

## **Women in the Profession: A more formal report to the CSW, by Kathryn Norlock**

The number of women professionally employed in philosophy is currently indeterminate, and indeed, will vary depending on how we define the set. Although the boundaries of this set are necessarily fuzzy, data exists which can allow us to estimate what percentage of employed philosophers are women, until a successful study can be conducted by our own national organization. In what follows, I outline and interpret data which suggests that although women currently make up nearly 27% of the available labor pool in philosophy, recent data suggests that women are closer to 21% of professionally employed philosophers. This compares well with data for 1992, in which between 13% and 18% of professional philosophers were women. Although we are not yet present in proportion to our portion of Ph.D. recipients, this is a significant gain which appears to be accelerating.

### ***Data Collection efforts within the APA***

I should note immediately that the APA has attempted to gather gender-related data through survey methods, but the results did not constitute a sufficiently reliable sample. According to the 2002-2003 Annual Report of the Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession, “As of 9/1/2001, we had contact information for 1,738 philosophy departments, and all of those departments were sent a survey. Of those, 340 useable surveys were returned. This represents only a 20% return rate for departments.”<sup>1</sup> Better methods for smaller and more effective studies can be suggested, but that is perhaps a matter for another report.

### ***Comparative data from federal agencies, 1992 and 2003***

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) estimates that, nationally, 18,340 workers in the U.S. (incl. citizens and non-citizen resident workers) are identified as teaching philosophy, religious studies, or philosophy and religious studies.<sup>2</sup> This is just a small fraction of all postsecondary teachers. In 2004, the BLS estimated that nationally 1,176,000 workers were employed as postsecondary teachers, of which 46% were estimated to be women.<sup>3</sup> In the same year, in the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that 41% of all instructors were female.<sup>4</sup> It is probably not news to women in philosophy that the approximate gender equity of employees in postsecondary instruction, generally, and in the Humanities in particular, is not reflected in our own profession.

#### ***1992***

This is especially clear in analyses of data on full-time workers in four-year institutions. In a 1997 study, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found, “about one-half of full-time instructional faculty and staff in 4-year institutions in English and literature (47 percent) and foreign languages (50 percent) were female in the fall of 1992, compared with less than one-half of instructional faculty and staff in history (24 percent)

and philosophy and religion (13 percent)."<sup>5</sup> The associated table counts U.S. citizens and resident alien workers employed in four-year institutions as follows:

Sample size of full-time Philosophy and/or Religion instructional faculty and staff in 4-year institutions in 1992: 7,646

Male: 87.3% (6675 men)

Female: 12.7% (971 women)<sup>6</sup>

In a separate study using the same data set, the NCES (2000) estimated that the total number of "History and Philosophy" full-time faculty in 1992 was 19,000, of which 79% were men (i.e. , 15,010 men in history and philosophy), and 21% were women (3,990); "...in fact, men were at least twice as likely as women to teach history and philosophy."<sup>7</sup> The numbers of women in philosophy from the two studies are then nearly comparable; subtracting the number of women in history (in the 1997 study) from the number of women in 'history and philosophy' (in 2000 study) yields a count of 1,293 women, and subtracting the number of men in history from the number of men in 'history and philosophy' yields a count of 6,325 men. Added together, this is a possible sample of 7,617 philosophers, of which 17% (1,293) are women. Although the latter is an extrapolation from comparison of two studies, it suggests that the percentage of women working full-time in philosophy in 1992 was between 13% and 17%.

A separate study from the same data set counted both full-time and part-time employees, and estimated the percentage of women in philosophy to be closer to 18%.<sup>8</sup>

### 2003

No comparably detailed studies of humanities instructors by discipline have been done by any organizational body since these publications in 1997, 2000, and 1994, all of which were based on 1992-1993 data. However, a query to the project officer for the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) resulted in the provision of a breakdown of gender ratios within philosophy and religious studies, arrived at from a sample of the full 18,340; this is not going to yield an exact number of women identified on payrolls as "in philosophy," but is the best data set available, and based on Fall 2003 payrolls, which is a most welcome improvement in timely data.

In the 2003 sample, the NSOPF provided statistics which allowed me to estimate the percentage of women in philosophy (taken alone, that is, vs. philosophy and religious studies), which was about 21%.<sup>9</sup> This includes some standard deviation, but at least it comes closer to our proportion in the labor pool, estimated to be 26.6%.<sup>10</sup> (A numeric total, which is naturally doomed to inexactitude, can be derived by calculating 21% of the total employees in philosophy and religious studies (18,340) to be 3,851, but of course, some of that number are religious studies instructors.) Twenty-one percent is comparatively good news in contrast to the 1992 percentages. If the Dept. of Education's best estimates are that women went from 13-17% in 1992, to 21% in 2003, then women have made significant gains, though not enough to reflect a 27% portion of the labor pool.

The top-50 programs still only average a proportion of women at 19%, as measured by Julie Van Camp, and those programs range from about 40% at U. of Penn (as of 7/7/06) to 8% at Rice University (as of 7/19/06).<sup>11</sup>

Many questions arise from this data, of course: (1) why more women aren't Ph.D. recipients, that is, why until 2006 we have been so mired in the less-than-one-third bracket? (2) why the spread of women's employment in the elite programs is so exaggerated? and (3) why women are not closer to 27% of employed philosophers when for many years now women have been about 27% of the Ph.D. recipients?<sup>12</sup> However, at this rate, we should be catching up in the next ten to twenty years, and the rate of gain is predicted to be steeper at the far end of the curve.

In none of the studies examined do women make up the optimistically projected 25-to-30 percent that has surfaced in recent professional conferences and publications. Of course, the federal data cited does not easily take into account the numbers of women who are philosophers but affiliated with other departments; however, nor do they take into account the number of alternately employed men with degrees in philosophy, which as it turns out is likewise a significant number. Nor does it clearly take into account the disproportionate numbers of women in the part-time work force; women make up about 41% of all full-time humanities instruction, but about 56% of part-time humanities instruction. However, NSOPF reports from 1994, 1997, and 2000 all reiterate that the gender proportions between the full- and part-time labor forces within each discipline reflect each other fairly closely; in other words, females are a minority of both part-time philosophers and full-time philosophers, and so the part-time ranks are not so swelled with women that we can imagine the rest of our labor force is employed within it. I believe we should call attention to our best available data showing women's presence in philosophy to be about 21% of professional philosophers, and not estimate an inflation that may not be warranted and which may be misleading.

#### *Future directions for research*

The data cited in this report was pulled together by helpful individuals from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, especially in the offices of Occupational Employment Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Department of Education, especially the National Center for Education Statistics; almost all of the federal employees I contacted noted that data is neither easily nor often collected solely on philosophers, because we are such a small percentage of the total number of postsecondary educators. That this report required informal correspondence with many creative individuals, who lack access to much data on philosophy departments, suggests a need for our own national organization to do more concerted work on data collection about our profession. Department of Education sources were most helpful but are not ideal sources; with contact information for 1,738 philosophy departments, the APA is in the best position to obtain more accurate data. Moreover, given the disturbing correlation between (1) gender disproportion in philosophy, compared to other humanities faculty, and (2) the sense among men *and* women in philosophy that female faculty members may be treated unfairly, compared to other humanities faculty, it seems ethically incumbent on us as a profession to gather data which will allow us to improve the status of women for the better.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Submitted by Peter French, Chair; found online at

<http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/governance/committees/status/report2003.html>; accessed 7/21/06.

<sup>2</sup> The following table was created online at [www.bls.gov/oes](http://www.bls.gov/oes). (“These estimates are calculated with data collected from employers in all industry sectors in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in every State and the District of Columbia.”)

## Occupational Employment Statistics

Area name	Employment <sup>(1)</sup>	Employment percent relative standard error <sup>(3)</sup>	Annual mean wage <sup>(2)</sup>	Annual median wage <sup>(2)</sup>
National	18340	3.8	57960	53210

Footnotes:

(1) Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.

(2) Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the hourly mean wage by 2,080 hours; where an hourly mean wage is not published, the annual wage has been directly calculated from the reported survey data.

(3) The relative standard error (RSE) is a measure of the reliability of a survey statistic. The smaller the relative standard error, the more precise the estimate.

SOC code: Standard Occupational Classification code -- see

<http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm>

Data extracted on July 11, 2006

**Occupation: Philosophy and Religion Teachers, Postsecondary (SOC code 251126)**  
**Period: May 2005**

<sup>3</sup> Source: Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, 2004 Annual averages, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, February 2004, Report 973.

<sup>4</sup> Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:04), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nsopf/>

<sup>5</sup> Source: Characteristics and Attitudes of Instructional Faculty and Staff in the Humanities, National Center For Education Statistics E.D. Tabs, July 1997, from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF-93), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs97/97973.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Table 4. Compare with other fields in the humanities:

English and literature: Sample size: 23,063 instructors; 53.3 percent male, 46.7 percent female.

Foreign languages: Sample size: 12,000 instructors; 50.0 percent male, 50.0 percent female.

History: Sample size: 11,383 instructors; 76.3 percent male, 23.7 percent female.

See also Table 29 in the same study, “Percentage of full-time instructional faculty and staff in 4-year institutions, by opinion about whether female faculty members are treated fairly, sex, and program area, 1992;” the proportions of :

Male respondents:					
Program area	Sample size of faculty	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
Humanities	33,658	4.5	16.8	36.8	41.9
English and literature	12,315	6.3	15.3	36.6	41.8

Foreign languages	5,991	2.2	11.2	37.7	48.9
History	8,677	3.5	14.7	38.2	43.6
Philosophy and religion	6,675	4.7	27.3	34.3	33.7

Female respondents:					
Program area	Sample size of faculty	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Agree strongly
Humanities	20,435	15.9	30.3	36.4	17.5
English and literature	10,748	17.0	32.7	35.6	14.7
Foreign languages	6,009	13.2	26.5	39.4	20.9
History	2,706	18.8	23.9	36.0	21.4
Philosophy and religion	972	11.7	43.9	28.4	16.0

That both men and women in philosophy disagree in higher proportions and agree in lower proportions overall should be of concern to anyone in the profession.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Salary, Promotion, and Tenure Status of Minority and Women Faculty in U.S. Colleges and Universities; National Center For Education Statistics, Statistical Analysis Report, March 2000, from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:93), available at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/2000173.pdf>.

Teaching Field, p. 10 (correlative figures in Table 23): “Relative to their representation among full-time faculty, women were more likely to be found in nursing (98 percent of all full-time nursing faculty were women), English and foreign languages (52 percent women), and education (50 percent women; table 23). Women were less likely to be found among full-time faculty teaching engineering (6 percent women), physical sciences (13 percent women), occupational programs (16 percent women), history and philosophy (21 percent women), biological sciences (28 percent women), mathematics and computer sciences (27 percent women), and the social sciences (26 percent women). In fact, men were at least twice as likely as women to teach history and philosophy (6 versus 3 percent; table 24), occupational programs (5 versus 2 percent), physical sciences (7 versus 2 percent), and engineering (6 versus 1 percent).” [p.49:Table 23: History and philosophy 19,000 estimated, 79.0m,21f]

<sup>8</sup> Source: Faculty and Instructional Staff: Who Are They and What Do They Do?, National Center For Education Statistics, Survey Report, October 1994, from the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, p.9. Women in all humanities studies used for this report made up a greater proportion of the part-time labor force than the full-time labor force, which would explain the larger estimate, but it should also be noted that within disciplines, their proportions were not drastically changed between full- and part-time status.

<sup>9</sup> Source: Correspondence from Dan Heffron, a statistician with Kforce Government Solutions, on behalf of Linda Zimble, project officer for the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) at the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Data set source: NCES, NSOPF:2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty 03/30/2006

**Percent breakdown of principal field of study for faculty with instructional duties for credit, by gender: Fall 2003:**

Principal field of teaching			
Philosophy	Religion/ religious studies	Theology and religious vocations	Other fields

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Estimates				
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>97.6</b>
Gender				
Male	1.6	1.1	0.6	96.7
Female	0.6	0.5	0.2	98.8
Standard Errors				
Total	0.10	0.10	0.06	0.18
Gender				
Male	0.16	0.15	0.09	0.26
Female	0.10	0.08	0.06	0.14
Weighted sample sizes				
(n/1,000s)				
Total	1,093.07			
Gender				
Male	634.44			
Female		458.63		

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The numbers under philosophy are for 1.6% of the total sample of men and .6% of the total women.

$634,440 * .016 = 10,151$  men

$458,630 * .006 = 2,751$  women

Men : women ratio of 3.7 to 1

From this one may extrapolate the percentage of women in philosophy at 21%. Note that the sample size used by the NSOPF ( $634,440 + 458,630 = 1,093,070$ ) approaches the BLS estimation of total workers employed as postsecondary instructors nationally (1,176,000), so that this study doesn't seem to be guilty of measuring only full-time workers in four-year institutions.

<sup>10</sup> Again, exact data on women in the labor pool of philosophy is not readily available; the figure was put by individuals at the Department of Education at 26.6%, as an average of the percentage of female Ph.D. recipients in philosophy from 1959 to 2004.

<sup>11</sup> See Julie Van Camp's webpage, "Tenured/tenure-track faculty women at 98 U.S. doctoral programs in philosophy," for gender percentages at individual institutions:

[http://www.csulb.edu/%7Ejvancamp/doctoral\\_2004.html](http://www.csulb.edu/%7Ejvancamp/doctoral_2004.html), accessed on 7/19/06.

<sup>12</sup> Data on "Women in the National Labor Pool" is also available on Julie Van Camp's same webpage, cited above.

<sup>13</sup> See Table 29 in n6.