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**Book Reviews in *The Great Plains Sociologist*:
The Continuation of a Regional Tradition¹**

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Abstract

*On the tenth anniversary of publication of *The Great Plains Sociologist*, we examine the book review section for content and for participation by residents of the Great Plains. Since the inception of this journal feature in 1991, women have published 57 percent (N=57) of all book reviews. Moreover, women at masters and doctoral degree granting institutions have published a greater number of book reviews (52%, N=52) than their male counterparts (41%, N=41) and than women or men at 2-year, four-year, and tribal colleges (5%, N=5 and 2%, N=2 respectively). While there are differences in the topical areas evaluated by women and men, the primary area of interest for both is rural issues (16%, N=16). We conclude that the journal has met its goal of providing opportunities for regional scholars to publish their work and that *The Great Plains Sociologist* clearly plays a unique role in the region and in the discipline.*

The Great Plains Sociologist (TGPS) first appeared in 1988. According to the editor's note in the first volume, his goal for the journal was to "represent the whole range of sociological interest and research" (Hatle, 1988: iii); however, a letter which solicited members to submit papers for review stated "The [Great Plains Sociological] Association is particularly interested in furthering sociological interest

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in the Great Plains area” (Hatle, 1987). An analysis of the 52 articles that appear in *TGPS* by Ender and Huang (forthcoming) reveals that the journal has met the later goal. They conclude that “the authors who publish in *TGPS* provide important and localized sociological studies of the Great Plains. *TGPS* is, therefore, an invaluable local sociological research reference” (Ender and Huang, forthcoming: 18).²

The second editor of *TGPS*, Dr. Clifford Staples, initiated the book review section in 1991 with Dr. Robert Thompson as book review editor. He began the book review section because it “. . . provides an opportunity for more people to be involved with the journal. We plan to expand this feature in Volume 5” (1991: iii). Indeed, since its inception, the book review section has become a larger and more vibrant part of each volume of the journal. In this research note, we continue the analysis of *The Great Plains Sociologist* begun by Ender and Huang (forthcoming) and focus on the 100 book and software reviews done by 101 authors. We focus on five features of these reviews: the effect of book editors, authorship and institutional and state affiliation, gender of author and institution, and gender of the author and topic of each review.

Methods and Analysis

The univariate results that follow focus on authorship, gender of the author, institutional affiliation, and subject of the book reviewed. The 100 reviews that were analyzed comprise the entire population of reviews during the seven years they have appeared in *TGPS* under two different book review editors. Forty-three reviews appeared during the four-year tenure of Dr. Robert Thompson (Minot State University, North Dakota), and 57 reviews have appeared during the three years that Dr. Thomas Langham (Our Lady of the Lake University, Texas) has edited book reviews. A data file was constructed for eight variables: volume number, author, gender of author, institutional affiliation, state, book review editor, and two

This article includes a detailed review of the social organization and history of the Great Plains Sociological Association and *The Great Plains Sociologist*.

main topics of the review. In most cases, gender was determined by name recognition. Where gender was not clear, it was verified by an email query to a faculty member at that individual's department or by a phone call to the departmental secretary. To classify the subject heading for each review, we used **Sociofile**, the CD Rom version of the Sociological Abstracts. The "SH:" field in **Sociofile** provides subject heading of all articles and reviews. Each article and review can have up to three subject headings. In the case of multiple subject headings, we used the broadest heading listed. For example, family and socialization, coded 1900, was used instead of code 1941, sociology of the family, marriage and divorce. This eliminated the need to combine categories for analysis. No book review had more than two broad subject headings; each was entered into the data base.

Editors of the Book Review Section

Like the journal editorship, the state in which the conference is held, and the state affiliation of officers, book review editorship rotates to ensure representation and participation from both of the Dakotas. Thus far, book review editors have represented Minot State University in North Dakota and Our Lady of the Lake University in Texas.³ The number of book reviews has increased steadily over the past seven years under these editors. In 1991, the first year book reviews were published, there were eight reviews while 11 reviews appeared in 1992. The greatest number of reviews in a single year occurred in 1996 when a record 21 book reviews were published by 21 different authors. The mean number of reviews during the entire seven-year period is 14 per volume; however, the average number of reviews per volume increased dramatically with the change in editorship. An average of 11 reviews per year appeared under the initial four-year editorship of Dr. Thompson, while there was an average of 19 reviews under the three-year editorship of Dr. Langham. This is not totally unexpected. As people become more aware of an

³ Although he lives and works in Texas, Dr. Langham maintains his ties to the Great Plains and honorary Dakotan.

outlet for publication, we might expect that more reviews would be submitted and, if space is available, that they would be published. Moreover, given the initial goal of involving more people in the journal, we should expect to see more book reviews. Clearly the goal of increased participation in *TGPS* has been met.

Author and Institutional Affiliation

Because *TGPS* is a regional journal, one might expect that most published reviews would be done by authors affiliated with colleges and universities located in the Dakotas and the Great Plains region. The data bear this out. Institutions based in North and South Dakota account for 81 percent of the published book reviews. While some reviews come from as far away as Texas and Louisiana, the authors of these reviews are connected to the Great Plains through their affiliation with the book review editor or because they attended or held a position in a college or university in the Great Plains region. As Willis and McNamee (1990) discovered in their analysis of four leading journals in sociology, editorial evaluation was *particularistic*. That is, the acceptance and evaluation of manuscripts revealed a preference for the institutional affiliation of the submitting author. Therefore, we might expect that more reviews would be published from the Dakotas than from other places when the editor is also based in the Dakotas. However, Willis and McNamee (1990) also noted a trend toward greater adherence to the norms of science that include blind reviews and acceptance of a publication based on the quality of the manuscript. In short, they argue that manuscript evaluation and acceptance became more *universalistic* over time. Ender and Huang (forthcoming) argue that this is the case with articles published in *TGPS* and that a universalistic model may be detrimental to the identity of the journal. There is some evidence of the same trend in the book reviews published in *TGPS*. During the first four years of book review publication when Dr. Thompson served as book review editor, 88 percent (N=20) of the reviews came from the Dakotas. During the last three years, 75 percent (N=43) came from institutions in the Dakotas, but Texas, the home state of Dr. Langham, as well as

Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Louisiana were also represented.

Faculty at South Dakota State University (28%, N=28) and at the University of North Dakota (16%, N=16) account for nearly half of the book reviews in *TGPS*. (See Table 1.) It is notable that the leader, SDSU, has the only doctoral program in sociology in the Dakotas; however, while UND and North Dakota State University both offer master's degrees, there is a great disparity in the number of book reviews published by members of these departments in *TGPS*. Those at UND have published 16 percent (N=16) of the reviews while NDSU affiliates have published only 2 percent (N=2) of the reviews in this seven-year period.

Table 1: Authors' Institutional and State Affiliation, Number of Reviews by Gender, Number of Total Reviews by Institution and Carnegie Classification⁴

Institution	State	Number of Reviews by Women	Number of Reviews by Men	Total Number of Reviews	Carnegie Classification
South Dakota State University	SD	19	9	28	Doctoral II
University of North Dakota	ND	15	1	16	Doctoral II
University of South Dakota	SD	1	10	11	Doctoral I
Our Lady of the Lake	TX	5	5	10	Master's I
Northern State University	SD	5	4	9	Master's I

⁴ See classification rankings in Rodenhouse (1998).

Minot State University	ND	4	4	8	Master's I
McNeese University	LA	0	3	3	Master's I
North Dakota State University	ND	2	0	2	Doctoral II
Augustana College	SD	2	0	2	Baccalaureate II
Ridgewater College	MN	2	0	2	Associate of Arts
Black Hills State University	SD	1	0	1	Baccalaureate II
Southwest State University	MO	1	0	1	Master's I
University of Texas-Permian Basin	TX	1	0	1	Master's I
Dakota Wesleyan	SD	0	1	1	Baccalaureate II
Dickinson State University	ND	0	1	1	Baccalaureate II
South Dakota School of Mines	SD	0	1	1	Engineering
Trinity University	TX	0	1	1	Master's I
United Tribes Technical College	ND	0	1	1	Tribal Colleges
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater	WS	0	1	1	Master's I
Total		57	43	100	

It is also notable that, with the exception of SDSU, the top six institutions from which reviews were published have master's level

programs; those at institutions that offer baccalaureate, associate, tribal, or engineering degrees rarely published book reviews. It seems likely that this disparity is related to greater pressures on faculty to “publish or perish.” The pressure is greatest for those whose departments offer graduate degrees, and it is less pronounced in undergraduate institutions where the emphasis is on teaching over research and publication

Gender of Author and Institution

Women are somewhat more likely than their male colleagues to publish book reviews in *TGPS*. Fifty-seven percent (N=57) of the first authors of book reviews are women⁵ and 43 (N=43) percent are men. While there was a more balanced gender split under Dr. Thompson’s editorship (49% by women and 51% by men) than under Dr. Langham’s (63% women and 37% men), the reviews are skewed toward the inclusion of reviews by women overall. Table 1 shows that the preponderance of reviews by women came from SDSU and UND which published 33 percent (N=19) and 26 percent (N=15) reviews respectively. No other institution accumulated more than 5 reviews from women (Our Lady of the Lake and Northern State University) during this seven year period. Forty-two percent of the reviews published by men came from the University of South Dakota (21%, N=10) and from SDSU (21%, N=9). This is contrary to the findings of Ender and Huang (forthcoming). While we found low participation in the publication of book reviews by those at undergraduate institutions and high participation of those at master’s and doctoral level institutions, they found the opposite pattern for articles.

Gender and Book Review Topic

As Table 2 shows, rural issues is the primary area of interest

⁵ There was only one co-authored book review. The first author is a female undergraduate who did an initial book review as part of a class assignment. The second author is the male professor of that class who worked with her. We have classified this review as done by a female.

for those who publish book reviews in *TGPS*. This is consistent with the goal established by Dr. Hatle, the first editor of the journal. Given that the majority of book reviews come from South Dakota State University, a land grant school which has a department of rural sociology, this finding is not unexpected. Ranked in second place is feminist/gender studies with ten reviews. Tied at third are complex organizations and social problems with nine reviews each. In fifth place with eight reviews is culture. These six topics (rural, feminist/gender studies, complex organization, social problems and culture) account for 60 percent (N=60) of the published book reviews. The remainder of the ranked topic list appears in Table 2.

Table 2: Rank Order of All Book Review Topics

Rank	Number of Reviews	Topical Area
1	16	Rural
2	10	Feminist/Gender Studies
3	9 9	Complex Organizations Social Problems
5	8 8	Comparative/Historical Culture
7	6 6	Group Interaction Family
9	5	Methods
10	4 4	Health/Medical Policy/Planning
12	3 3 3	Social Psychology Social Change Social Control

15	2	Mass Phenomena
	2	Stratification
	2	Urban
	2	Language
	2	Sociology of Religion
	2	Demography
21	1	Political
	1	Sociology of Education
	1	Sociology of Science
	1	Sociology of Knowledge
	1	Community
	1	Environmental
	1	Poverty

While the women and men who publish book reviews in *TGPS* share an interest in rural issues, for women, this interest tied at first place with one in feminist/gender studies (see Table 3). From this point on in the rankings, the diversity and breadth women's and men's academic interests becomes more apparent. Interestingly, these topical areas do not fit neatly along traditional gender lines. For example, nearly eight percent (N=8) of the book reviews by women addressed research methods, but no men reviewed books on this topic. Similarly, men published book reviews on social change (6.3%, N=3) and religion (2.1%, N=1), but none of the women did.

Discussion

The book reviews that appeared in *TGPS* from 1991-1997, like the articles that were analyzed by Ender and Huang (forthcoming), do reflect the rural flavor of the region. As shown in the previous analysis, the preponderance of book reviews over the last seven years were on rural issues. This topic accounts for 16 percent (N=16) of all published book reviews. Moreover, rural topics were the primary review area for both women and men, although it was tied at

Table 3: Author's Gender and Book Review Topics by Ranking

Rank	Female Reviewer Topics	Percent of Articles	Rank	Male Reviewer Topics	Percent of Articles
1	Feminist/Gender Studies Rural	15.6% 15.6	1	Rural	12.5%
3	Methods Complex Organizations. Family/Socialization Social Problems	7.8 7.8 7.8 7.8	2	Comparative/Historical Group Interaction Culture Complex Organizations Social Problems	8.3 8.3 8.3 8.3 8.3
7	Comparative/Historical Culture	6.3 6.3	7	Social Change	6.3
9	Health	4.7	8	Mass Phenomena Urban Policy	4.2 4.2 4.2
10	Social-Psychology Group Interaction Social Control Policy	3.1 3.1 3.1 3.1	11	Social Psychology Stratification Language Education Religion Social Control Soc. of Science Demography Family Sociology of Knowledge Environment Poverty	2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1 2.1
13	Political Sociology Stratification Language Demography Community	1.7 1.7 1.7 1.7 1.7			

first place with feminist/gender studies for women.

It is also clear that the number of reviews, but especially from women at master's and doctoral level institutions, has steadily increased over time. There are numerous explanations for this. It

could be that more reviews are published because of renewed pressure on faculty to publish or perish. Because of other institutional pressures for their time, reviewers may have decided that it is more time efficient to submit reviews of books that they read anyway for their own professional development or for their classes to get a value added. Similarly, book reviews are often considered quick publications. For junior faculty, they are essential indicators that professional outcomes can be reached. Moreover, book reviews can fill a gap on one's vita while waiting for larger pieces of scholarship to be published. It is also possible that the book review editors have begun to more actively solicit book reviews from regionally based colleagues and that the journal is better known now than in the past. There is some evidence for this explanation as the number of reviews from states outside of the Great Plains region increased under Dr. Langham's editorship.

The disparity between the number of reviews published in *TGPS* by women and by men when compared to the number of articles published by women and men provides an interesting contrast. Ender and Huang (forthcoming) report that 52 percent (N=24) of the articles in *TGPS* are single authored. The ratio of single-gender articles for women and men is 1:5 with four authored by women and 20 by men. This ratio increases to 1:12 for same gender co-authorship with one article by women and 12 by men; however, a slightly different picture emerges in the book review section. Here the ratio between reviews that are single or first authored by women and men is 1.3:1.

The difference between the number of reviews published in *TGPS* by women and by men is more difficult to explain. It could be that women have more noninstitutional roles that infringe upon the time available for their professional work. That is, the "second shift" (Hochschild, 1989) may make it more difficult for women to produce other academic products. It could also be that these women publish more book reviews than men because women are more likely to be junior scholars. Other researchers have noted major factors that impede women's publishing success include that women tend to be affiliated with college positions rather than academic and university ones (Huber, 1984; Welch and Lewis, 1980), that they are excluded

from full collegial relationships for collaborative research (Reskin, 1978), and that they focus on qualitative and gender-specific studies which usually receive low priority from elite journals that favor quantitative research (Grant, Ward and Rong, 1987; Schiebinger, 1987; Ward and Grant, 1985).

It is also possible that women are less experienced in the field and have fewer editorial connections than men (Mc Namee, Willis and Rotcheford, 1990) so they publish fewer articles. The number of book reviews that appear in *TGPS*, but especially book reviews from women at two- and four-year colleges, could, therefore, be due to the efforts by the book review editor to encourage those who do not regularly publish to submit a book review. We do have some evidence to support this explanation as the number of book reviews from outside the Great Plains has increased under the editorship of Dr. Langham.

The increase in the number of book reviews published in *TGPS*, but especially in the number of reviews by women, suggests two things. First, it seems clear that *TGPS* is active in the transformation of our ideas about what "rural issues" are and who "does" rural sociology. Second, through the articles and book reviews that are published, the journal maintains and supports the sociology of the Great Plains (Ender and Huang, forthcoming). Moreover, the strong emphasis on rural concerns seems healthy for a journal dedicated to the sociology of the Great Plains. *TGPS* clearly occupies a unique niche in the region and in the discipline and should continue on the path down which its editors have taken it.

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