doubted their points had much utility for his research. A week later, after giving precisely the same talk in an economics department colloquium, his graduate student peers challenged his lack of econometrics and made other, similar, disciplinary-bound comments. However, the economics faculty—the dissertation advisors of our fellow as well as of the doctoral students in the room—raised the exact same issues as had our seminar historians and anthropologist. The fellow was surprised. And, indeed, judging from the suggestions of his peers, he should have

²⁴ To make this point by posing an extreme thought experiment: The logic of my argument suggests the idea of disciplinarily joint dissertations resulting from students forging a relationship across disciplines. Imagine a single dissertation produced by two scholars from disciplines as diverse as, say, African literature and political science field experimentation. The research question posed is one that both disciplines can speak to. The former doesn't have to know the logic or practice of field experiments or the political science theory which generated the design of the political scientist's experiment; and the latter doesn't have to know or have even read African literature or theories of, say, interpretation/meaning versus affect theory which the literary scholar may be discussing. These get incorporated into the work by the one scholar who is expert in them. Their collaboration results in a single dissertation which is legibly in the field of African literature and in the field of political science. This idea may not be as far-fetched as may first appear: a less extreme version partially occurred when two fellows in our program—an economist and a political scientist—collaborated on a chapter in the former's “three paper” dissertation.

²⁵ That some fellows might have a difficult time is evident in a problem we encountered in a fellow selection practice we tried but abandoned. Consistent with program logic, we sought to include faculty from diverse disciplines in selecting an incoming cohort. We asked each person to review applications from ten candidates, where each saw applicants from their own and distal fields. A political scientist evaluated the social scientists' applications, but said he was unable to review those from the humanities because they were not interested in creating generalizable knowledge! It is not surprising, then, to find students trained by such faculty are unable to see value for their research in epistemologies different from their own discipline. I note this may say more about certain individuals than about certain disciplines. An economist participating in this selection process, whose methodological and positivist approach is akin to that of the political scientist, had no such difficulties evaluating all applicants.

been. While the faculty, in effect, saw the value in what our fellows had to say, they clearly had not trained their students to be similarly astute. The sociality of our seminar tried to do so.

Cross-disciplinarity abets sociality. I have suggested sociality facilitated cross-disciplinarity's embedding of knowledge in distal fields. Here I suggest how cross-disciplinarity was crucial for sociality and its engendering collaborative behavior by mitigating individualism. Key is that cross-disciplinarity brought together students who, for the most part, were not competing with each other, i.e., within departments or within disciplines—not competing for awards, for postdocs, for faculty attention, for academic appointments, or for departmental benefits.²⁶ The absence of competition, combined with programmatic features previously described, allowed fellows to collaborate with one another. The animating esprit of our initiative was to be collaborative regardless of field, and we did try to select fellows who engaged that spirit. But this value was also fed by the cross-disciplinary fact that fellows could aid others in their research (reading and commenting on chapter drafts), job searching (reading, commenting on, and sharing cover letters for jobs or teaching statements), and other professional activities (conference preparation, connecting fellows to scholars in their field) without concern that doing so harmed their own interests.²⁷ These characteristics of cross-disciplinarity furthered the program's sociality, which, in turn, enabled fellows to benefit from what other disciplines had to offer. Its cross-disciplinarity effectively "used" sociality as a mechanism to produce intellectual and professional benefits.

Consider one example, our seminar, the most important intellectual gathering in our program. Structurally, this was akin to the role and importance of seminars in fellows' previous coursework, but, in that setting, intellectual exchange has to compete with other dynamics. One prevalent dynamic is students jousting with each other to demonstrate how "smart" they are, to themselves, to their departmental peers, and, of course, to relevant faculty who may be on their dissertation committee, have some control over departmental benefits, and provide access to career opportunities. It would not be surprising if, in these seminars, students pay less attention to intellectual discourse and more to scoring points, perhaps in ways detrimental to peers. As a result, the intellectual utility of the seminar may be crimped, to say the least. By contrast, in the Mellon seminars, with few peers and faculty from fellows' departments, showing off had little value; the intellectual force of the seminar discussion was paramount and evident. As a result, the ethos of sociality—consciously, demonstrably, explicitly helping presenting fellows improve the intellectual quality of their work and how they write and present—governed.

²⁶ At any one time, we always had more than one fellow from several departments as well as some "soloists," but, even in these instances, the combination of sociality and cross-disciplinarity mitigated the competition arising from the individualism of their doctoral programs.

²⁷ That students feel intra-departmental collaboration might be problematic for them is, to say the least, unfortunate. Our fellows reported its prevalence nevertheless.

Another example emphasizes the professional benefits of sociality resulting from cross-disciplinarity: fellows' applications for post-docs or for assistant professor positions. Cross-disciplinarity effectively created two kinds of interactions which were, according to fellows' annual reports, noticeably different from their departmental experiences. One was the informal exchange among fellows of cover letters, teaching statements, research statements, and other materials needed for a job, post-doc, or grant application. We—the fellows and I—considered but rejected formalizing this process because doing so by, for instance, establishing a central repository with individual online access, would reduce the sociality-induced mode fellows preferred. And informal exchange put responsibility on the fellows. By fostering sociality, these, in turn, nurtured the collaboration we sought to create. As a result, exchanges were prolific, and fellows in one field could hit the right notes in cover letters which others then emulated. For instance, fellows in English, highly sensitive to writing-quality, expressed themselves in ways fellows from other, less linguistically-besotted, fields could use; or fellows in one field featured elements in their applications which those in others had not even conceived, for example, the kinds of materials to include.

Two, because cross-disciplinarity fostered sociality, fellows learned of positions they would not otherwise have known about, such as an English fellow accessing an academic opportunity in criminal justice research, and they gained practical ideas for how to handle different aspects of the job process, such as relationships with advisors, campus visits, job talks, job negotiations, and the like.²⁸

Benefits of Cross-disciplinarity and Sociality

In my account, cross-disciplinarity simultaneously strengthens an understanding of one's own discipline even as it provides opportunities for incorporating the knowledge base of others. This Janusian quality helped us achieve two intellectual aims: contributing to fellows' work and developing knowledge.

Fellows' research/careers. I earlier developed the concept of cross-disciplinarity by showing how including concepts, methods, and content from distal disciplines can contribute to fellows' research in their focal discipline. No need to repeat here how that worked, except to emphasize that we also wanted to help them better see what is distinct to their field. Because graduate training is commonly so heavily siloed in a home discipline, students are unlikely to have much systematic experience with how different fields construct knowledge production. As a result, their training may not make obvious exactly how their own research is founded on certain philosophical positions, (as the political scientist in earlier my example found in her suggestions to the classicist). Fellows can be unaware of what their discipline distinctly has to offer, how

²⁸ Over several years, we accumulated a sufficiently large set of ideas that we developed a nine-page handout called "Wisdom of the Mellon Fellows."

their research is ontologically and epistemically bounded, and, so, what opportunities distal fields offer which would enhance their own work without contravening their discipline's defining assumptions. Indeed, an intellectual historian said that participating in our program allowed him to better understand why he so disliked the social sciences. It helped him become a better historian because it let him understand more deeply than had his training what makes the field of history, history.

Research and disciplinary knowledge are not the only part of fellows' work to gain from cross-disciplinarity. Insofar as fellows pursue academic careers—and likely elsewhere—teaching and interacting with faculty from diverse fields will also be important. Exposure to diverse fields may be particularly useful for undergraduate liberal arts teaching, which, among other things, tries to develop undergraduates' ability to think across disciplines (Han et al. 2023). In writing letters of recommendation for fellows applying for assistant professorships, I emphasized how well they would teach because of their demonstrated ability to enter our wildly cross-disciplinary discussions.

At the faculty level, academic work can mean participating in intellectual discourse across fields and, more prosaically but no less importantly, participating in school administrative activities, e.g., committees which bring together faculty from different disciplines. Comfort with the discourses of different disciplines fosters integration into the academic environment. This may be particularly important for junior faculty. One fellow reported that, despite being a new assistant professor, she felt empowered by her cross-disciplinary experience in our program to engage senior faculty from other fields at her school.

Disciplinary development of knowledge. The importance of cross-field borrowing in the development of knowledge, at least in the West, over the *longue durée* and more recently, is well known.²⁹ A perhaps Whiggish history tells this story: The natural philosophy of Aristotle enclosed what we now think of as issues in philosophy (ethics, ontology, epistemology, and so forth) with issues we now think belong only to the natural sciences (mechanics, motion, human anatomy, and the like). A shorter, historically later time period saw a similar cleaving of philosophy and the social sciences. Fields currently concerned with politics and economics were encompassed by philosophy as recently as the early nineteenth century, and they themselves were entwined as political economy until later in that century. Similar changes have occurred more recently. At the turn of the twentieth century, what we now recognize as the distinct field of psychology was firmly a part of the field of medicine. This history is a reason to organize a program cross-disciplinarily, but not because we want to emulate a certain version of the past; rather, because that history tells us something important: Increasing the specification of a field

²⁹ I limit my discussion to the West because I have some familiarity with this history and very little of non-Western sites.

by employing diverse methods and by finding different bases for making ever-greater analytic distinctions works to develop knowledge.

This history can be understood as the development of new conceptual objects. As Bourdieu (1991: 33) points out, “Scientific research is in fact organized around constructed objects that no longer have anything in common with the units divided up by naïve perception.” And these objects “can only be defined and constructed in terms of a theoretical problematic which makes it possible to conduct a systematic questioning of the aspects of reality that are brought into relationship by the questions that are put to them” (1991: 35). This is no less true for the humanities than for the social, natural, and behavioral sciences.

Such new objects, resulting from cross-disciplinarity, can remain within existing disciplines, as my previous example of network positioning for history suggests, or can result in new or “hybrid” fields. For example, biochemistry was birthed by focusing on the chemistry of living matter, necessitating incorporating knowledge from biology (Burggren et al. 2017).

Astrophysics brings physics and chemistry into the field of astronomy, which had previously focused on the position and motion of heavenly bodies, to study the what of these bodies, not just the where (Meadows 1984). Importantly, such crossing does not mean the “originating” field disappears; biology and chemistry continue to generate knowledge independently of biochemistry and of each other. Rather, a new field develops which incorporates certain knowledge and methods from these previously existing fields.

As our program developed, we had in mind Bourdieu’s argument, specific to cross-disciplinarity’s role in constructing new objects. This can be seen when a fellow from English argued how the theatrical performance of risk in the relationship between sailors and ship financiers in seventeenth century English drama made the new concept of risk accessible to the society at large and, so, helped embed it in the economic institutions of the time (and since). One way social science fellows entered this discussion was to observe that the literary scholar was dealing with the principal/agent problem common to their fields. As a result, the English fellow could incorporate this framing into his thinking because it provided a more precise understanding of the sailor/financier relationship. But doing so did not require him to model this relationship assuming, say, economic rationality nor to carry out an empirical economic analysis of fiscal returns to seventeenth century sea-faring in commercial goods. He just took the concept’s specification of the relationship to make more acute his argument about the staged performance of risk, making him better able to answer questions posed by his own discipline about the relationship between theatrical performance and society. Putting the matter more abstractly, he could utilize concept formation in a foreign discipline to create a Bourdieuan new object, whose creation did not violate the ontology and epistemology of his discipline.

This claim and my (severely truncated and simplified) history of the development of knowledge and disciplines conflicts with some arguments about the utility of bringing disciplines together as distinct entities (Bammer 2013; Moran 2010). In these arguments, disciplinary boundaries

inhibit generating new conceptual objects and, so, our ability to produce innovative research. The conceptualization of inter-disciplinarity described earlier takes as foundational that boundaries are problematic in this way. I do not want to discuss this contention; it may, of course, be right in some contexts. But however useful inter-disciplinarity is, it also misses an epistemological point about knowledge. Intellectually, we only know something because of disciplines.³⁰ As Kohler (1991: 2) argues, “[D]isciplines regulate intellectual traffic among scientific communities; they are indispensable for understanding innovations that may occur when academic boundaries and trade relationships shift.” So, in this context, the “theory” of our program was to enable fellows to collaborate across disciplines so they could advance knowledge by creating new conceptual objects.

Mitigating departmental issues. As a program director, I did not share a home department with the fellows. As a result, they recognized that, relative to their departmental faculty, I had an arguably less conflicted interest in helping them achieve what they sought. I did not, for instance, have to weigh students against each other in their department or to consider departmental concerns. A consequence was that fellows reported feeling more free to discuss their intellectual and professional issues than they would with faculty from their departments, such as not wanting a career in academia, the relationship between their careers and personal situations, and how to handle their relationships with faculty from their departments.³¹ Also, fellows were able to express ignorance of professional processes they would otherwise be unable to express to departmental faculty, thereby learning how these processes work.³² Relatedly, I often served on fellows’ dissertation committees in fields not my own, enabling fellows to incorporate into their research knowledge from my field.

Also, by the writing stage, fellows had spent at least three to five years with their departmental peers. They reported that our cross-disciplinary community was a very welcome relief from this company. This had psychic, as well as intellectual, benefits, and the former may have positively influenced the latter. The degree to which competition among students becomes Hobbesian may harm their ability to learn and to take intellectual risks, as the emotional and psychological costs of competition inhibit how they would otherwise think and act (Posselt 2021; Hazell et al. 2020). More broadly, as we know, the psychic toll of doctoral programs can be enormous and intense (Council of Graduate Schools and the Jed Foundation 2021; Levecque et al. 2017). It can not only negatively impact students’ mental health, but also, perhaps concomitantly, their ability to complete coursework, research projects, and dissertations. The relief fellows generally

³⁰ More generally, the relevant concept is communities (Kohler 1991). But in university-based research, these communities equate to departmentally-bounded disciplines.

³¹ This is based on fellows’ year-end reports (see Table 6 in the Appendix) and on our conversations.

³² To the extent U.S. doctoral programs recruit students from outside the country and/or from lower-status class and educational backgrounds, students may not know how academia works, especially those common processes which are informal and subtle, and so are disadvantaged relative to certain peers.

felt in participating in our program was one way of saying it made the doctoral process “fun.” Exposing them to knowledge from diverse fields and doing so outside their departmental settings enhanced the sense of intellectual curiosity and engagement which made them want to become academics in the first place.

To be more expansive, what became clear through our approach is that earning a PhD does not have to be as difficult, indeed torturous, as so many students experience (and as seemingly every darkly “humorous” cartoon about obtaining a doctorate has it). This essay has focused on the dissertation-writing stage of the process, but our experience begs the question: What principles should underly that process? While I think our approach has a lot to recommend it regarding achieving the goals of doctoral programs, it has as much to recommend about the process by which those goals are achieved. I discuss these later in the penultimate section.

Mitigating structural problems of doctoral programs. Our initiative fostered sociality at a crucial point in completing the PhD—dissertation writing, perhaps the most intellectually and socially isolating stage of graduate school. As I have argued, doing so helped mitigate this isolation and, thus, helped students complete the degree, and in a timely manner.

To see how this worked, consider a stylized depiction of doctoral program stages in the humanities and social sciences: initial coursework, dissertation prospectus/research, and dissertation writing. Coursework provides intense structure which joins scholarly engagement with a degree of sociality, if unintended. It organizes and guides major elements of the doctoral process: students’ time, intellectual work, faculty contact, and peer interaction. At the prospectus and research stage, support for these elements diminishes but does not disappear. Deadlines for work and the commonality of intellectual endeavor weaken. Interaction with faculty becomes one-on-one with fewer faculty, e.g., advisors, and perhaps more infrequent. Peer interaction takes place in chance exchanges at common spaces in the department or at a library.³³ If a student participates in a faculty research project, these elements may be more formalized and produce greater sociality and intellectual engagement. But as students move from research (reading, field work, archival digging, data collection, and the like) to writing, solitude increases. Organization, time-management, and intellectual focus, as well as faculty and peer engagement, rely almost completely on student self-structuring. Thus, over the course of a few years, absent self-structuring, the student has gone from a setting which highly organizes their graduate experience to one which leaves them much more socially and intellectually isolated. Small wonder people take more time than we would like to complete the

³³ Students may themselves organize intellectual and/or research exchanges, but these are not structured by the doctoral program.

degree or fail to do so. The CV designation “ABD” testifies to the extent to which programs fail to provide useful structure.³⁴

It may be thought doctoral programs should not have much post-coursework structure because an academic research career requires being able to generate and organize one’s work. True enough. But part of training students could be helping them learn how to self-structure. Right now, we effectively claim we’re training students by throwing them into the deep end of the pool and letting them figure out how not to drown, hoping that will mean learning to swim. This is not training; it’s abdication.³⁵

In providing structure, mostly through fostering sociality, our initiative also tried to deal with other concerns arising from the absence of structure. One is the greater difficulty for students of certain genders, nationalities, socio-economic classes, and educational backgrounds. Styles of parenting and of education likely differ by class and by the kinds of schooling a person has had prior to entering a doctoral program. Relative to less-resourced homes and schools, where top-down organization may be a more common way to deal with fewer resources, homes and schools with great resources are more able to both allow a person to be less formally organized and to foster their finding their own way to self-organization. Too, for non-American students, their educational systems may not foster the kind of self-organization as do higher-status schools in the U.S.,³⁶ and this may hold regardless of school quality in the home country, as, for instance, a matter of cultural notions about what constitutes appropriate education.

Our program’s emphasis on sociality also sought to address the common assumption that PhD students are necessarily going onto academic research and teaching careers which require this high degree of self-organization. This assumption may currently be especially problematic for humanities students. People earn doctorates for a variety of reasons, perhaps more so now than ever, including to carry out research in non-academic settings or become an administrator in an educational institution. These careers are likely to require less self-organizing than university-based research and teaching. A glance at respectable think tanks, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and for-profit corporations—major loci of non-academic research in the humanities and social sciences—suggests that work in these settings is more collaborative. There’s little expectation that the researcher go off on his own, returning with a completed

³⁴ Studies have found structural features associated with the different stages of earning a doctorate correlate with student well-being and motivation, e.g., Sverdlik and Hall 2019.

³⁵ Here’s an apposite example at the undergraduate level: An elite liberal arts college in the U.S. at which I once taught required students to complete a thesis to earn their BA or BS. Prior to undertaking the thesis in their senior year, their education consisted entirely of three years of coursework. To carry out the thesis, a student was nominally supported by infrequent meetings with advisors; creating the structure of drafts, deadlines, and related research was left almost entirely to the student. Not surprisingly, failure to complete a thesis was the main reason students did not graduate in the intended four years—or ever.

³⁶ I recognize some do: Undergraduate programs in the United Kingdom seem to do so.

product in hand. On the contrary, the research process usually tries to ensure more continuous engagement with other researchers as well as with managerial personnel who help organize the work flow. These positions do not value the degree of isolated self-organization traditionally found in doctoral programs, making fostering individualism especially problematic to the extent we are increasingly trying to encourage PhD students to develop alternative careers to university- and college-based research and teaching.

Our Mellon Program met these concerns by instantiating and encouraging sociality at a particular point in graduate education, dissertation-writing, when individualism may be most intense. The work-site arrangements I've discussed are a crucial site for this instantiation, but, on their own, they are not sufficient. A second critical element is that students share that space precisely to enact a joint initiative, like the Mellon Program's ideation and elements I have described.³⁷ As fellows reported when graduating, by reducing the intellectual and professional isolation of their lives, the program dramatically changed what their experience would otherwise have been.

Implications for doctoral programs

Here I discuss some practical implications for humanities and social science PhD training in general and then for each set of disciplines. Discussing "the humanities" and "the social sciences" as coherent entities can be intellectually and practically problematic. But incorporating the too-many and too-varied distinctions within each is not feasible here, and these rubrics may usefully structure my discussion if only because we commonly employ them to organize higher education.

Doctoral programs across the humanities and the social sciences. One obvious implication is the disciplinary utility of incorporating, in a cross-disciplinary manner, other disciplines into doctoral education and training. Broadly speaking, as disciplines partition into sub-specialties, these latter can have less to do with one another than they do with scholars in more distal disciplines working in kindred areas. In our program, for instance, a historian demonstrated the existence and importance for disease control of how African strategies to mitigate illness related to European approaches to the study and transmission of sleeping sickness in the nineteenth

³⁷ Columbia unwittingly but effectively carried out a test of this argument. When our program ended, graduate students in the social sciences were assigned the exact same individual work spaces we have described, and all other elements of the space—the lounge, kitchen, seminar room, and so forth—remained the same. But now students were assigned space through their departments based on whatever criteria each department used; they were not evaluated on common criteria derived from a shared initiative in which they were expected to contribute to the work of other students. In the language I have just been using, the individualism typical of doctoral programs was governing; no evidence of sociality was apparent. My and others' observations of the effects of this "experiment" was that the space was utilized much less than during the Mellon Program and that intellectual, professional, and social exchanges did not exist. The use of the space merely continued the usual unstructured, individualized manner of each department's PhD program.

and twentieth centuries. The public health focus of her work—a small sub-discipline in history—led her to engage research in two fields distinct from history and from each other: colonialism and tropical diseases and the medical field concerned with the biology and chemistry of these diseases. Incorporating the research of both deepened her discussion of exactly what was culturally and medically at stake in disease transmission. Working with other disciplines can foster, not mitigate, the benefits of disciplinary specialization.

A second implication is greater emphasis on sociality as a programmatic principle at the department level. As previously shown, our initiative both evinces the intellectual and professional value of this principle and, relative to departmental programs, may more easily accomplish it. Departmental structure may make sociality difficult to instantiate, but not impossible. Rather, academic history, departmental culture, and the philosophical foundation of individualism are so strong that we commonly do not even consider the idea or value of sociality, no less how to implement it.

Last, our project suggests doctoral programs, compared to how they usually operate, can profitably be more thoroughly structured after coursework.³⁸ Right now, coursework ends and students are left to forage for structure. They get work done in response to some combination of generalized expectations (e.g., completing their prospectus) and/or a relationship with a particular faculty member, which can run from weak, e.g., they are in the same department, to strong, e.g., they are carrying out shared research. Our experience at an even later stage suggests greater structuring earlier on can crucially help students complete good dissertations in a reasonable time. This suggestion is akin to the finding of the Mellon Foundation report “Reforming Doctoral Education, 1990 to 2015: Recent Initiatives and Future Prospects” (Weisbuch and Cassuto 2016), which points to the lack of structure over the course of a doctoral program, especially regarding student advising and departmental culture. Our experience suggests that the issue extends more broadly over all phases and elements of PhD programs, and that students can be explicitly trained in structure.

Humanities disciplines. The utility of sociality may be more pronounced for the humanities, as perhaps it is not as well-embraced in these fields as in the social sciences. As I’ve described, for instance, social science graduate students often work together in faculty-induced research groups. Humanities research processes are more solitary and, so, their training is grounded in an individualism which does not value research collaboration. Books and articles are overwhelmingly solo-authored, so students are trained to research and write alone. This

³⁸ Note that I am not suggesting this greater structuring necessarily embrace principles of cross-disciplinarity and sociality, though my experience suggests incorporating both would benefit such structuring. And I am not suggesting that, were sociality to be a governing principle, it can only occur via cross-disciplinarity.

practice cannot produce the sociality which can mitigate a conceptual commitment to individualism.

This results in a greater degree of disciplinary insularity, compared to other fields, undermining the ability of the humanities to incorporate knowledge from other disciplines. This was evident in our initiative in two ways. One was that humanities fellows seemed to more greatly engage only their fields, compared to the social scientists.³⁹ This was evident, for instance, in dissertation citations and in conversational awareness of work in other fields. This may be because the disciplines comprising the humanities are, arguably, substantively more diverse than the social sciences. But the fields of the humanities are also arguably methodologically and epistemically more similar to each other than are the social sciences. This suggests a ground on which they can be more rather than less easily brought together. For instance, many humanities-based inter-disciplinary programs seek to eschew disciplinary boundaries in order to construct new conceptual objects. People who run these efforts may think this possible, and succeed, precisely because epistemological and methodological similarities across fields create opportunities for eroding content-based disciplinary boundaries. Nevertheless, our emphasis on cross-disciplinarity worked well for fellows from these disciplines, as it showed how each can remain disciplined even as students usefully draw on scholarship from across the humanities (and the social sciences).

The other expression of the humanities' insularity was fellows' conflicting responses to the social sciences. On the one hand, these fellows displayed an undeserved sense of inferiority, perhaps based on the relationship of the social sciences to the non-academic world. That is, the social sciences make stronger claims which are generally believed to be empirical, especially quantitative, and therefore "harder" knowledge about the social world; have more technically sophisticated methodologies for empirically analyzing the social world; and generate greater career opportunities and higher incomes resulting from this relationship. On the other hand, these same worldly benefits caused fellows in the humanities to diminish the social sciences because the questions they seek to answer are not deeply important or their methods are deeply insufficient when they do pose vital questions. In this regard, to paraphrase an unknown wit, humanities fellows suggested the social sciences dive deeply into the surface of things. These paradoxical responses to the social sciences argue for the utility of cross-disciplinarity to foster a more coherent and, therefore, stronger appreciation of humanities PhDs for their disciplines.

Social Sciences. As discussed, individualism in social science programs tends to be mitigated because of the structure of research projects in these fields. Sub-disciplinary methodological differences within sociology show this. Faculty projects whose methods are quantitative are

³⁹ History was a great and important exception. As a *general* statement, historians, more than fellows from any other humanities or social science discipline, were willing and able to engage fields across the humanities and across the social sciences. This program would not have succeeded nearly as well as it did without its historians.

more likely to support one or more graduate students to carry out research than projects employing ethnography, where faculty themselves commonly carry out the research. This difference owes to the nature of the methods, to the kind of knowledge desired, and to the relationship of methods to fiscal efficiency. Broadly speaking, quantitative methods consist of “technical” skills which translate across people, while ethnographic methods emphasize highly individualized interpersonal skills.⁴⁰ Funders do not want to pay faculty salaries for collecting, coding and analyzing the volume of data quantitative studies can require; ethnographic data collection is usually over a much smaller data space, such as the number of people to be interviewed, and so can be—commonly, must be—carried out by the principal researcher. In sociology, for instance, faculty quantitative projects often rely importantly on one or more graduate students; ethnographic projects rely almost entirely on individual faculty. In this way, quantitative research masks the individualism of social science programs; but it does not obviate the utility of constructing programs which rely more greatly on sociality.

Too, the social sciences could stumble regarding incorporating distal disciplines. In contrast to our humanities fellows, who were generally willing to consider (or at least not dismiss) the value of methods and epistemologies different from their own, fellows from more positivist sub-fields of social science disciplines could find it difficult, at best, to do so. I have already cited such instances. This was the case regardless of whether this scholarship was in the humanities or in the social sciences. And so, of course, the (overly) positivist social science fellows had a difficult time incorporating insights from these perspectives into their work. But this is not a necessary effect of being trained in quantitative methods. Historians, for instance, have used these methods (e.g., Connelly 2023), and social scientists have successfully married quantitative analysis and social constructionism in their work (e.g., Romaioli 2022). Further, as my example of the economic fellow’s experience attests, the kinds of evidence non-quantitative approaches can generate can be useful even in very sophisticated statistical analyses (Freedman 1991). Thus, there is no necessary reason why the social sciences cannot be open to the kind of cross-disciplinarity the Mellon Program practiced. The inability of some positivist social science fellows to engage is ideological, not epistemological.

Closing

As I noted at the start, the antecedent project to our Mellon Program arose in an institute charged with increasing the amount and quality of social science research at Columbia University (Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy). Because that institute was by design and leadership intellectually capacious, we sought to expand that initiative beyond the social sciences to the humanities. Mellon Foundation support allowed us to do that and to develop more elements, and to continue to do so when we moved the program to its

⁴⁰ Of course, both sets of skills can be taught and learned; what matters is the degree to which knowledge is shareable and learnable across people.

subsequent home at the Interdisciplinary Center for Innovative Theory & Empirics.⁴¹ It may seem unlikely that bringing together such divergent fields—from the substantive concerns, formal methods, and epistemological grounds of economics and political science to those of classics and languages—can intellectually and educationally “work,” both intellectually and practically.⁴² I obviously think it did, per the first part of this text and its Appendix. The latter essay expresses how and why I think it did by, for the most part, challenging the more common intellectual and organizational instantiations of doctoral education and training. I hope this report and essay can make more possible useful changes to all stages of doctoral education and training.

⁴¹ This center has now metamorphosed into the Incite Institute, no acronym.

⁴² Columbia organizes its Department of History with departments more commonly considered the social sciences, thus this pre-Mellon initiative already included what historians themselves consider a humanities field. As I’ve noted, fellows from history were crucial for the vitality of the program, thus spurring our interest in bringing together the humanities with the social sciences as well as our sense that this could work.

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Appendix: Program Elements and Accomplishments

This appendix identifies the elements comprising our Mellon Program and reports some quantitative measures and other indications of how well our program succeeded. Annual reports filed with the Mellon Foundation contain more detailed information.

Program Elements

Cross-disciplinary recruitment/participation. Over its ten years, our program successfully attracted students from almost all humanities departments at Columbia and from all its social science departments in the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences. It also attracted fellows from affiliated schools, such as Teachers College, the School of Public Health, and the School of International and Public Affairs, among other schools. Table 1 lists all applicant departments and schools and their respective number of applicants and fellows. The table shows that over 50% of applicants and over 60% of fellows came from history, political science, sociology, and English and comparative literature.

Bi-weekly seminar. To foster learning across the disciplines, a major intellectual element was our biweekly seminar where fellows presented their research. Table 2 reports an example of one year's talk schedule (2012-13, chosen at random), a mix of seven talks from fellows in the humanities and six from those in the social sciences. As part of the seminar, each year a committee of fellows and a director chose an issue for discussion which was important across fields. In 2012-13, for instance, the issue concerned how different disciplines think about and research the relationship between agency and structure. As an example of the sociality principle, the last session every year had fellows on the job market the past year passing on what they learned to those remaining in the program.

Conceptual seminar. Each year, we committed one of our bi-weekly seminars to readings and a discussion about a concept which was relevant to all disciplines, each in its own way. In keeping with the principle of sociality, fellows came together to decide on these themes and relevant readings. Examples include discussions of normativity, agency/structure, the nature of explanation, and so on.

Mentoring. The program directors disparately engaged with fellows: written and oral post-seminar presentation comments; professional development counseling, particularly concerning managing job-seeking; letters of recommendation; substantive and editorial assistance on dissertations, research papers, grant applications, job talks, letters and statements, among others, and, not unimportantly, general and persistent encouragement.

Office space. I discuss this in detail in the second part of the essay, so do not repeat here.

Financial support. Our program provided first-year summer stipends which freed up fellows' time for dissertation writing and gave research and mini-grants which allowed fellows to participate in professional conferences and to carry out research imperative for their dissertations.

Short courses. Each year, the program offered four two-day courses on topics key for people in both the humanities and the social sciences. One purpose of these courses was for the program to participate in and contribute to the intellectual life of the larger Columbia community. They attracted not only graduate students, but people in faculty, research and post-doctoral positions from extraordinarily diverse fields and from organizations outside Columbia. Courses ranged from the practical (writing, based on the Little Red School House at the University of Chicago), to the methodological (how to analyze textual, image, and sound information, ethnographic interviewing), and to the ideational (Love as an Object of Study in the Socio-Historical Disciplines). Courses were taught by Professors from Columbia and from other universities.

Alum biennial. Every other year we held a conference which brought back to campus Mellon alums to give papers on their current research and to renew acquaintances and make new friendships. In this way, our program continued to make useful its principles of cross-disciplinarity and sociality in fellows' work lives. And in its highly cross-disciplinary panels, the conference also makes clear the degree to which disciplines can usefully speak to one another. Also see "Program Value," below.

Program Accomplishments

I focus only on the more manifestly measurable accomplishments. Subsequent tables below contain more detailed information.

Time to completion. As noted in the narrative, completing the PhD in a timely manner was an important program objective. Depending on discipline, fellows entered the program in their fourth to sixth years and were expected to complete their dissertations within two years of entry. Table 3 shows 80.2% finished in this time (37.9% in the first year) and another 9.5% took a third year. Since timely completion may be a particular concern for humanities students, note that 83.3% of humanities fellows finished within two years compared to 77.4% of social science fellows.

Research productivity. In addition to the dissertation, our program sought to generally foster fellows' research productivity. Table 4 lists known publications of 2007-09 fellows while they were in the program. I choose this cohort at random; the list does not include papers submitted or revised and resubmitted which may have become publications, conference papers presented, panels organized, and other scholarly and professional activity while in the program.

Career positions. If an important goal of our program was to foster academic or comparable research careers, Table 5 summarizes the kinds of organizations in which former fellows held positions up to ten years after graduating the program. Over 70% held faculty positions in universities or colleges while another 12% held positions in non-academic research organizations.

Program Value. When fellows completed the program, we asked them to file a report with us to let us know what was helpful and not helpful about our program. Our question was intentionally very open-ended to allow fellows to say what they wanted in the manner they wanted. Table 6 contains comments for all fellows leaving the program in 2016. I chose that year at random. And Table 7 reports the conference panels for one of the four Harriet Zuckerman Biennial Conferences the Mellon Program held. We consider the enthusiasm with which program alums participated in these conferences (always over-subscribed) to be an important statement of the value of our program for fellows.

Table 1: Disciplines/Schools of Program Applicants and of Accepted Fellows

Note: Departments are in the Columbia School of Arts and Sciences unless otherwise noted.

Disciplines/Schools	N Applied	N Accepted	% Dept/School Applicants Accepted
<i>Humanities</i>			
Anthropology	23	6	26.1%
Art & Architecture, Art History & Archaeology	12	2	34.3%
Classics	6	1	16.7%
Communications/School of Journalism	17	3	17.6%
English & Comparative Literature	27	11	40.7%
French & Romance Languages	5	2	40.0%
History/East Asian Languages & Culture	102	24	23.5%
Italian or Spanish & Portuguese Languages	3	0	0.0%
Middle Eastern, South Asian & African Studies	22	5	22.7%
Music	9	3	33.3%
Philosophy	12	3	25.0%
Religion	11	3	27.3%
School of Law	1	0	0.0%
School of Social Work	10	1	10.0%
<i>Humanities sub-totals</i>	260	64	24.6%
<i>Social Sciences</i>			
Business School	11	1	9.1%
Economics	6	1	16.7%
Political Science	87	19	21.8%
School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation	11	0	0.0%
School of Public Health	35	6	17.1%
Sociology	41	16	39.0%
Sustainable Development/School of Int'l & Public Affairs	16	4	25.0%
Teachers College	42	5	11.9%
<i>Soc Sci sub-totals</i>	249	52	20.9%
<i>Combined totals</i>	509	116	

Table 2. Fellows Seminar Schedule of Talks

Note: To provide a sense of our seminar discussions, I list here the topics of the seminar for 2012-13. Almost always, fellows were presenting work from their dissertations. I chose the year at random.

Fall 2012

<i>Date</i>	<i>Presenting Fellow</i>	<i>Discipline/Department</i>	<i>Title of Talk</i>
14-Sept		Program Orientation	
12-Oct	Kate Krimmel	Political Science	<i>Special Interest Partisanship: The Transformation of American Political Parties</i>
26-Oct	Tyler Williams	Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies	<i>From Sacred Sound to Sacred Book: A History of Writing in North India</i>
9-Nov	Pierce O'Reilly	Political Science	<i>Social Insurance in Ireland since the 1930s</i>
16-Nov	Ruth Palmer	Communications	<i>"Making the News" in a Digital World</i>
30-Nov	Claire Edington	Sociomedical Sciences	<i>Psychiatric expertise and the problem of juvenile delinquency in French Indochina</i>
14-Dec	Sherrally Munshi	English & Comparative Literature	<i>"You Will See My Family Became So American:" Indian Immigration, Racial Visibility, and the Citizenship Contract</i>

Spring 2013

<i>Date</i>	<i>Presenting Fellow</i>	<i>Discipline/Department</i>	<i>Title of Talk</i>
1-Feb	Thematic Session		<i>Whose Agency? What Structure?: Disciplinary Differences in Universal Concepts</i>
15-Feb	SeungJung Kim	Art History	<i>Figuring History: The Emergence of Historienbilder in Fifth Century (BCE) Greece and the Notion of the "Present"</i>
1-Mar	Sarah Vaughn	Anthropology	<i>The Social Life of Vulnerability</i>
15-Mar	Matthew Morrison	Music	<i>Sound in the Construction of Race: Whiteness, American Popular Music, and Ragtime at the Turn of the Century</i>
29-Mar	Andrew Liu	History	<i>The 1936 Shanghai Tea Warehouse Controversy</i>
12-Apr	Ginger Nolan	Architecture	<i>The Mind of Brightness in the Heart of Darkness: "Media" between Aspen and Africa</i>
26-Apr	Olivia Nicol	Sociology	<i>Anatomy of a Blame Game: Dynamics of Attribution of Responsibility for the Great Recession in the U.S.</i>
10-May	Pierce O'Reilly	Political Science	<i>Insiders and Outsiders: Reforming Social Protection Finance in France Since 1970</i>
17-May		Job market experiences/Au revoir to departing fellows	

Table 3. Mellon Program Completion Rates

Time to PhD Completion from Program Entry	N	% Total N
One year	44	37.9%
Two years	49	42.2%
Three years	11	9.5%
Four years or longer	8	6.9%
Unknown	4	3.4%
Total	116	100.0%

Table 4: Fellows In-Program Publications, 2007-09

Note: This table presents work our 2007-09 fellows had published while in the program. This includes work that in process before program entry as well as work initiated and completed during the program. It does not include work initiated and carried out during the program that was subsequently published. And it does not include conference presentations, of which there were far too many to list here. I cite work for which we have information from reports fellows filed at program exit. I chose this cohort at random. Productivity was similar for all other cohorts.

Peer-reviewed Journal Articles Published or Accepted for Publication

Erickson, Ansley. Building Inequality: The Spatial Organization of Schooling in Nashville. Tennessee after Brown. *Journal of Urban History*, forthcoming June 2010.

Hemmasi, Farzaneh. From Iranian to 'World': Persian-Language Pop Crosses Over. *Mahoor Music Quarterly*, 2009.

Hicks, Rosemary. Cosmopolitan Consciousness and American Islam: Sufism. Ethics. and Citizens of the World. *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, forthcoming 2009.

Jennings, Jennifer. A Multiplex. Longitudinal Theory of Urban Service Distribution. *Urban Affairs Review*, forthcoming 2009.

Jennings, Jennifer. How Does Test Exemption Affect Schools' and Students' Test Scores. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, forthcoming 2009.

Kondo, Ayako. Does the First Job Really Matter? State Dependency in Employment Status in Japan. *Journal of the Japanese and International Economies*, 2007.

Pittinsky, Matthew. Behavioral Versus Cognitive Classroom Friendship Networks. *Social Psychology of Education*, 2008.

Schaefer, Tali. Disposable Mothers: Paid In-Home Caretaking and the Regulation of Parenthood. *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 2008.

Schaefer, Tali. Saving Children or Blaming Parents? Lessons from Mandated parenting Classes. *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, forthcoming 2010.

Tappan, Jennifer. Blood Work and Rumors of Blood: Nutritional Research and Insurrection in Buganda. 1938-1952. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 2009.

Weiss, Lindsay. Heritage-making and Political Identity. *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 2007.

Peer-reviewed Journal Book Reviews

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Table 5. Positions in Academic & Non-Academic Organizations Up to Ten Years After Graduating the Program

Kind of School or Organization	N	% Total N
University	71	61.2%
Liberal arts college	13	11.2%
Research organization	14	12.1%
Other organization	10	8.6%
Unknown	8	6.9%
Total	116	100.0%

Table 6: Fellows Program Comments, 2016

Note: When fellows completed the program, we asked them to file a report to let us know what was and was not helpful about our effort. Our questions were intentionally open-ended to allow fellows to say what they wanted in the manner they wanted. This table contains comments for all fellows leaving the program in 2016. I randomly chose that year. The comments are unedited. I identify fellows by their department and have not organized their comments in any order.

Fellow A, Sociology

I find myself struggling to articulately describe the myriad of ways that the program has helped me with not only completing my dissertation, but also my intellectual and professional development as a whole. I, like many of the second year fellows with whom I have discussed the topic, am currently in a state of sorrow and denial that the source of so much intellectual joy, camaraderie, and functionality (a rarity at Columbia) is quickly drawing to a close. Put simply, the Mellon Fellows Program has absolutely kept me sane for the past two years, which, given the perpetual existential crisis that exists around dissertation writing, is more difficult than it sounds. Firstly, the space is absolutely perfect for writing. I decidedly sprawl while working, often working from a plurality of papers and books simultaneously, if not from multiple computer screens. Consequently, the oversized corner desks have been the first assigned workspace that I have actually found conducive to working productively at Columbia. Likewise, while the arrangement of desks facing away from one another and the general quiet of the space is ideal for getting into the writing zone, so to speak, the space also allows for conversation and exchange between fellows. As it turns out, regular human contact and the occasional laugh and/or venting session with ones peers are also imperative to the dissertation writing process. Caffeine is as well- I cannot thank Audrey enough for keeping us constantly supplied with coffee (and printer paper, pens, and countless other odds and ends!!)

While I am immensely grateful for having had such an amazing workspace for the past two years, the core of the program's functionality is ultimately the fellows themselves, Bill, and the rest of the INCITE support staff. As alluded above, my own thinking and research tends to be highly interdisciplinary—lying at the intersection of economic sociology, political science, and science and technology studies. Similarly, while I by no means intend to disparage my own department, I am one of only a handful comparativists and largely the sole individual working on China. Consequently, over the years, I cannot count the hours I have spent trying convince others that the dynamics of states found outside the US and Europe generally, and China specifically, might challenge the scope conditions of a number of sociological theories, and thus be worthy of more scholarly analysis. Likewise, I regularly find myself regarded as a token "China expert" ... I cannot truly articulate how refreshing and sanity-inducing it has been to exchange ideas and experiences with such a brilliant and intellectually diverse group of individuals for the past two years. The biweekly seminar (and perhaps even more importantly

the hour or so of impassioned conversation that follows each seminar) has regularly been the highlight of my month for the past two years, while literature recommendations and organizational suggestions from peers across both other social science disciplines and the humanities have greatly informed the direction taken by both individual chapters I have discussed with other Mellon fellows and my dissertation as a whole. Many of the most revelatory moments I have had regarding my own work over the past two years, in fact, have come from papers my peers at Mellon have sent me, or from reading their own (often seemingly completely unrelated) work.

In addition to creating an intellectually inspiring community, the interdisciplinary nature of the Mellon Fellows Program has also created an immensely personally supportive community of graduate students for which I will forever be personally grateful. As PhD candidates get closer to finishing and entering the job market, even the closest of cohorts can suddenly find themselves embroiled in passive aggressive competition and posturing, or at least this has been my experience within my own department. Within the context of these dynamics, I cannot emphasize enough how beneficial it has been for me personally to have had a group of brilliant and unceasingly generous individuals who are going through the same process (but not in direct competition for the same jobs etc.) with whom I can discuss partially formulated ideas, edit fellowship and job market materials, and occasionally, simply commiserate about the trials and tribulations of dissertation writing process. Similarly, Bill, whose intellectual creativity, boundless warmth, and strategic advice never cease to amaze me, truly lies at the foundation of this community, playing an integral role in creating this environment year after year.

Finally, I would just like to thank Bill, Audrey, Michael Falco, and everyone else at INCITE. I cannot count the hours I have wasted trying to deal with a wide variety of administrative snafus during my time at Columbia. It is so refreshing to have at least one aspect of my academic life that works so efficiently and flawlessly!

Fellow B, Political Science

I'm not sure if I would have finished the dissertation on time or gotten a tenure-track position without the Fellows program. From the very beginning, the organizational structure and the physical space of the fellowship gave me the freedom to delve into the writing without unnecessary distraction. At the same time, my fellow Fellows were always around in the Mellon space, whether it be for a quick chat in the kitchen or assistance overcoming an analytical problem in the dissertation. I can't count how many times both of these instances took place—it was simply a joy to come to the office every day. Secondly, during the job market season, the program was there for me every step of the way. My colleagues (and especially Bill) read several drafts of my application documents as well as attended several practice job talks. One thing that was particularly helpful were several overviews of the hiring process that previous

fellows had written up and passed down to later generations. These helped enormously as I prepared for on-campus interviews. Later as I was a bit overwhelmed by contract negotiations, I relied on several individuals in the program to bounce ideas off of and find my way. In all, the Mellon Fellows program was one of the best aspects of my graduate school career and I've recommended it to all my younger friends in my department. I couldn't imagine a better environment to wrap up my studies and get ready for the next step, and I'll miss it dearly.

Fellow C, Sociology

Mentoring. The program has been instrumental in getting me through the impasse. This is largely thanks to Bill's mentorship and intervention. Bill is able to recognize individual graduate student stumbling blocks and weaknesses—anything from writers' anxiety and analysis paralysis to seminar shyness or public presentations—and is willing and able to gently (but very, *very* persistently) help us work through them. The combination of his temperament, skill set, expertise and position in the university (outside of our home departments' hierarchy) creates opportunities and space to ask for advice and assistance we might hesitate to ask of our departmental advisor—even those of us lucky to have accessible and invested ones. With his knowledge of how to get graduate students through the final challenges of a PhD program, he can answer not only the questions we might hesitate to ask our advisors, but questions we didn't know we had.

Space. I spent the fall semester in an idyllic, pastoral, writing retreat and was anxious about returning to the Mellon space—a sterile, populated, sub-basement. It is not a natural environment for long hours of creative work, nor is it naturally conducive to prosocial behavior. But with years of modifications, thoughtful social engineering and deliberate community building, the Mellon program thrives here. This strange, sterile, sub-basement is now amazingly well suited to the particular needs of dissertation writing—few distractions, positive pressure of peers modeling good work habits, excellent desks, and similarly situated officemates who understand and respectfully create the peculiar office conditions needed for focused intellectual work in a shared space.

There are a few benefits I mentioned last year that are worth reiterating and updating after my second year in the program:

- *Seminars & Interdisciplinarity.* The interdisciplinary seminars are a breath of fresh air, a chance for us to 'indulge' in ideas, projects and ways of thinking outside of our own discipline. This interdisciplinary exchange, of course, is enjoyable and beneficial, but given the increasing emphasis on strategic professionalization and specialization, it is a challenge to prioritize without the opportunities provided by the Mellon program.

- *Cohort (re)creation.* The creation of a similarly situated cohort is an amazing asset of the program. We enter our respective programs in cohorts—but remain intact as we finish. Mellon creates a new cohort—which provides an infusion of new blood and energy when we’re losing both.

Dissertator’s dilemma. The space, as inhabited by the Mellon fellows (and it has been particularly well inhabited this year), offers a corrective to a major challenge to sanely finishing a dissertation: combating isolation without distraction.

Fellow D, English and Comparative Literature

Since I entered the Mellon Fellows program with my dissertation quite close to completion, I found that the program most clearly influenced my job search this past year. This was my second year on the academic job market, and I felt that the experiences I had as a Mellon Fellow contributed substantially to my ability to obtain a tenure-track appointment this year, which I was unable to do the first time I went on the job market. One of the most challenging aspects of the job market is that it requires you to be able to talk clearly and compellingly about your research with a much wider audience than the one you encounter while writing the dissertation. Since this is something we’re practicing all the time in the Mellon program, I felt that the time I spent in our bi-weekly workshops and in the with the other Fellows helped immensely, both in terms of developing my confidence in speaking to a wide audience about my work and in terms of giving me opportunities to think in much broader terms about that work, its interventions, and the fields that I hoped to speak to with my research. This is highly anecdotal, but I also found that I was sometimes asked in job interviews to talk about how I could contribute to interdisciplinary programs and centers at other universities, and/or about what kind of colleague I am, and I often pointed to the Mellon Program as an example of my experience as a colleague and as part of an interdisciplinary program to make the case for why I would be ready for that kind of work in an academic position. Finally, the academic market tends to be psychologically, emotionally, and even physically grueling, and the support I received as a Mellon Fellow helped me in really significant ways to be able to make it through that experience successfully for a few different reasons: I felt as though the advice about the job market we received in the program was excellent. I gave a practice job talk in our seminar, and incorporated that feedback into my talk. I was frankly inspired by the confidence and energy of the other fellows, and re-invigorated by my discussions with them, and I felt that carried over into my own self-presentation. The emotional support the other fellows and the program provided helped me maintain a positive attitude during what can be a very trying process. And the material resources and office space that the program provided helped me stay organized and let me make the best possible use of my (often very limited time) while teaching, defending, and interviewing, which in turn helped me approach each of those projects in a less distracted manner than I would’ve been able to otherwise. Simply put, the program made me feel like a

professional rather than a graduate student, and I think that paid off in the way I presented myself in interviews. Having gone through the job application process once outside of the program and then a second time in the program, I can say confidently that I wish every graduate student on the job market had a program like this one to help them at this crucial stage in their career!

I've also found the seminar to be a really exciting intellectual experience, especially at this juncture, when I am finishing one project and beginning to think about a second. I know that part of the book proposal process includes thinking about audiences for my work and about larger trends not just in my own field but in the humanities at large, and being part of this program helped me expand my view of the humanities in general and of my own work in relation to other fields in ways that I think will help me quite a bit in the future. It's been particularly interesting to see diverse takes on the digital and empirical turn in the humanities in others' research projects, to help me think more about where my work fits into these broader trends, not just within English but in the humanities and social sciences at large.

I'm very grateful for my time in the Fellows program, and my only regret is that I didn't apply to join the program a year earlier (or many years, if that were an option)!

Fellow E, Sociology and Education

The Mellon Fellowship has been helpful in the completion of my dissertation and in my professional development in many ways. First, the professional development workshops around cover letters, job talks and campus visits were all extremely useful, and I plan to use what I learned from them when I go on the job market next year. The academic short courses (which fellows had the opportunity to apply for and receive priority) were also extraordinarily useful—especially the one about academic writing. The space provided for the fellows to work in was also an incredible asset of the program. It certainly helped my progression to have a quiet, well-appointed and reliable place to work in every day. Lastly, and most importantly, the dedication, kindness and generosity that Professor Bill McAllister demonstrates as a mentor to the fellows, and his efforts to make the group collegial and supportive are truly commendable.

I found some aspects of the bi-weekly seminar to be helpful in my thinking—especially as I was exposed to work in other disciplines that had different perspectives on thinking about concepts that my work engages with. It was also extremely helpful to hear everyone's thoughts about structuring pieces of writing to present the most convincing argument possible. I do feel, however, that I did not get as much out of the seminars as I could have, and upon reflection, I think it had to do with not feeling as comfortable and as much a part of the fellowship community as I might have. While the program has a lot of diversity in dissertation topics as well as in the backgrounds of the fellows themselves (especially as far as country of origin and gender), I felt that the fellows' backgrounds were not especially diverse in terms of racial/ethnic

and social class background (especially in terms of groups that are and have historically been marginalized in academia). As a Black woman whose dissertation deals with issues of racial inequality in the United States, I felt like my perspective (not only around scholarship but more broadly) was often vastly different from the perspectives and priorities of the other fellows in the program, making it hard for me to connect. For example, while issues around gender were often raised and deeply engaged with—not only in terms of some of the fellows’ scholarly work, but also in terms of how gender can affect wider issues of being an academic and a scholar—the same cannot be said for race or class. I think this made hard for me to truly feel like a part of the community and comfortable with sharing my ideas, which made it challenging for me to engage in the seminars. I do not necessarily put the blame entirely on this program (this is often an issue in academia in general), but I have been a part of fellowship programs (like the NAed/Spencer fellowship program, which is also interdisciplinary but has more of the diversity I’m talking about) where I did not feel this discomfort.

Fellow F, Political Science

I think that the Mellon Fellowship had a very large impact on my ability to finish my dissertation. Practically, having a dedicated space to work was vitally important for me. I work best on campus, in a well-lit, quiet area. While there is some space in the political science department, it’s quite noisy and not always guaranteed to have free space. It usually serves as a hub for early graduate students to work collaboratively and is not geared towards late-stage students. Having a workspace in the Mellon suite provided certainty that I would have a quiet space to work if I came to campus and a place to leave my books at the ready if I needed to reference something.

More importantly, the other students in the program provided fantastic companionship and ideas. In my own program, at this point many of my collaborators and friends have started to live elsewhere, or stay home because they don’t feel comfortable in the department around all of the early-stage students. The Mellon fellows are fantastically kind and creative. I was deeply impressed with the quality of the comments that I received when my work was discussed, and loved reading and discussing others’ work. I did feel pretty unqualified to comment on many of the humanities students’ work, but nevertheless greatly enjoyed the discussions and writing samples. In particular, I loved talking to the historians and sociologists in the program, and their suggestions for what I should read or think about have made my dissertation much stronger.

Finally, I think the part of the fellowship that helped me the most was simply the tone that Bill set for our group. I was really touched by Bill’s speech during orientation, from which I took away the main message that we just need to get out of our way to finish our dissertations and that we deserve to be supported in our work. The late stages of a PhD are a time of a lot of dour

predictions and criticism—we know that the market is terrible, that our time is scarce, and that it's too late to dramatically fix most of the inevitable problems in our dissertations. To have someone treat us like we deserve whatever resources we might need to finish our dissertations is a fantastic boon. In addition, Bill's visible excitement about our research is a great antidote to the feeling that you have wasted years on a mediocre project.

Thank you so much for making this program happen! I don't know how I would have gotten through the year without it!

Fellow G, French

I can't quite emphasize enough how formative my experience at INCITE has been. First, on a most fundamental level, the opportunity to present my work four times over the last two years as a Mellon INCITE fellow has provided me with a space in which to critically examine my work along with some of the most supportive, accomplished, friendly and intelligent close readers with whom I could hope to work. I would hope that over my academic career, I might be able to recreate this, but I fear it is unique to the program.

Second, the program's commitment to interdisciplinarity has had a particularly important impact on my research and writing. My work lies between literature and history, and it has often been a struggle to satisfy these disciplinary requirements and expectations; the INCITE program has allowed me to learn and hear from those who work in both or either fields, has helped me to make my work more convincingly respond to the two disciplines. Moreover, throughout my PhD program, I had increasingly taken to distance myself from my "home" discipline, and work more from within a historical perspective. Speaking with and reading the work of those fellows who work in literature about their work and their different approaches towards it has made me more excited about working in literature in my future projects. It has, in no certain terms, restored my interest (and indeed faith!) in literary study.

Third, INCITE has provided an intellectual community for me at Columbia, where before I had none. One of the weaknesses of the PhD program in French, and perhaps of many programs across the university, is that after coursework is completed, there are next to no opportunities to discuss our work with those in the department beyond our supervisors. The nature of the department is such that there is very little intellectual exchange, and it is mostly a quite competitive and isolated environment. INCITE has ensured that my last two years at Columbia have been spent in a rigorous and welcoming environment, where everyone's work and time is taken seriously and is treated with the upmost respect. The bi-weekly seminars has taught me inordinate amounts about reading and responding to colleagues' work, and learning from others how to talk about it.

Fourth, the nature of the working environment is such that it is extremely productive to work alongside very busy and equally consciousness people. It creates, if you like, a collaborative peer pressure, which is especially necessary while we are writing up, a moment which is otherwise very lonely indeed. The snatches of conversations we have at the beginning, middle and end of our days help the process no end!

Fifth, and perhaps most simply, I have met some of the best scholars, interesting people, and most wonderful friends and colleagues during my two years at INCITE. I only wish that I had longer to work with and next to them, and I very much hope our friendships last beyond the cave at SIPA.

It is without question thanks to Bill's hard work and high standards that the program is so successful. It is no exaggeration to say that Bill's support for all us, our work and our professional careers is unmatched by any other faculty at Columbia, and his work has certainly has fundamentally changed my academic and intellectual experience at Columbia. Bill reads us and our work generously and meticulously, and goes beyond the call to help each of us progress further with our work and with our careers. I will be ever grateful for his contribution to my graduate experience and for helping me get on to the next step.

The INCITE program has been without question one of the best experiences and opportunities of my time as a graduate student at Columbia. It has been the upmost privilege to be part of this community.

Fellow H, History

The INCITE Mellon Fellows program has been absolutely invaluable in my progress towards completion of my dissertation, and for my success on the academic job market. I outline below the main ways in which it has helped me:

Office space: Having a separate dedicated space for work has been of immeasurable importance for maintaining work/life balance, and for the sake of my home life. This is a luxury rarely available to grad students on campus, yet has been critical during this very stressful year. Working at home is less than ideal for various reasons, and I am unable to work productively in library spaces. So I can positively say that without the office space, I would not have been able to produce two chapters so quickly and efficiently this academic year (in and amongst being on the job market!). On a related note, having open access to a printer and office supplies made life so much easier at some incredibly time-sensitive and stressful moments during the job hunt. These things feel like the basic infrastructure that is needed to finish up the dissertation, yet it is very hard to come by on campus. This program therefore fills a unique gap at Columbia.

Mini-grants: Among the many stresses of finishing up a PhD are the many unanticipated but unavoidable expenses that come with completion. For me, a big expense came with the many job and post-doc applications I was submitting (a necessary, unavoidable cost given the state of the academic job market these days). Without Mellon support, I would have had to make sacrifices elsewhere in my tight budget to allow for expenditure on job materials/applications. Not having to worry about this though, removed a really significant layer of stress on an already stressful process.

Community: The community of scholars and mentors in the program is by far the best, most supportive, and rigorous I have had the pleasure of being a part of. Water-cooler conversations, happy hour chats, and more formal discussions with other fellows in bi-weekly seminars, regarding our shared academic interests, shared grad student struggles, or shared job-market experiences, have made the closing phase of the degree so much more enjoyable, navigable, and approachable. I have received invaluable advice from my peers and mentors in the program; advice I have not been exposed to anywhere else in the university. Intellectually, my work has also benefited from the process of exposure and interdisciplinary exchange that is central to this program. The other fellows have undoubtedly helped me think through some tricky conceptual issues.

Without these various aspects of the program, I doubt that my experience on the academic job market this year would have gone so smoothly. Landing both a post-doc for next year and a tenure track job to follow, were in the end made possible by my completion of the additional chapters, and (I'm sure), by all the good advice, feedback, and support that I have received through this program.

I am eternally grateful for having had this community of bright, collegiate, and dedicated group of interdisciplinary colleagues to work with and alongside in this final year of my degree. I have every intention of staying in touch with everyone. I would also like to add that I don't think it would be possible to find anyone more committed, thoughtful, supportive, engaged, and generous than Bill, to run this program. I am truly thankful for everything this program has provided.

Fellow I, Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies

Owing to medical issues arising from the malpractice of Columbia's Health Service, the conclusion of my program and my future have not materialized as expected. Nonetheless, I am finishing the degree and am scheduling to defend. This would not be possible without the immense support I received from the Mellon Program and Bill McAllister. I have written the entire dissertation this past year. The majority of last year was spent in therapy recuperating and doing translation work for the dissertation. The Summer of 2015 I began trying to write in earnest again and produced the first chapters. Mellon's summer financial support helped ease

what has been the most devastating period of my life. Moreover, Bill stepped in and up to help me when I was surprisingly told that this was indeed my final year in the doctoral program or I would be thrown out. I was forced onto the job market unprepared. Bill looked at all my materials when my advisers and committee members were of no help and unresponsive. Bill mentored me back into writing when my advisers and committee members said nothing. Bill wrote me extensive emails on concerns he had, what issues posed problematic, and the bigger picture I needed to think about. Bill worked with me not only to meet deadlines but he spent untold hours working on a particular chapter that has become pivotal. He engaged with me and my work, posing questions, challenging me to push further, and showing me how to leave room in my writing for more. He was available by email, phone, and Skype. His support both professionally and personally have been invaluable. Without Bill I would not be finishing this degree.

I also want to add that while I unfortunately ended up spending most of the program away from NY for medical reasons, I have been here consistently for months now. Being here in the Mellon suite has been integral to my return to work. Clearly working in a collegial atmosphere affects our bottom lines, providing the means to be more productive and efficient rather than wasting time and energy fighting over space and other resources. The mere fact that material resources were not an issue enabled a more conducive work environment that allowed for the exchange of ideas and information.

For instance, I and another colleague have seen job postings that are more applicable towards the other's discipline and research area. First, I would like to point out that just by proximity, the ability to converse, and do so in a relaxed setting allowed us to know the research interests of the other. Second, because we are not in the same department, vying for the same jobs, we are more easily willing to send each other such job postings.

Similarly, working in an open space that allows for discussion with colleagues in my immediate area is also productive. I have on numerous occasions received input on my work from my colleagues who sit just across my eye line in two directions. That we aren't bound in cubicles not only allows us an expansive mindset but provides the opportunity to engage with others. Similarly, over cups of coffee in the kitchenette, my colleagues have suggested ideas on how to handle my last chapter and how much to edit my first. They have also asked follow-up questions to my seminar presentations in the weeks that followed. Although it only takes a few minutes of conversation to create ideas that appear in the dissertation, we need the space and opportunity to have these moments of collaboration. The Mellon suite and its layout produce the means for these opportunities and makes working long-hours productive and even enjoyable. It is a very conducive space. I have heard other colleagues who are returning next year already speak of how they will miss this space. I am thankful to have worked here.

Also, I want to commend Audrey. She always answers emails and requests in a timely and professional manner without being impersonal. I love that she sees her job as helping us fellows be more productive and how her job relates to our “bottom line,” as she once told me. I love that approach and attitude. I wish more people and institutions at Columbia operated like the Mellon Program and its personnel. I cannot say enough about the Mellon Program, its support, its structure, and its people.

Fellow J, Sociomedical Sciences

The Mellon Program helped me enhance the content and progression of my dissertation, and of my intellectual development in general, in numerous ways.

- The fortnightly seminars were key to help me learn and think about the interdisciplinary work of other fellows. They provided excellent practice in reading and responding to research questions, methods, and themes that lay beyond my own. I take away from that experience greater confidence with articulating ideas and engaging in interdisciplinary debate in academic settings.

- Engaging with fellows outside of the seminar was also very useful; it allowed for exchanging ideas about mutual research interests and common concerns about academic life and jobs. I've made friends with whom I might also develop professional relationships beyond graduate school.

- Desk space was a critical aspect of the program. It was not only essential to enabling the collegial friendships I mention above, but also provided a quiet space in which to focus and write in the company of other fellows. The atmosphere in the Mellon suite was always that of industry and calm. Ancillaries really mattered: a coffee maker, coffee supply, an office with a door that one could use for Skype calls, an open area with a few sofas for more casual conversation away from the quiet space of fellows' desks, for instance. I live in Queens, but I would still weather the commute to Columbia, an hour each way, to use my desk in the Mellon suite.

- The Mellon Program made possible my conference participation in meetings of the American Public Health Association in New Orleans; the Third Global Health Systems Research Symposium in Cape Town, South Africa; and the Society for Applied Anthropology in Vancouver, Canada. By presenting my work at these diverse forums (representing the interdisciplinarity of my research and the Mellon Program's role in fostering it), I was able to gain feedback from varied audiences. The Mellon Program also helped me prepare for these meetings through feedback I received from fellows and from Prof. McAllister in my seminar presentation.

- Prof. McAllister's advice, humor, generosity, and sincere interest in students and their research were profoundly important aspects of the program's success for me (and for other students too, I know). I've benefited directly from conversations with Prof. McAllister on

elements of my work and career options, and indirectly from his example as a mentor. I've gained a sense of what it takes, on personal and intellectual levels, to create and participate in a collegial, stimulating, critical, and productive scholarly environment.

Given all of the above, if I haven't yet put the final words on my dissertation, it is in part because of my personal situation—two young children and a partner who works long hours. Many, many thanks to the Mellon Program. It's been among the most rewarding intellectual experiences I've had at Columbia, and provided an excellent environment in which to make progress towards dissertation completion.

If I could have done anything differently, I'd have reached out earlier in the program than I did (to Prof. McAllister) to voice specific concerns I had given my dissertation and its writing. Students' advisors are meant to help with that, but a second, objective view can be useful. Perhaps a more formal way to integrate that early on might help some fellows?

Fellow K, English and Comparative Literature

I am so grateful for my time in the Mellon Fellows program, and only wish I had known to apply earlier. The program provided a collaborative space outside of my department where I was able to form generative and supportive relationships with other graduate students doing interdisciplinary work. Not only did I learn from the content and methods of my fellow fellows' projects, I also found the program to be a great source of moral support for the dissertation process, for the job market, and for tackling the challenges of interdisciplinarity. Forming these relationships (and simply inhabiting the same workspace with other fellows) made my academic work much less isolating (and even more fun). Furthermore, actually having a workspace where I could store my books, make coffee and store meals in a fridge was a huge boon to my productivity as well. It allowed me to create a stable routine where I was able to work without interruption (as opposed to the library where space is limited and often interrupted by undergraduates who are on a different work schedule), and I believe this stable and supportive atmosphere increased my momentum as I balanced teaching, applying to academic jobs, finishing my dissertation and working on publications and conference papers. As a graduate student, it is often easy to feel that so much is beyond your control—the difficult academic job market, the level of support you receive from your department, your work environment—and the Mellon program made this process sustainable and served as a much-welcomed reminder of how exciting and meaningful academic work and conversation can be.

Fellow L, History

The Fellows program has been essential to the completion of my dissertation, and my time in the program has contributed enormously to my professional and intellectual development. I find the seminars to be stimulating and helpful, and my presentation of my own work helped me to improve a chapter of my dissertation that I was struggling with. The postdoctoral fellowship that I have received for next year was brought to my attention by another INCITE fellow, and I have found support on navigating the job market from the other fellows and from Bill that I have not found elsewhere. The seminar has exposed me to disciplinary perspectives (especially from the social sciences) that now inform certain aspects of my dissertation. The community of fellows is collaborative and close-knit, and Bill and Audrey are extremely supportive of us. The office space has also been essential; I am sure that I would not have been able to complete my dissertation in the time that I did without having this space, which I use constantly. I was also able to attend the major conference in my field with the financial support of the program. I am very grateful to INCITE and the Mellon Foundation for the support that I have received over the course of the past year, and I hope the INCITE program continues to thrive at Columbia.

Fellow M, English and Comparative Literature

This past year as a Mellon Fellow has been my most enjoyable and productive year at Columbia, and I'm deeply grateful to the Mellon program and Bill McAllister's oversight.

Having my own office in the Mellon suite has been very important to me. I don't have any other private space to work on campus and, with two preschoolers at home, my apartment is not a good working space. My family's schedule means that I like to start work early, often around 7am, but Butler library—my only other work space—doesn't open until 9am in the summer, which has been a real issue for my work. With my own office space in the Mellon suite I was able to put in at least 10 hours/week of extra work over the summer that I would not have had otherwise. Having the office has allowed me to create routines and standard work hours that I've not previously had. Simple things like having an accessible printer and office supplies have also saved me time and stress. Audrey Augenbraum's immediate and always helpful responses to any concerns I've had related to the program have also done so much to help me remain focused on work and that my work is meaningful and worth supporting!

I have really appreciated the community in the Mellon suite; everyday I look forward to seeing my colleagues in the suite and being with people who are all working on different projects but are at a similar final (and stressed out!) stage in their dissertation. It is motivating, and helps to counter the loneliness and doubt people so often feel at these final stages of their dissertations.

I have really enjoyed our bi-weekly seminars and the opportunity to all get together. The mutual respect and comradery in these meetings is evident. I've been exposed to many fields and ways of researching that I had no idea about before and this has been fascinating and useful. I do think there is room for improvement in the kind of responses offered in these seminars. I'm not sure that our feedback is always as useful for the presenter as it could be, partly because the field is foreign to most of us. I wonder if there is a way of giving the presenter more ownership of their session by making it more explicitly about teaching others about their discipline? This could be as simple as framing the sessions slightly differently in the Mellon introductory meeting: i.e. Saying that the seminars serve two purposes: 1) for the speaker to introduce their field's way of research and writing, and some of its key discourses, through the example of their work and for others to ask about the field, and 2) for the speaker to receive feedback on their work (as we already do).

Lastly, I've been grateful for Bill McAllister's interest in and feedback on my work. He has offered extensive edits and responses to fellowship and job applications, often at line edit level, which my departmental advisors have rarely done. His perspective from a different discipline has also been very useful in helping me understand how to pitch applications to interdisciplinary audiences.

Fellow N, Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies

- (1) As a Fellow, I was able to complete the two remaining chapters of my dissertation;
- (2) I used the Program's quiet work space to polish part of a chapter for publication as a peer-reviewed article (and it was accepted for publication);
- (3) I received funding to attend the annual conference of the American Academy of Religion where I interviewed for tenure-track positions, which eventually led to two job offers;
- (4) I obtained valuable advice from fellows on how to organize my job talk;
- (5) I received extensive advice from the Director of the Program on matters related to job searching and negotiating job offers.

Fellow O, Philosophy

Serving as a Mellon INCITE Fellow has been an invaluable component of my graduate school experience, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of the program. When I first applied, I was most excited about the space and the seminar. However, the informal interactions and friendships built in the Mellon suite have for me been by far the best part of the program. I have learned so much about both the content and methodology of other fields through casual conversations at the printer or the coffee pot, as well as how to better

communicate my own work across disciplines. Further, being able to talk about the job market, to express insecurities about dissertation writing, and to run ideas by my peers has made the dissertation writing process so much more manageable and less mysterious. While it is always a bit nerve-wracking to show one's weaknesses in front of colleagues in the same department, the Mellon environment feels like we're all in it together – working through similar challenges and able to support one another rather than having the process ultimately feel very isolating. Knowing that I had a workspace to go to and supportive peers has unquestionably made me more motivated to get to work in the morning and more excited about my project. I will greatly miss the Mellon community, but am now excited to seek out further opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. I would love to still participate in informal job market materials sessions in the fall if others are up for it.

Though my dissertation isn't yet completed, the INCITE Fellows program has helped me propel my project forward, and I am now confident that I will finish next year with a well-developed dissertation. The feedback I received when presenting in the seminar helped me both identify some empirical resources that I might want to draw on and get a better sense of to what extent my work had broader appeal. The most persistent question I received was "why rights?" What would turning to a rights-based framework get me that a responsibilities-based framework would not? I have subsequently added a section to the paper exploring that question more thoroughly – teasing apart the positive parts of my argument that hold regardless of whether I ultimately adopt a right-based framework, and those that only follow if we adopt a rights-based framework. It was helpful to see how fraught the notion of rights was for many people in the room, and to get a better sense of the source of the hesitation. Beyond strengthening my own dissertation, participating in the seminar also challenged me to get more comfortable asking questions and having discussions about content that was largely unfamiliar, a skill that I think will be extremely valuable.

Access to mini-grants also makes a big difference. Presenting works-in-progress is such an important part of both networking and developing one's work. However, the cost of traveling to conferences often puts one in the position of choosing between professional experiences and financial security. Not needing to be as frequently worried about choosing between the two options means that one can put greater attention on her work. The sessions on PowerPoint, job applications, and grant-writing were also very helpful for thinking about presenting myself as a professional both to philosophers and to academics more broadly.

Overall, I have no doubt that the Mellon community is in large part responsible for both the dissertation progress that I have made and for my overall professional development over the last two years. Thank you for the opportunity!

Table 7: Harriet Zuckerman Conference Panels, 2013

Note: This table reproduces the Mellon Fellows alum conference program for one of the four Harriet Zuckerman Biennial Conferences we held.

Ebola and HIV in Africa: Critical Reflections on Genres, Structures, Technologies and Economics of Health Care in Africa

Alvan Azinna Ikoku, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature and Medicine/Stanford University: *Ebola, Outbreak Narratives and the Deliverance of Others*

Jennifer Tappan, Assistant Professor of History/Portland State University: *Vaccines, Experts and Hospital Beds: Viewing Ebola Through the History of Other Afflictions in Other Parts of the African Continent*

Mari Webel, Assistant Professor of History/University of Pittsburgh: *Global Health and the "White Man's Grave:" Narrating West Africa Amid Ebola*

Anna Tompsett, Assistant Professor of Economics/Stockholm University: *The Lazarus Drug: Macro-economic Impact of the Expansion of Anti-Retroviral Therapy for HIV/AIDS*

Radhika Gore, PhD Candidate, Sociomedical Sciences & Mellon Fellow: *Discussant*

Analytical Importance of Everyday Words and Objects

Felipe Gaitan-Ammann, Assistant Professor of Anthropology/University of Chicago: *Notes on the Crooks: Getting Personal on the Grillo and Lomelin Slave Trading Business, 1662-74*

Olivia Nicol, Research Associate, Mellon Program, INCITE/Columbia University: *The Blame Game for the Financial Crisis, 2007-10*

Paul-Brian McInerney, Assistant Professor of Sociology/University of Illinois at Chicago: *The Dynamics of Artisanal Industries: Collaboration and Competition Among Craft-Brewers*

James Chappel, Assistant Professor of History/Duke University: *Theses on the Historical Discipline's Neglect of the Elderly*

Abigail Coplin, PhD Candidate, Sociology & Mellon Fellow: *Discussant*

**Achieving Organization: Processes and Structures
That Realize and Undermine Sought- after Goals**

Dan Lanier-Vos, Assistant Professor of Sociology/University of Southern California: *Aligning Interests: The Israel Lobby and the Production of the Mutual Security Act of 1952*

Micki Eisenman, Lecturer/Hebrew University, Jerusalem: *Three-Way Streets: Toward a Theory of Effective Aesthetic Communication*

Roz Redd, Lecturer in Sociology/London School of Economics and Political Science: *Peer Influence and Gender Inequality in Undergraduate Major Choice: A Field Theoretic Approach*

Uri Schwed, Assistant Professor of Sociology/Ben Gurion University: *The Troubled Seeds of Coexistence*

Radhika Gore, PhD Candidate, Sociomedical Sciences & Mellon Fellow: *Discussant*

Afterlives of Dead and Decaying Empires

Aimee Genell, Postdoctoral Fellow In International Security Studies/Yale University: *Empire or the Turkish State? Autonomy in Ottoman International Legal Thought and Practices, 1914-19*

Dominique Kirchner Reill, Associate Professor of History/University of Miami: *Mapping the City, the Nation and the Empire, or All of the Above?: Geography Lessons in 1919-20 Fiume*

SeungJung Kim, Assistant Professor of Art History/University of Toronto: *It's About Time: The Historiographical (Re)naissance of Kairos in the 20th Century Interwar Period*

Sherally Munshi, Law Research Fellow, Georgetown University Law Center/Georgetown University: *Immigration, Imperialism and the Legacies of Indian Exclusion*

Victoria J. Collis-Buthelezi, Lecturer in English/University of Cape Town: *Empire, Nation, Diaspora*

Andrew Ollett, PhD Candidate, Middle East & Mellon Fellow: *Discussant*

**Actual and Potential Constructions of the American State's Relationship
to the American People**

Steven White, Postdoctoral Research Associate/Brown University: *For Democracy and a Caste System?: World War II and American Racial Politics*

Robert Genter, Professor of History/Nassau Community College: *American Psychology and the Rise of the Cold War National Security State*

Jeronimo Cortina, Assistant Professor of Political Science/University of Houston: *Not In My Front Yard: The Impact of Spatial Proximity on Attitudes Toward Immigration in Texas*

David Szakonyi, PhD Candidate, Political Science & Mellon Fellow: *Discussant*