

Women underrepresented in philosophy journals, data reveals

30 May 2017



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Women are underrepresented in philosophy journals, even when compared to their already low rate of representation among faculty, according to new research from Binghamton University, State University of New York.

The findings reveal several ways in which female philosophers are underrepresented that had previously gone unnoticed, such as the discrepancy between the percentage of women faculty and the percentage of women authors.

Nicole Hassoun, associate professor of [philosophy](#) at Binghamton University, hopes her research will allow for progress to be made regarding female representation in philosophy, by revealing what journals are doing well and what they are doing poorly. "Women are seriously underrepresented in philosophy journals, things are not improving and we need to take steps to change that," she said.

Hassoun and her co-researchers looked at the "top 25" philosophy journals, as ranked on the popular philosophy blog Leiter Reports. Some of the main findings of their research include the following:

1. In all years and for all journals, the percentage of female authors was extremely low, in the range of 14-16 percent.

2. The percentage of women authors is less than the percentage of women faculty in different ranks and at different kinds of institutions.

3. There is great variation across individual journals, and the discrepancy between women authors and [women faculty](#) appears to be different in different subfields.

4. Surprisingly, journals that do not practice anonymous review seem to have a higher percentage of women authors than journals practicing double anonymous or triple anonymous review.

5. As full-time hiring and tenuring practices presumably depend on a candidate's academic publishing, additional data is necessary to reveal potential correlation between underrepresentation of women in journals and the low number of full-time female faculty in philosophy.

"Publishing is important for hiring, tenure and promotion, so fixing the diversity issue in these journals could have a great impact on the discipline," said Hassoun. "I think it is terribly sad that publication rates in these journals are, if anything, reducing women's chances of success in philosophy. Fortunately, it may be easier to change publishing practices in a few dozen journals than to overcome some of the other hurdles to increasing diversity in the profession."

Hassoun, along with coauthors Isaac Wilhelm and Sherri Lynn Conklin, survey various methods for improvements in the discipline. One idea is to implement a version of the Bechdel Test, in which works of fiction must feature at least two women having a conversation about something other than a man in order to pass. To pass this version of the

Bechdel Test, authors would "cite publications by at least two women philosophers, where at least one of the cited publications is thoughtfully integrated into the paper's main text, and at least one is cited because it discusses the woman's original work or the work of another woman (and not because she discusses a male philosopher's work)." Another idea is to encourage women to submit articles, or even introduce quotas.

Hassoun hopes to expand this analysis to include STEM disciplines and to gather similar data on the representations of different races in philosophy journals.

This research is a continuation of Demographics in Philosophy, a project created by Hassoun and a group of professors and students that ranked university philosophy departments and academic journals by gender representation in order to draw attention to the underrepresentation of [women](#) in philosophy.

The paper, "New Data on the Representation of Women in Philosophy Journals: 2004-2015," was published in *Philosophical Studies*.

More information: Isaac Wilhelm et al, New data on the representation of women in philosophy journals: 2004–2015, *Philosophical Studies* (2017).
[DOI: 10.1007/s11098-017-0919-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-017-0919-0)

Provided by Binghamton University

APA citation: Women underrepresented in philosophy journals, data reveals (2017, May 30) retrieved 2 August 2021 from

<https://phys.org/news/2017-05-women-underrepresented-philosophy-journals-reveals.html>

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