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Abstract Title

**The Lack of Women in Philosophy: Psychological and Structural Barriers
and the Moral Dimension of Epistemic Responsibility**

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The Lack of Women in Philosophy: Psychological and Structural Barriers and the Moral Dimension of Epistemic Responsibility

In the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, the field of philosophy employs fewer women in fulltime tenured posts than any other humanities field in academia.[1] The gender inequity in the field of philosophy is well known, and many have speculated that it is due to the masculinist, aggressive style of argumentation for which philosophy is known. Due to enculturated gendered traits of cooperation and conciliation, women may find this style of argumentation foreign and unappealing. Given that many more women begin as philosophy majors than those that finish as permanent full time faculty, this speculation may indeed identify one of the barriers that have kept women out of philosophy. However, there are perhaps more pervasive and inimical barriers to women. One such barrier may be implicit bias. Research on racist attitudes and behavior has shown that implicit, or nonconscious biases against African Americans negatively affect behavior toward them. This is true even for individuals who score low on measurements of explicit racial biases. Moreover, those who think of themselves as objectively egalitarian are often most blind to their own racist behavior. Another barrier that may be operative is stereotype threat, which causes those associated with negative stereotypes to underperform. The nature of this paper is both descriptive and normative. First I will identify the evidence for implicit bias and stereotype threat relevant to gender inequity within philosophy. Then I will argue that there is a strong moral imperative to 1) become epistemically responsible for the ways in which these biases and stereotypes are perpetuated; and, 2) enact counter measures at the institutional and individual levels.

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[1]A recent report done by the British Philosophical Association Committee on Women and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK showed that only 24% of permanent posts are held by women. Beebee, H. & Saul J. (2011). Women in Philosophy in the UK: A Report. http://www.swipuk.org/notices/2011-09-08/.

2011 data from the American Philosophical Association Committee on the Status of Women showed that 16.6% of full time instructional faculty were women. Kathryn Norlock. (2006).Women in the Profession: A Report to the CSW, with field-specific data in 2011 'Update.' http://www.apaonlinecsw.org.

The Australasian Association of Philosophy released a report showing similar findings. Eliza Goddard. (2008). Improving the Participation of Women in the Philosophy Profession. http://aap.org.au/women/reports/IPWPP_ExecutiveSummary.pdf