

Preliminary Report of the Survey on Publishing in Philosophy

APA Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession
December 2009

1. Background of the survey: Why do it?

- Apparent underrepresentation of women in certain “analytic” journals (as documented in Haslanger 2007). Need for more data to determine whether this appearance is supported by the facts, and if so, what explains it.
- Repeated concerns about whether “peer reviewed” journals in the profession are anonymously reviewed.
- Ongoing concerns about time to acceptance/rejection and time to publication.
 - NB: Schemas kick in when people are rushed. How does this affect the refereeing process? Does it matter for desk rejections, which may be quick and based on non-anonymized papers? Does it also affect referees? How?
- Repeated concerns about the tone and quality of comments on submissions.
- Concerns about whether referees being asked to review feminist work are qualified to do so.

2. Point of the survey

- This is a pilot study. Is an attempt to get preliminary ideas about what questions should be asked and what changes might be considered.
- It is not an attempt to provide a thorough basis for policy changes – more work needs to be done on what the problems are and how they might be solved.

3. Basic demographics¹ (This is a first pass on data sorted by gender. More analysis needs to be done, especially by race, etc.)

- 2040 responded to the survey. 1609 made it past the first “gateway” question which excluded graduate students and independent scholars who have never held a job in professional philosophy. Approx. 1450 completed the survey. This is really an *astounding* number and in itself suggests that there are many in the profession who want to help rethink how the publication process works (or doesn't). It is also notable that respondents were very forthcoming in the open-ended questions, some of which received nearly 550 responses.
- Of those who completed it, roughly 34% say they are identified professionally as women (513/1454), 64% men, 2% other or refused to answer. This is a higher percentage of women than the numbers of women faculty/researchers in the profession. It is a strength of the survey that women are numerically well-represented in the data.
- On professional race/ethnic identity (the question is phrased in terms of how others in professional contexts interpret your race/ethnic identity), respondents had the option of choosing one or more boxes, including “other,” or skipping the question. 1399 answered as follows (not rounded):
 - 91% (1272) “White/Caucasian”
 - 3.6% (51) “Other”
 - 3.4% (47) “Asian, Asian-American Pacific Islander”
 - 2.5% (35) “Hispanic, Latino/a”
 - 1.3% (18) “Black, African-American, Afro-Caribbean”

¹ Numbers are rounded to nearest .5 unless otherwise noted.

- .1% (2) “North American Indian, Native American/Canadian, Native Alaskan, Inuit, Aboriginal, Other Native”
- Specifications under “other,” include: Mixed race, Jewish, Arab American, Gypsy/Roma, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Italian, Eastern European, Greek, Polish, Slavic, Egyptian, New Zealander, Muslim, I don’t know, It depends on context, Race is a construct.
- Breaking down race/ethnicity by gender²:
 - 91.4% (458) of women and 90.7% (812) of men answered “White/Caucasian.”
 - 3.6% of women and 3.6% of men “Other”
 - 3.6% (18) of women and 3.2% (29) of men “Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander”
 - 1.8% (9) of women and 2.9% (26) of men “Hispanic, Latino/a”
 - 1.4% (7) of women and 1.2% (11) of men “Black, African-American, Afro-Caribbean”
 - 0% of women and .2% of men “North American Indian, Native American/Canadian, Native Alaskan, Inuit, Aboriginal, Other Native”
- Primarily Anglophone respondents (which is what we expected):
 - Mainly from US (70% of women, 62% of men)
 - More women from Canada, more men from Europe and UK. Roughly equal for Australia+NZ.
 - Other regions include: Japan, Singapore, Turkey, Mexico, South Africa, Kenya, Israel, Hong Kong, Trinidad, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, China.
- Respondents were disproportionately untenured faculty at research universities.
 - Roughly 1/3 of men and of women were untenured, tenure-track faculty.
 - Slightly higher percentage of men were full professors, of women associate professors.
 - Emeriti and “other” were roughly equivalent percentages of men and women.
 - Notable: higher percentage of men were non tenure-track, e.g., lecturers (13.5% v. 8%).
 - 59% women and 67% of men from Research U’s. Women make up the difference in liberal arts colleges and “other” universities.
- Distribution by areas (top and bottom, in order)

² Note that I have chosen not to break down race/ethnicity by the category of “other” gender. Due to the small numbers, I was concerned this might compromise the anonymity of the respondents.

Top 5 areas for women:

1. Feminist philosophy
2. Applied Ethics
3. Normative Ethics
4. Social Philosophy/Social Theory
5. Political Philosophy

Bottom 5 areas for women:

1. Chinese Philosophy
2. Indian Philosophy
3. Logic
4. Decision Theory/Rational Choice/Game Theory
5. Philosophy of Mathematics

Top 5 areas for men:

1. Metaphysics
2. Epistemology
3. Philosophy of Mind
4. Normative Ethics
5. Metaethics

Bottom 5 areas for men:

1. Indian Philosophy
2. Chinese Philosophy
3. Philosophy of Education
4. Philosophy of Race/Race Theory
5. Feminist Philosophy

- Areas (Difference)
 - Greatest difference between percentage of women and percentage of men in:
 - Feminist philosophy (38 point difference)
 - Metaphysics (15.5 point difference)
 - Epistemology (12 point difference)
 - Rough Equivalent percentage of women as percentage of men in:
 - Indian Philosophy
 - Philosophy of Art/Aesthetics
 - Normative Ethics
 - Political Philosophy
 - Higher percentage of women than percentage of men in:
 - Feminist Philosophy (38 points)
 - Social Philosophy/Social Theory (11 points)
 - Applied Ethics (9 points)
 - 20th c. Continental (6.5 points)
 - Philosophy of Race/Race Theory (4 points)
 - Existentialism and Phenomenology (2 points)
 - Philosophy of Education (1.5 points)
 - Areas in which the actual number of women exceeded the actual number of men:
 - Feminist Philosophy
 - Philosophy of Race/Race Theory
 - Social Philosophy/Social Theory
- Gender neutral names:
 - 93.3% of women use gender-specific names
 - 92.3% of men use gender-specific names

4. Notable “results”?

Re refereeing:

- To your knowledge, have you ever received a “desk rejection” (1107 replies):
 - Yes: 58%; No: 27%; Possibly, but not sure: 14%
 - Gist of (549) comments: most think this is to be expected because journals must have some kind of screening process. Many, however, find the process mysterious and have no idea why their paper is rejected. This prompts all kinds of speculation.

- To your knowledge, have you had a paper rejected by referees who knew you to be the author? (1100 replies):
 - Yes: 16%; No: 61.5%; Possibly, not sure: 23%
 - Gist of (roughly 200) comments:
 - It is very hard to anonymize papers, especially in a small sub-field where one's work is known or when papers (or titles) are available online.
 - Journals anonymize in such a sloppy way it is easy to determine the author/referee (one can find authors' names in the "properties" section on Word).
 - It is easier for women to determine whether the referee suspects who the author is because the report refers to the author as "she".
 - Sometimes reports suggest that the author is someone other than the actual author. This is confusing and upsetting to the actual author.
- On having a paper refereed by "not minimally competent referees" (1094 replies):
 - Yes: 39.5%; No: 60.5%
 - Gist of (332) comments:
 - Referee is not familiar with current literature.
 - Referee might be a competent philosopher, but was not well chosen for the paper in question due to lack of expertise in the particular sub-field, e.g., a generalist is asked to referee specialist material. Sometimes there is a basic lack of familiarity with notation, terminology, etc.
 - The paper is not read carefully, the comments are sloppy and confused or "make no sense."

On papers that have never been accepted (1046 replies):

- | | | |
|---|------------|--------------|
| • Eventually published in edited collection | Men: 2.5% | Women: 3% |
| • Eventually published on departmental/college website: | Men: 1% | Women: 1% |
| • Eventually published on personal website: | Men: 3% | Women: 1% |
| • Working on revisions: | Men: 31.5% | Women: 29% |
| • Given up on project: | Men: 23% | Women: 17% |
| • Never had a paper not accepted somewhere: | Men: 26% | Women: 31.5% |
| • Other: | Men: 14% | Women: 17% |

How was your most influential paper published (1072 replies)?

- | | | |
|---|------------|--------------|
| • Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal: | Men: 84.5% | Women: 72.5% |
| • Submitted to anthology: | Men: 2.5% | Women: 3.5% |
| • Invited to a peer-reviewed journal: | Men: 4% | Women: 8.5% |
| • Invited to anthology: | Men: 5.5% | Women: 8% |
| • Other: | Men: 3% | Women: 8% |

Where do people recommend a paper in analytic feminism be published? (982 replies, figures are not rounded)

Women:

1. Hypatia (36.1%)
2. Noûs (12.8%)
3. Canadian Journal of Philosophy (11.9%) -tied
- 3: Journal of Philosophy (11.9%) - tied
5. Australasian Journal of Philosophy (11.4%)

Men:

1. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research (19.6%)
2. Hypatia (19.5%)
3. Philosophical Studies (19.3%)
4. Journal of Philosophy (18.3%)

5. Philosophical Review (16.6%)

Mentoring: 236 Comments, those below are direct quotes. Virtually all express frustration at lack of mentoring. Samples:

- The tenure track has been very isolated, and a self-education in the existence of journal rankings, journal prestige, the worth of peer-reviewed papers over non-, etc. God bless the internet, since without it I would still be in the dark as to the importance of publication.
- My colleagues appear to be too busy to bother helping younger faculty members. Indeed, some have been positively hostile to my research ambitions.
- Finding a mentor has been the most difficult challenge of my academic career. Because my work is inter-disciplinary and ground-breaking (i.e. fewer than twenty professional philosophers in North America publish on this topic), I have had great difficulty placing my articles in philosophy journals. Several mentors outside of my area have made suggestions, all of which I followed, but very few were useful in the end. My most successful strategy has been to submit to special conferences which then publish selected papers after undergoing the peer review process.
- Never mentored – this led to stupid strategies.
- People have mentors on the tenure-track?
- This is interesting. I don't think I've ever had any one mentor. Although I have considered (and still do) publishing under my initials to hide my gender, no one has ever advised that this might be a good strategy. I often wonder if my institutional affiliation might hurt my chances more than my gender/ethnicity. But I don't have enough data to even gather anecdotal evidence about my own case.
- I am angry at the lack of mentoring I have received. In my experience, the men who I went to graduate school with, had lots (including co-authoring papers, co editing volumes, late night discussions about philosophy that included strategies on publishing as well as research and teaching). My women friends in other disciplines often still work on research with their major professors, some of them until they are well into an associate rank.

However some feel differently:

- My department is one in which people read each other's papers and provide comments so the term "mentor" doesn't quite capture the relationships, since I did the same for the people who read my papers as well. Still, when I was untenured my department was largely male and any input I got was from male faculty...
- Only an ignoramus in our profession would need a mentor to get them to realize the importance of publishing original work in the best peer-reviewed journals at which they can find acceptance!
- I haven't felt the need for a mentor.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS (431 total comments): a small sample is provided below, all are direct quotes grouped for relevance; elisions added to protect anonymity or to condense point).

- *Re referee's comments*:
 - I have received some incredibly nasty comments on some of my submissions. There are journals that I would be unlikely to submit to again for that reason.
 - I find that when I do get a rejection, there is often an undertone (or even an overtone) that is very hostile -- basically, you are doing something that is degenerate, and how dare you suggest that this work take up valuable page space in a journal. I know I am not alone here, as I compare notes with a lot of individuals who are at the same stage of career. Then the work gets accepted eventually at a first-tier journal. I don't quite understand

this, unless it's a case of philosophers thinking they have a direct line to truth, and that anything that opposed what they take to be truth is deeply vicious.

- *Re length of time to publication* (many on this):
 - It sucks. Editors have little professional/management experience. Papers get lost or misplaced. Timetables are not adhered to, etc. It takes WAY TOO LONG to go through the process. All the troubles involved would not be nearly so exasperating if it didn't take, for example, 12-15 months to learn that your paper is rejected. If we can't get shorter decision times, then we at least need simultaneous submission. Editors often do unethical things: One example: send a paper for review, then later reject it for being too long, referring to word-count limitations that were not in effect at the time the paper was submitted. I'm sure you'll get an earful in this survey. It is too difficult to get published in philosophy. And people are crazily narrow in their beliefs about what is a "good" journal. So, if you don't get into one of the few they endorse, your work is considered weak, without even reading it. I don't know how to fix things. There are just too many problems.
- *Re lack of information*:
 - Revise and resubmits can sometime be vague about what extent revision would in fact lead to publication.
 - I do wish that I had somehow been given more information and insight about how refereeing in philosophy works when I was younger. First, it might have helped when I received refusals that I found devastating (mean-spirited and rather dumb, frankly). Second, I think that I was just thrown into refereeing myself at some point, and didn't really know how it was supposed to work. I've wrestled my way to at least some sort of m.o., but I don't know that I truly follow the "best practices" -- of course, I'm not sure that anybody knows what the best practices are (other than the obvious things, like the importance of double-blind refereeing for most journal submissions)...
 - Who gets invited to put things in collections like *Phil Perspectives*? The process seems to be opaque and unjust. I've had some terrible experiences (waiting more than 2 years; having a paper rejected and then the person I criticize respond to what I say anyway in a new book). Also, my lack of mentorship support significantly slowed down the process of learning the ropes. The entire process has been discouraging.
 - Mainly I would say that trying to publish even things that will all eventually get published can be so disheartening. If I hadn't been lucky enough to have a couple of mentors who made it clear to me that this wasn't because I wasn't good enough, then I might have falsely concluded that I couldn't publish. Mentoring is key.
- *Re lack of options*:
 - I think if one works in an on-going discussion in contemporary philosophy, in particular in analytic philosophy, there are great options for publishing. I've also positively found the peer review process very helpful for revising my papers even though like many I've had bizarre, unprofessional, and often simply no review of papers I've submitted to peer-review papers. But I think if one works slightly or significantly outside traditional topics, it is difficult to find journals that "fit" one's work. Part of this I imagine is because they don't have reviewers to evaluate this kind of work.
- *Re quality of evaluation, bias (or not)*:
 - I see no strong connection between the quality of my submissions and their acceptance rate. I find publishing in philosophy to be, like everything in the profession, a process that involves a very high degree of chance or, if not chance, causal factors unrelated to

quality. My best work--by which I mean most original and carefully structured, presented and argued--remains unpublished or is published only after many submissions, while work I find adequate but clearly not my best is published and often quickly. This may be a problem in my area of research, where my impression is that publication is often based on the cache of the topic or of the position taken in the paper. Overall, despite a strong publishing record I have absolutely no faith in the system.

- I'm very frustrated by the emphasis on "hot" topics in publishing. I've repeatedly had the experience that papers that I've presented at specialty conferences with enthusiastic positive feedback from the top people working in my subfield (...) have been rejected out-of-hand at top journals on the basis of referee reports from referees whose comments indicate that either (a) they have little knowledge of the subfield or (b) they have their own commitments within that subfield that are contrary to the ones on evidence in my work. It seems to me that in the case of (b), however, where those commitments speak not to a failure in my reasoning or argumentation but rather to a substantive disagreement between the referee and me, such disagreements should not be grounds for rejection of the paper. Indeed, they would seem to point to the fact that the paper is getting at something interesting that might be of interest to others in the field. In other words, the gatekeeping function of referees should be limited to screening out from publication articles of insufficient rigor, professionalism, or interest, and not be extended to screening out positions with which the referee disagrees.
- It is far easier to publish work that has no political implications (whether feminist or in terms of questions of race) than to publish work with political import. When I have published on..., I have gotten back comments that address my work directly (even if those comments sometimes showed that the reader was not an expert in the field). When submitting work in race theory and/or feminism that is critical or engages with contemporary cultural and political situations, comments often reflect readers' preconceived opinions. This work is easier to publish in invited anthologies (where the editor is already convinced of the importance of the work), but difficult to publish through peer-review in journals. It is also more difficult to know where to submit such work (whether "mainstream" journals will consider it at all).
- I have had greater success publishing papers that are not available online with my identity attached to them. I also suspect that prestige effects have a far greater impact on these things than do gender or race. Philosophers are sometimes racists and sexists, but more often than that they are prestige-ists. The gender and race injustices you are fishing for in this survey are certainly real, but similar prestige-based injustices are equally real and much more widespread.
- I find the process extremely challenging and often infuriating, but I stick with it. I find that my papers are no easier to publish now (as a full professor) than they were as a graduate student. At the same time, I recognize that it imposes greater discipline upon me -- the invited papers I publish are usually not as good as the ones that I go through a series of revise-and-resubmits with. I sometimes lament the absence of high-volume journals in philosophy. At the same time, I do a lot of refereeing, and I reject almost everything I get sent. So basically what I want is for it to be easier for me to publish, but I also don't want more junk in the journals. Which is of course what everyone wants.... because everyone thinks their own stuff is great. One other thing: I find that very few philosophers actually read much of what gets published.... I've published in top journals in philosophy (Mind, P&PA, P&PR, etc.) and I have no evidence that more than five people have read any of it. Finally, I should say that in 20 years, I've always found the process to be squeaky clean. I've never encountered anything resembling corruption, bias,

personal vendetta, etc. -- just a lot of philosophical cantankerousness. But if you can't handle cantankerousness, you should be in another line of work.

- *Disincentives*
 - I'm very very frustrated by the massive imbalance between the extensive amount of time, effort, and labor that I (as a TT asst professor at a major teaching university) put in to constructing really good referee reports when called to do so, and the silly, short, thoughtless, and disengaged referee reports that I have gotten in the past. It makes we want to refuse to referee.
 - I am deeply concerned about the fact publishing companies are exploiting philosophers by charging them for a service that is carried out largely by members of the profession, and largely without remuneration.
- *Suggestions?*
 - I wish that I could give a journal a deadline of about two months for a decision so that I could send my paper elsewhere without further delay.
 - I've had the most success by submitting unsolicited articles to specific special issues and calls for papers. I'm always so appreciative of journals that are organized enough to set out cfp's for specific issues-- it's a wonderful way to motivate and facilitate publishing by junior academics.
 - I suppose you know this, but another voice can't hurt. There is great disparity between journals in the speed with which they render decisions, and the usefulness of comments they do, or sometimes do not, provide. Ideally, journals will return papers within a reasonable time (4-6 months seems fair to me) and with some explanation for the decision made, where this is not acceptance. Failing this, journals should strive for transparency about their editorial process, e.g., whether they give 'desk rejections' and in general why, how long they typically give referees, and the rates of acceptance, r&r, etc.
 - As an assistant professor, I have less information than I'd like about how best to go about submitting work to journals (which journals and why, how to frame work to make it more attractive to prestigious journals, how broadly or narrowly to focus work for publication, etc.). A compiled spreadsheet of each journal, and an honest statement about the kind of work published there (in terms of specialization and style), plus rejection/R&R rates and time-to-decision information, would make this a much more informed process.
 - Allowing the referees to be anonymous may be unavoidable, but the system encourages lots of irresponsible conduct by referees -- not only unreasonable delays, but careless, and sometimes bad tempered work, which the referee knows will have no consequences.... Maybe refereeing could be given more significance in our careers by have some aggregate APA statistics on how much each individual philosopher is doing? That might discourage both too much and too little refereeing.
 - I strongly favor instituting a national or international system for expediting the peer-review process in philosophy. One example of such a system (many could work): after two months without a response from a reviewer who has agreed to review a paper, the journal should send the paper to another reviewer and note the delinquent reviewer's identity in a database. Delinquent reviewers should be penalized with delays in reviewing their own papers. This sounds harsh, but nothing less will solve this collective action problem. BTW, I'm tenured at a major research university.
 - The idea was floated a few months ago that article reviewer names should appear with published articles (perhaps in the footnotes at the bottom of the first page). This, I think,

may be a good idea. It would have the effect of rewarding good reviewing and perhaps also of shaming those who let pass shoddy work.

- An updated edition of the "APA's Guidebook for Publishing Philosophy" would be useful, especially to younger philosophers, since the landscape is constantly shifting
- One thing I find extremely frustrating is the amount of time some journals take just to acknowledge receipt of materials.
- There are journals, such as *Perspectives in Science*, that don't blind papers. I have had some of the least charitable referee reports from such journals. Blinding does seem to help. As a referee, I think it is important to get feedback about one's reports. *Science and Education* does this-- all reports are available to all referees, so that you can see how others are responding to a piece of work. Such sharing might also mitigate the problem of irresponsible referees-- if you know your reports will get shared, perhaps you will be more responsible in your report.
- It's damned difficult! And has gotten more so. Not too long ago, a "revise and resubmit" would be sent back to the original referees, after revisions -- one could reasonably expect that it would eventually be published. These days, the more competitive journals send revised versions of the papers to new referees, whose comments bear no relation to the original suggested revisions...

5. Questions suggested by the information

- Should further research that be done, and who is going to do it? (Not me!)
 - What questions are the most pressing?
 - Should we explore refereeing practices in neighboring disciplines?
 - NB: This survey focused primarily on publishing articles in peer-reviewed journals. More could be done to examine the process for publishing books and a comparison between book v. article sub-fields.
- Should the APA be involved in developing a set of “best practices” or even minimal standards for what count as “peer-reviewed” publications?
 - How? Who?
- Is anonymous refereeing possible in this day and age? Is it desirable? How might it be achieved?
 - What can be done to promote anonymous refereeing?
- Should referees be better “trained” for their job? Should guidelines be distributed? Should editors refuse to forward (or take into account) hostile or vindictive comments?
- How can the profession provide incentives for responsible refereeing?
- How can mentoring be improved? Should the APA (or someone else) update the Guidebook for Publishing?
- How can the profession promote creative work on a broad variety of topics? (Other professional organizations publish important journals in the field.) How can the profession support a structure that encourages the best philosophy is published?
- Should publication in peer-reviewed journals be expected throughout one’s career? If this doesn’t occur in philosophy, is that a problem? Should there be greater incentives for senior people to publish in journals? Of what kind?

6. Minimal recommendations:

- Journals should make clear their policies on desk rejections and refereeing and include these policies online and in the letters sent with rejections.

- If the paper is not considered suitable for the journal based on topic, some explanation should be given.
- Editorial decisions concerning which papers are sent to referees should be made on the basis of anonymized papers.