APA Grant Proposal: Studying the Gender Gap in Philosophy

Purpose of Project

It is well known that philosophy lags behind all the other humanities, most of the social sciences, and many of the sciences in its gender diversity. Current estimates indicate that women account for around 20% ($\pm$ 3%) of philosophers, from graduate students to full professors. There is much less agreement about why the numbers are so low, although untested hypotheses abound.

But while philosophers are very good at generating hypotheses, they have no particular expertise in collecting and analyzing empirical data to test them, especially regarding complex social phenomena such as a gender gap. The Society for Philosophy and Psychology (SPP) is in a unique position to investigate the reason(s) for the gap because it is a cross-disciplinary professional organization whose membership includes psychologists who have the appropriate training for investigating this issue. Independently, the SPP has had an ongoing interest in gender diversity due to the severity of the gap in philosophy of mind and related areas in particular, and has an active diversity committee composed of philosophers and psychologists. The APA's Committee on the Status of Women has been very active within the APA regarding information on or related to women philosophers (including graduate students). The focus of this project would be to understand the reasons for the gender gap itself.

Our proposal is to use this grant as seed money to develop an empirical study of the gap. The actual study would require further grant money, which we would seek from the NEH, the AAUW, and other sources we are able to identify. The project also has the strong support of the officers and executive committee members of the SPP, who will endeavor to find ways for the SPP to contribute financially within the constraints of its very limited resources. Developing the study would involve:
- STAGE 1: Discussing the problem among philosophers and psychologists in order to get a comprehensive list of the possible factors to be studied.
- STAGE 2: Discussing these possible factors with psychologists who will design the study.

Most of Stage 1 would be via the Internet to draw on as many people as possible. Stage 2 would take place during the SPP annual meeting in the summer of 2011 in Montreal.

Benefits of the Project & Outreach

Understanding the reasons for the gender gap in philosophy is a crucial first step on the road to increasing gender equity. Like all disciplines, philosophy would benefit from doing what is possible to ensure that the best philosophical minds enter the field, regardless of gender.

SPP already has an attractive and user-friendly website (http://www.socphilpsych.org) where information from the project will be accessible to a wide audience. This information can help other organizations, including the APA's Committee on the Status of Women, develop further studies and programs on the gender gap in philosophy or in other fields. It is also likely to generate proposals for further research that would be eligible for funding from the NSF and other standard sources of support for scientific research.

Project Steering Committee:

Co-chairs: Valerie Tiberius, University of Minnesota (Philosophy) and Carrie Figdor, University of Iowa (Philosophy)

Current SPP Officers and Executive Committee members (2010-2011)*

Colin Allen, Indiana University (History and Philosophy of Science)

Michael Anderson, Franklin and Marshall College (Psychology)

Sharon Armstrong, LaSalle University (Psychology)

Tony Chemero, Franklin and Marshall College (Psychology)

Joshua Greene, Harvard University (Psychology)
Brian Keeley, Pitzer College (Philosophy)
Tania Lombrozo, University of California, Berkeley (Psychology)*
Bertram Malle, Brown University (Psychology)
Ron Mallon, University of Utah (Philosophy)
Sandeep Prasada, Hunter College (Psychology)
Rebecca Saxe, MIT (Brain & Cognitive Sciences)
Brian Scholl, Yale University (Psychology)
Tom Polger, University of Cincinnati (Philosophy)
Adina Roskies, Dartmouth College (Philosophy)
John Trueswell, University of Pennsylvania (Psychology)
Jen Cole Wright, College of Charleston (Psychology)
Liane Young, MIT (Brain & Cognitive Sciences)

*Current SPP President Louise Antony (University of Massachusetts, Philosophy) is co-chair of the steering committee of a distinct proposal for APA funds and so is not listed on this steering committee. Tania Lombrozo is a former executive committee member.

Timeline
- Stage 1 generation and discussion of hypotheses to explain gender gap (Fall 2010 – Spring 2011)
- Hire research assistant to create a summary document for distribution to participants in Stage 2 discussion and investigate grant opportunities (Spring 2011) and help prepare grant proposals (Summer 2011).
- Recruit interested and qualified psychologists to participate in Stage 2 discussion (Spring 2011)
- Organize planning meeting at SPP (Spring 2011)
- Conduct planning meeting (tentative date: July 6, 2011).

Fiscal Agent:
The Society for Philosophy and Psychology (an IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charity)
    Secretary-Treasurer Tom Polger (UCincinnati: thomas.polger@uc.edu)