

Report on the Survey of Earned Doctorates, 2005

Doug Steward

EACH year the United States government's Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) provides a census of doctorate recipients from United States universities. The survey is filled out by individual degree recipients at the time they file to receive their degrees. The results—broken out by field, gender, and race and ethnicity—appear annually as *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report*. The report can be downloaded as a PDF file from the Web site of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, the contractor that administers the survey. Totals for each year since 1966 can also be developed using the online data analysis tools of the National Science Foundation's *WebCASPAR* Web site.¹ This report presents some of the latest survey's data of interest to those in the modern language fields. The survey covers graduates who received their doctorates between 1 July 2004 and 30 June 2005. For the full results of the survey, see Thomas Hoffer et al.

Summary

In 2005, the 960 doctorates in English and American language and literature remained fairly level with the 933 in 2004 and represented a 12.2% decline from the recent high of 1,094 in 1997. In foreign languages and literatures, there were 609 doctorates in 2005, up 3.9% from 586 in 2004 and 6.6% below the recent high of 652 in 1997.

In 2005, 57.4% of English and 61.0% of foreign language doctorate recipients reported that they had definite employment after graduation. Such employment could be in higher education or not, full-time or part-time, tenure-track or non-tenure-track. In foreign languages, this rate of definite employment is the highest in the past twenty years. In English, the highest rate of postgraduation employment in the last twenty years is 1989's rate of 60.3%.

2005 Profiles in Detail

Table 1 outlines characteristics of recipients of 2005 doctorates in language and literature. Of 960 recipients in English, 40.0% were men, 60.0% women. Of 609 recipients in foreign languages, 39.6% were men, 60.3% women. United States citizens composed 85.4% of English and 55.2% of foreign language doctorates. Those on permanent and temporary visas together made up 10.9% of English and 39.2% of foreign language doctorates.

Of English doctorate recipients, 53.1% also held a bachelor's in the same field, while 43.3% of foreign language recipients did. In English, the median times from receipt of the bachelor's to receipt of the doctorate were 11.8 years (total) and 9.7 years (registered); in foreign languages, they were 11.0 years (total) and 9.2 years (registered).

Definite postgraduation employment was had by 57.4% of English and 61.0% of foreign language respondents. In English, 32.0% of respondents were seeking employment or postdoctoral study; in foreign languages, 29.1% were seeking employment or postdoctoral study. Some definite form of postdoctoral study was had by 8.1% of English and 5.8% of foreign language recipients. Postgraduation plans were unknown for 2.5% of English and 4.2% of foreign language respondents. The percentages for those who planned definite postdoctoral study, who planned definite postgraduation employment, who were seeking employment, and who had unknown plans total 100, with allowance for rounding.

The author is associate director of MLA Programs and ADE.

Table 1
Doctorate Recipients' Characteristics, 2005¹

Characteristics	English and American Language and Literature (%)	Foreign Languages and Literatures (%)	Characteristics	English and American Language and Literature (%)	Foreign Languages and Literatures (%)
Total doctorates earned (no.)	960	609	Definite postdoctoral study²	12.5	8.6
Gender			Fellowship	10.0	5.4
Men	40.0	39.6	Research associateship	0.0	1.9
Women	60.0	60.3	Traineeship	0.0	0.0
Unknown	0.0	0.2	Other study	0.0	0.0
Citizenship status			Employment commitments after doctorate		
US citizen	85.4	55.2	Primary activity		
Non-US, permanent visa	2.8	10.8	R&D	9.5	11.1
Non-US, temporary visa	8.1	28.4	Teaching	78.8	81.3
Unknown	3.6	5.6	Administration	6.9	3.3
Bachelor's in same field as doctorate	53.1	43.3	Professional services	0.1	2.4
Master's	87.4	87.0	Other	1.1	1.8
Median time lapse from baccalaureate to doctorate			Secondary activity		
Total time (yrs.)	11.8	11.0	R&D	52.5	64.2
Registered time (yrs.)	9.7	9.2	Teaching	12.5	11.1
Postdoctoral plans			Administration	6.5	5.4
Definite employment	57.4	61.0	Professional services	2.4	0.0
Seeking employment or study	32.0	29.1	Other	3.1	0.0
Definite postdoctoral study	8.1	5.8	No secondary activity	23.1	16.0
Postdoctoral plans unknown	2.5	4.2	Activities unknown	2.4	1.8
Definite employment after doctorate²	87.5	91.4	Region of employment after doctorate		
Educational institution	80.7	85.7	New England	8.1	9.2
Industry or business	3.5	2.7	Middle Atlantic	15.7	10.9
Government	0.8	1.4	East north central	16.4	17.2
Nonprofit	1.3	0.0	West north central	6.9	6.5
Other or unknown	0.0	0.0	South Atlantic	16.3	19.2
			East south central	5.2	2.1
			West south central	6.1	8.0
			Mountain	4.2	5.0
			Pacific and insular	15.7	14.2
			Foreign	5.2	7.7
			Region unknown	0.0	0.0

1. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

2. Percentages are based only on those doctorate recipients who indicated definite employment or postdoctoral study and specified the type.

Of graduates with definite employment or postdoctoral study, 87.5% in English and 91.4% in foreign languages indicated a type of employment. By far the largest percentages—80.7% of English and 85.7% of foreign language doctorate recipients—indicated that the employment was in education. These percentages suggest that just under half of all doctorate recipients in English and foreign languages had some form of definite postgraduation employment in education when they submitted the SED.

Of employed graduates, teaching was the primary employment activity of 78.8% in English and 81.3% in foreign languages. The secondary activity of 52.5% in English and 64.2% in foreign languages was research and development, a clear indication that while most of these doctorate recipients considered

research a significant component of their employment, teaching remained the primary anticipated responsibility. In English and foreign languages, the highest percentages of definite employment were in the south Atlantic (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia), east north central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin), Pacific and insular (Alaska, California, Hawai'i, Oregon, Washington, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, Trust Territory, Virgin Islands), and the middle Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania) sections of the country.

Of graduates with definite employment or postdoctoral study, 12.5% (English) and 8.6% (foreign languages) indicated a type of study. For 10.0% of those in English and 5.4% of those in foreign languages with definite postdoctoral study, the type was fellowship.

Table 2 outlines data for 2005 degree recipients' citizenship, and table 3 does so for race and ethnicity. A total of 16.9% of the 1,156 respondents in language and literature who were United States citizens or held permanent visas (the United States cohort) identified with a category of race or ethnicity other than white, excluding "other / unknown race." Of the United States cohort in language and literature, 78.1% identified as white, 5.0% as black or African American, 7.5% as Hispanic (Puerto Rican, Mexican American, or other Hispanic), 3.8% as Asian, and 0.5% as American Indian. The only categories of race or ethnicity in which foreign

Table 2
US Doctorate Recipients by Citizenship, 2005

Field	US citizens	Non-US citizens	Unknown citizenship	Total
Language and literature				
Number	1,156	344	69	1,569
Percentage	73.7	21.9	4.4	100.0
English and American language and literature				
Number	820	105	35	960
Percentage	85.4	10.9	3.6	100.0
Foreign languages and literatures				
Number	336	239	34	609
Percentage	55.2	39.2	5.6	100.0

Table 3
US Doctorate Recipients, US Citizens by Race/Ethnicity, 2005

	American Indian	Asian	Black / African American	White	Puerto Rican	Mexican American	Other Hispanic	Other / Unknown Race	Total
Language and literature									
Number	6	44	58	903	21	35	31	58	1,156
Percentage	0.5	3.8	5.0	78.1	1.8	3.0	2.7	5.0	100.0
English and American language and literature									
Number	6	32	51	660	8	15	4	44	820
Percentage	0.7	3.9	6.2	80.5	1.0	1.8	0.5	5.4	100.0
Foreign languages and literatures									
Number	0	12	7	243	13	20	27	14	336
Percentage	0.0	3.6	2.1	72.3	3.9	6.0	8.0	4.2	100.0

1. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

2. Previously, non-US citizens with temporary visas were reported in this category, and those with permanent visas were combined with US citizens. In 2005, all non-US citizens are reported together, and US citizens are reported alone.

languages show a significantly higher percentage than English are the three Hispanic ones—the only ones that imply a first language other than English. In 2005, Hispanic recipients account for 17.9% of foreign language and 3.3% of English doctorates in the United States cohort. Despite years of good intentions on the part of many members of the profession, the percentages of doctorate recipients of color remain disproportionately low.

Historical Timelines

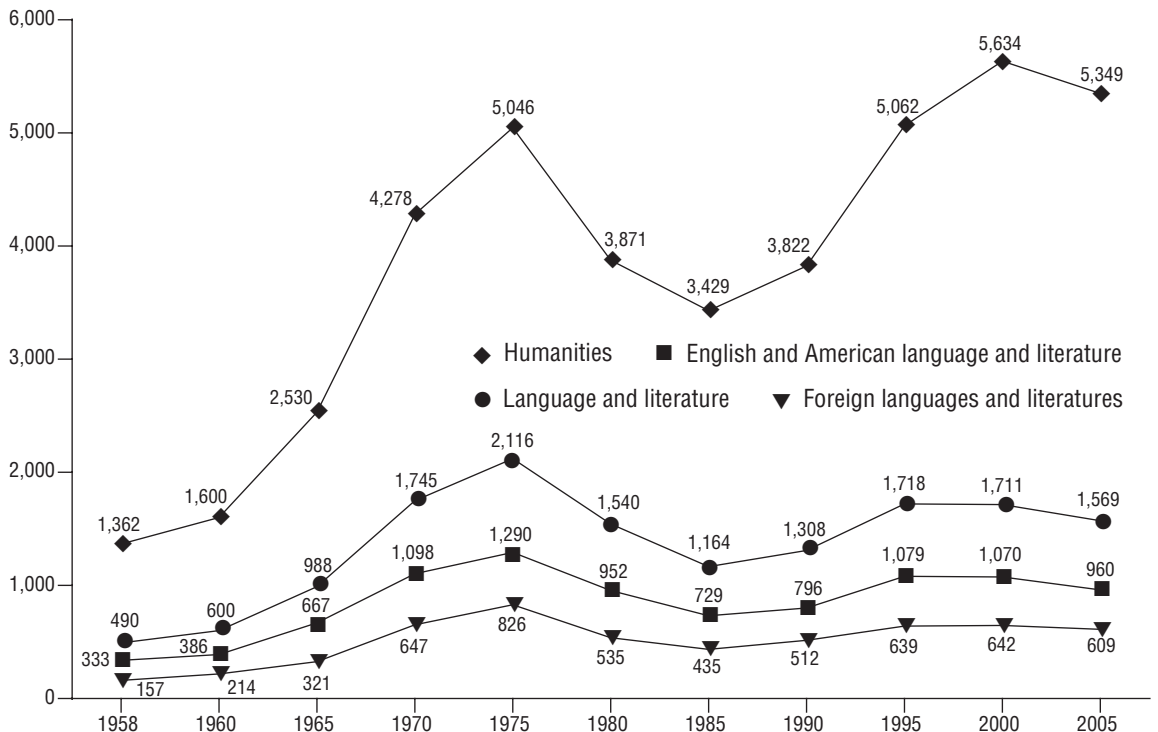
Figure 1 shows the number of doctorates in foreign languages and literatures, English and American language and literature, language and literature (the modern languages combined), and the humanities as a whole between 1958 and 2005. While all the lines in the figure show an increase from 1958 to 1973, a drop from 1973 through the mid-1980s, and an increase beginning in the late 1980s, humanities degrees in general have rebounded more vigorously than degrees in language and literature since the late 1980s. Figure 1 should be compared with figure 2,

which shows the number of doctorates conferred in all fields from 1958 to 2005. While the shape of this line is similar to those in figure 1, doctorate conferrals in all fields slow or drop off very slightly. The more distinct drop in language and literature PhDs beginning in the early 1970s can be attributed, in part, to the widely discussed PhD employment crisis, which emerged at the 1969 MLA convention and has been a preoccupying concern ever since.

Figure 3 shows the number of doctorates in the humanities and in language and literature per one hundred doctorates in all fields from 1958 to 2005. From this figure, we can see that since 1958 the humanities' and language and literature's share of all doctorates has declined noticeably but not precipitously, reaching highs in 1960 and 1973 and a low in the late 1980s.

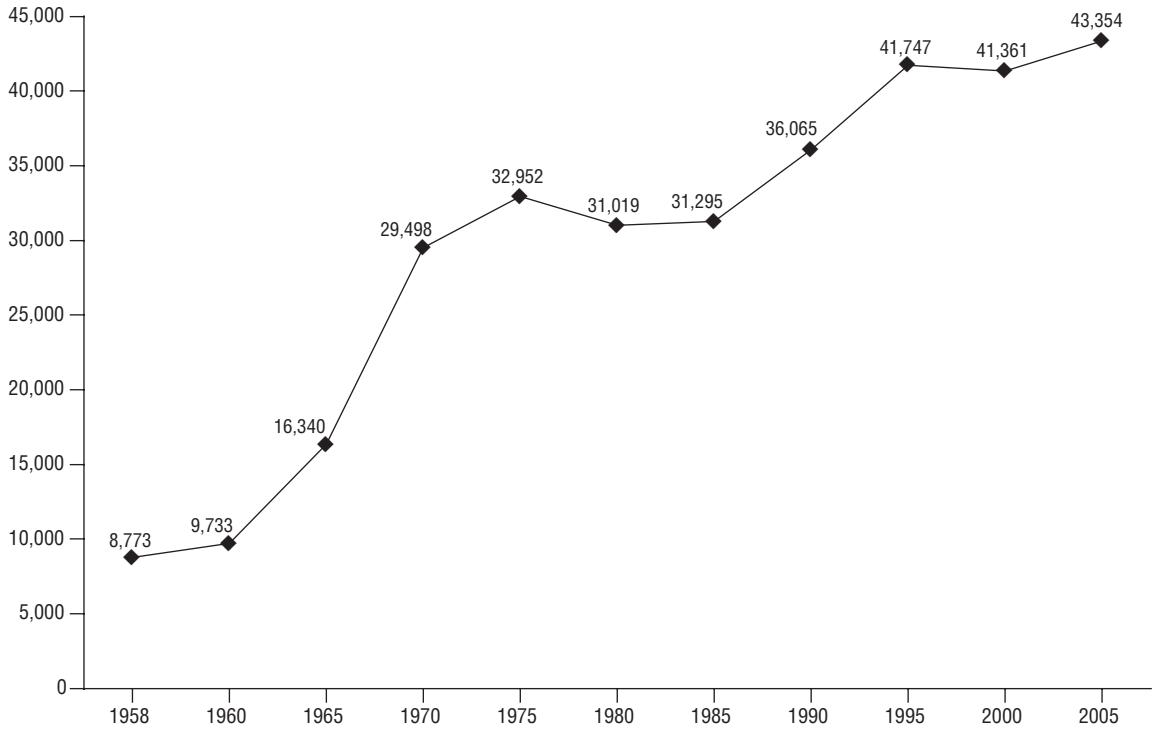
Figures 4 and 5 show 2005 doctorate recipients' reported employment. As the questionnaire is worded, "definite employment" at the time of graduation could be a tenure- or non-tenure-track position or a job in a sector other than higher education. For the period between 1984 and 2005, about half of any given year's graduates report having definite employment at the time of graduation. For 2005 the figures

Fig. 1
Doctorates in the Humanities and in Language and Literature, 1958–2005



Note: Data conform to latest print edition.

Fig. 2
Doctorates Earned in All Fields, 1958–2005



Note: Data conform to latest print edition.

Fig. 3
Doctorates in the Humanities and in Language and Literature per 100 Doctorates in All Fields, 1958–2005

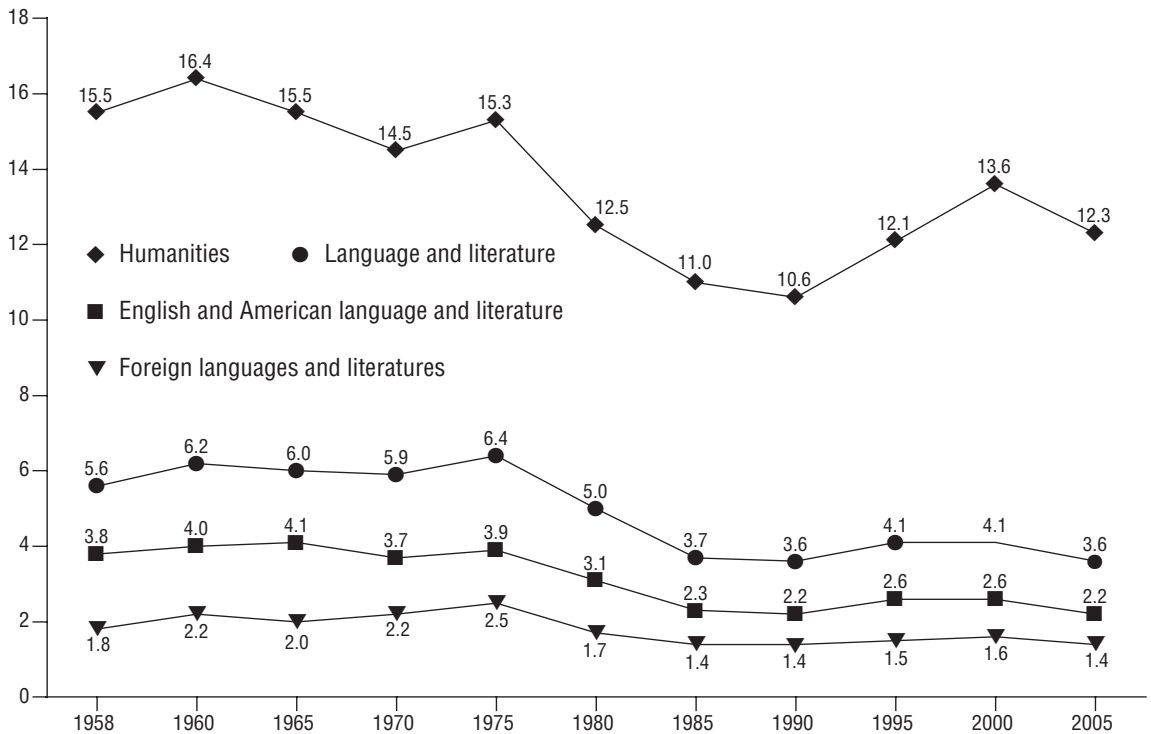


Fig. 4
Employment Profiles of Doctorate Recipients in English and American Language and Literature by Percentage, 1984–2005

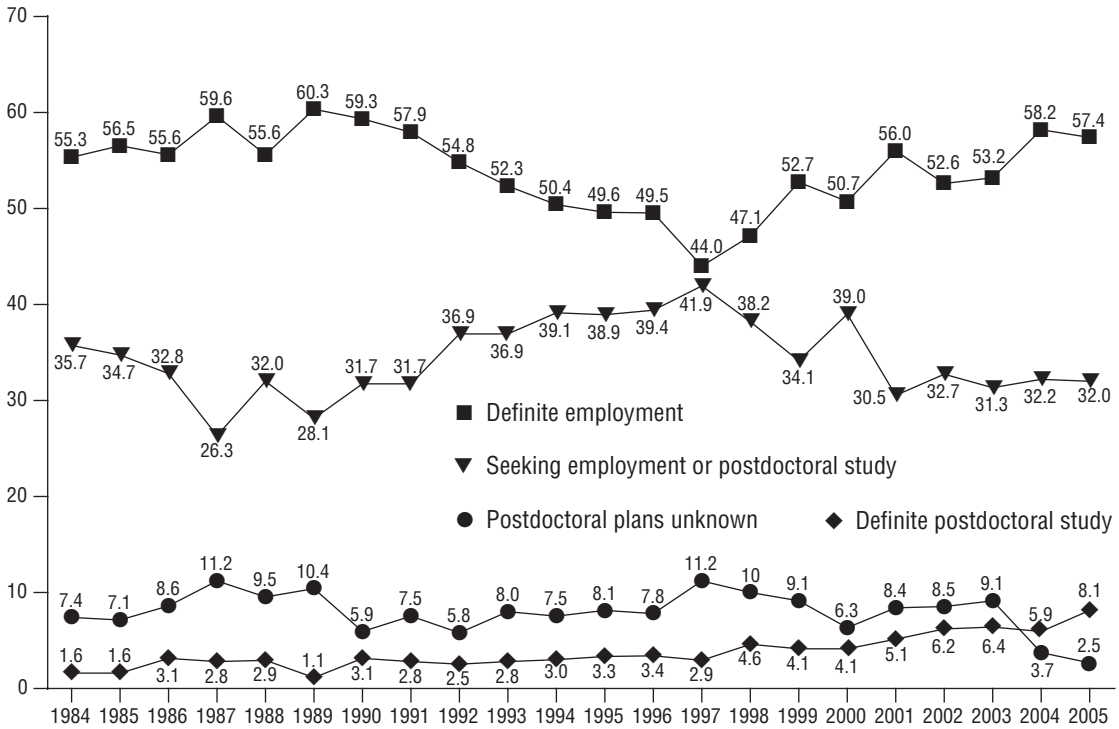
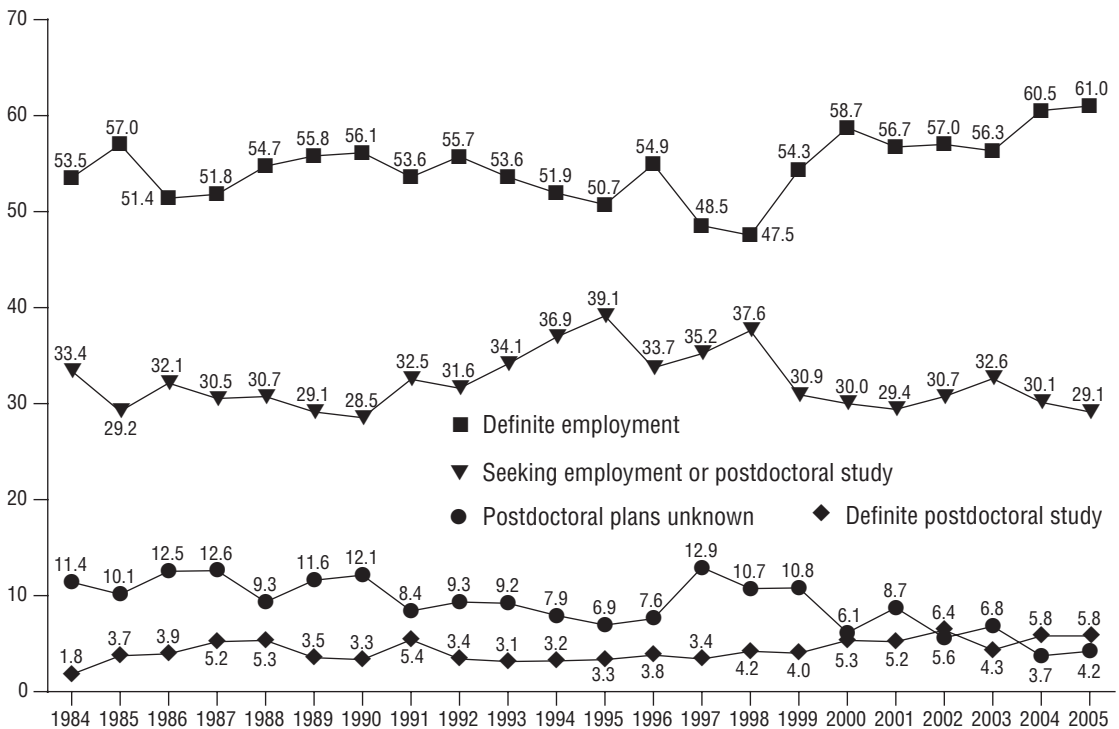


Fig. 5
Employment Profiles of Doctorate Recipients in Foreign Languages and Literatures by Percentage, 1984–2005



are 57.4% for English, 61.0% for foreign languages. Across the twenty-two years, the SED data on doctorate recipients with definite employment show a range from a low of 44.0% in 1997 to a high of 60.3% in 1989 for English and a low of 47.5% in 1998 to a high of 61.0% in 2005 for foreign languages.

Figure 6 illustrates that the increasing number of PhDs granted since 1958 has been most dramatically represented in women's greater access to graduate study. In 1958 only 991 of 8,773 PhDs in all fields, or 11.3%, were granted to women. By 2005 this number had risen to 19,564 of 43,354 doctorates, or 45.1%. This represents a difference of 1,874% in the number of PhDs granted to women yearly. The number of PhDs granted to men in 2005 was only 205% greater than in 1958. As figure 7 shows, the increase in this period in PhDs granted to women in the humanities is similarly striking: in 1958, 202 PhDs were granted to women in the humanities, while 2,724 such degrees were conferred in 2005. In fact, women have for the past several years surpassed men in earning PhDs in the humanities.

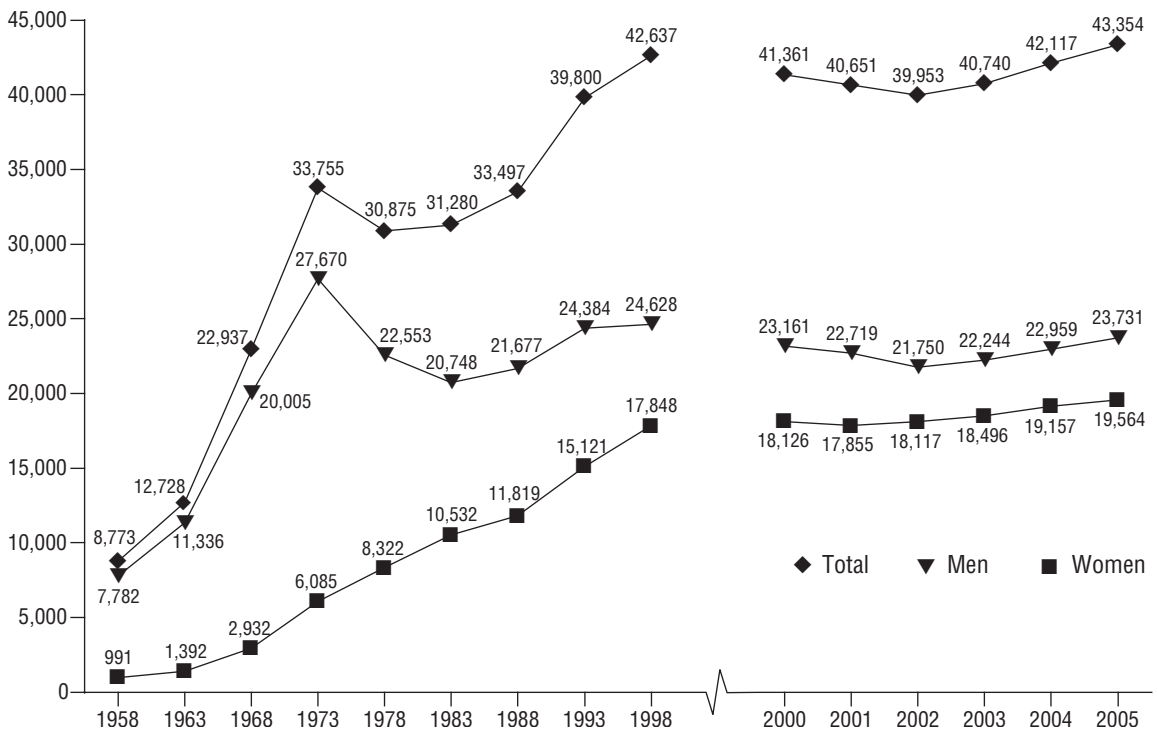
Note

1. *WebCASPAR* data differ from the SED's published data in the *Summary Report*. Though the two are based on the same survey results, they are aggregated differently. The *SED Summary Report* publishes data for American literature and English language and literature. Also included under the *WebCASPAR* heading "English and literature" are classics, comparative literature, speech and rhetorical studies, general letters, and other letters. Of particular interest in the *Summary Report* is appendix table A-1 (87). *WebCASPAR's* "Table Builder" has the advantage of allowing tailored cross-year analyses back to 1966.

Works Cited

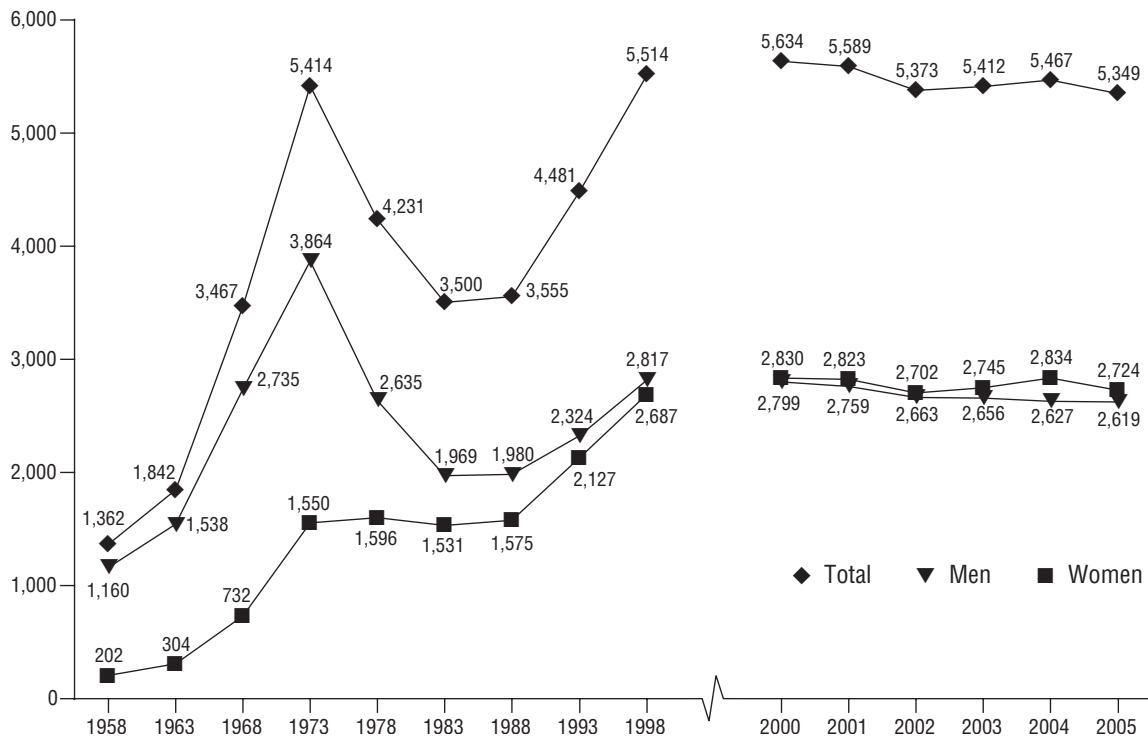
Hoffer, Thomas B., et al. *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report, 2005*. Chicago: Natl. Opinion Research Center, 2006. 30 Apr. 2007 <www.norc.org/projects/survey+of+earned+doctorates.htm>.
 "Table Builder." *WebCASPAR: Integrated Science and Engineering Resources Data Analysis System*. Natl. Science Foundation. 30 Apr. 2007 <<http://webcaspar.nsf.gov>>.

Fig. 6
Doctorates Earned by Women and Men in All Fields, Selected Years, 1958–2005



Note: Data before 1966 are those reported in the print edition. 1966–2005 data conform to the latest available online, 30 Apr. 2007. Totals include unknown gender.

Fig. 7
Doctorates Earned by Women and Men in the Humanities, Selected Years, 1958–2005



Note: Data are those reported in the print edition. Totals include unknown gender.