An Empirical Look at Gender and Research Specialization

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Part 1: Do men and women specialize in different areas of philosophy?

Part 2: What are the potential sources of these gender differences?

Part 3: What are some prospective applications of this research?

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885 unique individuals placed in tenure-track, postdoctoral, VAP, or instructor positions.

30% women and 70% men overall.

1.1 Placement Data
Using keyword searches of both the first-reported AOS and the full placement entry, I found that between 86 and 87% of tenure-track placements contained at least one of my search terms.

I then looked at the percentage of women whose placement records contained a keyword versus the percentage of men whose placement records contained that same keyword.

1.1 Placement Data
Value Theory (ethics, applied, politic, law, legal, aesthetics): 44% of women/35% of men

LEMM (metaphysics, epistemology, mind, language, logic): 32% of women/40% of men

History (ancient, medieval, modern, 19th, 20th, continental): 54% of women/58% of men

Science (biology, psychology, cognitive science, physics, math): 21% of women/22% of men

Feminist Philosophy: 7% women/1% men

1.1 Placement Data
Provisional Conclusions:
More women are placed into tenure-track jobs in Value Theory and Feminist Philosophy than men.

More men are placed into tenure-track jobs in LEMM, History, and Science than women.

The difference between the distribution of specializations for women and the average distribution is highly significant (p=0.001), according to Pearson’s Chi-Squared Test (but not for men).

1.1 Placement Data
1.2 Women of Philosophy

- Data on women with PhDs in philosophy at different professional stages.

- 1399 unique individuals, all women, with 36 emerita; 424 full professors, readers, or distinguished chairs; 343 associate professors or senior lecturers; 351 assistant professors or lecturers, 71 postdoctoral fellows; and 174 other (e.g. faculty member, research fellow, etc.).
1.2 Women of Philosophy

- Overall, 60% of these women philosophers have a research interest or area of specialization with a value theory keyword (ethics, moral, political, social, law, legal, feminist, feminism, race).
- In contrast, 45% have an LEMM keyword (mind, metaphysics, epistemology, language, logic).
- 81% of emerita, 61-3% of tenure-stream faculty, and **46% of postdocs** have a value theory keyword, whereas 39% emerita, 41-4% tenure-stream faculty, and **51% of postdocs** have an LEMM keyword.
Provisional Conclusion:
More women tend to state research interests and areas of specialization in value theory fields than LEMM fields, but this difference is more exaggerated with seniority.

This could support two different hypotheses:
1. women tend to advance more when they specialize in value theory fields than in LEMM fields
2. women were once more likely than they are now to favor value theory over LEMM fields.

1.2 Women of Philosophy
The PhilPapers collection tracks the personal pages of many philosophers for self-archived and linked papers. The list of tracked pages includes the area of specialization of each philosopher. Given the venue and purpose, these are likely to be philosophers with a greater research focus than average.

2,036 unique individuals, 15% women and 85% men.

1.3 PhilPapers
21% of women and 16% of men have one of: ethics, applied, political, law, or gender.

38% of women and 42% of men have one of: mind, metaphysics, epistemology, language, or logic.

14% of women and 12% of men have at least one of: ancient, medieval, 17\textsuperscript{th}, 18\textsuperscript{th}, 19\textsuperscript{th}, or 20\textsuperscript{th}.

13% of women and 16% of men have at least one of: biology, cognitive science, or physical.

1.3 PhilPapers
Provisional Conclusion:
More women than men specialize in value theory and history fields than LEMM and science fields.

Yet, the distribution across these fields is distinct from that of the other databases, emphasizing LEMM fields more, and value theory, history, and science fields less. This helps to strengthen the conclusion that there is a gender difference (especially) in representation for value theory versus LEMM fields.

1.3 PhilPapers
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The Independent’s “Ten great female philosophers,” 30% Value Theory: Hypatia (LEMM), Lady Conway (LEMM), Haack (S), Arendt (V), Anscombe (V), Rand (V), Fuller (F), Wollstonecraft (F), de Beauvoir (F), Warnock (F).

From The Norton Introduction to Philosophy, 13% women, 71% Value Theory: Zagzebski (LEMM), Siegel (LEMM), Langton (LEMM), Churchland (S), Wolf (V), Foot (V), Street (V), Jarvis Thompson (V), Hursthouse (V), Harman (V), Anscombe (V), Herman (V), Nussbaum (V), O’Neill (V).

2.1 Role Models

“We hypothesize that, across the academic spectrum, women are underrepresented in fields whose practitioners believe that raw, innate talent is the main requirement for success.”

2.2 Innateness Beliefs
The Implicit Association Test (IAT) has been used to look at implicit associations between, e.g., gender and academic disciplines. One finding is that male names are more easily associated with sciences, whereas female names are more associated with humanities.

Yuliya Chernykhovskaya is testing whether the divide should be re-drawn between those disciplines associated with mathematical skill and those not associated with mathematical skill. To do this, she is running one IAT pairing gender with math-heavy and non-math-heavy sciences and another IAT pairing gender with logic-heavy and non-logic heavy philosophy.

2.3 Stereotype Threat
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What steps can one take to encourage diverse interests while maintaining high standards in a philosophy program?

- Curriculum: increase the diversity of course offerings and course/program requirements to allow for those who are inspired by different philosophical entry points (i.e. Intro to Ethics/Value Theory, Intro to Logic/LEMM, or Great Works/Historical).

- Speaker Series: Supplement faculty specialization with guest speakers of complementary research interests.

3.0 Program Application
Among professional philosophers, women are more likely than men to specialize in value theory, whereas men are more likely than women to specialize in LEMM fields, especially for more senior members of the profession.

This difference may have its source in women role models in value theory, innateness beliefs for LEMM fields, or stereotype threat for fields thought to be more logic-heavy.

This difference may call for more diverse course offerings and course requirements.

Summary