Philosophy's Excluded Voices

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McGill Policy

Employment Equity Policy

McGill is dedicated to "developing policies, programs, practices and traditions that facilitate the members of historically disadvantaged groups in Canada […] by eliminating direct, indirect and systemic discrimination"

McGill Policy on Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Discrimination Prohibited by Law

Section 2.6 defines discrimination prohibited by law as "any action, behavior, or decision based on race, colour, sex (including gender identity), pregnancy, sexual orientation, civil status, age, religion, political conviction, language, ethnic or national origin, social condition, a disability"

Section 2.7 defines harassment as: "any vexatious behavior […] in the form of repeated hostile or unwanted conduct, verbal comments, actions or gestures, that affect the dignity or psychological or physical integrity of a Member of the University Community and that results in a harmful environment for such an individual"

In the above policies, McGill recognizes direct, indirect and systemic discrimination, and offers legal definitions of discrimination and harassment. These policies raise the question of what other types of discrimination ought to be recognized within the university context.

Discrimination

Discrimination in Philosophy

Philosophy continues to have a gender gap that not only harms the individuals who are excluded from the field, but also harms the field itself by limiting the scope of perspectives contributing to discussion. There are several hypotheses to explain the lack of women in philosophy, many of which can also apply to the lack of minorities in the field.

What are the different types of discrimination?

- Structural discrimination
- Direct discrimination
- Indirect discrimination
- Micro-inequities
- Sexual Harassment
- Victimization
- Statistical Discrimination
- Testimonial silencing
- Testimonial smothering
- Hermeneutical injustice

Philosophy

Main hypotheses for the gender gap/underrepresentation of minorities

1. Lack of syllabus diversity
2. Lack of role models
3. Gender schemas
4. Implicit bias causes women/minorities to be underestimated
5. Stereotype threat causes women/minorities to underperform
6. Women and minorities are given less credibility and silenced
7. Hypermasculine culture alienates women
8. Micro-inequities
9. Sexual harassment
10. Genius hypotheses
11. Pipeline problem

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Recommendations

- Syllabus and subject matter diversity
- Attention to equity in hiring and admissions
- Diversity in conference participation
- Diversity in promotional materials
- Emphasize that expertise in philosophy depends on skill-building not innate talent
- Create a mentorship program
- Create solidarity through e.g. a women in philosophy group
- Promote non-combative argument styles that focus on listening and constructive philosophical dialogue
- Ensure equity guidelines and sexual harassment and violence policies are clearly communicated
- Validate, support and respect people who speak up about discrimination, harassment and sexual violence
- Actively encourage underrepresented groups to enroll in majors and honours philosophy
- Institute strategies that counter implicit bias e.g. anonymous grading policies.