

Program Review Report, 2004-2011
Executive Committee
American Philosophical Association Pacific Division

The APA Pacific Division is committed to inclusiveness in all the senses endorsed by the APA Statement on Non-discrimination, including (but not limited to) race, color, religion, political convictions, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identification, and age. To realize equity and diversity in the programming of its Annual Meeting, the Division has for many years employed an indirect strategy; the Division has made it a priority to appoint or elect nominating committees, executive committees, and program committees that represent the diversity of the Division and the discipline of philosophy. As an initial step toward assessing the effectiveness of this strategy and considering more broadly what benchmarks might be used to measure effectiveness in the future, the Division has undertaken a review of the gender composition of the major APA Pacific Division committees (Table 1) and the main program of the Pacific Division Annual Meeting since 2005 (Table 2), as well as the representation of women in the pool of submissions for colloquia and symposia in the last three years (Table 3). The results of this review are summarized below.

First, a general caveat: because the APA does not ask speakers to disclose their gender (or any other demographic information), what we report here are ascriptions of gender on the basis of recorded names. There is, therefore, an unavoidable (if small) margin of error in the annual figures for gender representation: 1–4% in the case of the submission data reported in Table 3 (where instances of unknown or ambiguous gender are reported). Given this, we expect that the totals and five-year means are the most robust benchmark for assessing gender representation. The lack of self-reported demographic data also means that it is at present difficult to assess the diversity of the Division's committees or Annual Meeting programs on any dimension other than gender. We anticipate expanding the scope of future diversity reviews as the National Office develops a membership database that allows us to track other dimensions of diversity.

Second, the data reported in Table 2 relate only to the gender composition of those aspects of the Annual Meeting program for which the APA Pacific program committee is responsible: the main program, as opposed to sessions contributed by APA committees and autonomous affiliated groups. These latter contributions may be expected to add significant

diversity to the program, but the focus here is on assessing equity of access to the main program.

Third, there are a number of ways in which the figures for distinct roles on the program might be aggregated. For this preliminary analysis we have calculated totals for Invited Speakers, Refereed Speakers, and Commentators, including in the category of Invited Speakers those who participate in author-meets-critics sessions as well as speakers in invited sessions, and invited paper presenters. In this category the representation of women ranges from 15% to 27%. It is worth noting, however, that if the category of Invited Speakers includes only those presenting invited papers and the authors whose work is discussed in author-meets-critics sessions (not the critics), women are less well represented than suggested by the aggregate figures for all invited speakers; the range is 14% and 24%, with a five-year average of 19% rather than 21%. Further analysis, and additional data (for example, on the seniority and subfield affiliation of program participants), will be required to determine whether, for example, we do better at including women in “supporting roles” than in “starring roles.”

Bearing in mind the limitations of the data and the preliminary nature of the analysis we present here, what conclusions can we draw? First, there do not seem to be any strong trends in the past five years, although there are swings from year to year especially where sample sizes are small. Second, the five-year averages for the representation of women among invited speakers, refereed speakers, and commentators ranges from 21% to 24%, comparable to the widely cited figure of 21% for the representation of women employed as philosophers in the US (Norlock 2009, 2011).¹ Third, the submission rate for women in the last three years has been between 18% and 25% with a three-year average of 21%. This compares favorably with average acceptance rate for the previous five years of 23%, and closely tracks acceptance rates in the two overlapping years of 2009 and 2010: in 2009 the submission and acceptance rates were the same (25%), and in 2010 it differed by 3 percentage points (21% of submissions came from women, compared to 18% of papers accepted). This suggests that the anonymous review process does ensure women equality of access to the main conference program.

¹ Norlock (2009) cites 21% as the proportion of philosophers employed in post-secondary educational institutions in the US who are women, drawing on federal payroll data for 2003 reported by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). She provides an update based on NCES data for 2009, recently posted online: women comprise 20.69% of postsecondary philosophy teachers in the US but, most striking, they are just 16.6% of full-time philosophy faculty and 26% of the 10,000 part-time instructors (Norlock 2011).

At the same time, however, the widely cited 21% bench mark is problematic in at least three senses. We have no reliable figures on the gender composition of the APA membership as a whole, which is surely the most relevant baseline for assessing equity in the representation of women on Pacific Division committees and programs. In addition, the Pacific Division Annual Meeting draws speakers from around the world and we have no data on the representation of women in global philosophy. Finally, the proportion of women in philosophy varies by career stage, and by subdiscipline, as well as by employment status (as indicated earlier, in note 1). We know, for example, that women earned 29.6% of the Philosophy PhDs awarded in the US in 2009 (NORC 2009: Table 15), and that the representation of women among members of the Philosophy of Science Association stood at 15% in 2010 (Solomon & Clark 2010). It is to be expected that this variance in the representation of women by career stage and subdiscipline will interact with session types; for example, books are more common in ethics than logic, first books are rarely featured in author-meets-critics sessions, and early career philosophers dominate colloquia. In short, there is much more to be done to accurately assess the effectiveness of current policies where the representation of women is concerned, and certainly with respect to the range of other dimensions of diversity we have not yet considered.

Although the data we report do not provide evidence of blatant gender bias, there is reason not to be satisfied with the state of affairs as it stands. We are disappointed, as are so many others, that philosophy as a discipline has not achieved the improvements in the representation of women that have transformed the demographic profile of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, as well as such professions as law and medicine. We therefore urge that program chairs and their committees continue to be vigilant and proactive in their efforts to ensure that the Pacific Division's main program is as inclusive as it can be. We strongly encourage all eligible members to submit papers for the 2012 meetings in Seattle (and for future meetings), but we especially encourage submissions from women and other groups historically underrepresented in the profession. And we welcome ideas from members on how to address the challenge of realizing our goals of comprehensive diversity in our programming.

References

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Table 1 Committee Membership by Gender

	2005			2006			2007			2008			2009			2010			Mean
	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	M	F	%	%
Nominating Committee	2	2	50	1	3	75	2	2	50	3	1	25	3	1	25	2	2	50	46
Executive Committee	6	3	33	6	3	33	5	4	44	5	4	44	6	3	33	5	4	44	39
Program Committee	20	7	26	21	7	25	20	7	26	20	7	26	19	9	32	20	8	29	27

Table 2 Main Program Speakers by Gender

		2005				2006				2007				2008				2009				2010				Mean
		M	F	?	%	M	F	?	%	M	F	?	%	M	F	?	%	M	F	?	%	M	F	?	%	%
Author-Meets-Critics	Authors	21	5		19	23	3		12	32	4		11	15	3		17	22	3		12	14	2		13	14
	Critics	41	18	1	31	53	12		18	72	21	1	23	32	16		33	50	9	1	15	35	7		17	23
Invited Paper	Speakers	3	1		25	6	0		0	3	0		0	2	3	1	60	6	2		25	3	2		40	25
	Commentators	5	3		38	6	4		40	4	1		20	7	4		36	10	4		29	7	3		30	32
Invited Symposium	Speakers	59	16	1	21	73	13		15	73	19		21	60	18	2	23	70	22		24	62	14		18	20
	Commentators	17	1		6	18	6		25	21	6		22	18	8		31	21	4		16	27	11		29	21
Symposia	Speakers	6	2		25	12	2		14	10	4		29	3	2		40	4	1		20	6	2		25	25
	Commentators	9	5		36	20	7		26	19	5		21	8	1	1	11	9	1		10	12	2		14	20
Colloquia	Speakers	91	31	1	25	85	25		23	112	33	1	23	116	35	2	23	100	33	3	25	104	22	2	17	23
	Commentators	91	30	1	25	78	33		30	115	25	2	18	116	29	3	20	95	36	2	27	92	32		26	24
Totals	Invited Speakers	124	40		24	155	28		15	180	44		20	105	40		27	145	36		20	114	25		18	21
	Non-critic Speaker	83	22		21	102	16		14	106	23		18	77	24		24	98	27		22	79	18		19	19
	Refereed Speakers	97	33		25	97	27		22	122	37		23	115	37		24	104	34		25	110	24		18	23
	Commentators	122	39		24	122	50		29	155	37		19	145	42		22	135	45		25	135	48		26	24

Table 3 Authors of Refereed Submission by Gender

	2009		2010		2011		Total	
Male	317	74%	351	75%	317	79%	985	76%
Female	109	25%	96	21%	72	18%	277	21%
Unknown	2	1%	19	4%	12	3%	33	3%