



Women in Philosophy in the UK

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Citation for published version (APA):

Beebee, H., & Saul, J. (2011). *Women in Philosophy in the UK: A report by the British Philosophical Association and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK*. British Philosophical Association.

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British Philosophical Association



Women in Philosophy in the UK

A report by the British Philosophical Association and
the Society for Women in Philosophy UK

September 2011

Authorship & acknowledgements

This report is written by Helen Beebee and Jenny Saul, on behalf of the Joint BPA/SWIP Committee for Women in Philosophy. We are extremely grateful to the committee members for their contributions, and in particular to Drew Howat for gathering and compiling the HESA data used in §2.

We are also grateful to Ana Barandalla, Clare Mac Cumhaill, Nicole Hall-Elfick and Liz Ellis, Emily McTernan, Amber North, Sarah Richmond and Emily Thomas for supplying the case studies in §4.

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I. Introduction

Philosophy in the UK has a long and very distinguished history. That history is dominated by male philosophers: from Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, through Locke, Hume and Reid, to Bradley, Russell and Wittgenstein. This is, of course, a feature not only of philosophy but of every other academic discipline. However, philosophy continues to be dominated by men in a way that many other disciplines—particularly in the arts and humanities—are not. For example, according to HESA data, only 35% of philosophy PhD students in the UK are female, compared to 61% in English and 53% in history. If you visit the website of almost any UK department of English, history or psychology, you are overwhelmingly likely to find a considerably higher proportion of female members of staff than in the philosophy department. The proportion of permanent post-holders in UK philosophy departments who are women stands at roughly 24%, despite the fact that roughly 46% of single and joint Honours undergraduates are women.

Things look different, of course, if we compare philosophy not with English, history and psychology, but with mathematics, physics and computer science. For example, the proportion of PhD students in mathematics the UK who are women is 28%. One important difference between the sciences on the one hand and philosophy on the other, however, is that the lack of women at all levels in the sciences has long been regarded, nationally, as a serious problem, and various organizations and initiatives exist to try to combat it.

There is, for example, Project Juno, an initiative set up by the Institute of Physics in 2007 to ‘recognise and reward departments that can demonstrate they have taken action to address the underrepresentation of women in university physics and to encourage better practice for both women and men’ (<<http://www.iop.org/policy/diversity/initiatives/juno>>). There is the Athena SWAN charter, which ‘recognises and celebrates good employment practice for women working in science, engineering and technology (SET) in higher education and research’ (<<http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan>>). Athena SWAN was started by the Royal Society in 2005, and is now run by the Equality Challenge Unit. And the Resource Centre for Women in SET, UKRC (<<http://www.theukrc.org.uk>>), funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, provides a range of training opportunities and resources, again aimed exclusively at SET subjects.

The UK also lags behind other countries when it comes to addressing the issue of the underrepresentation of women in philosophy. In particular, the American Philosophical Association has a long-standing Committee on the Status of Women (currently producing a report on best practices for anonymous refereeing for journal editors). In addition, the recently established Women in Philosophy Task Force (unconnected with the APA but largely US-based) has undertaken a range of activities, including setting up the ‘What is it like to be a woman in philosophy’ blog (<<http://beingawoman-inphilosophy.wordpress.com>>) and running a mentoring project (<<http://www.philosophy.ku.edu/mentoring-project>>). The Australasian Association of Philosophy produced a report, *Improving the Participation of Women in the Philosophy Profession*, in 2008, and since then has had a Standing Committee for Women in the Profession (see <<http://aap.org.au/women>>).

We believe it is now time for the UK philosophy community similarly to regard the underrepresentation of women in philosophy as a problem, and to work together to find and implement solutions to it. The BPA and SWIP are launching a national mentoring scheme for women in philosophy (see §5), but we do not have the resources of, say, the Institute of Physics, or even the AAP, and our ability to launch and sustain national initiatives is therefore limited.

What we can do, however, is attempt to persuade the philosophical community that there is a problem to be solved, to provide concrete, practical recommendations for individuals, departments and journal editors, and to ask you to implement as many of them as you can, in consultation with your colleagues, your students, and your institutions. These are the aims of this report.

This report concerns the underrepresentation of women in philosophy. Clearly, there are other underrepresented groups in philosophy as well. However, the BPA/SWIP committee took the view that it is best to engage directly with the case of women in the first instance. This is partly because it is considerably easier to get reliable data (for example, it is unclear that Heads of Department would be able to acquire reliable information about their students’ ethnicity), and partly because we have to start somewhere. (The BPA plans to produce similar reports on other underrepresented groups in the future.) However, many of the points made in §3 carry over to other underrepresented groups (e.g. the point about women’s CVs also applies to the CVs of people with names associated with ethnic minorities, as noted in Saul forthcoming). This being so, following the recommendations in §6 (modified, where necessary) should go some way towards addressing the underrepresentation of other groups as well.

I.1. What we would like you to do

First, we would, of course, like as many people as possible to read this report. Please disseminate it as widely as you see fit; for example, if you are a Head of Department, you might consider sending the link to the PDF (<<http://www.bpa.ac.uk/policies>>) to your colleagues and undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Second, we would like the report to prompt informal discussion amongst philosophers. We have only recently begun the task of trying to understand and alleviate the underrepresentation of women in philosophy, and even so this report only briefly mentions work that has already been done on the topic. We urge philosophers to read more on the topic—for example by following up some of the references to the literature in §3—and also to apply their considerable collective and individual wisdom to trying to rectify the situation.

Third, we would like Heads of Department and staff with relevant roles (Director of Undergraduate Studies, etc.) to discuss the report, and in particular the relevant recommendations (§6), at departmental meetings and staff-student liaison committee meetings. We would also like journal editors and members of editorial boards to consider the proposals that are relevant to them.

Fourth, we would like everyone reading this to consider ways in which they, personally, might help to solve the problem. Some of the proposals relate to individuals who teach, organize conferences, and so on. In addition, the case studies in §4 give a flavour of how staff and students alike might think of their own ways of tackling the issue. Our proposals are not intended to be exhaustive, and there are other ways in which the problem of the underrepresentation of women in philosophy might be highlighted and addressed on a local level.

Finally, the Joint BPA/SWIP Committee for Women in Philosophy would like to hear your thoughts about this report, and in particular, about any actions you have taken as a result, and what effects they have had. Some quite small proposals might have large effects; conversely, some quite onerous ones might make little difference. It is only by sharing information that we will, collectively, come to a better understanding of the nature of the problem and how best to solve it.

Please direct your comments and experiences to the co-Chairs of the Committee, Maria Alvarez (<m.alvarez@kcl.ac.uk>) and Jenny Saul (<j.saul@sheffield.ac.uk>)

What people are doing¹

“In order to avoid all-male conferences and seminar lineups, I’ve started giving women first pick of dates. Somebody has to be asked first, after all.”

¹ The “What people are doing” quotes are taken from *What We’re Doing About What It’s Like*, <<http://whatweredoingabout-whatitslike.wordpress.com/>>.

2. Facts and figures

The data in this section have two sources. The BPA questionnaire data was collected by questionnaires sent out to Heads of Department (or equivalent) between 2008 and 2011. Data were gathered from 38 departments, with each responding department providing a 'snapshot' in a given year: number of men and women in a given undergraduate year group, incoming and finishing PhD students, and so on. While not all departments responded, the absolute numbers of staff and students are large enough for it to be unlikely that the sample is unrepresentative.²

The HESA data comes from the Higher Education Statistics Agency; we chose as our comparator subject areas English, history and mathematics.

2.1. BPA questionnaire data

Table 1: Summary figures

Level	% Women	Sample Size
UG single Honours	44	1397
UG joint Honours	47	2368
Women as % of UG students = 46%		
Taught Masters (Philosophy)	33	533
Taught Masters: Interdisciplinary with significant philosophy input	55	114
Research Masters	38	124
Women as % of Masters students = 37%		
PhD intake	31	198
PhD completions	29	89
Women as % of PhD students = 31%		
Casual teaching	28	359
Temporary lecturer/teaching fellow	30	79
Temporary research staff	25	59
Women as % of temporary staff = 28%		
Lecturer	26	179
Senior Lecturer	28	111
Reader	22	49
Professor	19	134
Women as % of permanent staff = 24%		

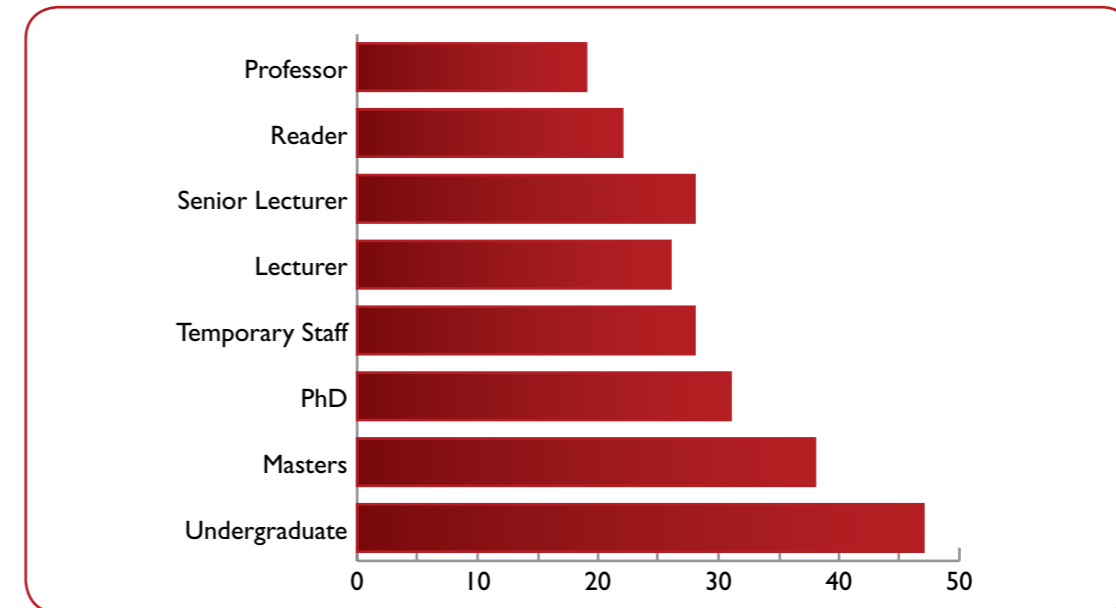
Commentary

The figures show a fairly steady decline in the proportion of women from over 45% at undergraduate level to under 20% at professorial level, with the largest drops occurring between undergraduate and Masters level (9 percentage points), and between Masters and PhD (6 percentage points).

It is worth noting that the figures for joint Honours (or rough equivalent) undergraduates are

² The departments that provided data are: Aberdeen, Birkbeck, Birmingham, BCU, Brighton, Cambridge, Cardiff, Dundee, Durham, Edinburgh, Essex, Glasgow, Greenwich, Heythrop, Institute of Education, KCL, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, LSE, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, OU, Oxford, Oxford Brookes, QUB, Reading, Roehampton, Sheffield, Southampton, St. Andrews, Stirling, Sussex, UCL, UEA, Warwick and York.

Figure 1: Percentage women at each level



skewed by two very large programmes; if these are discounted, the % of women is just over 50%. Women thus make up over 50% of joint Honours (or equivalent) undergraduates, excluding these two programmes, and students on interdisciplinary Masters programmes with a substantial philosophy element.

The fact that the staff level where women are best represented is Senior Lecturer is also worth noting; this may indicate a 'glass ceiling' effect.

Table 2: Admin roles in UK philosophy departments

Role	% Female	% Male
HoD	26	74
UG	28	72
PG	18	82
Research	22	78
UG Admissions	30	70
PG Admissions	21	79
Welfare	30	70

Commentary

The absolute numbers are small here (38 or less for each category), so it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. Nonetheless, it does appear that women are slightly over-represented (relative to the % of staff who are women) in the roles of HoD, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Undergraduate Admissions Officer and Welfare Officer (or nearest equivalents), and slightly underrepresented in the roles of Director of Postgraduate Admissions, Postgraduate Studies and Research Director.

2.2. HESA data

Figure 2: First degree students in various subject areas, academic year 2008/09

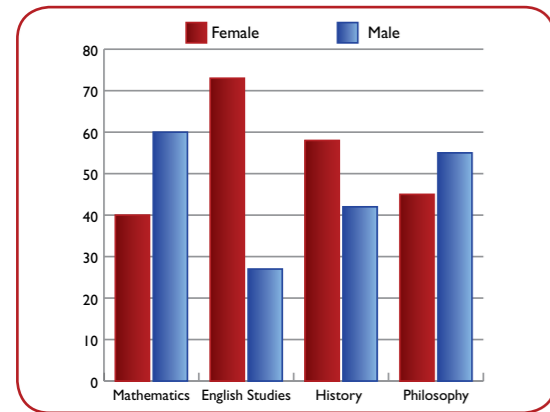


Table 3: First degree students in various subject areas, academic year 2008/09

Subject Area	% Female	% Male
Mathematics	40	60
English Studies	73	27
History	58	42
Philosophy	45	55

Table 4: Masters students in various subject areas, academic year 2008/09

Subject Area	% Female Students	% Male Students
Mathematics	30	70
English Studies	71	29
History	52	48
Philosophy	38	62

Table 5: Doctoral Students in Various Subject Areas, Academic Year 2008/09

Subject Area	% Female Students	% Male Students
Mathematics	28	72
English Studies	61	47
History	53	47
Philosophy	35	65

Table 6: All trends by subject area from first degree to doctoral level

Female Students In...	First Degree	Masters (% Change from First Degree)	PhD (% Change from Masters)
Mathematics	40%	-10%	-2%
English	73%	-2%	-10%
History	58%	-6%	+1%
Philosophy	45%	-7%	-3%

Commentary

It is notable that there is a reduction in the proportion of women from undergraduate to PhD levels in all four subject area, though the decline is steepest in mathematics and philosophy: in mathematics, women make up 40 in every 100 undergraduates but only 28 in every hundred PhD students, which is a 30% reduction. In philosophy, it's a 22% reduction, compared to 15% in English and 9% in history.

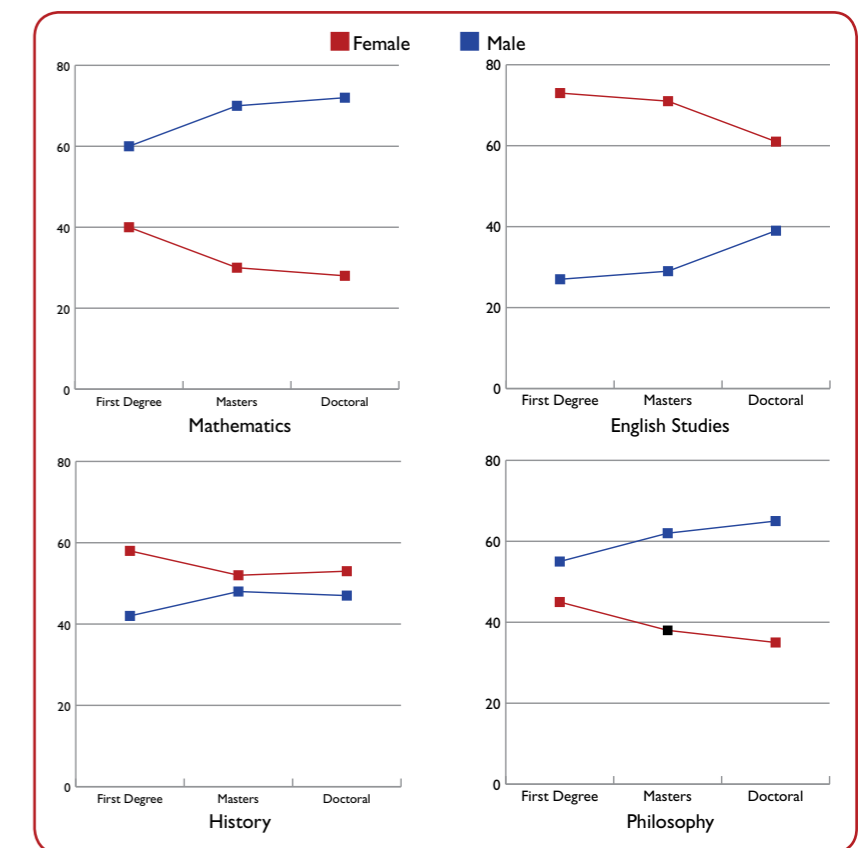
2.3. Summary

There is a steady decline in the representation of women from undergraduate level (46%, according to the BPA questionnaire data) to professorial level (19%) in philosophy, with the largest drops occurring at Master's level (down to 37%) and then PhD level (down to 31%).

The HESA data suggests that the decline from undergraduate to PhD levels is not unique to philosophy (though the decline is steeper in philosophy than in English and history); and one might reasonably assume that the decline from PhD through the different employment categories to professorial level is not unique to philosophy either.

Nonetheless, the fact that the decline is not unique to philosophy does not imply that there is no problem to be addressed. As we explained in §1, the sciences have long regarded the underrepresentation of women, at all levels, as a problem. That the arts and humanities have apparently been less concerned may be due to the fact that, since women are not underrepresented—indeed are overrepresented—at undergraduate level, and since the decline from undergraduate to PhD level is less steep, they are still fairly well represented at higher levels too. Philosophy, however, more closely resembles the sciences than do most humanities disciplines. Indeed, data from the US show that most sciences do better than philosophy for percentage of PhDs awarded to female candidates—only computer science, engineering and physics do worse (Healey 2011). And yet philosophy lags behind all of these fields in trying to address the problem.

Figure 3: Trends by subject area from first degree to doctoral levels



3. Barriers to women in philosophy³

We do not fully understand why the proportion of women philosophers is so low. Some will insist that it is due to innate and unchangeable psychological differences between women and men. This may be true (though there are good reasons to doubt such claims; see e.g. Fine 2010, Jordan-Young 2010), but there is also strong evidence that there are other barriers to women in philosophy. As long as these barriers exist, it will be impossible to know whether the underrepresentation of women is indeed due to such innate differences, or to these barriers. And since these barriers are, as we will see, both unjust and bad for philosophy, there is good reason for us to strive to remove them.

3.1. Implicit bias

Recent psychological research has shown that most people—even those who explicitly and sincerely avow egalitarian views—hold ‘implicit biases’ against such groups as blacks, women, gay people, and so on, based on unconscious stereotypes of these groups. Even members of the ‘targeted’ group are susceptible to implicit bias (see e.g. Steinpreis et al. 1999, Vedantam 2005). Here is one striking manifestation of this:

Women’s CVs

It is well established that the presence of a male or female name on a CV has a strong effect on how that CV is evaluated. This is true both inside and outside academia. Philosophers have not specifically been studied, but we do know that those academics most likely to be aware of the existence of unconscious psychological processes—psychologists—exhibit just this bias. In Steinpreis et al.’s US study, 238 academic psychologists (118 male, 120 female) evaluated a curriculum vitae randomly assigned a male or a female name. Both male and female participants gave the male applicant better evaluations for teaching, research, and service experience and were more likely to hire the male than the female applicant.

There has been no direct empirical research on stereotypes about gender and philosophy (though some is in progress at the University of Sheffield), but there is good reason to believe that philosophy is stereotyped as male. Sally Haslanger (2008: 213) writes:

As feminist philosophers have been arguing for decades, the familiar dichotomies with which Anglophone philosophy defines itself map neatly onto gender dichotomies—rational/emotional, objective/subjective, mind/body; ideals of philosophy—penetrating, seminal, and rigorous; and what we do—attack, target, and demolish an opponent, all of which frame philosophy as masculine and in opposition to the feminine.

In addition, analytic philosophy makes heavy use of logic. And there is an abundance of research showing that mathematics is stereotyped as male (e.g. Nosek et al. 2002).

If this is right, then philosophers will display both the biases against women that are standardly held in their culture and, additionally, biases against women in philosophy; and they will do so even if they do not consciously believe the stereotype. The result of this is that, whatever their own gender, philosophers are likely to unfairly downgrade the work of, wrongly ignore or mistakenly fail to encourage, women in philosophy at all career stages.⁴

3.2. Stereotype threat

Rather than affecting the way that members of a stigmatised group are perceived or evaluated, stereotype threat affects the way that members of that group actually perform. Victims of stereotype threat underperform on the relevant tasks because they are unconsciously preoccupied by fears of

confirming the stereotypes about their group—so preoccupied that they show elevated heart rate and blood pressure (Steele 2010: 119–20, 149). Rather tragically, the effect is strongest with those most committed to doing well in the area in question. Victims of stereotype threat are often, though not always, unaware of their own anxiety and performance pressure.

The effects of stereotype threat are dramatic. When in a threat-provoking situation, blacks perform worse than whites on standardised tests; girls perform worse than boys in maths; white people perform worse than black people at sports (Steele 2010). But when the threat is removed, performance from the stigmatised group improves dramatically—often to the point of equality. Stereotype threat is likely to be provoked where one is from a group that is negatively stigmatised in a certain context, one is in that context, and one’s group membership is made salient. Importantly for philosophers, being one of only a few women in a roomful of men is sufficient to make one’s group membership salient. If philosophy is also stereotyped as male, as seems likely, women philosophers are likely to suffer from stereotype threat quite frequently. This will lead women to underperform at all career stages, including crucially high-stress moments like job interviews.

It is worth noting, however, that the issue isn’t merely one of under-performance. Being subject to stereotype threat is stressful (recall the elevated heart rate and blood pressure). Someone who is subject to it on a daily basis will find their job (or their PhD study) more stressful, in general, than someone who is not, and is therefore less likely to want to stay in the stressful environment in the long term (Steele 2010, 111).

This is important because women philosophers’ membership of the stereotyped group—women—can be made manifest routinely in the day-to-day business of academic life. Many women philosophers are routinely the only female speaker at a conference or workshop or the only female member on an appointments panel. In departments with small numbers of women staff, the women will often find themselves the only woman sitting on a departmental committee.

Moreover, stereotypically male behaviour amongst male (and perhaps also female) colleagues will serve to make women’s status as women even more salient. One piece of stereotypically male behaviour is an aggressive style of argument in the seminar room. This might include, for example, displaying hostility—by words, tone of voice or body language—towards a speaker or audience (or a class discussion) member whom one thinks has failed to grasp a point or adequately address an objection, or pursuing a point well past the stage where it is obvious that the speaker has no adequate response (Beebe, forthcoming). Relatedly, philosophers’ standard metaphors for what goes on in the seminar room are those of competition, fighting and battle (Rooney, 2010). People win and lose arguments, shoot down points, go for the jugular, fight their corner, take no prisoners, don’t pull their punches, and so on. This all falls squarely in the ‘stereotypically male’ category.

The point here is not that women are somehow less able to cope when aggressive behaviour is aimed at them, and so should be treated more gently than men. It is rather that aggressive behaviour, whoever it is aimed at, can heighten women’s feeling that they do not belong by reinforcing the masculine nature of the environment within which they study and work.

What people are doing

“I am a male philosopher at a top 5 Leiter institution, who is invited to speak at many conferences. If I have any concern that the conference might be all-male, I now always ask something like: “May I ask who else will speak? I trust this will not be an exclusively male lineup?” The strategy is to draw explicit attention to gender inclusiveness in a way that appeals to the good intentions of the organizers, and at a time before their speaker list is finalized. This strategy has been quite successful: I believe that it has led to the inclusion of women speakers at two conferences so far.”

³ Parts of this section are reproduced or paraphrased from Saul (forthcoming).

⁴ For more on these claims, including responses to objections, see Saul (forthcoming).

3.3. Sexual harassment

We do not have good data on the prevalence of sexual harassment in philosophy. But we do have a lot of very disturbing anecdotes about sexual harassment in philosophy, so much so that *Inside Higher Ed* (Jaschik 2011) and *Gawker* (Nolan 2011) have both published stories on the topic. Much of this discussion was spurred by anecdotes submitted to the blog *What is it Like to be a Woman in Philosophy*: <http://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/>. Although there is considerable variation in how sexual harassment complaints are dealt with from institution to institution, it is clear that at least some institutions are brushing aside complaints of sexual harassment. It should not be difficult to see how both harassment, and a failure to deal adequately with it, may discourage women from continuing in philosophy. But the following testimonial (<http://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/why-stay/>) helps to make it vivid:

I am about to start my PhD at an excellent Leiter ranked program. I have a BA and MA from excellent schools. I have worked closely with ground breaking philosophers in my field. I have published, I have an excellent teaching resume, phenomenal letters of recommendation, and moreover I love my job. I am a good philosopher, and I am thinking about leaving philosophy.

I have been a secretary and a chauffeur. I have been disingenuously promised research assistantships and letters of recommendation, in return for dinner dates and car rides. I have been asked if I was married while my colleagues have been asked what they think. I have been told that I'm both cute and idiotic. I have passed on professional opportunities because I am a woman, and no one would believe that I deserved those opportunities—accepting would make me seem like a slut, since men make it on merit, and women make it in bed. So, ironically, I have been praised as professional for having passed on professional opportunities. I have been the lone woman presenting at the conference, and I have been the woman called a bitch for declining sexual relations with one of the institution's hosts. I think I have just about covered the gamut of truly egregiously atrocious sexist behaviour. So I just have this one question that I think I need answered: Is the choice between doing philosophy, and living under these conditions, or saving yourself, and leaving the discipline?

This is an open call for reasons to stay.

3.4. Why these barriers are unfair, and why their effects are bad for philosophy

We will assume here that there is no need to explain why sexual harassment is a bad thing, and we will focus instead on implicit bias and stereotype threat.

The effect of implicit bias is that work is not getting the mark it deserves, the best candidates are not being hired, and submitted papers are not being judged on their merits. The effect of stereotype threat is that people are performing less well than they are capable of solely because they are members of a group that is stigmatized, and are prone to experience unnecessarily high levels of stress. These effects are clearly unfair (though for argument on this topic see Saul, forthcoming).

They are also bad for philosophy. If implicit bias and stereotype threat are having the sorts of effects in philosophy that they have elsewhere, then:

- Women's work is being wrongly judged to be of lower quality than it actually is. This will lead to talented philosophers not being encouraged to continue, not getting grants, not getting jobs, not getting promoted, and not getting their work read.

- Talented and committed women philosophers are producing less good work than they otherwise would, which means that the philosophy that exists is not as good as it could be.

To get the best possible philosophy being done, we need the best philosophers to receive proper encouragement and good jobs, and to be working in environments where they can produce their best work.

Until we successfully do something about implicit bias and stereotype threat, this will not happen. The philosophy being produced is likely to be substantially worse than it would be in a fairer environment. And that, needless to say, is not good for philosophy.

What people are doing

"Every chance I get, I point out to the people in charge of such things that it's not just the STEM subjects that have gender problems. I argue that they should look department by department—and consider extending their programmes to support women to philosophy (and other fields, like economics, that are easily missed if one focuses on broad categories like "arts and humanities" or "social sciences"). And I think I'm starting to make some headway."

4. Case studies

In this section, women who have been involved in initiatives designed to improve women philosophers' visibility, experiences, etc. describe in their own words what they and their colleagues have done, and what effects it has had.

University of Cambridge: Women in Philosophy Society

Emily Thomas, Amber North, and Emily McTernan

The Cambridge 'Women in Philosophy' society began in 2010, when we (three female graduate students) decided to confront the gender imbalance in our departments, and explore together the best means for remedying its problematic effects. With the help of both female and male faculty members, we established a network and safe space to discuss the issues we face as women in philosophy, through talks and workshops. The society has been very successful, as we have heard from a number of female academics (from inside and outside of our departments) and other female graduate students. We hope these meetings will continue to bring illuminating insights, and opportunities for response, through our three explicit purposes.

Firstly, we aim to discuss and celebrate the work that women are doing in philosophy. Historically speaking, women have not been working in philosophy for very long. For example, Emily Jones became the first woman to present at the Cambridge Moral Sciences Club in 1896. But this absence is not only reflected in the Philosophy Tripos' historical courses, it is also reflected in its contemporary philosophy courses, where reading lists feature very few female philosophers. This is an issue because female students benefit from inspirational figures. Our group aims to address this need by highlighting the significant contributions female philosophers have made, and are making, through a speaker series that in turn provides a platform for discussion.

Secondly, we provide networking opportunities for female philosophers working in diverse areas. Female graduates are often conscious of being the only woman in the room during talks, lectures and reading groups. This is especially a problem at Cambridge as philosophy is spread across a number of faculties—including Philosophy, History and Philosophy of Science, Classics and Divinity—resulting in smaller group sizes with few women in each group. This can lead to an 'outsider syndrome': you feel as though you do not belong, and as a result can become shy with participation. The Women in Philosophy society aims to deal with this by connecting female philosophers. Talking to other female graduate students and realising how many of us have felt this way from time to time—in different rooms, at different talks—helps to alleviate this isolation.

Lastly, we discuss the various issues facing women in philosophy, and aim to find strategies to deal with them. These issues range from the difficulty of balancing children with an academic career to supervising a group of exclusively male students. However, the issue that our group returns to most frequently is the culture around professional philosophy, and whether it can at times deter a kind of individual who is often (though not always) female. Anecdotal evidence shows that argument style in the 'seminar room' can take aggressive tones with negative objectives, such as the purely destructive critique of a speaker or paper. This can lead to problems that fall along gender lines. For example, some members of our group have described the experience of arguing in a calm tone only to be talked over, or interrupted, by a louder and more aggressive argument style. One female PhD cited this atmosphere as part of the reason for her leaving academia altogether. Several undergraduates described how they were advised to improve their essays by 'writing more like a man.'

Of course, any analysis of the issues facing women in philosophy must be careful to avoid quick and dangerous stereotypes. Some of our female members have expressed feeling no dissatisfaction with, and even having a taste for, aggressive and rigorous critique. And this leads us to the larger question of how different methods and interpersonal styles do or do not advance the content of philosophy.

Addressing gender imbalance is not only an issue for those affected, it also is an important entry point for self-conscious analysis of the discipline as a whole—an analysis that any philosopher should be interested in.

University of Edinburgh: Women in Philosophy Group

Ana Barandalla, Clare Mac Cumhaill, Nicole Hall-Elfick and Liz Ellis

The EWPG was formed in early 2010, with the founding belief that, in general, professional philosophy as an institution is not good to women, and that things ought not to be that way. That philosophy is not good to women is manifest in the numbers and ranks in which women feature in the profession, and by the sexist prejudices which many women experience and witness in the profession. It is also aggravated by the needless underrepresentation of women philosophers on reading lists, edited volumes and, frequently, as invited speakers at seminars and colloquia.

We think that these phenomena are connected, and that they are driven both by cultural and by structural factors. Culturally, one of the greatest factors is a conception of women and of men according to which women are less good than men at philosophy. Structurally the factors are more varied, but they often cluster around child bearing and family issues.

The purpose of the group is to address both those cultural and structural factors. We do so in theoretical and in practical ways. On the theoretical side, we work towards gaining a greater understanding of discriminatory factors. On the practical side, we aim to promote ways of correcting them and of minimising the detrimental effects of discrimination.

On the theoretical side, we have organised two workshops: one under the broad rubric of philosophical issues surrounding the lack of representation of women in philosophy; another on feminism, art, and pornography.

On the practical side we have pursued numerous initiatives:

- We have encouraged faculty to increase the presence of women on course reading lists, at conferences and as speakers at departmental seminars, and to make more frequent verbal reference to women philosophers in their lectures, as well as more visible on the departmental website. We have also informed them of the importance of making it obvious that they take their female students seriously and that they value their philosophical insights. We thought that it was important to do this repeatedly and through different channels: through formal meetings with senior members of the philosophy department, through attendance at faculty meetings, and through informal discussion with several members of the department.
- We nominated a member of our group as someone to whom students could privately report instances of sexist behaviour they had suffered or witnessed.
- As part of the department Professional Development Seminars for postgraduate students, we set a session led by members of the academic staff focusing on the difficulties involved in combining an academic career with raising a family.

We have also organised other events which were as theoretically minded as they were practical. We organised a roundtable discussion featuring members of the academic staff, discussing facts about the presence of women in professional philosophy. We also organised a workshop detailing some of the difficulties which women face in academia, and ways in which those difficulties might be addressed at different levels.

We are about to commence planning a program of events for next year.

The Group's greatest achievement so far is perhaps the raising of awareness particularly amongst members of the academic staff about the multifarious ways in which sexist attitudes permeate the discipline, and a genuine interest in correcting that situation. We have also seen a marked increase in women speakers lined up for next year's departmental weekly Friday Seminars. The Group has also been invited to set the topic for another Professional Development Seminar.

UCL: Committee for Widening Participation

Sarah Richmond

The UCL Department of Philosophy set up a Committee for Widening Participation (WP) late in 2010 after Sarah Richmond, inspired by what she had heard at the November conference in Cardiff on Underrepresented Groups in Philosophy, proposed it at a staff meeting. There are six of us on the committee, plus an external advisor in the form of Helen Beebee. We chose the 'WP' title in order to associate ourselves with the advertised commitment of UCL as a whole to WP issues, and to make it clear that we take our remit to include the position not only of women, but also of the other groups whose participation in the Department is at present disproportionately low: in particular, members of ethnic minorities, and people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

We meet termly. Our two meetings to date have shown that there are numerous issues in relation to which the WP perspective is relevant and where, we hope, it will influence policy. We have begun monitoring student admissions and performance (at u/g and p/g levels), and the placement in jobs of our graduate students, according to gender and (where we have the data) ethnic and socio-economic categories. Members of staff have agreed to check teaching materials to make sure that, where relevant, work by women philosophers is included and to encourage a wide range of students to participate actively in seminars. Anonymity will be increased in relation to the Graduate admissions process, and visits to local state sixth forms are planned, possibly with the assistance of undergraduate 'ambassadors'. The Department has discussed the matter of images, especially in relation to stereotype threat. The Pyke photos on our seminar room walls will stay in place for now, but photos are being added to the website and other publicity materials to increase the range of people depicted. We are drafting policy recommendations for future staff appointments. The enthusiasm shown by a large number of colleagues has been gratifying and we are hopeful that signs of WP progress will soon be apparent. It is however clear that it will take time for the Department to become significantly more inclusive, and patience is required.

5. The BPA/SWIP mentoring scheme

The BPA and SWIP will soon be launching a mentoring scheme, open to all women from first-year PhD level onwards who are students of philosophy or employed on a teaching and/or research contract (including fractional contracts) in a UK university, up to Senior Lecturer level. The aims of the scheme are to:

- increase confidence and reduce isolation of women philosophers in what is still a male dominated environment;
- encourage more women to continue within philosophy and to take on more senior roles;
- provide women opportunities to discuss the problems they face;
- offer women informed advice about their personal career development; and
- raise the profile of women in philosophy.

Further information about the scheme and how to participate, will appear on the BPA and SWIP websites in due course.

What people are doing

"I'd arranged to meet male colleagues A and B to talk about a paper I was writing. Halfway through our discussion, male colleague C joined us. C began a conversation with A about the central point we were discussing (so, the central point in my paper). I tried at several points to join this conversation, but each time C interrupted me. Throughout the conversation, he addressed all his questions and remarks directly to A, completely ignoring me. A then had to answer his phone, at which point C began the same process with B. Again, I was unable to join the conversation, even though it was my paper that was under discussion. This wasn't an anomaly. I'm friends with C and we often talk socially, but C has never engaged me in a philosophical conversation and probably never will (though he talks philosophy a lot with other men). I tend to interpret these cases, when they happen, as reflecting badly on me. I must not be an interesting philosopher if C would rather talk to other people even when he's talking about my work, right? So on this occasion I was feeling down. But as soon as C was momentarily distracted, A and B both remarked on his obvious and unacceptable sexism. A then suggested that we reconvene at a coffee shop across the road, where we could finish our conversation without C's interruptions. We did, and it was great—not only because of the feedback I got on my paper, but because I felt valued and supported by my male colleagues."

6. Recommendations

6.1 For teaching (both UG and PG)

- Use anonymous procedures (for marking, possibly also postgraduate admissions/funding decisions) as far as possible. When anonymity is practised, the potential for implicit bias is substantially reduced.
- Double-check the women's applications for postgraduate study to make sure that they haven't been downgraded due to implicit bias. (Obviously this is only either possible or appropriate where anonymous procedures haven't been used.)
- Be aware that most people (whatever their sex, and whatever their political commitments) are more likely to notice men attempting to contribute to discussion than women. (This is probably partly due to expectations/implicit bias, and partly due to women participating more hesitantly.) Make an effort to notice and to call on women. (See Bartky 1990: 91, Sadker and Sadker 1995.)
- Communicate the phenomenon of stereotype threat, and the fact that it may be a cause of any anxiety they experience, to women students. In addition, make sure they are aware that you have high expectations for them, but that you think they are perfectly capable of meeting these expectations (Steele 2010: 159-164). This helps with stereotype threat. Finally, encourage them to try some of the further methods described in 'For those who may be suffering from stereotype threat' below.
- Encourage women to consider postgraduate study. In fact, encouraging all promising final year students to consider postgraduate study has the effect of increasing the percentage of women continuing (Saul forthcoming).
- Ensure that women staff are involved in postgraduate recruitment. Remember, the single biggest drop in the representation of women in the UK occurs between undergraduate and Masters levels.
- Make sure that you have women, both staff and students, at your Open Days.
- Encourage women PhD students to take advantage of the SWIP/BPA mentoring scheme (see §5).
- Have women as lecturers, put women on reading lists, do anything you can to make students aware that there are women philosophers. To get more women as lecturers and as postgraduate students, follow the suggestions under 'Staffing', below. When you discuss women philosophers in lectures, try using photographs as part of a PowerPoint presentation. Images are especially effective in combating implicit bias and stereotype threat, and they also help to make it clear that a woman is being discussed.

Why?

- Because doing this will help to break down the stereotype that philosophy is male, thus reducing both stereotype and implicit bias (Blair 2002, Kang and Banaji 2006).
- Because their exclusion may be due to implicit bias—studies have shown that women's names leap to mind less easily, and that women have to accomplish more than men to be seen as equally accomplished (see for example the CV case mentioned in §3). Good women are very likely being overlooked where they shouldn't be.

- Exposure to counter-stereotypical exemplars reduces stereotype threat (Blair 2002, Kang and Banaji 2006).

How?

- Instead of just relying on the names that leap to mind for reading lists, make a point of actually going through bibliographies and looking for female names you may have failed to think of. The AAP has a searchable database of papers by women that are suitable for undergraduate teaching, *Women's Works* (<<http://women.aap.org.au/papers>>), although it is currently not very comprehensive.

6.2 For staffing

- Make sure that women in your department aren't carrying a disproportionate share of the pastoral care in your department, and that their administrative work isn't disproportionately focused on teaching. These sorts of jobs are stereotyped as female, and are also the less prestigious than, say, PG or Research Director, thus slowing down women's career progress (Misra et al. 2011).
- Encourage women below the rank of senior lecturer to join the SWIP/BPA mentoring scheme (see §5).
- Provide funding, if possible, for women below the rank of senior lecturer to attend the SWIP/BPA mentoring workshop, to be announced in the next year.
- Investigate resources that may be on offer at your institution to combat underrepresentation of women in other fields. Universities tend to look at gender breakdowns by faculty (or school) and thereby fail to notice that philosophy has a problem. They sometimes do have e.g. special funds to help with re-starting research after maternity leave, and they may be willing able to extend these to philosophy once they become aware of philosophy's gender breakdown.
- Try to increase the number of women on your staff.

Why?

- Because doing this will help to break down the stereotype that philosophy is male, thus reducing both stereotype and implicit bias (Blair 2002, Kang and Banaji 2006).
- Because their exclusion may well be due to implicit bias—studies have shown that women have to accomplish more than men to be seen as equally accomplished (Saul forthcoming). Good women are very likely being overlooked where they shouldn't be.

How?

Preferring women, except in tie-breaker situations, is illegal in the UK. But there are many other things one can do⁵:

- Encourage women to apply for your jobs.

What people are doing

"We'd like to be able to longlist job applicants just on the basis of CV and cover letter, both of which are easily anonymised. But our online application system would reveal identities anyway. So we've asked HR to try to get the system changed in order to allow us to avoid bias based on social identities at this stage of the process."

- Put multiple women on the appointment panel if possible to reduce stereotype threat: stereotype threat still occurs if one is very much in the minority even if one is not the only woman in the room, so one woman is not enough (Saul forthcoming).
- Make sure that all panel members are familiar with the phenomenon of implicit bias, since all (whatever their own group membership) are likely to fall prey to it.
- Double-check the women's applications to make sure that they haven't been downgraded due to implicit bias.
- Bear in mind that letters of reference are likely to contain elements of gender stereotyping. Studies have shown that women's references tend to emphasise stereotypically female traits that are not so impressive (niceness, attention to detail) over more impressive stereotypically male traits, such as originality and ambitiousness (Madera et al. 2009, Ruth 2010).
- Don't allow decisions to be made just on the basis of an overall feel—all too easily affected by bias. Instead, insist on a more detailed evaluation: e.g. how were the arguments in the presentation? How significant was the paper? How good were the responses to questions? How much teaching ability was shown? This improves decision-making quite generally, but also helps to block the influence of bias.
- Try for as many data points as possible when making a decision: any one thing (e.g. letters of reference) might have been influenced by implicit bias, or stereotype threat.

6.3. For research

- Try to make sure you include women as conference speakers, in anthologies, etc.

Why?

- Because doing this will help to break down the stereotype that philosophy is male, thus reducing both stereotype and implicit bias (Blair 2002, Kang and Banaji 2006).
- Because their exclusion may well be due to implicit bias—women's names are likely to leap to mind less easily, and women have to accomplish more than men to be seen as equally accomplished (Saul forthcoming). Good women are very likely being overlooked where they shouldn't be.

How?⁶

- Realise that the first names you think of are overwhelmingly likely to be male. This is exactly what work on implicit bias would predict. So if you want some female names, you'll need to work a little harder. You might ask around a bit. Or you might look at the papers cited by some of the men you've thought of to find some women who work in the area. Neither of these is ideal, though, since the same biases will make it harder for others to think of women, or to remember to cite them. Perhaps a better idea is to search for your topic on the *Philosopher's Index*, *Phil Papers* (<<http://www.philpapers.org>>) or *Women's Works* (<<http://women.aap.org.au/papers>>), and see what women have written on it.
- Studies have shown that women often need to have done a lot more to be considered success-

⁶ This discussion draws heavily from this blog post: <<http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2011/03/26/how-to-avoid-a-gendered-conference>>.

ful than men do. There's a good chance that you're only thinking of super-famous women, while considering much less famous men. That is, you may well be setting the bar higher for women. So consider inviting some less famous women than those you first thought of. (This will also help redress injustice, since in many cases implicit bias will have been involved in these women being less famous.)

- Don't wait till the last minute to invite women. (Being asked at the last minute was the 4th most popular reason that women declined conference invitations, according to a poll on Feminist Philosophers: <<http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/2011/03/18/results-what-if-anything-prevents-women-from-accepting-conference-invitations/>>.)
- If there really are not that many women in your field, perhaps consult with them first about dates.
- Offer childcare at your conference. (For discussions of how to do this, go here: <<http://feminist-philosophers.wordpress.com/category/childcare-at-conferences>>.)
- Learned societies that fund conferences: consider ways of encouraging funding applicants to ensure that women are adequately represented in the list of proposed speakers.

6.4. For journal editors

- As far as possible, practise both anonymous review and anonymous editing. Anonymous editing is important because editors reject up to 65% of papers without making use of referees (Lee and Schunn 2010, Saul forthcoming).

Why?

The effect of implicit bias on journal publishing is well-documented.

- A recent study was done of the journal *Behavioural Ecology*: after switching to anonymous review, the representation of women authors increased by 30% (Budden et al.).
- In study of 'prestige bias', researchers resubmitted previously-published papers to top psychology journals that did not practise anonymous review, but with non-prestigious institutional affiliations. All but one of these papers was rejected—not for plagiarism/lack of originality, but for 'serious methodological flaws' (Lee and Schunn 2010).

6.5. For those who may be suffering from stereotype threat

- All of the following techniques have been shown to reduce stereotype threat.
- Remind yourself that stereotype threat may be a source of any anxiety you are experiencing (Johns et al. 2005).
- Spend some time reflecting on counter-stereotypical exemplars when you're in—or about to be in—a threat-provoking situation (Steele 2010: 215).

What people are doing

"I'm secretary to the Analysis Trust, and would like to report that the committee members and editors recently revised the paper reviewing processes at Analysis. The new policy is as described on the website (<http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/analys/for_authors/>): "We practise triple anonymity: the Editor receives the submissions in an anonymous form, as do referees, and authors are not informed of the identity of referees. A proportion of papers are sent on to referees, and all accepted papers will have been refereed." Given what we know about bias in the review process, I'm sure you'll agree that this is a commendable step. I hope this encourages more women to submit papers to the journal."

- Spend some time in a threat-provoking situation writing about the values that matter most to you (Miyake et. al. 2010). Women in a physics class who wrote two short (unmarked) assignments on values that matter to them earned higher marks than those who wrote on values that matter to others but not to them. The explanation of this phenomenon is that ‘when they reaffirm their core values in a threatening environment, people re-establish a perception of personal integrity and worth, which in turn can provide them with the internal resources needed for coping effectively’ (Miyake et. al. 2010: 1235.)
- Focus on your membership of social groups that are not negatively stigmatized in philosophy—people with good ‘A’ level grades or who are getting high grades for their coursework, people who have been accepted onto a good postgraduate programme, people funded by the AHRC for their PhDs, etc. (Steele 2010: 170).
- Join the BPA/SWIP mentoring scheme (see §5).

6.6. For everyone

- Make sure that your university’s policies on harassment and student/faculty relationships are clearly communicated to both staff and students.
- Take any concerns about harassment very seriously, and follow your university’s policies. Seek guidance, if needed, from university authorities.
- Create an atmosphere in which harassing behaviour is clearly unacceptable. If sexist, racist or homophobic comments are made, speak up. One of the most damaging things is for such comments to go unremarked upon. For guidance on speaking up in such situations, you may find it useful to consult this website on ‘bystander training’: <http://web.mit.edu/bystanders/assessing/>.
- Suggest any papers, books or book chapters by women that you know of, which are suitable for undergraduate teaching, for inclusion on the AAP’s Women’s Works database; see women.aap.org.au/papers.
- If you are a member of staff, investigate your institution’s policy and procedures relating to gender equality. Is there a university-level committee for equality and diversity? If so, what do they do? Has the university got an Athena SWAN ‘Bronze’ award? (This requires commitment to various principles, as evidenced by action, not all of which are aimed at the sciences.) If not, you could ask why. If they are, you could ask to see a copy of the application; this should contain a lot of information about its policies and procedures. (There are links to the applications on the Athena SWAN website, but very few of them work.) The list of University Bronze award holders is at <http://www.athenaswan.org.uk/html/athena-swan/awards/current-award-holders>.
- If you are a student, ask your student rep to table this report at a staff-student committee meeting, and ask your Head of Department to do the same at a departmental meeting.
- Be on the look-out for things that you can do to improve the climate for women, and don’t just assume that other people are thinking of this. Don’t make the mistake, for example, of assuming that someone else will be making sure your seminar series isn’t all-male.

7. Resources

Further reading: See §8 below.

BPA Women in Philosophy website: <http://www.bpa.ac.uk/resources/women>. Includes a PDF of this report, information about the BPA/SWIP mentoring scheme, PDFs of Beebee (forthcoming) and Saul (forthcoming), etc.

SWIP UK website: <http://www.swipuk.org>. Includes a useful links page with links to blogs, websites, etc.

AAP Women in Philosophy website: <http://women.aap.org.au>. This includes links to their 2008 report and the *Women’s Works* database.

Women in Philosophy Task Force website: <http://web.mit.edu/wphtf>. Includes some links and resources.

What Is It Like To Be a Woman in Philosophy?: <http://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/>.

What We’re Doing About What It’s Like: <http://whatweredoingaboutwhatitslike.wordpress.com/>.

APA Newsletters on Feminism and Philosophy, Spring and Fall 2009: These are special issues devoted to the underrepresentation of women in philosophy.

What people are doing

“Perhaps the most important thing the dept has done is to distribute climate surveys every now and again to keep tabs on things, to see how things might be improved, and to attempt to nip any potential climate issues in the bud. You can read the survey here: <http://whatweredoingaboutwhatitslike.wordpress.com/2011/07/21/what-rutgers-is-doing-about-what-its-like/>.”

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