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A bibliometric study of the reviews of small press sociology books

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A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY OF THE
REVIEWS OF SMALL PRESS SOCIOLOGY BOOKS

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the
School of Library and Information Science
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Library and Information Science

By
Robin Louise Babou
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ABSTRACT

A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY OF THE REVIEWS OF SMALL PRESS SOCIOLOGY BOOKS

By Robin Louise Babou

This thesis provides information regarding the effectiveness of book review resources as an aid in identifying small press sociology titles. *Small Press Record of Books in Print* was the source for the 290 book database, published 1985-89, with sociology subjects as defined by the Library of Congress classification system HM-HV. The study determines that small press sociology books, generally, receive as many reviews as other books. The review distribution conforms to Bradford's law, with a small core of periodicals receiving a large percentage of the reviews. No relationship is found between publisher size and the number of reviews their books received. The study used five periodical indexes to identify reviews and found all were productive for the identification of reviews. The subject areas of women's studies, sexuality, and gay and lesbianism received the most reviews, while marriage and family and substance abuse received the fewest reviews.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The choice of selection aids is a critical aspect of successful library collection development. Book reviews have historically had a dominant role in selection decisions. They are an important resource for identification and evaluation of potential books, as well as an aid to determine the appropriateness of an item for a particular collection. Surveys routinely find that librarians rank reviews as the most important tool for making selection decisions (Edelman and Muller 1987, 32; Serebnick and Quinn 1995, 19).

As the larger libraries have instituted mass buying approval plans, the role of reviews as a tool in the selection process has changed. Research has shown that different libraries using the same vendor acquire very similar collections through their approval plans. It is the strategies used to supplement the plans that distinguish the collections (Loup 1988, 44). Book reviews are often the first choice as a supplemental selection aid. Librarians use reviews, often in conjunction with approval plans, not only to identify books for their collection, but also to evaluate the effectiveness of approval plans. Moreover, reviews provide a critical path in identifying

titles published by small companies that approval plans often overlook.

Over the last two decades, many mergers and takeovers have occurred within the publishing industry. This has created large, profit-oriented publishing conglomerates. It is estimated that just ten publishing companies control about 80 percent of the book industry's revenue (Horowitz 1987, 41). These large houses are reluctant to publish books thought to have only a small audience. Unfortunately, this reluctance is not always in the best interests of intellectual diversity. Generally, small publishers are more willing to take chances on new and controversial ideas. The inclusion of their publications helps libraries "provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues," as stated in the American Library Association's "Library Bill of Rights" (1980).

It is an often-held opinion that books of small publishers are underrepresented in library collections. The perceived dearth of small press publications prompted one small publisher to refer to library acquisitions as "one of the black arts," and claim that "the mechanics of magnetohydrodynamics or the precepts of witchdoctoring are less abstruse to me than the methodology and rationale of the librarian" (Smith 1980, 14). The challenge to the

bibliographer is finding comprehensive and effective resources that identify small press titles for consideration. Selectors often must utilize individual selection techniques, as the large approval plan vendors do not provide comprehensive coverage of small press publications. Some of the major vendors do not consider it profitable to provide small press titles; others offer small press books but do not include them in their approval plans (Manoff 1992, 12).

With libraries facing shrinking budgets for acquisitions and staff, it is increasingly difficult for librarians to give adequate consideration to materials requiring individual selection. Studies that identify the most useful review journals and indexes can help librarians make the most efficient use of their time. Knowledge of the most productive resources could be particularly valuable in sociology, where bibliographers must consider many popular secondary books and small press monographs. The identification of important journals and indexes may help selectors find small press books that they may otherwise overlook.

Book reviews can be examined using the techniques of bibliometrics, which Alan Pritchard (1969, 348-49) has described as "seeking to quantify the process of written communication." Bradford's law is one of the major laws

of bibliometrics. According to this law, in a given subject, there are a few journals that publish a relatively high percentage of the articles and there are many journals that publish only a few articles each. This law is named for S. C. Bradford who observed this pattern in 1934 with the distribution of articles on applied geophysics and lubrication in science journals. While most commonly associated with journal productivity for articles in a given field, Bradford's law has been tested and found relevant in a variety of library and information science applications. Chen and Galvin (1975) were among the earliest to apply Bradford's law to book reviews. This current bibliometric study identifies the most productive periodicals for reviews of small press books and determines if the distribution of reviews conforms to Bradford's law.

The diverse subjects and perspectives found in the sociology literature may often be neglected by the major trade and scholarly publishers. These subjects, the focus of many small publishers, are important in the study of contemporary social issues and activism. Collection gaps occur when selectors overlook the more esoteric and ephemeral sociology publications of the small presses. The small press has a history of responding to changing social concerns faster than larger publishers. Small publishers were the first to release black studies texts, as well as

the literature of the new feminism and the anti-war movement of the 1960s (Huenefeld 1985-86, 74).

The current study examines reviews of small press books in the area of sociology. The database consists of books listed in *Small Press Record of Books in Print* (Fulton 1989) with topics that fall into the Library of Congress sociology classification, HM-HV. Sections under this classification include sociology-social history, sexuality, gay and lesbian, marriage and family, childhood and adolescence, women's studies, social and public welfare, substance abuse, and criminology.

The goals of the current study are to determine the number of reviews received by small press sociology books, in comparison to other subjects previously studied, and to provide information regarding the relative effectiveness of book review resources as an aid in the identification of these titles. In so doing, the study endeavors to help bibliographers to efficiently locate and use book reviews when selecting small press sociology books.

To achieve this goal, the study analyzes the reviews of small press sociology books. Specifically, this study examines the productivity of the periodical and index resources and explores the relationship between the number of reviews and the publishers and subject areas of the books.

Information regarding the availability of reviews for these small press titles is provided by determining what percentage of small press sociology books are reviewed, and which periodicals do the reviewing. The study further determines if these small press sociology reviews comprise a fair portion of the publication or only a small percentage of the total reviews the periodical publishes. In addition, the study identifies whether the periodical tends to review books that receive many other reviews or books that receive few other reviews. This information is helpful to the bibliographer deciding which periodicals are the most productive to use in a given situation.

The study will also examine the indexes to tell which indexes are most and least productive for review identification. This information is helpful not only to the bibliographer, but also to the reference librarian and others searching for book reviews.

It is valuable for the bibliographer to know if there are identifiable groups of publishers, or subject areas, that the review media fails to adequately cover. The study provides this information to alert the bibliographer that supplementary selection aids may be needed.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

A careful search of the literature finds numerous studies covering diverse aspects of book reviews. This chapter reviews those studies that provide significant information about the extent of book reviews in particular fields, the identification of core review periodicals, the identification of core publishers of books reviewed, and the thoroughness of indexes.

Core Review Periodicals

The broad goal of the studies in this section is to determine the extent of book reviews and to find the most productive, or core, book review periodicals for a particular subject area. The studies identifying core review periodicals can be divided into two categories based on their methodology: index-based studies and periodical-based studies.

Index-Based Review Identification

Index-based studies rely solely on indexes to identify the periodicals containing reviews of the sample titles. These studies share a common methodology that includes selection of a sample of book titles, a search of *Book Review Index* and up to three additional indexes, and

identification of the published reviews for each title.

Serebnick and Cullars (1984) studied reviews of a random sample of 214 books from the 1981-82 edition of *Small Press Record of Books in Print*. Included were books priced over \$2.50, in English, non-juvenile, and published in 1980, excluding reprints and revised editions. The titles in the sample covered a wide variety of subjects, about 53 percent nonfiction. A search of *Book Review Index*, *Current Book Review Citations*, and *Alternative Press Index* found reviews for 47 percent of the titles. Titles reviewed at least once received an average of 2.4 reviews each (241 reviews of 101 titles). The distribution followed Bradford's law, with a small core of periodicals responsible for most of the reviews. Four periodicals (4 percent) were responsible for the top 34 percent of all reviews, while seventy periodicals (79 percent) accounted for the bottom 33 percent. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 11 percent of the sample.

Murphy and ur Rehman (1987) studied reviews of 604 management monographs listed in the 1981 edition of *American Book Publishing Record*. An examination of *Business Periodicals Index* and *Book Review Index* found reviews for 42 percent of the titles. Books reviewed at least once averaged 2.2 reviews each (564 reviews of 252 titles). The distribution pattern followed Bradford's law.

Four periodicals (4 percent) accounted for the top 34 percent of the reviews, while ninety-four periodicals (82 percent) accounted for the bottom 34 percent. The subgroup of eighteen library and book trade journals (16 percent) was responsible for 38 percent of the total number of reviews. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 8 percent of the sample. The management journal subgroup was much larger, numbering ninety-six journals (84 percent) and 62 percent of the reviews. The top three management journals reviewed an average of 5 percent of the sample. *Personnel Psychology*, the top management journal, reviewed the second highest number of titles overall.

Miranda (1990) studied reviews of books in the areas of physical education, athletics, and sports. The sample, compiled from *Books in Print*, consisted of 446 books published in 1985. A search of *Book Review Index*, *Book Review Digest*, *Physical Education Index*, and *Sports Periodical Index* found only 31 percent of the titles received reviews. The books reviewed at least once averaged 2.4 reviews each (335 reviews of 140 titles). Analysis of the data finds that it followed a Bradfordian pattern. Three periodicals (4 percent) account for the top 31 percent of the reviews, while sixty-nine periodicals (83 percent) account for the bottom 35 percent. The library trade journals were the most productive, accounting for 33

percent of the periodicals and 64 percent of the reviews. The physical education journals accounted for 38 percent of the periodicals but only 20 percent of the reviews. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 7 percent of the sample. The three top physical education journals reviewed an average of 2 percent of the sample. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance*, the top physical education journal, reviewed the eighth highest number of books overall.

Kirby (1991) studied reviews of 291 United States history books listed in *American Book Publishing Record* and published in 1984. A search of *Book Review Index* found 58 percent of the books reviewed. The titles reviewed at least once received an average of 7.5 reviews (1,261 reviews of 169 titles). Kirby notes that this unusually high average indicates United States history books receive a higher number of duplicate reviews than books in other subjects. The distribution pattern is not Bradfordian, which Kirby attributes to a larger than expected number of low-yield periodicals. Further analysis of the data finds that the number of both high-yield and low-yield periodicals are slightly high, leaving the middle zone of periodicals smaller than necessary to conform with Bradford's law. Seven periodicals (5 percent) accounted for the top 34 percent of the reviews, while 120

periodicals (83 percent) accounted for the bottom 33 percent. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 24 percent of the sample. The top three history journals reviewed an average of 15 percent of the sample. *Journal of American History* was the top history journal and reviewed the seventh highest number of books overall.

Serebnick (1992) repeated and expanded upon the study by Serebnick and Cullars (1984). The 1988-89 edition of *Small Press Record of Books in Print* was the source for a random sample of 450 titles. The sample was similar to Serebnick and Cullars' sample, though this sample was more than twice as large and included only titles priced \$3.00 or more. Again, the study included a wide range of subjects, with about 55 percent of the titles nonfiction. A search of *Book Review Index* and *Alternative Press Index* found less than 39 percent of the titles received reviews, a drop of 8 percent from the previous study. Titles reviewed at least once received an average of 2.4 reviews (418 reviews of 175 titles), identical to the previous study. Five periodicals (4 percent) were responsible for the top 32 percent of the reviews, while 105 periodicals (77 percent) accounted for the bottom 31 percent. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 7 percent of the sample, down 4 percent from the previous study. *Library Journal* discontinued a small press review

article published annually during Serebnick and Cullars's previous study and was responsible for most of the drop in reviews overall.

Sweetland and Christensen (1995) studied reviews of gay, lesbian, and bisexual books cited in *Lambda Book Report*, as well as a control group of books reviewed by *Publishers Weekly*. Two samples were obtained from *Lambda Book Report*, the main sample contained thirty-five titles from the January-February 1992 issue; the award winner sample included the twenty Lambda Book Award winners for 1992. The *Publishers Weekly* sample consisted of ninety-nine titles listed in the January 27, 1992 issue. *Book Review Index* was searched to determine the total number of reviews for each of the samples. The main *Lambda Book Report* sample received a mean of 5.5 reviews each. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 23 percent of this main sample. The award winners sample received a mean of 7.7 reviews, and the *Publishers Weekly* sample received a mean of 8.1 reviews. The authors concluded that books on gay, lesbian, and bisexual themes, even those which receive a literary award, tend to get fewer reviews than titles selected at random.

Five of the index-based studies found reviews for 31-58 percent of the books in their samples. The studies of small press titles did not find a significantly lower

percentage of books reviewed than did the other three studies. Taken together, the two small press studies averaged 43 percent of titles reviewed, quite close to the 43.7 percent combined average found in the other three studies.

The findings regarding the average number of reviews per book vary. Four of the studies found that books reviewed at least once received an average of 2.2-2.4 reviews each. Two other studies found much higher averages of 5.5-8.1 reviews each for United States history books, gay, lesbian, and bisexual books, and books reviewed by *Publishers Weekly*.

Bradford's law applied to the review periodicals in four of the index-based studies, with Kirby's examination of history books again being an exception. Kirby's study nevertheless followed a similar distribution pattern. The data found in regard to a core of the top review periodicals are very consistent, with all five studies finding 4-5 percent of the periodicals responsible for the top third of the reviews. However, the studies differed with regard to the bottom third of the reviews. The small press studies found an average of 78 percent of the periodicals responsible for the bottom third, while the other studies found an average of 83 percent. Likewise, to locate 80 percent of the reviews, the small press studies

needed an average of 43 percent of the periodicals, while the other three studies needed an average of only 31 percent. These percentage differences indicate a less concentrated core of the most productive periodicals for the small press books. This may be due to the small press studies covering many different subjects, while the other three studies were subject specific. Sweetland and Christensen's study did not provide sufficient data to determine if Bradford's law applied.

The studies consistently found that the core review periodicals were the library and book trade journals. Despite spreading their reviews over a broad range of topics, the large volume of reviews they publish makes it hard for subject-specific periodicals to match their numbers. *Library Journal*, *Choice*, and *Booklist* reviewed an average of 7-11 percent of the sample in four studies, but 23 percent of gay, lesbian, and bisexual titles, and 24 percent of the history titles. The top subject-specific periodicals reviewed an average of 2-5 percent of the physical education and management books, but 15 percent of the history books.

Periodical-Based Review Identification

Periodical-based studies use a preselected list of periodicals and either examine those periodicals directly

or use an index to locate reviews in only those periodicals. These studies use a wide range of methodologies, so they cannot be directly compared to the same extent as the index-based studies.

The studies of Ching-Chih Chen were the first to identify the most productive reviewing periodicals for a specialized subject area. Chen and Wright (1974) studied book reviews in fifty-four biomedical journals. The journals were chosen from titles received by the Science Library at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The study found reviews for 2,067 books during 1970, with an average of 1.6 reviews per book (3,347 reviews of 2,067 titles). Just four journals (7 percent) accounted for the top 37 percent of the reviews, and the top nineteen journals (35 percent) accounted for 80 percent of the reviews.

Chen and Galvin (1975) studied book reviews in the field of library science. The sample, compiled from numerous sources, consisted of 222 library science monographs published in 1971. A search of twenty-two preselected library and information science journals found 74 percent of the titles were reviewed at least once. The titles received an average of 2.3 reviews each (372 reviews of 164 titles). Two journals (9 percent) were responsible for the top third (43 percent) of all reviews, while the

top seven journals (32 percent) published 80 percent of all reviews. *Library Journal* alone reviewed 76 percent of the titles reviewed more than once.

Serebnick (1981) studied reviews of nonfiction books considered potentially controversial due to sex content. *American Book Publishing Record* and catalogs of the Library of Congress and the Institute for Sex Research were the sources for a sample of 602 books, published 1972-74. A search of *Book Review Index* identified reviews in six preselected review periodicals considered the most frequently used in public libraries. The study found that 64 percent of the potentially controversial books were reviewed at least once by the six periodicals. The titles received an average of 2.6 reviews each (1,015 reviews of 385 titles). A comparison of the percentage of potentially controversial books reviewed and the total number of adult books reviewed in each periodical found that *Choice* reviewed proportionally fewer potentially controversial books, while *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus* reviewed more. Serebnick suggests that this may be due to extensive use of *Publishers Weekly* and *Kirkus* by trade booksellers who find that books about sex sell well. *Library Journal* reviewed the most titles overall, including 42 percent of those titles reviewed only once.

Morton (1983) conducted a smaller study based on the methodology of Chen and Wright (1974). This study examined 25 biomedical journals from those recommended for small medical libraries by the Brandon list. The study found 1,814 books reviewed during 1981, receiving an average of 1.3 reviews each (2,319 reviews of 1,814 titles). Morton found nearly 70 percent of the number of reviews located by Chen and Wright's study despite using 54 percent fewer journals. Just two journals (8 percent) accounted for the top third (35 percent) of reviews, while the top eleven journals (44 percent) were responsible for 81 percent of reviews. Morton noted the need for a source for bibliographic control of medical book reviews because *Index Medicus* and *MEDLINE* do not include book reviews. Unfortunately, *Science Citation Index* limits book review coverage to only three journals.

Webreck and Weedman (1986) repeated the study of Chen and Galvin (1975), looking at twenty-two professional journals for reviews of 204 library science monographs published in 1983. The study found that only 67 percent of the titles were reviewed at least once, down 5 percent from Chen and Galvin's study. The authors suggested that the reviewing media could not keep up with the growth in publications over the twelve-year period. The extent of overlap was very similar to the previous study, with titles

reviewed at least once receiving an average of 2.4 reviews each (512 reviews of 214 titles). This study found a less concentrated core of top journals than Chen and Galvin found. The top three journals (14 percent) published 37 percent of all reviews, and the top nine journals (41 percent) accounted for 80 percent of all reviews.

Degnan (1994) studied reviews of books for adult children of alcoholics. The sample included thirty titles, published 1982-91. *Book Review Index* was used to identify reviews in six major review periodicals. The study found that seven (23 percent) of the books were reviewed at least once by the six periodicals. Those seven titles received an average of 2.9 reviews each. The most productive periodical was *Library Journal* with five reviews (17 percent); the least productive was *New York Times Book Review* with one review (3 percent).

Serebnick and Quinn (1995) provided additional review data on four controversial topics as part of a larger study to develop a method for measuring diversity of opinion in public library collections. Titles chosen by librarians as representative of their diverse holdings were examined for reviews in six major review journals. The study found that thirty-five (48 percent) of the seventy-three abortion titles received at least one review. Those thirty-five

titles received an average of 2.4 reviews each. Further, 72 percent of the pro-abortion titles were reviewed, compared to 11 percent of the anti-abortion titles. Large publishers published many of the pro-abortion titles, while none of the anti-abortion titles came from large trade publishers, and most were from religious book publishers. Of the forty-three capital punishment titles, seventeen (40 percent) were reviewed at least once, receiving an average of 1.2 reviews each, and without significant difference between pro and anti titles. Of ninety-five disarmament titles, fifty-six (59 percent) were reviewed at least once, receiving an average of 2.9 reviews each. In addition, 62 percent of the pro-disarmament titles were reviewed, compared to 92 percent of the anti-disarmament titles. Of the sixty-seven euthanasia titles, forty-one (61 percent) were reviewed at least once, with an average of 2.2 reviews each. Further, 63 percent of the pro-euthanasia titles were reviewed compared to 43 percent of the anti-euthanasia titles.

The periodical-based studies found a much wider range for the percentage of their sample titles reviewed than did those that were index-based. The two studies examining library science titles found an average of nearly 71 percent reviewed, while 64 percent of books controversial due to sex content received reviews. These are both

substantially higher than the average 43 percent found in studies relying on indexes. In the case of library science, this may be due to librarians being more book-review oriented than practitioners in other fields. Likewise, books about sex may receive wider than average coverage. Substantially fewer, only 23 percent, of the books for adult children of alcoholics were reviewed.

The average number of reviews per book found in most of the periodical-based studies were similar to those found in the studies relying on indexes, with titles reviewed at least once averaging 2.2-2.9 reviews each. However, the studies of biomedical titles together averaged only 1.5 reviews each and the capital punishment titles received an average of 1.2 reviews each.

The periodical-based studies reporting such data found 7-14 percent of the journals responsible for 35-43 percent of the reviews, indicating a less concentrated core of periodicals than was found in the index-based studies. This may be due to the different nature of the subjects studied, namely the more specialized biomedicine and library science fields. It is also possible, however, that the periodical-based studies may not have included all of the most productive periodicals in their preselected list.

Core Publishers of Books Reviewed

A common goal of the studies in this section is to determine if a core, or small group, of publishers are responsible for most of the books receiving reviews. These studies use a wide range of methodologies, as the identification of publishers is not always the primary goal.

Noble and Noble (1974) studied nearly 4,000 reviews appearing in twelve British newspapers in 1973. Some 251 publishers received reviews during the period, but only thirty-three publishers (13 percent) received nearly two-thirds of all reviews. The average number of reviews for the top thirty-three publishers was seventy-seven, while the average for the other 218 publishers was only five.

Chen (1974) also examined the publishers of books reviewed in the study of biomedical books described previously. While 161 different American publishers had titles among the 2,067 books reviewed, 66 percent of the titles came from less than 16 percent of the publishers. The top seven publishers (4 percent) produced 34 percent of all the books reviewed.

Morton (1983) found that the top ten publishers (3 percent) accounted for 33 percent of the books reviewed, and 35 percent of the reviews. Morton's percentage findings are nearly identical to Chen's. However, during

the nine years between the two studies there was remarkable growth in the number of biomedical publishers. Chen's study found 161 publishers for 2,067 books, while Morton found 291 publishers for only 1,814 books.

Serebnick (1984) collected data on publishers of non-fiction books, published in 1972-74 and 1978-80, and reviewed in six review periodicals used extensively in public libraries. Findings for the two time periods were similar, with the top 6-8 percent of publishers responsible for 29-36 percent of the books reviewed, and 39-41 percent of the reviews, with each book receiving an average of four reviews. The bottom 66-75 percent of publishers accounted for 31-36 percent of books reviewed, and 19-27 percent of all the reviews, with an average of two reviews for each title.

Bridges (1989) examined book reviews in six American history journals from 1985-87. The study found that more than 90 percent of the titles reviewed were from major trade and university presses. Bridges concluded that those who would like to collect comprehensively in American history, including material published by minor trade presses, associations, historical societies, libraries, or the federal government, should not rely on scholarly history journals to alert them to these publications.

The two studies of small press titles did not find a core of publishers accounting for most of the titles reviewed. Serebnick and Cullars (1984) found 54 percent of the publishers had at least one title reviewed. Of the eighty-one publishers receiving reviews, 79 percent had only one book reviewed, 19 percent had two books, and 2 percent had three books. Serebnick (1992) found a similar pattern, though lower percentage of reviews, with 43 percent of the publishers receiving at least one review. Of the 139 publishers receiving reviews, 86 percent had only one book reviewed, 9 percent had two books, 3 percent had three books, and 3 percent had four books.

The studies that examined the publishers of books reviewed did not provide sufficient data to make statistical comparisons between them meaningful. However, they all found a core of publishers responsible for most of the titles reviewed, except for those examining small press books. The elimination of large publishers from these studies is a possible explanation for the lack of a core of publishers. The wide variety of subjects in the books examined by the small press studies, however, also may have influenced this finding.

Index Evaluation

The goal of the studies in this section is to evaluate the thoroughness of periodical indexes, or how well the indexes cover periodicals they claim to index. Three of the studies evaluate the indexing of periodical articles in general, while one looks specifically at book review indexing. They all determined how well the indexes cover various subject areas.

Spencer (1986) studied book review indexing in several subject areas. Ten indexes were examined, including *Book Review Index*, *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, and three subject indexes published by the H. W. Wilson Company: *General Science Index*, *Humanities Index*, and *Education Index*. In each subject area, Spencer checked the appropriate indexes for citations to book reviews in three or four specific journals. *Book Review Index* included citations to 98.3 percent of the reviews in three subject areas. *General Science Index* cited 88.2 percent of the science reviews, while *Education Index* cited only 68.9 percent of the education reviews. *Humanities Index* cited 92.2 percent of the U.S. history reviews, and 95 percent of the philosophy reviews. The three Wilson indexes included an average of 86.1 percent of the reviews. *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* identified 99.2 percent of the humanities reviews.

DeBoer (1989) examined index coverage of articles on the Cuban Missile Crisis. *Social Sciences Citation Index* was among the five indexes searched. Also included was the H. W. Wilson Company's *International Index*, which changed its name to *Social Sciences and Humanities Index*, and thereafter split into *Social Sciences Index* and *Humanities Index*. DeBoer considered these Wilson indexes jointly as one index. Indexing thoroughness was examined based on the source list for each index. *Social Sciences Citation Index* cited 60.5 percent of the articles under obvious subject headings, cited another 25.6 percent under less than obvious headings, and did not cite 13.9 percent. The Wilson indexes cited 54.4 percent under obvious headings, cited another 5.9 percent under less than obvious headings, and did not cite 39.7 percent, though Wilson claims complete indexing.

LaRose (1989) studied index coverage of communications journals. Eight indexes, including *Social Sciences Index* and *Sociological Abstracts*, were searched for citations to articles in twelve communications journals. *Social Sciences Index* indexed only one of the journals and cited 78.8 percent of that journal's articles. *Sociological Abstracts* cited from 3.4-21.2 percent in the six journals it indexed, averaging 10.4 percent each.

Mesplay and Koch (1993) studied index coverage of women's studies periodicals. Eight indexes were searched for citations to articles in seventeen periodicals. The indexes included *Social Sciences Index*, *Alternative Press Index*, and *Sociological Abstracts*. *Social Sciences Index* covered seven periodicals and cited 99.7 percent of the possible 291 articles, the highest of all the indexes studied. *Alternative Press Index* covered eight periodicals and cited 98.7 percent of the possible 235 citations. *Sociological Abstracts* indexed eleven periodicals and cited 39.9 percent of the possible 383 citations.

The findings of these index evaluation studies varied widely by index. *Book Review Index* cited 98 percent of the possible citations, and *Alternative Press Index* included 99 percent. The Institute of Scientific Information's citation indexes were examined twice. The *Arts and Humanities Citation Index* included 99 percent of the possible citations, while the *Social Sciences Citation Index* cited 86 percent. The studies evaluated the Wilson indexes seven times and found an average of 83 percent cited. *Sociological Abstracts*, was evaluated twice, with an average of only 25 percent cited.

Related References

These related references provide further relevant data, though they do not fit into the previous sections of this chapter. Included is information on reviews of small press, sociology, and women's studies books.

Fox (1990) studied the usefulness of *Choice* by comparing it to *Contemporary Sociology*, an official journal of the American Sociological Association that publishes about 780 book reviews annually. The study found that 59 percent of the titles reviewed in the sociology section of *Choice*, and 32 percent of the titles reviewed in the social and behavioral sciences section, also received reviews in *Contemporary Sociology*. Fifty-five percent of the titles reviewed in *Contemporary Sociology* also received reviews in *Choice*, but only 36 percent of these reviews were in the sociology or social and behavioral sciences sections of *Choice*. Fox had expected a higher degree of overlap because *Choice* has annually reviewed only a quarter of the number of sociology titles as compared to *Contemporary Sociology*. The study concluded that what *Choice* reviews is not what is of greatest interest to the field, and cautioned librarians against relying solely on *Choice* for selection decisions.

Willett (1989) studied a sample of thirty-two politically controversial monographs to determine how many

Choice reviewed. The study found that *Choice* reviewed 50 percent of the sample titles. Willett also reported a survey of small presses who publish politically controversial books. Five of the publishers reported sending galley proofs or hardbound copies of all their new books to *Choice*, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. They estimated that 2-50 percent of these receive reviews, with a median of 20 percent.

Willett's paper also noted that in 1988, Patricia E. Sabosik, editor and publisher of *Choice*, said preliminary results of an internal study showed that the chance of a small press book being reviewed in *Choice* was better than in other review journals. Likewise, in a *Choice* editorial, Virginia Clark (1990) stated that *Choice* probably reviews more women's studies titles than any other journal. During the 1980s, reviews of women's studies material rose from 4.1 to 6.7 percent of all *Choice* book reviews, with an average of about thirty-six per issue during 1987-89. Clark pointed out that the first five issues of the 1989-90 volume of *Women's Review of Books*, by comparison, averaged fourteen long, essay style reviews discussing nineteen titles, plus a supplementary "Books Received" list of fifty-seven titles.

Summary and Evaluation

This chapter has reviewed the literature related to the quantity of book reviews and the average number of reviews per book in particular fields, the identification of core review journals, the identification of core publishers of books reviewed, and the thoroughness of periodical indexes. Findings of the studies included in this literature review indicate:

1. Small press books are reviewed with nearly the same frequency as other books.

2. Journals publishing most of the book reviews in a particular field can be identified and will usually follow a predictable, Bradfordian pattern.

3. The top core journals for reviews are usually library and trade journals, rather than subject-specific journals.

4. The average number of reviews per book varies, with books reviewed at least once often receiving an average of 2.2-2.4 reviews, but sometimes receiving as many as 8.1 reviews.

The unique findings of the two small press studies raise further research issues. These two studies found a somewhat larger percentage of periodicals responsible for the top two-thirds of the reviews, when compared to other studies. They also found that there was no core of

publishers responsible for most books reviewed, in contrast to other studies. To what extent were these findings due to the titles being small press? To what extent were they due to the wide variety of subjects included? The current study addresses these issues by focusing on the sociology publications of small publishers.

As the previous studies have reported only minimal findings on indexes, other questions and concerns emerge. Though four of the studies identifying core review periodicals used multiple indexes, not one analyzed the data by individual index. Which of these indexes were most useful? What was the extent of their respective contributions? None of these studies included any of the citation indexes published by the Institute of Scientific Information, despite the large volume of reviews they index. The only index evaluation study that examined book review citations did not include the social science indexes. The current study contributes to the literature by examining book review coverage in three social science indexes, including *Social Sciences Citation Index*.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The goal of the current study is to provide information regarding the relative effectiveness of book review resources as an aid in the identification of small press sociology titles. To achieve this goal, the study analyzes the reviews of small press sociology books.

One of the objectives of this study is to determine the degree to which findings compare with previous studies. For this reason, the source of the database and the method of analyzing the periodicals by number of books reviewed were based on the previous studies of Serebnick and Cullars (1984) and Serebnick (1992). However, the current study goes beyond these previous studies by examining the periodicals in greater depth, as well as analyzing the publishers, indexes, and subject areas.

Compilation of Database

Small Press Record of Books in Print, 1989-90, was the source of the database. *Small Press Record of Books in Print* is a standard, annual reference source listing publications of small publishers. While not comprehensive, it is the best source available for relatively easy access to many current small press titles. The 1989-90 edition

includes some 25,000 individual listings from more than 2,500 small publishers. The geographical scope is worldwide; however, the majority of the publishers are American, with some Canadian and British publishers represented as well.

Inclusion in *Small Press Record of Books in Print* was the only criterion used to determine if a publisher would be categorized as a small publisher. During data collection, some of the publishers were found to publish as many as 290 books annually according to *Literary Market Place*. This is larger than one might expect given the designation "small press." Nonetheless, all of the publishers remained in this study for the purpose of comparison to previous studies that used the same database source.

A careful search of the 1989-90 edition of *Small Press Record of Books in Print* identified all books with possible sociology subject content and published from 1985-89. This timeframe was chosen to obtain a database large enough for meaningful data to result, while also allowing time for the reviews to be published and indexed by early 1993 when collection of the data began.

To identify all possible sociology titles, the search utilized the author index of *Small Press Record of Books in Print*. In addition to the standard bibliographic data,

most entries in this index include short contents notes. This proved helpful in determining subject, which was often not apparent from the title alone. Though a subject index does exist, it is extremely poor, with many titles listed under obviously wrong subjects. Therefore, the author index, with the content notes, was the most appropriate to use for this study. All titles appearing even remotely likely to be sociology titles were noted to avoid overlooking appropriate titles.

The search identified over one thousand possible titles. A subsequent verification confirmed the bibliographic data and subject content. The current database was limited to titles verifiable through OCLC or RLIN. *American Book Publishing Record* and *Cumulative Book Index* were also checked but resulted in no additional verifications. Previous studies found verification necessary, as there are numerous errors in the *Small Press Record of Books in Print* listings. The verification process eliminated books with incorrect publication dates, children's books, reprints, and revised editions.

Limiting the current database to titles included in OCLC or RLIN may have introduced a bias tending to exaggerate the percentage of small press titles that received reviews. Titles not contained in these two sources would be more obscure and so less likely to receive

reviews. However, including nonverified titles in the final database would have introduced a bias in the opposite direction by inadvertently including titles that were reprints, published prior to 1985, or never actually published at all.

The verification process served not only as a check for errors in the bibliographic data, but also as a means of confirming the sociology subject content. For the purpose of this study, sociology is defined by the Library of Congress classification system, subclasses HM-HV, as indicated in OCLC or RLIN. This study recognizes that the Library of Congress sociology classification may not be all encompassing for the field. There may be topics that sociologists consider part of their discipline that are not included in the subclasses HM-HV. However, it was important for this study to have an objective basis to decide which books to include. The Library of Congress system provided that verifiable, objective basis.

The final database resulting from the verification process consists of 290 books issued by 157 publishers. The search for all sociology titles, as defined by the Library of Congress subclasses HM-HV, resulted in the following: 24 titles in HM for general works and theory of sociology; 18 titles in HN for social history and conditions, social problems, and social reform; 161 titles

in HQ for family, marriage, and women; 2 titles in HS for societies; 2 titles in HT for communities, classes, and races; and 83 titles in HV for social pathology, social and public welfare, and criminology.

Dividing the database by Library of Congress subclass finds a large number of books in the HQ subclass. A relatively high percentage of these titles are on the subject of gay and lesbianism. For comparison, *Books for College Libraries* (Association of College and Research Libraries 1988) lists nearly fourteen times as many books on women's studies as on gay and lesbianism, yet in the current small press database, the number of books in these two areas is equal. Gay and lesbianism is clearly a subject with many small press titles.

The database includes only two titles in the Library of Congress HT subclass, both with urban sociology topics. The HT subclass covers the subject areas of cities, class, and race. Before the verification process, many titles appearing to have class or race related topics were identified for possible inclusion in the database. However, during the verification these books were found in classes other than HT, most often in GN and E. Ethnicity topics are in the GN subclass. Topics on minority groups and race relations in the United States are in the E class. The race section of the HT subclass is for global and

foreign regional topics. Typically, a much larger number of books are classified in the race relations section of E than are classified in the race section of HT. Even so, the number of HT subclass books in the current study is very small.

Identification of Reviews

Book Review Index, Alternative Press Index, Social Sciences Citation Index, Social Sciences Index, and Sociological Abstracts were used to identify reviews for each book. Each of the five indexes was examined for the period 1984-92. The 1984 volumes included prepublication reviews. If the same journal included more than one review of a particular title, this study counted only the first review. An index card was made for each of the 290 books, and all reviews cited were noted on the card.

Book Review Index provides access to reviews appearing in a wide range of popular, academic, and professional publications. The 1990 edition included 132,000 reviews appearing in more than 500 publications. Both the print and online formats were searched for reviews. The online version was useful for determining the total number of reviews various periodicals published in order to calculate the concentration rate for small press sociology titles.

Alternative Press Index indexes social change publications covering many of the topics of this study's database including feminism, and gay and lesbianism. It does not index conservative publications. The 1990 volume indexed approximately 250 publications, and included citations to approximately 2,800 book reviews. *Alternative Press Index's* guidelines specify that items cited must be at least five paragraphs long. Accordingly, the number of possible citations for this index is limited to reviews five or more paragraphs in length.

Social Sciences Citation Index is a comprehensive index to publications in all of the social sciences. The 1990 volumes fully covered approximately 1,400 journals and selectively covered another 3,300, with citations to 36,235 book reviews included. This study examined both the print and online formats.

Social Sciences Index is an index to journals in all of the social sciences. The 1989-90 volume indexed more than 350 journals, with citations to over 8,600 book reviews. The guidelines for this index indicate exclusion of book notes, without specifying a definition of book note. Spencer (1986, 189) found that *Humanities Index*, another index published by the H. W. Wilson Company, excludes reviews less than one-half page long. Because this publisher follows the same format in *Social Sciences*

Index, the current study included only reviews at least one-half page long in the number of possible citations for this index.

Sociological Abstracts is an index with abstracts to journals in sociology and closely related fields. *Sociological Abstracts* journal list includes approximately 200 journals that receive full coverage, 850 journals with partial coverage, and 740 journals with infrequent coverage. This index cited 7,293 book reviews in 1990. This study used the online format, *Sociofile*, exclusively. The book review section in print format is very cumbersome to use, and the CD-ROM format does not include book reviews.

Analysis of Data

After noting the review citations in each index, the data on the index cards were entered into a database program for analysis. The reviews were sorted and counted, and then analyzed by periodical, publisher, index, and subject. The results are explained using descriptive statistics.

The periodical analysis included determining if a small group of highly productive periodicals was responsible for a large percentage of the reviews. These few highly productive periodicals constitute what is often

referred to as the "core" periodicals. Bradford's law is the basis for this concept of core periodicals.

Samuel Clement Bradford (1878-1948) first showed that the distribution of periodical articles on a given subject follows a predictable pattern. Bradford expressed concern that the abstracting and indexing services did not provide complete access to the periodical literature. To illustrate the problem, he examined the literature of applied geophysics and lubrication. Looking at his data, he derived what is now known as Bradford's law:

...if scientific journals are arranged in order of decreasing productivity of articles on a given subject, they may be divided into a nucleus of periodicals more particularly devoted to the subject and several groups or zones containing the same number of articles as the nucleus, when the number of periodicals in the nucleus and succeeding zones will be as 1:n:n²... (Bradford 1934, 99)

Drott (1981) provides a basic, clear explanation of Bradford's 1934 data and the steps he took to arrive at the mathematical formula $1 : n : n^2$. Drott says that Bradford first examined all of the journal titles contributing to a bibliography on applied geophysics. After arranging the journals from most to least productive, he divided the journals into three groups contributing a roughly equal number of articles. The first nine journals, the core, contributed 429 articles. The next 59 journals contributed 499 articles. The last 258 journals contributed 404

articles. Bradford discovered regularity in calculating the number of journals in each of the three groups: (a) 9 journals, (b) 9 x 5 journals (equals 45 journals), and (c) 9 x 5 x 5 journals (equals 225 journals). Thus, journal groups contributing a roughly equal number of articles are shown as $9 : 9 \times 5 : 9 \times 5^2$. Because the size of the core, nine, and the multiplier, five, might be different for other searches, the groups are divided by nine and the multiplier is replaced with a variable. This is how Bradford arrived at the formula $1 : n : n^2$, according to Drott's explanation.

In the decades since Bradford's original work, his name has been most commonly associated with journal productivity. However, Bradford's law has also been extended to a wide range of other library and information science concerns. Previous studies have applied Bradford's law to the identification of the most productive review sources for a given subject (Chen and Galvin 1975; Kirby 1991; Murphy and ur Rehman 1987; Serebnick 1992; Serebnick and Cullars 1984). The current study determines if the distribution of reviews conforms to Bradford's law, using the formula $1 : n : n^2$ (Bradford 1934).

The concentration and overlap rates provide further information about the periodicals. The concentration rate is the number of small press sociology reviews in a given

periodical, per thousand total reviews the periodical publishes. The rate was calculated by dividing the number of total reviews published by one thousand then multiplying it by the number of small press sociology reviews published by each periodical. The online format of *Book Review Index* was searched for the total number of reviews each periodical published 1985-90, excluding juvenile titles. While this method limits the data to periodicals covered by *Book Review Index*, there is no other adequate source for data on total reviews published by given periodicals. To provide a fair comparison for the same time period, small press sociology reviews appearing later than 1990 are not included in the data.

Concentration rate information is an important addition to the identification of the core periodicals. Evaluating the productivity of review periodicals based solely on the total number of small press sociology reviews they publish favors larger periodicals and those published more frequently. Smaller periodicals and those published less frequently are less likely to publish the large number of reviews necessary to rank among the core periodicals, even if the periodical was largely devoted to small press sociology reviews.

The overlap rate for a given periodical is the average number of total reviews received by the small press

sociology books that periodical reviewed. This rate indicates if a periodical tends to review books also reviewed by many other periodicals, or books that receive few other reviews.

The publishers are examined to determine if there is a relationship between the number of reviews and the size of the publisher, based on the number of books published annually. *Literary Market Place* was the source for annual publishing figures. Unfortunately, many of the publishers are not included in *Literary Market Place*. It is difficult to obtain data to determine publisher size, as the available resources are incomplete and inconsistent in the type of information provided. After an examination of the options, *Literary Market Place* was chosen as the best source for the current study.

Data on the overlap of review citations for each of the five indexes indicate the number of unique citations that are not found in any other index, as well as the number of citations found in one other index, and the number found in two or more other indexes. This information is valuable in evaluating the productivity of an index. When consulting multiple indexes the overlap rate is helpful in determining which indexes are likely to provide additional, unique citations.

For the purposes of this study, the possible citations for an index is defined as the total number of reviews found in the current study that were from periodicals on the index's source list. It should be noted that, since the reviews were located using the indexes, only reviews cited by at least one index in this study are included. As there may be reviews missed by all five indexes, the actual number of possible citations may be somewhat higher. However, the possible citations used herein should provide an effective mechanism for comparing the thoroughness of the indexes.

The books were grouped into subject areas for analysis. The subject areas were defined as follows: sociology/social history HM15-291, HN, HS, and HT; sexuality HQ15-72 and HQ77-471; gay and lesbian HQ75-76; marriage and family HQ536-767 and HQ801-1090; childhood and adolescence HQ769-99; women's studies HQ1154-2039; social and public welfare HV16-4708; substance abuse HV4998-5824; and criminology HV6025-9950.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This analysis of small press sociology book reviews divides data into sections for periodicals, publishers, indexes, and subjects. The first section is an analysis of periodicals, with respect to quantity of reviews, identification of a core group, concentration rates, and overlap rates. The next section studies publishers, with identification of a core group, and examination of the relationship between publisher size and review quantity. The third section examines indexes, with regard to quantity of citations, extent of overlap, and thoroughness of coverage. The final section explores the identified sociology subject areas, and considers quantity of reviews, top periodicals, and the number of index citations.

Periodicals

This section is an analysis of periodicals, with respect to quantity of reviews, identification of a core group, concentration rates, and overlap rates.

Table 1 displays data on the number of reviews for the 290 books in the database. The table shows that 206 books (71 percent) received one or more reviews, while 84 books (29 percent) received no reviews. Of the books reviewed at least once, 58 books (20 percent) received one review, 76

(26 percent) received two to four reviews, and 72 (25 percent) received five or more reviews, including 12 (4 percent) that received ten to sixteen reviews each. The remainder of this study will focus on the 206 books from the database that received one or more reviews.

The current study found that 71 percent of the books were reviewed at least once, while the previous index-based studies found only 31-58 percent reviewed. These earlier studies used a maximum of four indexes and the small press study by Serebnick (1992) used only *Book Review Index* and *Alternative Press Index*. The current study utilized five indexes, increasing the likelihood of locating reviews. Still, when including only reviews cited by *Book Review Index* and *Alternative Press Index*, nearly 65 percent of the titles in the current study received at least one review. The current finding is high relative to most, but not all, previous studies. The periodical-based study of Chen and Galvin (1975) found 74 percent of library science books reviewed.

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF PERIODICAL REVIEWS PER BOOK

Number of Periodical Reviews	Number of Books	Number of Periodical Reviews	Number of Books
16	1	4	16
15	1	3	33
14	1	2	<u>27</u>
13	1		76 (26%)
12	3		
11	4	1	58 (20%)
10	1		
9	9	0	84 (29%)
8	9		—
7	11		
6	14	Total	290
5	<u>17</u>		
	72 (25%)		

Table 2 displays data for the relative productivity of the review periodicals. The table shows 261 periodicals reviewed one or more of the 206 books, resulting in a total of 822 reviews. The top 9 periodicals (3 percent), each reviewed nineteen to fifty-nine books, accounting for about one-third of all reviews. These 9 periodicals constitute the "core." It took 48 periodicals (18 percent), each reviewing three to sixteen books, to locate the second third of the reviews, and 204 periodicals (78 percent), each reviewing one to two books, to locate the final third.

TABLE 2
 PERIODICALS BY NUMBER OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Number of Periodicals	Periodical(s)	Reviews per Periodical	Total Reviews
1	<i>Booklist</i>	58	58
1	<i>Library Journal</i>	45	45
1	<i>Choice</i>	39	39
1	<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	31	31
1	<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	29	29
1	<i>New Directions for Women</i>	24	24
1	<i>Publishers Weekly</i>	22	22
1	<i>Gay Community News</i>	21	21
<u>1</u>	<i>Small Press</i>	17	<u>17</u>
9 (3%)			286 (35%)
1	<i>American Reference Books Annual</i>	15	15
1	<i>Off Our Backs</i>	14	14
3	<i>Belles Lettres; Bookwatch;</i> <i>Voice of Youth Advocates</i>	12	36
3	<i>Book Report; West Coast Review of</i> <i>Books; Wilson Library Bulletin</i>	10	30
2	<i>Kliatt; Lambda Book Report</i>	8	16
3	<i>Contemporary Sociology; New Pages;</i> <i>New York Times Book Review</i>	7	21
6	<i>Advocate; Books in Canada;</i> <i>Kirkus Reviews; Reference and</i> <i>Research Book News; Rites;</i> <i>School Library Journal</i>	6	36
6	<i>Briarpatch; Guardian; Lesbian</i> <i>Contradiction; Ms.; Quill and</i> <i>Quire; RQ</i>	5	30
7	<i>Body Politic; Book World;</i> <i>Contemporary Psychology;</i> <i>Kinesis; Nation; NWSA Journal;</i> <i>Third World Quarterly</i>	4	28
<u>16</u>	Periodicals with 3 reviews each	3	<u>48</u>
48 (18%)			274 (33%)
58	Periodicals with 2 reviews each	2	116
<u>146</u>	Periodicals with 1 review each	1	<u>146</u>
204 (78%)			262 (32%)
261	Total		822

The 78 percent of periodicals responsible for the bottom third of the reviews matches the 77-79 percent found by Serebnick's previous small press studies. The previous index-based studies all found 4-5 percent of periodicals accounted for the top third of the reviews. The current study found a more concentrated core, with the top 3 percent of periodicals responsible for a third of the reviews.

The data in table 2 conform to Bradford's law, showing that a small core of periodicals accounts for a large number of the reviews. The number of periodicals responsible for the first approximate third of the reviews, and the number of periodicals responsible for each of the succeeding approximate thirds are in the proportion 9 : 48 : 204, or roughly 9 : 9 x 5 : 9 x 5². This proportion reduces to 1 : 5 : 5², and so conforms to Bradford's (1934) formula 1 : n : n².

Booklist, the top periodical, accounted for fifty-eight reviews. This was nearly a third more than *Library Journal* with forty-five reviews, followed by *Choice* with thirty-nine reviews. These three periodicals each reviewed an average of 16 percent of the 290 books in the database. Out of five previous index-based studies, four found *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Choice* each reviewed an average of 8 percent of the sample titles. Kirby (1991), though, found they each reviewed an average of 24 percent of United States history

titles. According to Serebnick (1981), these three periodicals also reviewed an average of 28 percent of titles controversial due to sex content.

Library and book trade publications represent two-thirds of the core periodicals in the current study. However, the core also includes three subject-specific periodicals: *Women's Review of Books*, *New Directions for Women*, and *Gay Community News*. These three periodicals each reviewed an average of 8 percent of the database titles. In previous studies, the percentage of titles reviewed by the top three subject-specific periodicals ranged from an average of less than 2 percent for physical education journals (Miranda 1990), to 15 percent for United States history journals (Kirby 1991).

Further analysis of the extent of small press sociology reviews shows the concentration rate of these reviews in relation to all reviews the periodicals publish. Table 3 displays the number of total reviews and the number of small press sociology reviews cited by *Book Review Index* 1985-90, as well as the rate of small press sociology reviews per one thousand total reviews. For purposes of comparison, small press sociology reviews appearing later than 1990 are not included. The highest rates, by far, are for women's studies periodicals and small press trade publications.

TABLE 3

PERIODICALS BY CONCENTRATION RATE OF SMALL PRESS SOCIOLOGY REVIEWS

Periodical	Book Review Index: 1985-90		
	Total Reviews	Number of Reviews	Reviews per 1,000 Total Reviews
<i>New Directions for Women</i>	794	24	30.23
<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	1,492	31	20.78
<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	1,490	28	18.79
<i>New Pages</i>	448	7	15.63
<i>Small Press</i>	1,336	17	12.72
<i>Belles Lettres</i>	808	10	12.38
<i>Ms.</i>	522	5	9.58
<i>RQ</i>	1,128	5	4.43
<i>Bookwatch</i>	2,510	11	4.38
<i>Nation</i>	1,201	4	3.33
<i>Wilson Library Bulletin</i>	3,762	10	2.66
<i>Books in Canada</i>	2,394	6	2.51
<i>West Coast Review of Books</i>	4,150	10	2.41
<i>Quill and Quire</i>	2,517	5	1.99
<i>Voice of Youth Advocates</i>	6,635	12	1.81
<i>Booklist</i>	35,017	57	1.63
<i>Contemporary Sociology</i>	4,416	7	1.59
<i>Library Journal</i>	27,913	44	1.58
<i>American Reference Books Annual</i>	10,401	15	1.44
<i>Book Report</i>	3,944	6	1.52
<i>Kliatt</i>	5,458	8	1.47
<i>Choice</i>	40,490	35	.86
<i>School Library Journal</i>	5,922	5	.84
<i>Publishers Weekly</i>	26,831	22	.82
<i>Contemporary Psychology</i>	5,206	4	.77
<i>Reference and Research Book News</i>	9,367	6	.64
<i>Book World</i>	9,513	4	.42
<i>New York Times Book Review</i>	18,203	7	.39
<i>Kirkus Reviews</i>	17,685	6	.34

The top rate in table 3 is for *New Directions for Women*, which published 30.23 small press sociology reviews per one thousand total reviews. This rate is much higher than the 12.38 rate for *Belles Lettres*, a women's studies periodical with an emphasis on the humanities rather than sociology. *Belles Lettres*, though, has a rate close to three times higher than *RQ*, the highest periodical other than women's studies and small press trade publications. The data indicate *RQ* published 4.43 small press sociology reviews per one thousand total reviews, ahead of *Bookwatch* and *Nation* with 4.38 and 3.33 per one thousand respectively. *Kirkus Reviews* had the lowest rate with .34 small press sociology reviews per one thousand total reviews. *New York Times Book Review* had a slightly higher .39 review rate.

Table 3 shows that the review media with the highest concentration rates did not review the greatest absolute numbers of small press sociology reviews. The four periodicals publishing more than twenty-five thousand total reviews produced only .82 to 1.63 small press sociology reviews per one thousand total reviews. At the same time, the nine periodicals publishing less than fifteen hundred total reviews had the highest rates with 3.33 to 30.23 small press sociology reviews per one thousand total reviews.

The 206 books reviewed at least once, received an average of 4.0 reviews each. This average is higher than the 2.2-2.4 reviews found in four previous index-based studies, though lower than the 7.5 reviews found in United States history books and 5.5 found in gay, lesbian, and bisexual books. Even when counting only reviews cited by *Book Review Index* and *Alternative Press Index*, as done in the previous small press studies, books in the current database received an average of 3.8 reviews each.

Table 4 provides additional data on the overlap rates in the current study. For periodicals reviewing four or more titles, the table shows the average number of total reviews received by the books each periodical reviewed. *Ms.* had the highest overlap rate, with the books it reviewed receiving an average of 9.4 reviews. *Lesbian Contradiction* followed with a rate of 9.2 reviews. The lowest rate was 3.8 for the books reviewed by *Contemporary Psychology* and *West Coast Review of Books*. In comparison, the current study found a 6.1 rate for books reviewed by *Publishers Weekly*, lower than the Sweetland and Christensen (1995) finding of an 8.1 rate. The current study found a rate of 5.8 for *Lambda Book Report*, close to Sweetland and Christensen's 5.5 rate.

TABLE 4
 PERIODICALS BY OVERLAP RATE OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Periodical	Number of Reviews	Average Number of Reviews Each Book Received
<i>Ms.</i>	5	9.4
<i>Lesbian Contradiction</i>	5	9.2
<i>Briarpatch</i>	5	8.8
<i>New York Times Book Review</i>	7	8.7
<i>Belles Lettres</i>	12	8.4
<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	29	8.0
<i>Off Our Backs</i>	14	7.6
<i>Quill and Quire</i>	5	7.6
<i>RQ</i>	5	7.6
<i>Book World</i>	4	7.5
<i>Books in Canada</i>	6	7.5
<i>NWSA Journal</i>	4	7.5
<i>Guardian</i>	5	7.2
<i>Kirkus Reviews</i>	6	7.8
<i>Kinesis</i>	4	7.0
<i>Kliatt</i>	8	7.0
<i>Nation</i>	7	7.0
<i>New Directions for Women</i>	24	7.0
<i>Rites</i>	6	7.0
<i>Small Press</i>	17	6.9
<i>Wilson Library Bulletin</i>	10	6.9
<i>Third World Quarterly</i>	4	6.8
<i>Choice</i>	39	6.3
<i>Reference and Research Book News</i>	6	6.2
<i>Gay Community News</i>	21	6.1
<i>Publishers Weekly</i>	22	6.1
<i>New Pages</i>	7	5.9
<i>Body Politic</i>	4	5.8
<i>Lambda Book Report</i>	8	5.8
<i>Voice of Youth Advocates</i>	12	5.8
<i>Library Journal</i>	45	5.5
<i>Book Report</i>	10	5.4
<i>Booklist</i>	58	5.4
<i>Advocate</i>	6	5.2
<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	31	5.0
<i>Bookwatch</i>	12	4.9
<i>School Library Journal</i>	6	4.7
<i>Contemporary Sociology</i>	7	4.6
<i>American Reference Books Annual</i>	15	4.2
<i>Contemporary Psychology</i>	4	3.8
<i>West Coast Review of Books</i>	10	3.8

Of the titles in the current study, *Choice* reviewed 57 percent of those titles reviewed by *Contemporary Sociology*. This overlap rate compares with a similar finding of 55 percent by Fox (1990). The current study found *Choice* published 38 percent of their small press sociology reviews in either the sociology or social and behavioral sciences section of the periodical. All the titles *Choice* had in common with *Contemporary Sociology* appeared in the sociology or social and behavioral sciences sections. In contrast, Fox found only 36 percent of the common reviews in these sections of *Choice*.

This study makes note that two of the core periodicals, *Small Press Book Review* and *New Directions for Women*, recently ceased publication. In addition, *Gay Community News*, formerly published weekly, ceased publication for a while and then returned as a quarterly.

Publishers

This section studies publishers, with identification of a core group, and examination of the relationship between publisher size and review quantity.

Table 5 shows the number of publishers with books in the database, in descending order by number of books per publisher. The 290 books in the database were from 157 publishers, including 116 publishers (74 percent) each with

one title, 32 publishers (20 percent) with two to five books, and 9 publishers (6 percent) with six to fourteen titles in the study. The current database differs from the samples of previous small press studies that had no publishers with more than three or four titles.

TABLE 5
NUMBER OF BOOKS PER PUBLISHER FOR ENTIRE DATABASE

Number of Books per Publisher	Number Of Publishers	Total Number of Books	Number of Books per Publisher	Number of Publishers	Total Number of Books
14	1	14	5	4	20
9	2	18	4	8	32
8	1	8	3	9	27
7	3	21	2	<u>11</u>	<u>22</u>
6	<u>2</u>	<u>12</u>		32 (20%)	101 (35%)
	9 (6%)	73 (25%)	1	116 (74%)	116 (40%)
				—	—
			Total	157	290

Of the 157 publishers with books in this study, 101 (64 percent) had at least one book reviewed. The two previous small press studies found 43-54 percent of the publishers received at least one review. Table 6 displays, in descending order by number of books reviewed, data on these publishers and the corresponding number of reviews received. The top ten publishers (10 percent), responsible for roughly one third of the books reviewed, received 45 percent of the

reviews. The second group, consisting of twenty-three publishers (23 percent), responsible for the next third of the books reviewed, received 32 percent of the reviews. The third group, consisting of sixty-eight publishers (67 percent), responsible for the last third of the books reviewed, received only 23 percent of the reviews. This distribution pattern confirms the existence of a small core group of publishers responsible for a large percentage of total reviews. This differs from previous small press studies that failed to find a core of publishers as there were no publishers with more than three or four books reviewed.

Further analysis finds that books from publishers with more titles reviewed at least once received more reviews per book than books from publishers with fewer titles reviewed. Books published by the top ten publishers, with five to fourteen books reviewed, received an average of 5.2 reviews each. Books from the bottom sixty-eight publishers, with one book reviewed, received an average of only 2.8 reviews each, or 46 percent fewer reviews. The number of reviewed books a publisher has in the current study should not be confused with the relative size of the publisher.

TABLE 6
PUBLISHERS BY NUMBER OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Number of Books Reviewed	Number of Publishers	Publisher(s)	Total Books Reviewed	Total Reviews
14	1	New Society	14	78
8	2	Alyson; Seal Press	16	100
7	2	Feminist Press; Reference & Research Services	14	58
6	2	Black Rose; Cleis Press	12	79
5	3	Foundation Center; General Hall; Spinsters	15	53
	<u>10 (10%)</u>		<u>71 (34%)</u>	<u>368 (45%)</u>
4	6	Between the Lines; Crossing Press; Harrow and Heston; McFarland & Co.; Morning Glory; Women's Press	24	118
3	9	Bergin & Garvey; Firebrand; Gallaudet University; Hunter House; Impact; Kumarian Press; Mother Courage; Naiad Press; Worldwatch Institute	27	89
2	8	Bryce-Waterton; Castalia; Glenhurst; Institute for Lesbian Studies; Kitchen Table; Lake View Press; LuraMedia; Seven Locks	16	54
	<u>23 (23%)</u>		<u>67 (33%)</u>	<u>261 (32%)</u>
1	68 (67%)	Publishers: 1 reviewed book	68 (33%)	193 (23%)
	<u>101</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>206</u>	<u>822</u>

Additional data allow examination of the relationship between publisher size and number of reviews. Table 7 shows the number of books published annually for seventy-one publishers included in *Literary Market Place*. The top eighteen publishers (25 percent), publishing sixteen or more titles annually, were responsible for 29 percent of the books reviewed, and received 30 percent of the reviews, or roughly 4.5 reviews per book. The bottom thirty-two publishers (45 percent), publishing eight or fewer titles annually, were responsible for 37 percent of the books reviewed, and received 39 percent of the reviews, or roughly 4.6 reviews per book. The number of reviews received was essentially the same for books from the largest and smallest publishers.

TABLE 7
PUBLISHERS BY NUMBER OF BOOKS PUBLISHED ANNUALLY

Number of Books Published Annually	Number of Publishers	Publisher(s)	Small Press Sociology	
			Total Books Reviewed	Total Reviews
290	1	Peter Lang	1	2
100	1	Foundation Center	5	16
93	1	McFarland & Co.	4	21
52	1	Orbis Books	1	11
45	1	Prima	1	2
42	1	Brunswick	1	2
40	1	Island Press	1	3
32	1	Crossing Press	4	17
25	2	Humana Press; Sigo Press	2	3
24	2	Bonus Books; Naiad Press	4	14
22	1	Academy Chicago	1	9
20	3	Black Rose; General Hall; Bergin & Garvey	14	53
19	1	Signature Books	1	12
16	<u>1</u>	Feminist Press	<u>7</u>	<u>47</u>
	18 (25%)		47 (29%)	212 (30%)
15	7	Alyson; Gallaudet University; Kumarian Press; Libra; New Society; South End Press; Sunstone	31	147
14	2	Free Association; Impact	4	9
12	4	Intercultural Press; Pruett; Seven Locks Press; Whole Person Associates	5	15
10	6	Between the Lines; Bookmakers Guild; Firebrand Books; Milkweed; Whitford; Worldwatch	13	48
9	<u>2</u>	Williamson; Alchemy	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
	21 (30%)		55 (34%)	221 (31%)
8	4	Hunter House; ISI Press; Seal Press; Women's Press	16	100
2-7	<u>28</u>	Publishers w/ 2-7 books	<u>45</u>	<u>180</u>
	32 (45%)		61 (37%)	280 (39%)
	71	Total	163	713

An examination of the individual publishers further suggests a lack of connection between publisher size and number of reviews. Out of eight publishers whose books received an average of seven or more reviews each, only three (Signature Books, Orbis Books, and Academy Chicago) were among the largest publishers. Five (Lake View Press, Cleis Press, Seal Press, Denali Press, and Garrett Park Press), however, were among the smallest publishers with eight or fewer books published annually. In addition, five of the largest publishers (Peter Lang, Prima, Brunswick, Humana Press, and Sigo Press) were among the least reviewed publishers, with their titles receiving only one or two reviews each.

Indexes

This section examines indexes, with regard to quantity of citations, extent of overlap, and thoroughness of coverage.

Table 8 shows the number of review citations found in each index, as well as the number of possible citations and the percentage of possible citations found. The possible citations for an index is the total number of reviews found in the current study that were from periodicals on the index's source list, excluding reviews that were not cited at least once by one of the five indexes.

TABLE 8
INDEXES BY ACTUAL AND POSSIBLE CITATION RATES

Index	Number of Review Citations	Percentage of Total Citations (N=822)	Number of Possible Citations	Percentage of Possible Citations
<i>Book Review Index</i>	544	66	547	99.5
<i>Alternative Press Index</i>	211	26	222	95.0
<i>Social Sciences Citation Index</i>	140	17	207	67.6
<i>Social Sciences Index</i>	51	6	55	92.7
<i>Sociological Abstracts</i>	46	6	132	34.8

Book Review Index was by far the most comprehensive index, citing 544 reviews, or 66 percent of all the reviews found. *Alternative Press Index* and *Social Sciences Citation Index* also made significant contributions, citing 211 and 140 reviews, or 26 and 17 percent, respectively. Coverage by *Social Sciences Index* and *Sociological Abstracts* was relatively low, with 51 and 46 reviews respectively, or each only 6 percent of the total reviews found.

Out of a possible 547 reviews, *Book Review Index* cited 544 (99.5 percent). This percentage is similar to the 98.3 percent *Book Review Index* cited in the study by Spencer (1986). The 3 missed reviews in the current study were all from the March 1990 issue of *Women's Review of Books*. During this study, *Book Review Index* failed to index five of

the thirty-four periodicals that published 5 or more reviews. However, *Book Review Index* has recently begun indexing three of these: *Advocate*, *Lambda Book Report*, and *Off Our Backs*. *Rites* has ceased publication, and *Gay Community News*, formerly published weekly, has recently returned as a quarterly publication.

Alternative Press Index included 211 out of a possible 222 citations (95.0 percent), and *Social Sciences Index* included 51 out of a possible 55 citations (92.7 percent). Comparatively, Mesplay and Koch (1993) found *Alternative Press Index* cited 98.7 percent, while the four previous index evaluation studies found that Wilson indexes cited a somewhat lower average of 83 percent. The current study excludes some reviews from the number of possible citations for these two indexes, due to their respective minimum length requirements. *Alternative Press Index's* minimum is five paragraphs, and *Social Sciences Index's* minimum is half a page. If these reviews were included, *Alternative Press Index's* percentage found would drop to 87.9, and *Social Sciences Index's* would drop to 77.3.

Social Sciences Citation Index included only 140 out of a possible 207 citations (67.6 percent). The source list for this index includes *Library Journal* as a fully indexed journal. *Social Sciences Citation Index*, however, did not cite any of the 45 *Library Journal* reviews included in *Book*

Review Index. The percentage of possible citations found would have risen to 86.4 percent if *Library Journal* reviews were not counted as possible citations. The DeBoer study (1989) also found an 86 percent citation rate for this index.

Sociological Abstracts included only 46 out of a possible 132 citations (34.8 percent), failing to cite 86 reviews in fifty-five periodicals. *Sociological Abstracts'* source list indicates that fifteen of the periodicals included in the current study receive full coverage, while sixty-four receive partial coverage, and eleven receive infrequent coverage. Of 23 reviews from periodicals receiving full coverage, 21 citations appeared (91 percent). Of 99 reviews from periodicals with partial coverage, 15 citations appeared (15 percent). In addition, 8 cited reviews were from periodicals with infrequent coverage, and 2 cited reviews were from periodicals not on the source list. The overall percentage of possible citations found in *Sociological Abstracts* is by far the lowest of the five indexes. In previous studies of *Sociological Abstracts* citations, LaRose (1989) found a 10 percent citation rate, while Mesplay and Koch (1993) found a 40 percent rate. The previous studies did not differentiate between periodicals receiving full and partial coverage.

The extent of citation overlap by multiple indexes was fairly low. Of 822 total reviews identified in the five indexes, 694 (84 percent) were in only one index. Two indexes cited 95 (12 percent) of the reviews, three indexes cited 23 (3 percent) of the reviews, and four indexes cited 10 (1 percent) of the reviews. None of the reviews were in all five indexes. However, one periodical, *Science and Society*, was covered by all five indexes. *Book Review Index* was the only index to cite all three of the reviews in this periodical.

Table 9 displays further data on the extent of overlap between indexes. For each index, the table shows the number of cited reviews included in no other index, one other index, and two or more other indexes. *Book Review Index* included many unique citations, with 85 percent cited by no other index, as were 74 percent of the reviews in *Alternative Press Index*. *Social Sciences Index*, on the other hand, had only one unique review and over half the reviews cited were also in two or more other indexes.

TABLE 9
INDEXES BY OVERLAP OF REVIEW CITATIONS

Index	Total Reviews	Number (and Percentage) of Review Citations Included in:		
		No Other Index	One Other Index	Two or More Other Indexes
<i>Book Review Index</i>	544	463 (85)	53 (10)	28 (5)
<i>Alternative Press Index</i>	211	157 (74)	50 (24)	4 (2)
<i>Social Sciences</i>				
<i>Citation Index</i>	140	58 (41)	52 (37)	31 (22)
<i>Social Sciences Index</i>	51	1 (2)	24 (47)	26 (51)
<i>Sociological Abstracts</i>	46	15 (33)	11 (24)	20 (43)

Social Sciences Index and *Social Sciences Citation Index* had the greatest overlap. With forty-five reviews in common, 98 percent of all reviews cited in *Social Sciences Index* were also in *Social Sciences Citation Index*. *Sociological Abstracts* and *Alternative Press Index* had the least overlap, with only two reviews found in both. *Sociological Abstracts* had thirty reviews in common with *Social Sciences Citation Index*, and thirteen reviews in common with *Social Sciences Index*.

Subjects

This section examines the identified sociology subject areas, including the quantity of reviews, top periodicals, and index citations for each subject.

Table 10 shows, for each subject area, the total number of books, as well as the number and percentage of books receiving at least one review, and the average number of reviews those books receive. The percentage of books with at least one review varies from 82 percent for women's studies to 38 percent for substance abuse titles. Sexuality received the highest average number of reviews with 6.1 reviews, followed by women's studies with 5.2 reviews. Substance abuse had the lowest average, with 1.7 reviews, followed by marriage and family with 2.6 reviews.

TABLE 10

SUBJECTS BY TOTAL REVIEWS AND REVIEW RATES

Subject	Total Reviews	Total Books	Books Reviewed at Least Once	
			Number (and Percentage of Total Books)	Average Number of Reviews Received
Women's Studies	140	33	27 (82)	5.2
Gay and Lesbian	121	33	26 (79)	4.7
Criminology	116	34	26 (77)	4.5
Social and Public Welfare	111	33	25 (76)	4.4
Sexuality	104	22	17 (77)	6.1
Marriage and Family	97	51	37 (73)	2.6
Sociology/ Social History	88	46	30 (65)	2.9
Childhood and Adolescence	35	22	12 (55)	2.9
Substance Abuse	10	16	6 (38)	1.7

Table 11 shows the top five periodicals that published the most reviews in each subject area. The top five periodicals with the most reviews overall--*Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *Choice*, *Small Press Book Review*, and *Women's Review of Books*--account for more than two-thirds of the periodicals listed. *Belles Lettres* was the top periodical in the area of sexuality. More than half the reviews (58 percent) found in *Belles Lettres* were in this area.

Likewise, *Wilson Library Bulletin* was among the top periodicals in the area of social and public welfare titles, and 50 percent of its reviews were in this area.

Clark's (1990) findings still hold true. *Choice* reviews more women's studies titles than any other journal. *Choice* had ten women's studies reviews, more than either *Women's Review of Books* (8 reviews) or *New Directions for Women* (6 reviews), despite their respective overall totals of twenty-six and twenty-four reviews. In both *Women's Review of Books* and *New Directions for Women*, the number of gay and lesbian reviews equaled the number of women's studies reviews. These two journals also reviewed several titles dealing with violence against women. This topic falls into the criminology section of the Library of Congress classification instead of the women's studies section.

TABLE 11

TOP FIVE PERIODICALS FOR EACH SUBJECT AREA

Periodicals	Number Of Reviews	Periodicals	Number of Reviews
Women's Studies		Marriage and Family	
<i>Choice</i>	10	<i>Library Journal</i>	9
<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	8	<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	7
<i>Booklist</i>	7	<i>Booklist</i>	6
<i>Library Journal</i>	7	<i>Publishers Weekly</i>	5
<i>New Directions for Women</i>	6	<i>New Directions for Women</i>	4
Gay and Lesbian		Sociology/Social History	
<i>Gay Community News</i>	15	<i>Booklist</i>	6
<i>Booklist</i>	12	<i>West Coast Review of Books</i>	4
<i>Choice</i>	10	<i>Book Report</i>	3
<i>Off Our Backs</i>	10	<i>Library Journal</i>	3
<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	8	<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	3
Criminology		Childhood and Adolescence	
<i>Booklist</i>	8	<i>Booklist</i>	4
<i>Library Journal</i>	8	<i>Library Journal</i>	4
<i>Publishers Weekly</i>	5	<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	4
<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	5	<i>Kliatt</i>	3
5 Periodicals	3	2 Periodicals	2
Social and Public Welfare		Substance Abuse	
<i>Booklist</i>	7	<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	2
<i>Library Journal</i>	6	<i>Voice of Youth Advocates</i>	2
<i>Choice</i>	5	6 Periodicals	1
<i>Small Press Book Review</i>	5		
<i>Wilson Library Bulletin</i>	5		
Sexuality			
<i>Belles Lettres</i>	7		
<i>Small Press</i>	6		
<i>Women's Review of Books</i>	6		
<i>Booklist</i>	5		
<i>Choice</i>	5		

Library Journal reviewed only two sexuality titles and five gay and lesbian titles, while *Booklist* and *Choice* each reviewed at least double those numbers. This contrasts with both Serebnick's (1981) and Sweetland and Christensen's (1995) findings that *Library Journal* reviewed substantially more sex content and gay, lesbian, and bisexual books than *Choice* and *Booklist*. The current study found *Library Journal*, however, reviewed more marriage and family titles than either *Booklist* or *Choice*. In the criminology and childhood and adolescence areas *Booklist* and *Library Journal* both reviewed at least four times as many titles as *Choice*.

Table 12 shows the number of reviews found in the five indexes for each respective subject area, and the corresponding percentage of total reviews for each index. *Alternative Press Index* cited a high percentage (55 percent) of the gay and lesbian titles. *Book Review Index* cited a high percentage (90 percent) of the substance abuse titles, as well as the childhood and adolescence titles (80 percent). Though they did not match the high numbers of *Book Review Index*, it is interesting to note that *Social Sciences Citation Index*, *Social Sciences Index*, and *Sociological Abstracts* all had more citations in the area of criminology than in any other area, with twenty-four, fourteen, and thirteen citations respectively.

TABLE 12

SUBJECTS BY NUMBER OF INDEX REVIEW CITATIONS

Subject	Number of Reviews (and percentage)					
	Total Reviews	Book Review Index	Alternative Press Index	Social Sciences Citation Index	Social Sciences Index	Sociological Abstracts
Women's Studies	140	101 (72)	29 (21)	21 (15)	9 (6)	11 (8)
Gay and Lesbian	121	60 (50)	67 (55)	5 (4)	3 (2)	1 (1)
Criminology	116	76 (66)	27 (23)	28 (24)	14 (12)	13 (11)
Social and Public Welfare	111	86 (77)	15 (14)	26 (23)	5 (5)	3 (3)
Sexuality	104	64 (62)	34 (33)	14 (13)	3 (3)	2 (2)
Marriage and Family	97	63 (65)	16 (16)	24 (25)	11 (11)	7 (7)
Sociology/ Social History	88	57 (65)	19 (22)	16 (18)	6 (7)	9 (10)
Childhood and Adolescence	35	28 (80)	4 (11)	5 (14)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Substance Abuse	10	9 (90)	0 (0)	1 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Total	852	544	211	140	51	46

Summary

The periodical data show the extent of reviews for small press sociology books is relatively high, with close to three-quarters of the books receiving at least one review. A core of periodicals is responsible for the greatest number of reviews. This core conforms to Bradford's law. Most of the core consists of library and book trade periodicals, though three subject-specific periodicals are included as well. The average number of reviews received by each title is higher than in most subject areas previously studied, though lower than that for United States history books (Kirby 1991) and gay, lesbian, and bisexual titles (Sweetland and Christensen 1995).

A core of publishers is responsible for the greatest number of books receiving reviews. This finding differs from previous small press studies. Publishers with more books reviewed at least once receive a greater number of reviews per book than publishers with fewer books. There did not appear to be a connection, however, between the number of reviews received and publisher size as defined by the number of books published annually.

Of the five indexes in the study, *Book Review Index* provided, by far, the largest number of citations, as well as including the highest percentage of possible citations. *Sociological Abstracts* provided the fewest citations, and

included the lowest percentage of possible citations. *Social Sciences Index* provided only one unique citation. The majority of the reviews appeared in only one index.

The extent of reviews varied substantially by subject area. More than four-fifths of the titles in the area of women's studies received one or more reviews, while less than two-fifths of the substance abuse titles were reviewed even once. Of books reviewed at least once, the area with the highest percentage reviewed, women's studies, received on average more than three times the number of reviews as the least reviewed area, substance abuse. The indexes also varied in the coverage of the various subject areas. Of the five indexes examined, *Book Review Index* cited the most reviews for nearly every subject area. The only exception was gay and lesbianism, for which *Alternative Press Index* provided the most citations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The goals of the current study are to determine the number of reviews received by small press sociology books and to provide information regarding the relative effectiveness of book review resources as an aid in the identification of these titles. To achieve this goal, the study examined reviews of small press sociology books in the following areas: periodicals, with regard to quantity of reviews, identification of a core group, concentration rates, and overlap rates; publishers, with regard to identification of a core group and the relationship between publisher size and review quantity; indexes, with regard to quantity of citations, extent of overlap, and thoroughness of coverage; and subjects, with regard to quantity of reviews, top periodicals, and index citations for each subject area. The study also examined the degree to which findings compared and contrasted with earlier investigations.

Periodicals

While it is true that many small press books go unreviewed, the current study found that small press sociology titles, as a group, do not receive fewer reviews

than other books. The extent to which periodicals review small press sociology books is actually high relative to previous studies of other subject areas. Seventy-one percent of the titles received at least one review, compared to an average of 43 percent found in previous index-based studies. This high number of reviews may be because the sociology subject areas include current social issues that are of interest to a wide range of publications. In addition, many subject-specific periodicals that concentrate on these areas regularly publish a large number of reviews.

The reviews of small press sociology books comply with Bradford's law. This law states that a given literature will have a high-yield core of a few highly productive sources, a larger group of sources of moderate production, and a much larger group of sources with constantly diminishing productivity. This study found a relatively small core of nine periodicals (3 percent) account for just over a third of the reviews. At the same time 18 percent of the periodicals account for the second third of reviews, and 78 percent account for the final third.

The core list is the primary starting point for librarians wishing to identify the most productive review periodicals. Predictably, the top three periodicals are

Booklist, *Library Journal*, and *Choice*. These library trade journals have routinely appeared at the top of core lists due to the large number of reviews they publish. Less predictably, three subject-specific periodicals were also among the core. *Gay Community News*, *New Directions for Women*, and *Women's Review of Books* each published a substantial number of reviews. Most previous studies found no subject-specific periodicals among the core.

Beyond the core list, the concentration rate and overlap rate data are relevant to librarians deciding which periodicals are most productive to examine. The concentration rate, which is the number of small press sociology reviews per thousand total reviews, varied widely. Specialized women's studies and small press trade publications had the highest concentration rates. The small press sociology books received, on average, more reviews per title than most subject areas previously examined. The overlap rate between periodicals also varied, with the highest average number of reviews found in books reviewed by specialized periodicals in the areas of women's studies and gay and lesbianism. Clearly, the subject-specific periodicals play a vital role in the review coverage of small press sociology books.

Sociology bibliographers who wish to make the most productive use of their time and resources should consider

the publications with the highest concentration of small press sociology reviews. A high overlap rate is desirable if the object is to locate titles with multiple reviews, such as when a prerequisite for acquisition is two or more reviews, but a low overlap is desirable if the object is to locate more uncommon titles. A librarian looking for books with multiple reviews might examine *Women's Review of Books*, a core periodical with a high concentration rate and a high overlap rate. However, a bibliographer browsing for more unique reviews might examine *Bookwatch*, a periodical with a fairly high concentration rate but low overlap rate. *Bookwatch*, published by Midwest Book Review, is a little-known publication that could be a helpful resource for less frequently reviewed books.

Publishers

Contrary to previous small press studies, the current study found a small core group of ten publishers responsible for titles receiving 45 percent of the total reviews. This finding suggests that the failure of previous studies to identify a core of publishers was likely due to their examination of books covering a wide variety of subjects, rather than due to the size of the publishers. The current study's core group of ten

publishers was each responsible for five or more books that received reviews. Most of the publishers in this group specialize in one or more of the sociology subject areas. Just as the specialized periodicals have influenced the extent of reviews, the specialized publishers have made an impact. The first among these was New Society Publishers, responsible for fourteen reviewed books. New Society specializes in social change, nonviolence, feminist, and parenting books.

Publishers with more reviewed sociology titles had a higher review rate per title, than publishers with fewer reviewed titles. However, the total number of titles a publisher releases annually does not appear to affect the review rate for their sociology books. Many of the publishers with the highest number of reviewed titles concentrate in one or more of the sociology subject areas. Included among these are Alyson and Cleis Press, publishers of gay and lesbian books, and Feminist Press, Seal Press, and Spinsters, publishers of women's studies titles. These specialized publishers may be more likely to know and access their review sources. Conversely, publishers with more titles published annually may lack the focus that the more specialized publishers maintain.

It is important for bibliographers to recognize that, while a substantial number of the non-fiction small presses

concentrate on a particular topic, many small publishers issue books on a variety of subjects. Since titles from these nonspecialized, eclectic publishers are generally less likely to receive reviews, these books may be overlooked in the selection process. Bibliographers can minimize the oversight possibility for these books by identifying and examining the catalogs of the nonspecialized small publishers.

Indexes

Although this study found one index was significantly more productive, there was no single index that provided comprehensive coverage of the subject. Overall, the extent of overlap was low, with 84 percent of the 822 reviews cited in only one of the indexes.

Book Review Index was the most comprehensive, citing 66 percent of all reviews, with 85 percent that were in no other index. *Kinesis* and *Third World Quarterly* are the only two periodicals with four or more reviews in the current study that are not currently covered by *Book Review Index*. *Alternative Press Index* was the second most productive index with 211 reviews, 74 percent unique to this index. Together, *Book Review Index* and *Alternative Press Index* cited 87 percent of all reviews.

Social Sciences Citation Index contributed 140 reviews, 41 percent in no other index. While *Sociological Abstracts* cited a fairly low number of 46 reviews, nearly a third of these reviews were unique to *Sociological Abstracts*, making this source helpful when seeking comprehensive coverage of the subject. *Social Sciences Index* cited only 51 reviews and included only one unique citation. Consequently, this index is not very useful for review identification when the other indexes are available. When examined by itself, *Social Sciences Index* provided fair coverage without any specific, identifiable gaps. However, lack of coverage of periodicals such as *Contemporary Sociology*, a publication concentrating on reviews, lessens the productivity of *Social Sciences Index* for book review identification.

The large number of citations provided by *Book Review Index* make it a good primary source for bibliographers and others searching for book reviews. However, the low rate of overlap found in this study suggests it is beneficial to use other indexes as well. *Alternative Press Index*, *Social Sciences Citation Index*, and *Sociological Abstracts* are all rich sources of unique citations. These indexes are all productive in the search for book reviews, as they do not merely duplicate efforts, but provide substantial individual contributions.

The five indexes varied in thoroughness, each falling short of citing all reviews in the covered periodicals. *Book Review Index*, *Alternative Press Index*, and *Social Sciences Index* each cited over 90 percent of the possible citations. While these are respectable figures, they still represent many missing citations. Based on the number of reviews cited annually, the one-half percent missed by *Book Review Index* could add up to 660 reviews overlooked. Similarly, the 5 percent of reviews missed by *Alternative Press Index* could result in 140 reviews overlooked, and the more than 7 percent missed by *Social Sciences Index* could result in over 600 overlooked reviews.

Social Sciences Citation Index included less than 68 percent of the possible citations. This index is very inconsistent in its thoroughness. Despite the fact that *Library Journal* is designated as a fully covered journal, not one review from this periodical was cited in the index, though reviews in other periodicals that were of a similar length to those in *Library Journal* were included. Failing to cite more than 32 percent of the reviews could result in over 11,700 missing reviews annually.

Sociological Abstracts offers very selective indexing of less than 35 percent of the possible citations. This index attempts to include only those citations that will be

of the greatest interest to its users. In its selectivity, the index excludes many citations from journals pertinent to the field, such as *Race and Class*. *Sociological Abstracts* either simply missed or failed to find adequate importance in 65 percent of the possible citations, even though the editors of the journals found them of enough importance to publish. This missing 65 percent could add up to 4,750 reviews annually.

Bibliographers, and others searching for book reviews, should recognize that each of the indexes fails, to some extent, to thoroughly cite the periodicals they cover. This may be due either to an unstated policy or simply to error. A review published in a periodical covered by more than one index may be cited in any number of the indexes or it may not be cited at all. While the indexes provide substantial review citations, they still fall short of providing complete coverage.

Subjects

The current study found the extent of reviews varied significantly for the different sociology subject areas. The patterns indicate particular subject preferences by the review media, with some topics receiving extensive coverage, and other subjects receiving limited reviews.

Moreover, certain subject areas commonly perceived as being under-reviewed actually were well represented.

Though determination of the actual positions taken in the books is beyond the scope of the current study, a disparity appears to exist in the number of reviews related to certain liberal issue topics as compared to more conservative issue topics. In comparing the most and least reviewed subject areas, the three most reviewed areas--women's studies, sexuality, and gay and lesbian--are often associated with liberal issues. Conversely, two of the least reviewed areas--marriage and family, and childhood and adolescence--tend to be associated with conservative issues. This disparity may suggest that the review media favors liberal topics over conservative ones. On the other hand, the publishers of titles related to liberal topics may obtain more reviews for other reasons, such as better-known periodicals specializing in these areas. Moreover, the current study may simply have located more of the liberal reviews by using *Alternative Press Index*, which concentrates on liberal publications and excludes conservative publications.

The high review rate for gay and lesbian titles differs from Sweetland and Christensen's (1995) findings that gay and lesbian titles receive fewer reviews than average. Sweetland and Christensen compared the review

average for gay and lesbian titles reviewed in *Lambda Book Report*, a gay and lesbian subject-specific periodical, to a random sample of all titles in *Publishers Weekly*, and found the *Publishers Weekly* titles received more reviews. In contrast, when the current study's data are examined to compare the small press titles found in *Lambda Book Report* to the small press titles found in *Publishers Weekly*, there is no significant difference in the review rates. Sweetland and Christensen's finding may be a reflection of *Publishers Weekly's* emphasis on books with expected high sales. These high-sales titles are most likely receiving many more reviews than the average small press title. Since many gay and lesbian titles come from the small press, they, too, are receiving fewer reviews than the high-sales titles. However, when compared to other small press titles in the current study, as well as the other subject areas examined in previous studies, gay and lesbian titles were well represented.

Substance abuse was the least reviewed area. Degnan's study of books about adult children of alcoholics also found a very low number of reviews. The two titles in the present study for adult children of alcoholics received no reviews. While not all the substance abuse titles are recovery oriented, the reviewing media may perceive such books as self-help pop psychology. The overall low number

of reviews for substance abuse books is a disturbing finding given the extent of the problem in society. This area clearly needs more attention from the reviewing media.

Bibliographers should be aware that the review media does not cover all topics equally. The subject areas with fewer reviews, such as marriage and family, childhood and adolescence, and substance abuse, may be areas where small press titles are most likely to be overlooked. To assure the library's collection includes diverse ideas in these areas, bibliographers should regularly utilize supplementary selection aids and not depend solely on book reviews.

Areas for Further Research

It would be valuable to compare the extent of reviews for sociology titles from the major publishing houses to the current findings. Will the current finding that small, specialized publishers may actually receive more reviews still hold true when compared to reviews for the large houses? Another area to explore is whether the books whose reviews are excluded from *Sociological Abstracts* are really of less significance to researchers. Do they receive fewer reviews overall? Are they less frequently acquired? Do they receive fewer citations, or lower circulation?

Further investigation is also needed into the less frequently reviewed subject areas including marriage and family and, especially, substance abuse. Why do they receive fewer reviews? Do librarians have trouble identifying appropriate titles? Do collections reflect a shortage of material in these areas? Answers to these questions would provide a better understanding and more productive use of book reviews as selection aids for library collection development in the future.

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