Philosophy of Science (2025), **92**, 708–731
doi:10.1017/psa.2025.12

PSA PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

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ARTICLE

Changing Working Environments in Philosophy: Reflections from a Case Study

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(Received 22 December 2023; revised 19 December 2024; accepted 26 February 2025; first published online 19 March 2025)

Abstract

There is an "underrepresentation problem" in philosophy departments and journals. Empirical data suggest that while we have seen some improvements since the 1990s, the rate of change has slowed down. Some posit that philosophy has disciplinary norms making it uniquely resistant to change. We present results from an empirical case study of a philosophy department that achieved and maintained male-female gender parity among its faculty as early as 2014. Our analysis extends beyond matters of gender parity because that is only one, albeit important, dimension of inclusion. We build from the study to reflect on strategies that may catalyze change.

> It is impossible for people to feel a sense of belonging without the people in power taking active responsibility for it.
>
> –Ruchika Tulshyan, *Inclusion on Purpose,* 2022[1]

[1] Cited from an interview transcript (Tulshyan 2022).

[2] Author contributions: writing—original draft preparation, all authors; writing—review and editing, all authors; project coordination, AM; community organizing liaison, SR; empirical study, MB; finalizing total revisions across sections, JW and AM, and later revisions MH, MB, AM, SR, CB. All authors have agreed to the submitted version of the paper.

1. Introduction

Academic philosophy faces an "underrepresentation problem": women, first-generation, and non-White philosophers are underrepresented at virtually every level in philosophy departments and journals (Antony and Cudd 2012; Jennings et al. 2017; Wylie et al. 2021).[2] Empirical data suggest that while we have seen some improvements since the 1990s, the rate of change has slowed down. Some posit that philosophy has disciplinary norms that may make it resistant to change (Lamont 2009; Antony and Cudd 2012; Dotson 2012; Hassoun et al. 2022).[2] Although some subfields of philosophy are showing signs of possible change, philosophy of science remains resistant. As Schwitzgebel and Jennings note, women comprise only 16 percent of US faculty[3] within philosophy of "science, logic, and math" (2017, 85–86). This finding is not only statistically significant but it also shows the need for continued conversations and strategies within philosophy of science. While there are many systemic factors contributing to the professional climate, we present evidence-based constructive strategies toward promoting inclusiveness, equity, and a sense of belonging for all.

In particular, we begin with a brief description of one author's case study of a philosophy department that achieved and maintained male-female gender parity among its faculty as early as 2014.[4] Though our analysis extends beyond matters of gender parity because that is only one, albeit important, dimension of inclusion. Building on this case and contributing authors' personal and professional experiences as interdisciplinary philosophers of science across ranks, we reflect on and evaluate strategies that professional societies and departments can adopt to build infra-structures that encourage the flourishing of all members. While qualitative studies are not meant to be statistically generalizable due to their unique context and nature, Patton (2002) suggested that qualitative research might in fact be externally transferred and extrapolated. Here we adopt this as an active, engaged practice in social science, and share the study's recommendations with the very group that was studied: philosophers of science. With the unique adaptation and application of Clark and Estes (2008) gap analysis model in this "promising practices" study, we maintain that philosophers of science are uniquely positioned within philosophy to lead the charge on professional climate issues drawing constructive solutions for our disciplinary working environments. In section 2, we describe the case study;[5] in section 3, we draw on that case study to argue that recruitment and retention go hand-in-hand, and present strategies that facilitate this synergy; in section 4, we argue for the communal responsibility for scholarly identity through mentorship and

[2] Lamont (2009, 64ff, 105, 118) discusses the "problem case" of philosophy's disciplinary culture with respect to grant proposals and interdisciplinary panels that may be especially salient for philosophers of science.

[3] Schwitzgebel and Jennings used faculty lists from the "Philosophical Gourmet Report." Setting aside how representative that may be of the field as a whole, that is a strikingly low level of representation at influential institutions.

[4] We acknowledge, and as a referee points out, male-female gender parity is but one kind of gender parity. Others include Male, Female, Cis Male, Cis Female, Trans, Non-Binary, and more. As the referee states, these distinctions can help note the scope of the study and a specific gender parity. We clarify this in the supplementary materials.

[5] For a fuller presentation of the case study please see the supplementary materials.

explicit structure; and in section 5, we further present actionable strategies to purposefully create environments wherein diversity and interdisciplinarity can thrive.

2. A case study on promising practices

The gender gap among professors in universities around the world is well documented. Numerous studies demonstrate that women are underrepresented, underrated, and underrewarded in most academic disciplines (Lincoln et al. 2012; Cruz-Castro and San-Menendez 2023). These conditions have persisted for decades (AAUP 2019). Some fields are more gender-imbalanced than others: Women are disproportionately underrepresented in STEM fields (Kahn and Ginther 2017) but are generally better represented in arts and humanities disciplines. However, they are severely underrepresented in one humanities discipline in particular: philosophy (NSF 2014), and philosophy of science specifically (Schwitzgebel and Jennings 2017).

In the United States, for example, women earn about 30 percent of undergraduate degrees, 25 percent of master's degrees, and 31 percent of doctoral degrees awarded in philosophy (Institute of Education Sciences 2016). Moreover, women occupy only about 25 percent of tenured faculty positions at the top fifty philosophy doctoral programs in the United States (Women in Philosophy 2023). Despite many nationwide institutional efforts to diversify academic departments through hiring and retention practices, recent statistics show that women's underrepresentation in philosophy departments has steadily persisted for the last twenty years at around 25 percent (AAUP 2019). Researchers proposed several hypotheses to explain why the underrepresentation of women in philosophy persists (Dougherty et al. 2015). Regardless of the cause, the lack of gender parity in academic philosophy has several damaging impacts. It marginalizes nonmale voices, devalues their scholarship, affects students seeking female role models and academic mentorship, and creates the conditions for continued gender discrimination (Kings 2019; Saul 2013). This mirrors the risks and costs in other fields lacking gender parity (e.g., Barthelemy et al. 2022; Griffith et al. 2022)—including the opportunity cost of missing out on the benefits of more inclusive departments (Nishii 2013; Nielsen et al. 2017; Bodla et al. 2018; Douglas et al. 2024) Hence, closing the gender gap in academic philosophy is important for at least three reasons: (1) greater social justice, (2) fairness and inclusion in organizational practices, and (3) the quality of philosophical scholarship.

In sum, the purpose of this study was to better understand why and how the faculty at one particular US-based philosophy department participates in gender-equitable hiring and retention practices and to create a set of recommendations for other organizations to solve similar problems of practice. This case study also had a strength in philosophy of science, offering a unique intersection of interest for philosophers of science in lessons for building inclusive, supportive departments. The full report of this case study may be found in the supplementary materials; here we offer a brief description and some highlights of recommendations we amplify in sections 3–5.

2.1 Purpose statement, research questions, and methodology

The purpose of this study was twofold: to examine factors that lead philosophy departments to successfully close the gender gap among their regular full-time faculty members and to create generalizable and transferable recommendations to be

used by other organizations, irrelevant of their location, that struggle with similar problems of practice.[6]

This research study was predicated on the notion that a deeper understanding of the circumstances underpinning gender parity in an academic philosophy department may help identify solutions to the larger problem of gender discrimination and women's underrepresentation in academia worldwide (Bogacz 2021). As such, the study employed a qualitative case study approach. The analysis focused on the philosophy faculty members' assets in the areas of knowledge and skill, motivation, and organizational resources. There were two research questions that guided the study: (1) What faculty knowledge, motivation, and organizational factors support achieving and maintaining gender parity among the faculty? (2) What recommendations in the areas of knowledge, motivation, and organizational resources may be appropriate for solving similar problems at other organizations. The study used descriptive data obtained from ten semistructured interviews with ten full-time, tenure-line research faculty members, document analysis, and content analysis to investigate and examine twelve assumptions made about philosophy faculty members' knowledge and motivation assets, as well as the institutional context, culture, and support structures that might have contributed to reaching gender parity. These assumptions were generated based on personal knowledge and related literature. The interview questions matched the assumed influences. Further details of the case study, including theoretical framework, methodology, and summary of findings may be found in the attached supplementary materials.

One methodological note worth highlighting from the supplementary materials is the assumption that there are, among others, at least three key stakeholders' groups who contribute to and benefit from the achievement of gender parity among the philosophy faculty members. These groups were students, faculty, and university. While all stakeholders' contributions to the achievement of the organizational performance goal were significant, it was imperative to understand the promising practices utilized by the faculty for three reasons: Faculty members set departmental diversity goals, regularly participated in hiring of new faculty members, and contributed to establishing a departmental culture and climate where the social and psychological phenomena that perpetuate the gender gap might be eliminated. This study serves as a window to promising practices toward a more inclusive climate more broadly speaking, which matters for purposes of retention and recruitment, and especially for marginalized scholars within those processes (Douglas et al. 2024). Moreover, good practices at the level of the department can mitigate harms from other institutional levels (ibid.), hence, our focus in subsequent sections on operationalizing recommendations for faculty at the department level—though we note the important role that higher administrative levels and professional societies play as well.

There were three findings also worth emphasizing here: knowledge, motivation, and organization findings. Knowledge findings suggested the need to be aware of historical barriers and current challenges that women and other underrepresented groups face in philosophy departments (see supplementary materials for details). Motivation findings revealed the need to recognize an intrinsic value in gender parity. The participants made an explicit distinction between social and epistemic values in

[6] Magdalena T. Bogacz conducted the study. See supplementary materials for the full case study.

reaching and maintaining gender parity and stated that diversity makes them "better teachers, researchers, and citizens." Organization findings stressed the importance of effective role models and developing institutional culture that actively addresses historical injustices, promotes inclusivity, and affirms the value of philosophy to everyone.

Additionally, data from the study identified five promising practices for promoting gender equity among faculty. They were divided into two groups: hiring practices and retaining practices. Promising *hiring* practices include the use of intentional and diversity-oriented language in job advertisements; a deliberate effort to recruit broadly and advertise inclusivity and diversity; and spousal hiring. Promising *retaining* practices included a shared commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and creating a family friendly environment in which women (and parents more generally) are not compelled to sacrifice their personal lives for professional success. We detail some of these promising practices in section 3. In section 4 we argue that there is a communal responsibility to adopt these practices, highlighting the role of mentorship and explicit structure in building that scholarly identity. Section 5 continues to drill down into actionable strategies reinforced by the case study to purposefully create environments that foster and support the diversity and interdisciplinary work valued by philosophers of science.

Finally, although the status of women in academia has evolved over the past twenty years, many systems are resistant to organizational progress and social change. Studying philosophy departments in the United States that are finding ways to include more women among their faculty members offers lessons that may be generalized. This case study distilled a set of promising and transferable practices that might be used by other organizations, irrelevant of their location, to promote inclusion (Bogacz 2023).

We aim to share these promising practices with the very source of the case study: philosophers of science. This is to practice socially engaged and active philosophy of science collaboratively with the broader community of the study subjects.[7] So, how do we build a more inclusive professional climate in departmental life? Achieving gender parity is an important factor contributing to inclusivity, but it is not the only one. In the next sections, we detail practices that may contribute to success in achieving and maintaining inclusive working environments in philosophy of science programs and beyond.

3. Recruitment and retention go hand-in-hand

The case study demonstrated that building an inclusive, supportive, and diverse department rarely happens by accident. It typically involves a thoughtful, long-term approach extending both well before and long after compiling a finalist list or extending a job offer. Though numerous strategies should be employed, here we focus on how linking recruitment and retention may reinforce and construct positive department culture and climate (Settles et al. 2006; Schneider et al. 2013; Holroyd and

[7] The approach employed in this paper is analogous to other metaphilosophical approaches in philosophy of science, e.g., work on philosophy *in* science (Pradeu et al. 2024), or the sort of work highlighted by the *Society for Philosophy of Science in Practice*. Here our approach is bringing science *into* philosophy. We understand both directions, together, to constitute promising co-constitutive analysis.

Saul 2018). The good news is that this improves departmental climate for *everyone* (Settles et al. 2006; Nishii 2013; Nielsen et al. 2017; Bodla et al. 2018).

This section emphasizes the importance of reflecting a department's vision and strategy in job advertisements and recruitment efforts. A clear strategic vision expands the candidate pool, helps finalists transparently see how they are valued and fit into a department, and ultimately aids recruitment and retention of new faculty. Focusing on strategic thinking also reflects the importance of "effective chair leadership" on positive work outcomes associated with retention, for example, "job satisfaction, [felt] influence, and productivity" (Settles et al. 2006, 54). Because some existing academic structures perpetuate poor climates (see Douglas et. al. 2024), it is important to promote a positive organizational climate in philosophy departments.[8] Throughout the section we offer operationalized examples drawn from the case study that departments may adopt to encourage a positive, supportive, and collaborative department culture.

We start with definitions from organizational psychology:

> *Organizational climate* may be defined as the shared perceptions of and the meaning attached to the policies, practices, and procedures employees experience and the behaviors they *observe getting rewarded and that are supported and expected*. On the other hand, *organizational culture* may be defined as the *shared basic assumptions, values, and beliefs* that characterize a setting and are taught to newcomers as the proper way to think and feel, communicated by the myths and stories people tell about how the organization came to be the way it is as it solved problems associated with external adaptation and internal integration. (Schneider et al. 2013, 363; emphasis added)

These serve as useful grounding points for the following discussion of promising practices, though we acknowledge that there are competing views.

3.1 Have a vision and be strategic

New hires should feel valued by their hiring department. That may seem obvious, yet there are ways to encourage and reinforce that message (Settles et al. 2006; Schneider et al. 2013; Barthelemy et al. 2022; Griffith et al. 2022). One is to adopt a recruitment process that transparently reflects the department's vision and strategy for achieving that vision. Let's explore a few features of what that might look like in practice and why it matters.

First, have a vision. That vision may be an aspirational goal. The case study department had an explicit and highly aspirational vision that included close collaborative research and teaching efforts with more empirically grounded research units, reflecting their strength in and approach to philosophy of science. An attractive feature of this vision is the clear and concrete way it lays out what is valued by the department and how new hires may contribute to that. This promotes transparency and education about department culture and climate; in contrast, opaque or inaccessible visions can result in exploitation and inequity (Freeman 2013/1970;

[8] Thanks to a referee for this justification.

see section 4.3). Explicitly sharing with applicants how a search aligns with a department vision operationalizes that transparency, and, in turn, promotes inclusion and participation in the construction and maintenance of that culture and climate, cultivating the "felt influence" of individual faculty (Settles et al. 2006).

Hiring strategies can further amplify this inclusive approach, for example, "hire from strength outwards" means hiring new faculty that both *extend and overlap* with existing strengths of the department. Transparently displaying this during recruitment encourages applicants to share *their* vision of how they will extend the department in the context of departmental vision, for example, forging new interdisciplinary connections across campus, or in some other unique aspect of their research interests.[9] Regardless, this helps set the groundwork for what success looks like on *their terms* and how that will reinforce department goals.

Importantly, this strategy *also* includes hiring faculty that overlap with existing department strengths. This promotes good mentoring and other support mechanisms for new faculty (see sections 4 and 5), especially if that overlap helps bridge existing faculty interests. That increases the professional networks that senior faculty can help new hires tap into and expands available teaching support. It may also create positive feedback loops generating novel collaborative research and teaching strengths centered on those new faculty networks.[10]

There are other ways to transparently reflect a department's vision during recruitment. For instance, the case study highlighted the importance of language used in job ads as well as the venues of recruitment to which the ads are sent. Including this vision in job ads carries the advantage of making it clearly visible to new hires *before* they apply, encouraging them to share how they envision advancing department goals. This makes important criteria by which applicants will be judged more transparent and helps align applicant files with hiring goals, as opposed to relying on applicants picking up on muted or hidden signals, or, worse, relying on word of mouth or insider knowledge (which can effectively narrow the applicant pool in harmful ways).[11]

Ads also offer the opportunity to convey the values embedded in a department's vision. This need not take up a great deal of space; ads may simply describe an interest in hiring at the intersection of or even between traditional areas of specialization (AoS). Though departments may be happy with or even aim to hire in a traditional AoS, specifying an openness to doing this in creative, nontraditional ways sends a strong message to people that may not fit traditional roles in philosophy. Combining this practice with encouraging applicants to share how they will help advance department goals can amplify the benefits of both strategies. This not only helps to expand the initial applicant pool but also aligns the criteria for evaluating who advances in each round with a department's vision.

[9] This can be especially important for hires in philosophy of science, particularly when a hiring department may need help understanding the value of cross-campus interdisciplinary connections. See also section 5.

[10] There are trade-offs involved in hiring strategies. As one referee noted, one trade-off of this strategy may be the risk of epistemic exclusion of underrepresented voices, in favor of building effective scaffolding support mechanisms. However, other strategies like hiring to cover traditional "gaps" reinforces a narrower view of philosophy. These trade-offs should be transparently weighed.

[11] Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing this out.

A department's vision and strategy may also be reflected in the recruitment process in how faculty talk about the position and process. Faculty can agree on how a job search might help a department advance toward its larger vision even while disagreeing over details. This can start early, for example, in how searches are proposed to administration. It can also be reinforced later in the process, for example, reminding faculty of this in anticipation of finalist visits.

In practice, this may mean faculty coming together around a message that can be shared with applicants, deans, students, and other stakeholders. Everyone on faculty —but especially the chair (Settles et al. 2006; Douglas et al. 2024) —should be able to articulate how the new hire will fit into the department and how their work will advance larger department strategy and goals. This reinforces the message that new hires are at the center of department strategy, encourages this as a *shared* goal and responsibility, and effectively and transparently shares department culture, climate, and practices (Freeman 2013/1970; see section 4.3).

The value of clearly reflecting department vision and strategy in recruitment carries over to retention. It signals to newly hired faculty that they and their work are regarded as central to a department's strategy in precise and concrete ways, transparently aligning their success with the department's. This message should be conveyed to new hires, as well as existing faculty, administrators, students, and other stakeholders.

These strategies promote alignment of the new faculty and hiring department's interests. Intention and transparency are key. It is critical to ask finalists what they value and what success looks like to them. Genuinely help them understand that flourishing on their terms also means the department flourishes. It is the *department's* responsibility to make this part of the applicant review and interview process, so that finalists recognize that their success—on their terms—*also* serves the department's interests.

Following through on this commitment means effectively integrating a department's vision and strategy into recruitment and retention processes. New faculty should feel valued by their hiring programs because they *are* valued. That is, they are valued in precise, concrete ways that explicitly and transparently embody departmental culture and climate (Settles et al. 2006).

3.2 Adopt creative and actionable policies

Recruitment and onboarding practices offer promising opportunities to support new faculty. Service load is illustrative of this and thus is a matter of when practice meets policy. New faculty—especially from underrepresented groups—are often asked to be on too many committees, resulting in overly burdensome service loads (Flores et al. 2019; Settles et al. 2019). This can also be mischaracterized as *their* fault, framed as falling into the trap of overextending themselves by not learning how to say no.

Hiring departments should create mechanisms to protect new faculty from high service loads. One example is adopting a policy that new faculty should *never* accept a service assignment without clearance from their chair. Yet that is still not quite good enough; it puts the responsibility for saying no on the new faculty without providing concrete tools and training on *how* to say no. This can be especially difficult if the service assignments seem well suited or interesting, or if the person making the request is a senior administrator.

To operationalize this support, couple it with a concrete phrase that new faculty may use when asked to join committees, for example, "let me check with my chair" (whom the new faculty knows will say "no," unless there is strong reason to do otherwise). This provides new hires with a quick, friendly response, while providing cover for declining the service request. In most cases it should be the *chair* who follows up with the person making the request, so the new hire is not put in the position of declining. The chair may even take the opportunity to explain that new hires—especially new *junior* hires—need to be supported by being kept off committees, faculty senates, union representative positions, and so forth because a significant mechanism of assessment toward their promotion and tenure, and thus their allotted time, concerns their research program and standing in their larger professional associations. This is especially important for faculty from underrepresented groups, who often are *over*represented in service capacities on campus.

Policies like this demonstrate clearly and concretely to new faculty that a department will support them, tangibly embodying the values that are part of a department's culture. This provides new faculty with tools that better help them to be selective about how they will allocate their service responsibilities wisely while encouraging them to make those decisions collaboratively with their chair. This prompts ongoing dialogue and communication between new hires and their chairs, which can help identify other issues or struggles that may arise. Declining a service request may be easily handled by chairs even if it may seem daunting or challenging to individual faculty.

Being thoughtful about how recruitment and retention are tied together is a win-win. It improves searches and provides clear criteria that help align new faculty and department interests. It encourages a shared vision of what success looks like and broad buy-in from faculty and other stakeholders. As importantly, incorporating these strategies into a job search does not add work and may even produce a more streamlined, efficient process. Ultimately, though, the goal is for new hires to feel valued because they *are* valued, on their own terms and for what they uniquely bring to the department.

That said, having *a* clear vision is not enough. It needs to adequately aim toward creating a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable department.[12] The case study makes this clear with several key findings assumed to play a role in contributing to a more equitable departmental climate. Among them was a shared commitment among the faculty members to diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as to creating a family friendly environment in which members are not compelled to sacrifice their personal lives for professional success. This vision must also be actively maintained over time, as department climates ebb and flow. Proper training is imperative for curating inclusive visions, along with sustained strong department leadership (Settles et al. 2006). Though some of that responsibility falls on higher level administration, ultimately departments need to actively continue to choose to act on this path.

4. Communal responsibility for scholarly identity

Next, we focus on the community responsibility to facilitate practices that help new hires cultivate a core scholarly identity. Professional identities are actively

[12] Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing on this point.

constructed and cared for by others. This community responsibility occurs simultaneously at multiple levels of organization (Douglas et al. 2024), for example, from how the PSA supports junior scholars to how departments shape scholarly identity. Though the PSA can support the cultivation of positive identity—in part by publishing papers like this one—here we focus on the department level as it is well known that productivity in terms of research and teaching, that is, the measures of scholarly professional worth, is affected by the political climates of departments (e.g., Cech et al. 2018). The more severe circumstances are with respect to department environments, the more support is required from the broader university community and professional associations. Cross-departmental mentorship will be specifically discussed in section 5. Presently, we focus on arguments for communal responsibility in mentorship across career stages, and detail good mentorship practices within a scholar's home department.

4.1 Scholarly identity and success conditions

Scholarly identity intimately intertwines with conditions of professional success, for example, publishing and negotiating. First, publishing processes represent a learning curve for many junior scholars. Yet they make or break not only a scholar's career but also future stability for themself and their family. Many graduate programs do not provide explicit structure about key matters of professional writing. Departments can help demystify the publishing process in the following ways:

- Provide examples for how to write letters of changes upon major revisions, that is, how to become an editor for one's own manuscript;
- Communicate *when* multiple journal rejections might require reconsideration of a paper's framing, for example, discuss how many journals to resubmit to before substantial revisions; and
- Discuss how to recognize identifiers for toxic, nonconstructive manifestations within peer review, and when appropriate, how to escalate a complaint to an editor.

Inclusivity means working with multiple writing styles and approaches (Dotson 2012). It is imperative to develop the capacity to identify when criticism crosses a line from constructive to problematic. In turn, it is critical that editorial teams continue to improve norms for referees.[13]

Second, negotiating for a position also affects conditions of success, for example, starting salary, its subsequent compound interest, and the necessary structural support emerging scholars need to professionally thrive. This matters because poverty and scarcity have real effects, which disproportionately affect

[13] Recent trends are encouraging. The British Society for the Philosophy of Science posts instructions for referees for their flagship journal, the *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science,* that engages constructive practices for report writing that focus on the paper/product, and not the person/author. The *European Journal for Philosophy of Science,* in its emails to referees, communicates its values for constructive reports noting that reports may be subject to editing if the language is especially harsh. It also encourages referees to inform the editors if the manuscript uses inappropriate, harsh, or dismissive language.

underrepresented groups in academia. For example, many junior scholars may not know that moving expense stipends may be subject to double taxation, or that research funds can be specified for summer salary. Another example concerns immigration expense coverage beyond the scholar to include their spouse and children, a process which often accrues thousands in legal fees. These fees can be covered by universities, though they may need to be requested during negotiations. Marginalized academics are often not aware, too timid, or too relieved to have a tenure track job to spend appropriate time negotiating (Dotson 2015; Rutter and Berg 2017; Kugler et al. 2018). They will come to realize these issues too late, often through informal means, and experience their personal impact from either capriciously applied or biased policy application. This frequently leads to a debilitating sense of humiliation and isolation along with real material consequences.

First-generation and low-income scholars, immigrants, and other underrepresented groups are especially affected by the types of large expenses—moving costs and immigration fees—that occur within the first few years. To cope, some need to take on additional part-time jobs, which diverts focus away from their primary career. Those unable to work for other employers due to immigration laws are barred from supplementing their income outside of the university. Departments *must* become more aware of these challenges to assist their incoming faculty during negotiations; professional societies such as the PSA can assist by providing informational resources and strategies for negotiating offers and facilitating communication between junior scholars, among other professional development infrastructure, for example, promotion and retention (section 3). These resources might include communicating publication norms and standards for scholars facing promotional practices in institutions that may be unfamiliar with philosophy of science as a field. This aligns scholar and departmental interests toward practices that recognize diverse norms across fields within philosophy that promote successful retention. In short, professional associations can play a positive role in helping to facilitate the communal responsibility for scholarly identities (Douglas et al. 2024) (see section 5).

If one accepts communal responsibility for healthy scholarly identities and their relationship with the conditions of success discussed in the examples above, this calls for:

1. Proactive engagement of senior scholars with newcomers in the field, that is, not waiting for junior scholars to necessarily approach, but inviting their involvement; and
2. The recognition of friendship's critical importance for withstanding the pressures and challenges of academia.

While "friendship" may sound trivial to some, it is one aspect of *sentimental order* (i.e., trust, collective mood, etc. as per Glaser and Strauss 1965 and Strauss et al. 1982) organizing institutional settings. Collective failure to take sentimental order's effects seriously is a major contributor to the anxiety, confusion, and isolation that job candidates and junior faculty often experience. Sometimes, practices that uniquely affect morale are often perceived as "outbound" topics: money, relationship management, personal living circumstances (e.g., family, spouse), and so forth. However, the "outbound" reasons—many of which both shape and constitute

conditions for sentimental order of work environments—matters for productivity. So, there are "inbound" (i.e., professional reasons) to care about them.

Dovetailing this point on sentimental order, the need for increased communal care toward the realization of individual scholarly identities cannot be overstated. When working within the conceptual systems characteristic of Western philosophy and in the midst of socioeconomic scarcity (Brown 2012), the idea of involvement in the identity construction process of someone other than oneself may seem strange. Nevertheless, this idea is not new.

Many feminist scholars (Nedelsky 1989; Lindemann 2014; Mackenzie 2014; Brison 2017) and philosophers working beyond the conceptual limits of traditional Western philosophy (Mbiti 1969; Menkiti 1984; Edet 2015; Ikuenobe 2018) offer a rich tapestry of perspectives by which we might reimagine the nature of the identity as ineluctably relational and appreciate the profound ways that identity modulates our ability to access and operationalize philosophical knowledge and professional skills. In short, philosophers have already provided good reasons for thinking about identity in relational terms; self-constitution is partly a communal affair. Our intention in this article is not to mount a robust metaphysical defense of these conceptual framings. Rather, our aim is to highlight the advantages that such a framing might afford in practice—for example, improved well-being for philosophers at all stages of their individual careers, the cultivation of cooperativity, and discouragement of competition among colleagues.

The beginning of one's academic journey is often accompanied by "accentuated feelings of loneliness" (Boice 1992, 35). While few would deny that social isolation can be psychologically injurious, there seems to be less appreciation for the prohibitive role this isolation plays in the junior faculty's attempt to establish their identity as a scholar—what social psychologists refer to as the process of *core-identity formation* (Trede et al. 2012). Core-identity formation is construed as a complex process involving existing self-conceptions informed by personal experiences and positionalities (Gecas 1982; Thoits and Virshup 1997; Stets and Burke 2000), an array of local and global cultural schemas that influence the interpretations of those experiences and positionalities (Ibarra 1999; Cech 2015), and of critical importance for our analysis, external verification of one's identity from socially relevant others (Burke 2004; Burge 2015). As a result, we understand the call for greater communal attention to core-identity formation to be a responsibility supported by well-established empirical findings such as the case study, not a supererogatory nicety. Thus, it can be meaningfully said that the formation of the scholar's core-identity is where *the outbound considerations at the individual level* intersect with *the inbound matters at the professional level.*

bell hooks warns us that "if professors are wounded, damaged individuals, people who are not self-actualized, then they will seek asylum *in the academy* rather than seek to make the academy a place of challenge, dialectical interchange, and growth" (1994, 165; added emphasis). There are many unacceptable consequences of failing to take seriously communal responsibilities toward the formation of colleagues' core-identities. These consequences include worsened mental well-being and increased stress (Burke 1991; Urbina-Garcia 2020), lack of persistence within the profession (Cech et al. 2011), the perpetuation of oppressive power structures that systemically disadvantage professionally marginalized groups (Moody 2012; Cech et al. 2018; Cech

2021; Fox Tree and Vaid 2022), and intent to leave and burnout (Douglas et al. 2024). While these burdens may clearly manifest at the individual level, we must heed hooks's admonition and appreciate the ways they cumulatively shape the broader professional culture by means of a loss of diverse perspectives, a weakened openness to intellectual innovation, and an inability to cultivate sincere collegiality within our academic communities. Avoiding these corrosive consequences requires careful attention to our standards of professionalization and our approaches to mentorship.

4.2 Professionalization standards and intradepartmental mentorship

We *must* engage practices that make professionalization standards more explicit and transparent for faculty and students alike. The case study detailed in supplementary materials focused on gender as one dimension of inclusion, but as stated it is not the only one. Explicit and transparent standards matter for those historically excluded from academia, such as persons who identify as first-generation, immigrating, LGBTQ+, and other underrepresented social demographics concerning race, sex, gender, disability, and class (Barthelemy et al. 2022; Griffith et al. 2022). So how might professionalization standards be made more explicit? Building on section 3, constructive practices might include focusing on topics like curating inclusive climates in departments and ensuring service responsibilities are scaled appropriately, thus avoiding a material tax on the labor of vulnerable faculty. Some possible solutions to address questions like these include:

- Who-does-what documents and centralized access to policy documents;
- Semester-based class lists posted each semester;
- Transparent service rotations (and even occasional audits) that include specific start and end dates for service items;
- Supplementing university level orientation to ensure familiarity with local systems, for example, learning management, student information, and financial systems; and
- Transparency in regular and ongoing administrative and retention timelines, for example, review cycles and declaration of teaching interests.

Even when these solutions exist, there should still be a map and a mentor to guide the navigation of those policies. Let us explain with a metaphor.

Mentorship facilitates orientation using someone else's map, similar to those who establish hiking trails before others go on the hike. "Org Charts," that is, a university's pictorial representation of administrative hierarchies, are insufficient for navigating how to get from point A to point B, such as getting funds or approval of some initiative. As abstractions, organizational charts do not necessarily represent the nature of the terrain as rough, steep, or well-traveled. Thus, a more detailed map is required, often one that someone else has already made.[14]

Figuring out how to connect coordinative points is part of what creates *jurisdictional awareness*. Existing maps that coordinate various administrative

[14] Many institutions hold subscriptions to the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD), which provides mentorship and professionalization resources. See www.facultydiversity.org.

jurisdictions in a university, arguably, tend to follow Four Cardinal Directions in university bureaucracy.[15] If a junior faculty member does not yet have a landscape map, consider taking a couple steps into one of the following directional categories of *where* to go:

- Personnel (such as student hiring, e.g., HR, payroll);
- Research and grants;
- Teaching; and
- Administrative life of the department.

The last direction concerns the formal and informal structures of departmental life, namely, the *how* to go. When building a map, remember that the terrain is local, and the sentimental order of the organization is often unwritten. For example, it may be less successful to contact payroll for corrective measures as a faculty member, and more successful to request that the department chair and/or administrator contact them on your behalf. There are patterns of administrative chains, and crossing those chains, or jumping levels in those chains, can be less successful than "retreating" into the hierarchy. Section 3 discussed this by example concerning "let me ask my chair" as a "no" filter for junior faculty when requested to do service by others. "Retreating" into the administrative hierarchy can be a successful form of protection against requests that may risk time away from other activities more relevant to success criteria for promotion and tenure.

While in some cases, retreating into the hierarchy can be powerful, other cases may call for bypassing steps. For instance, while a department chair reports to their dean, going directly to the dean bypasses the chair's authority, however, other assistant and associate deans in some colleges also report to the dean like the chair does, and as such they exist on a similar level. They can then report to the dean effectively bypassing the authority level of the chair. While local circumstances will dictate the specific nature of these authority chains, understanding those chains in part requires experiential knowledge, which is where mentorship becomes salient to navigate these pathways in safe and effective ways.

4.3 The tyranny of structurelessness

A common objection to the discussion thus far is about what increasing professionalization entails. That is, insofar as professionalization includes the production of explicit structural and procedural rules and policies, it may affect the freedom of the department. Too much structure in that sense risks restrictions on freedom for everyone in the departmental community.

In response, we highlight Joreen Freeman's argument in *The Tyranny of Structurelessness* (2013/1970, 232–33) that there is no such thing as a structureless group:

[15] The concept of 4 Cardinal Directions in university bureaucracy is borrowed from discussions with Jim Griesemer, Elihu Gerson, Luke Breuer, and Chris DiTeresi.

> As long as the structure of the group is informal, the rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few and awareness of power is limited to those who know the rules. Those who do not know the rules and are not chosen for initiation must remain in confusion, or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware.

Applying Freeman's account to departmental contexts, a department's structure may be flexible and vary over time, and it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power, and resources over members of the community. But that structure will be formed regardless of the abilities, personalities, or intentions of those involved.

In effect, *to strive for structurelessness is a myth just like the value-free ideal of science is a myth.*[16] The ideal of structurelessness is what Freeman called a "smokescreen" that masks power: The absence of explicit guidelines does not prevent the formation of informal structures. Rather, sexism, classism, and other systemic biases retain their power in that opacity. Moreover, such opacity can cause back channeling, but how backchanneling is and should be understood is complex. What goes on "below"—the offstage discourse for the powerless—is often characterized as empty posturing or "unprofessional" back channeling, which is an unfair characterization in some cases. Rather, backchanneling can be where institutionally induced injustice finds expression and the means for small incremental changes and facilitating acts of resistance. This can result in practical gains and coordination in the "infrapolitics" (Scott 1990).

One effective way to counter this "tyranny of structurelessness" is recognizing the collective responsibility for scholarly identity through mentorship: "Mentors can make otherwise unspoken norms and expectations clear [and] identify departmental procedures and politics" (Settles et al. 2006, 55–56). This reinforces the focus here on the importance of mentorship toward the Four Cardinal Directions discussed already and making explicit rules and procedures through increased professionalization practices.

5. Promising practices for community building

In this section we focus on promising practices for community building and advocacy that have aided progress in the discipline, and in philosophy of science specifically. We organize the following into three categories: cross-departmental mentorship, interdisciplinary research advocacy, and requirement clarity with respect to building interdisciplinary communities.

5.1 Cross-departmental mentorship

In section 4 we focused on structuring *intra*departmental mentorship programs. Here we focus on the importance of *cross*-departmental peer-mentorship programs in our institutions, or cross-institutional peer-mentorship programs in philosophy. These groups come in many forms (e.g., many universities and professional societies—including the PSA—have affinity groups for underrepresented members). Oftentimes

[16] For the myth of the value free ideal see Okruhlik 1994; Longino 1996; Douglas 2009; Douglas and Branch 2024; Elliott 2024.

these communities coalesce informally, as a result of friendship alliances (section 4) built through shared struggle or advocacy. These "horizontal" mentorship communities bring several benefits:

- *Shared experience and standpoints*: We may find ourselves to be the only ones with our particular identities in our home department (Dotson 2014; Settles and Buchanan 2014). Peer-mentorship programs allow us to connect with similarly situated scholars navigating similar institutional or disciplinary structures;
- *Transmission of institutional knowledge*: Peer groups are great places to learn about how things are done in other places. It becomes easier to advocate for change in our home departments by pointing to precedents in comparable departments;[17] and
- *A space with less scrutiny*: It may be easier to share information and personal goals with people who do not share social or professional circles (this benefit applies more to intrainstitutional cross-departmental groups).

In addition, weekly writing groups and research groups are also great ways to periodically check in, share skills, and build community. They often provide an avenue for institutional knowledge or a place to learn about and from the struggles of other universities and departments. Informal information like this can be invaluable (Acker 2006; Charles et al. 2022). Learning how and when to advocate for oneself and asking clarifying questions around institutional requirements can be very beneficial. Learning what went well or poorly for others can matter for understanding one's own positionality and the process of being a marginalized academic within a philosophy department. We believe that marginalized academics would be well suited to look for communities *outside of* their department, a lesson not always taught to graduate students nor apparent to early-career scholars.

Mentorship means using the maps of others as guides to one's own map making (section 4), but it is imperative to remember that sometimes mentees cannot move through the same terrain as the mentor did for a variety of reasons concerning identity, positionality, and the like. This highlights the importance of effective mentors and role models both within and *across* departments to cultivate good mentorship as a practical way to operationalize inclusive values (Douglas et al. 2024).

5.2 Interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary research advocacy

Broadening one's academic community can bring about collaboration across disciplines. While generally viewed as a "good thing" in the broader academy, truly interdisciplinary work is not always highly regarded as academically rigorous within philosophical circles. Here is a prime example of where challenges facing philosophers of science dovetail with those of marginalized academics—potentially amplifying these challenges for the latter. Those who productively find and collaborate with like-minded scholars and researchers outside of philosophy are not always rewarded for their efforts. Empirical data support this observation. Pearse

[17] This is one reason we are sharing the results of the case study and affiliated recommendations. This is a component of active and engaged social science in practice. See footnote 7.

et al. (2019) finds that the top "mainstream" journals in philosophy have the highest proportion of within-discipline citations, among the six social sciences and humanities disciplines studied. However, *Hypatia*, a journal specializing in feminist philosophy, has among the lowest proportion of within-discipline citations (ibid.). There is often more required of interdisciplinary philosophers, in that they are additionally expected to outline how the collaborative project "is philosophy" (see also Dotson 2012). While this is an additional step not usually asked of those collaborating within academic philosophy, there is also an emotional cost, indirectly implying that interdisciplinary scholars are not "true" philosophers or that their work is "less important." Interdisciplinary collaborations that often result from marginalized philosophers looking for more comfortable places are often disregarded, degraded, and held to a different standard during evaluative processes, such as promotion and tenure (Frances 2018).

As a result, philosophers of science and marginalized academics often find *themselves* having to advocate for interdisciplinary research. Many universities' promotion processes are siloed within departments or generalized across all departments, leaving little to no space for the intricacies of interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary research. Furthermore, there can be a lack of campus community awareness and culture celebrating this type of research and/or forcing it into traditional philosophical expectations and corresponding professional profiles. That leaves philosophers of science and marginalized academics the added burden of raising awareness, arguing for the inclusion of their research into campus venues, and endless informal explanations "owed" to other colleagues who think that these projects are "less than" and not engaging with traditional philosophy and its venues "enough."

Instead, departments should advocate and determine concrete practices to count interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary as much or more than "standard" philosophical work. If universities and departments truly prize the synergistic effects of cross-disciplinary knowledge, then departments must provide guidance about tenure standards for external evaluators and communicate those to relevant university committees. Universities and departments should also make efforts to respect the vast diversity of standards across fields within philosophy. This is salient for philosophers of science writing tenure and promotional letters for colleagues at institutions to communicate the role of interdisciplinarity and other standards in the field. While communicating those norms are critical, we suggest that interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary work be formally counted for tenure and that process be crafted and maintained by either the department or university (or both). This would encourage early career researchers to find community in these spaces while promoting the value of their work. Promoting interdisciplinary research is one way to alleviate the sorts of epistemic exclusion that are especially harmful to researchers working on nontraditional topics (Dotson 2015). In a field like philosophy of science it is especially important to promote interdisciplinary research, given that there may be a gap between how the field and local departments place value on this sort of work. Professional societies like the PSA can play a positive role in that promotion by developing materials that may be shared with departments and administrations to help establish how the field regards interdisciplinary work, co-authored research, and publication in science journals (Douglas et al. 2024).

We want to continue to encourage undergraduate, graduate, and early career marginalized academics to form these bridges, gather in these spaces, and pursue mentorship and collaboration outside of philosophy departments. Yet, the burdens discussed here do not end after the graduate or early career level, but follow marginalized academics throughout their professional trajectory, asking ever more and requiring a growing knowledge of campus intricacies and shifting academic standards (Fenstermaker and West 2002; Dotson 2016). The philosophical literature regarding issues around recruitment (Saul 2012, 2018; Holroyd and Saul 2018) would benefit from similar concerns surrounding retention of marginalized academics and philosophers of science.

5.3 Clarity of requirements in interdisciplinarity

Our own experiences align with the literature and indicate substantial disparities in work assignments and expectations (Bishu and Alkadry 2017; Hatch 2017; Kugler et al. 2018; Rutter and Berg 2017). Some of this is endemic to philosophy of science, especially in how expectations in philosophy of science are evaluated and understood by philosophers working in other areas. Constructing local interdisciplinary research networks often carries requirements and obligations not shared by less interdisciplinary researchers. In philosophy of science this may include regular attendance at extradepartmental speaker series, additional meetings, and mentoring and/or informal teaching obligations. That is the "cost of admission" philosophers of science often must pay in terms of time to establish credentials with their science colleagues. Additionally, affiliations with other departments can serve dual purpose: Sometimes philosophers of science affiliate with other departments to take refuge, other times this is due to years of work and is recognized as a professional achievement in the field after establishing proficiency and trust among members of the philosopher's science of study.

All this with respect to interdisciplinarity is further amplified when philosophers of science are also marginalized in other ways. Marginalized academics often do more work to achieve the benchmarks all academics are required to achieve, such as tenure, promotion, and yearly renewal (Settles et al. 2019). More publications, "higher-quality" publications, an unequal advising burden, or an unfair number of administrative tasks are expected over and above those asked of fellow faculty members of similar, or even greater, rank. Furthermore, a disparity in *types* of work asked of marginalized academics is common (Dotson 2016). Important work that is typically not rewarded as one seeks tenure or promotion, such as student advising, administrative tasks, helping students find funding, student clubs, and departmental social event organizing, is not equitably shared. As discussed, students and administration often rely heavily on marginalized faculty to fulfill these important lacunae.

Moreover, marginalized faculty are making less money and are expected to outperform and/or do tasks not asked of fellow faculty of similar or higher rank (Bishu and Alkadry 2017). They also undertake more emotional labor because their students show more need and come to them. Not only is this inequality apparent day-to-day but also these matters are often capitalized on by nonmarginalized colleagues

left to focus on research and teaching. When there are not transparent and unilateral policies in place, those in power have the ability to apply policies inconsistently (e.g., administration, department chairs; see section 4). One reason *why* the promising practices in prior sections matter is because of how they intersect with the forms of interdisciplinarity inherent to fields like philosophy of science specifically.

Cross-departmental mentorship relations, either formal or informal, can guide junior scholars toward a clearer understanding of policies and expectations. It may only be through avenues of informal mentoring, especially of the "horizontal" sort of focus in this section, that early career scholars can both ask the unique questions affecting them and receive honest, useful answers from others who experienced similar situations. Perhaps most importantly, mentorship relationships and supportive communities often help graduate students and early career philosophers of science better understand when to advocate for themselves and their research within and across departmental contexts and feel supported while doing so.

6. Conclusion

While each department and university are unique environments, deep societal attitudes and behaviors normalizing differential treatment are prevalent across academia (Dotson 2014; McCormick-Huhan et al. 2019; Settles et al. 2020). We began with highlights from a case study on promising practices supporting inclusion, offered strategic visions for recruitment and retention, argued for the communal responsibility of scholarly identity, and presented good practices for community building. Finally, as we have noted throughout, because diversity related service work is often disproportionately shouldered by marginalized groups (Flores et al. 2019), and many initiatives and mentorship relationships begin informally, there is a persistent underrecognition of service work in general, and diversity related service work in particular.

Looking forward, we suggest that departments introduce mechanisms to advocate for philosophers of science and marginalized academics by adopting the promising practices described here. Professional societies also have an important role helping departments accomplish this goal. The PSA has done this through its UPSS program, the ombudsperson role, and its Caucus for Inclusion. We encourage continuing these and other supportive efforts for promoting excellence and equity in our field because advocacy by professional societies can be deeply impactful and "may help alleviate harm done by poor climate at the department level" (Douglas et al. 2024, 10).

The content of this research matters not only to department chairs and other senior leaders in the field but also to those in positions of less power who may find a sense of solidarity and concrete empowerment. A clear conclusion is that higher administrative levels in institutions and professional societies at different and overlapping levels of resolution should aim to be more proactive in promoting good departmental environments. Departments can take action too and we have presented evidence-based, constructive strategies toward these goals. Looking forward, we anticipate the need for more infrastructure development to encourage explicit self-reflection on our disciplinary norms toward improving working environments. Professional organizations like the PSA, in particular, should explicitly aim to

continue and expand the active promotion of the support identified here to departments and to individual philosophers of science.

Acknowledgements. The authors would like to thank attendees at the panel discussion from the 2022 biennial meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association (PSA), organized by members of the PSA's Caucus for Inclusion. Discussion at that event inspired the research for this paper. We extend sincere thanks to three insightful referees, our handling editor and Editor-in-Chief, Jim Weatherall, and *Philosophy of Science*'s editorial team for seeing the potential in what this paper could be. It matters that philosophers of science engage in these debates and that we bring our perspective to the table. The authors would also like to thank UMass Lowell's Provost Office for providing funds to make this article's open access possible.

Supplementary material. To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10.1017/psa.2025.12

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Cite this article: McConwell, Alison K., Magdalena T. Bogacz, Char Brecevic, Matthew H. Haber, Jingyi Wu, and Sarah M. Roe. 2025. "Changing Working Environments in Philosophy: Reflections from a Case Study." *Philosophy of Science* 92 (3):708–731. https://doi.org/10.1017/psa.2025.12