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## From the Editor

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**T**his, Volume 34:4, 2000, of *Law & Society Review (LSR)*, is the twelfth and final issue produced under this editorial team. As I take leave of the editor's post, I want to thank the people who have worked hard to keep *LSR* the leading journal in law and social science. The associate editors—Marianne Constable, Robert Dingwall, Lee Epstein, and Jonathan Simon—have offered consistently informed and nuanced judgment; the editorial board has been an invaluable source of advice and criticism, essential for making difficult decisions across a broad spectrum of subjects, methods and disciplines. Without the intelligence and energy of the board and associate editors the *Review* would certainly be less interesting and less multidisciplinary in its content.

Although the editors and editorial board labor to review and edit the manuscripts, *LSR* exists as a forum for excellent research *only* because there are authors willing to submit to the often tedious and sometimes burdensome and frustrating process of peer review. Their openness to serious evaluation sustains this scholarly tradition of critique and response. In this process, the standards for publication are not only the editor's but are also in large part a synthesis of the perspectives and criteria of the individuals who serve as reviewers. If the raw material and energy are provided by the authors, the style and quality of the *Review* are also the work of these unsung heroes of academic publishing: the reviewers. The authors are encouraged to participate in what may in the end turn out to be a disappointing experience by the prospect of publication for a ready and intelligent audience. The reviewers, however, work anonymously, at substantial cost of time and opportunity and without noticeable material reward to themselves, to provide the prestige and immortality of publication for those authors willing to sail through these rough seas. Hundreds of scholars willingly give their time not only to read and comment upon others' work but also to offer suggestions and instruction that, in my experience, always produces stronger and more persuasive publications.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lempert (1985:531), editor of *LSR* from 1982 to 1985, concluded that because the inter-evaluator reliability was so low, the "value of outside reviews lies more in their contribution to the revision process than in their utility as a selection device."

In my three years as editor of *Law & Society Review*, nothing has impressed me more than the consistency with which some people, despite compelling professional and personal demands, nonetheless manage to give their attention to others. Those interested in human generosity and moral commitment may wish to explore why and how some people give so much. I, for one, am very grateful, and I know that there are dozens of authors who are even more grateful for the help and advice they received from careful and insightful reviewers.

In addition to acknowledging the relatively invisible volunteer labor that goes into producing *Law & Society Review*, I want to use this venue to review what we ultimately manage to produce. This is a familiar editor's game, and perhaps it is of interest only to editors—but I think not, because periodically controversies emerge concerning the content of academic journals. Recently, for example, protests from several hundred political scientists concerning the style, research methods, and subject matter published in the *American Political Science Review* were reported in the *New York Times*. Since that report in November 2000 commentaries have flooded several listserves. Other examples can be found in sociology where, over the past decade, debates about the editorship of the *American Sociological Review* have also led to vituperative exchanges in meetings and publications. I do not think these rumblings are unique to the specific disciplines, organizations, or journals, nor has *LSR* in its lifetime been immune from complaints about its contents, if not the organized campaigns occupying other fields.

In a world of interdisciplinary explosion and methodological proliferation, as well as increased pressure for publication to secure highly competitive academic employment, it is not surprising that the politics of publication, as a piece of the sociology of knowledge, might be a source of scholarly storms. More importantly, however, the strength of the interdisciplinary collaboration that constitutes the field of law and society seems to demand in its own right periodic assessment of what that disciplinary collaboration looks like, at least in the pages of the official journal of the association. A review of the journal's content can provide a benchmark of how law and society scholarship has changed over time. Because I am always looking for manageable projects on which my students can develop their research skills (using qualitative or quantitative methods), as I assumed the editorship of *LSR* three years ago I supervised an analysis of the journal's content. We updated it for this issue, offering here the results for your enlightenment, amusement, or commentary. Specifically, we asked how the content of *LSR*—the size and texture of papers, the topics researched and methods used, and the authors—

changed over its 34 years. Could we observe shifts and trends in the *Review* through these methods?<sup>2</sup>

Andrew Abbott (1999) recently published an analysis of the *American Journal of Sociology* (*AJS*) as part of his history of the “Chicago School” of sociology. In *Department and Discipline: Chicago Sociology at One Hundred*, Abbott describes the *AJS* as “the physical condensate” of the department, an artifact that displays “better than anything else the many ways in which institutional change wears a false guise of continuity” (1999:80). Although Abbott provides an in-depth portrait as compared to our surface skimming, the data from *LSR* provoke in this editor a similar observation of change disguised as continuity. The continuous, normally quarterly,<sup>3</sup> publication of *LSR* over 34 years constitutes that kind of “physical condensate” Abbott uses as an indication of several scholarly communities over time. Our analysis suggests that within the pages of *LSR* there has also been transformation over time, culminating in more law and society research in a larger, more interactive community. The indicators we use are more authors per article and articles of greater length, with more citations and more acknowledgments to the contributions and suggestions of others. Without making too strong a claim, I think one could argue that there are signs of increasing professionalization. The increasing number of authors from “interdisciplinary programs” over the 34 years also points in this direction, as does the upward slope in the number of graduate student authors. A more detailed analysis could at some time also look at citations to *LSR* within its own pages as another measure of professionalization, a measure that others might suggest is equally a sign of inward-looking parochialism. The point, of course, would be that there is something within to build from and upon.

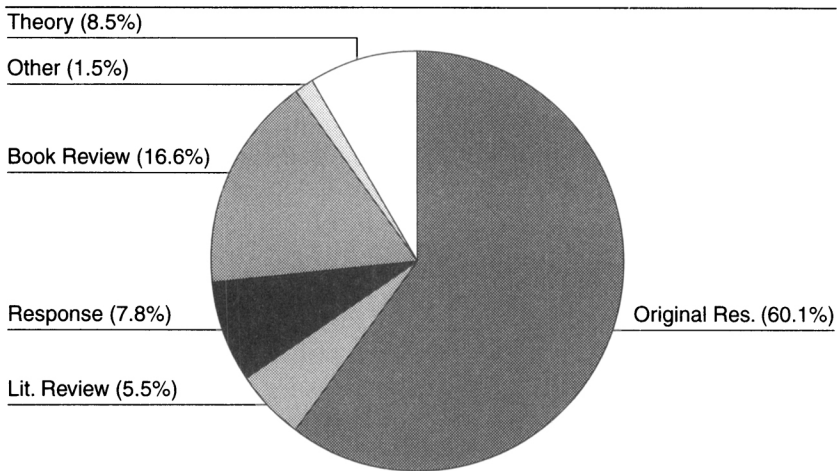
Despite signs of increasing professionalization, there are also strong indicators that sociolegal scholars have resisted some of

<sup>2</sup> The data preparation and analysis for this editor’s commentary was produced by Erin York in 1998 and updated and revised in 2000 by Erin York and Joseph Swingle. Proceeding without the benefit of peer review, I sought the criticisms of friends and colleagues. I am particularly grateful for their sage counsel which has saved me from my worst errors. Any virtue in these ruminations is due directly to the help I received from Kitty Calavita, Patricia Ewick, Bert Kritzer, Heather MacIndoe, Gary Marx, Frank Munger, Austin Sarat, Carroll Seron, Joe Swingle, and Erin York. They cannot, however, be responsible for my inability to follow good advice. I worked with only the contents of the *Review* to prepare these comments. They could certainly be enriched with data on membership and participation in other venues (e.g., attendance at conferences and workshops, publications elsewhere, etc.) There is an abundant literature in sociology and history on how professional and scholarly fields develop and on trends and changes over time; more serious work could also pursue lines of analysis developed there. As I suggested above, I offer these comments as provocations rather than as firm conclusions.

<sup>3</sup> Volume 1 (1966–67) consisted of two issues, Volumes 2 (1967–1968) and 3 (1968–69) three issues; Volumes 21–24 (1987–89) included a fifth issue of book reviews and essays; Volumes 24 (1990) and 28 (1994) included special fifth issues on Trial Courts (1990) and on Southeast Asia (1994).

the calcifying features of professionalization by remaining multidisciplinary. The simplest and most straightforward conclusion from these data is that there is more than one route to being published in *LSR*, whether we characterize these routes by the subjects and textual features of the articles, methods of research, or characteristics of the authors. First, I will support the claim that there is more law and society research and will illustrate what I mean by more; then, I will show how the gender and status of authors have changed over time. Finally, I will close with some ruminations on the nature of the field and the virtues of resisting professionalization.

**Figure 1.** Types of Articles in *Law & Society Review* 1966-2000



*N* = 586

Not surprisingly, as the official journal of a scholarly association, *Law & Society Review* publishes primarily original research, with the proportion of research articles relatively stable over time (Fig. 1). Although theoretical writing is obviously original research, we reserved the term “original research” to designate articles in which authors analyzed observations, data, or texts in order to interpret or explain them, rather than articles that used texts primarily to construct a theoretical model or a synthesis of scholarly literature. Over the 34 years, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of book reviews (Table 1). Reviews were not a part of the early journal, but the rate of book publication in law and society was not then what it is today. This increase in book reviews is the first indicator of more law and society research. Correspondingly, there has been a significant decrease in articles dealing with the development of the field of sociolegal studies. I take this reduction also to be a sign of an increasingly mature field that has less need to say what it is and what it is not. Notice as well the increase in the number of articles responding

**Table 1.** Type of Article by Decade

Type of Article	Decade (N)				Total
	1966–1969	1970–1979	1980–1989	1990–2000	
Original research	(26) 59.1%	(96) 65.3%	(85) 55.6%	(145) 59.9%	(352) 60.1%
Literature review	(5) 11.4%	(16) 10.9%	(6) 3.9%	(5) 2.1%	(32) 5.5%
Response	(2) 4.5%	(9) 6.1%	(10) 6.5%	(25) 10.3%	(46) 7.8%
Book review	(6) 13.6%	(10) 6.8%	(36) 23.5%	(45) 18.6%	(97) 16.6%
Other	(4) 9.1%	(2) 1.4%	(1) .7%	(2) .8%	(9) 1.5%
Theory	(1) 2.3%	(14) 9.5%	(15) 9.8%	(20) 8.3%	(50) 8.5%
Total	(44) 100.0%	(147) 100.0%	(153) 100.0%	(242) 100.0%	(586) 100.0%

to other articles, a dramatic and recent phenomenon. Here, we may be seeing the influence of special symposia, and perhaps the influence of our competitor, *Law & Social Inquiry*, with its well-developed style of publishing scholarly dialogue. The dialogue model suggests, nonetheless, that there is sufficient participation and audience to construct multiple perspectives within a subfield of the larger field.

How is this research done? What research methods were employed in the original research papers? Of the 352 articles coded as original research, the largest portion (42.8%) used “content analysis” (Table 2). As used here, the term refers to any research that systematically analyzed the substantive content of whatever sources were used, whether that analysis was qualitative or quantitative and whether the source materials were judicial opinions, administrative agency records, interview transcripts, or police interrogations.<sup>4</sup> “Analysis of existing data” (33.7%) refers to research that used a data source specifically collected and prepared for quantitative analysis, such as the General Social Survey, U.S. Census, or Bureau of Justice Statistics, as well as already analyzed data (secondary analyses). “Comparative analysis” (6.5%) refers to studies that look at two or more legal systems.

Clearly, the methods of original research vary. Although there has been a consistent production of survey research, over time there has been proportionally less reliance on observation and marked increases in historical, experimental, and comparative analyses. There has been much less multisystem research than the editors would have liked to have seen. Thus it appears that although a consistent proportion of *LSR* is devoted to origi-

<sup>4</sup> As we use the term here, content analysis refers to a continuum of methods, from those organized to be more easily replicable using standard analytic recipes to some that were more interpretive and hermeneutical. Any subsequent analysis might want to distinguish these further.

**Table 2.** Method of Original Research by Decade

Method	Decade (N)				Total	Mean # authors
	1966–1969	1970–1979	1980–1989	1990–2000		
Content analysis	(2) 5.0%	(55) 39.3%	(49) 37.1%	(45) 18.7%	(151) 42.8%	1.61
Interview (s)	(13) 32.5%	(33) 23.6%	(21) 15.9%	(52) 21.6%	(119) 33.7%	1.65
Analysis of existing data	(1) 2.5%	(11) 7.9%	(15) 11.4%	(40) 16.6%	(67) 19.0%	1.66
Observation	(15) 37.5%	(14) 10.0%	(17) 12.9%	(16) 6.6%	(62) 17.6%	1.24
Historical analysis	(6) 15.0%	(5) 3.6%	(12) 9.1%	(37) 15.4%	(60) 17.0%	1.17
Survey or questionnaire	(3) 7.5%	(17) 12.1%	(11) 8.3%	(26) 10.8%	(57) 16.1%	2.14
Comparative analysis	(0)	(3) 2.1%	(4) 3.0%	(16) 6.6%	(23) 6.5%	1.52
Experiment or simulation	(0)	(2) 1.4%	(3) 2.3%	(7) 2.9%	(12) 3.4%	2.25

Total number of articles = 352. Note that the percentages reach more than 100% because an article or piece of research may have used more than one method and was coded with up to three methods.

nal research, over time there is greater representation in the journal of a wider array of methods.

Some correspondents have suggested to me that *LSR* and the Law & Society Association generally have become more “law” focused, in the sense of being more attentive and welcoming to analyses of legal doctrine and texts, and thus including hermeneutical textual interpretations with quantitative content analyses in the coding may obscure this increase. The implication is that *LSR* and Law and Society as a community of scholars may have become less hospitable to and less evidently a social science endeavor. In part, I think this perception is a consequence of changes in the various social science disciplines that are paying more attention to culture and to processes of representation in social life generally. As the social sciences first developed, the basic impetus seemed to be to expose the underlying social forces that influenced the organization and texture of social life. The obvious analogy to physical forces notwithstanding, it became clear over time that social forces and deep structural analyses were not sufficient to describe or explain what happens in social life, including that part we label as law. Thus while sociolegal studies may have first emerged and thrived by casting its eye elsewhere than on legal doctrine (the lawyer’s terrain), the recent attention to cultural studies in almost all disciplines and fields of human life (from the arts to medicine, science, and politics, as well as law) has brought more legal doctrine within the purview of sociolegal studies. Our coding of “content analysis” may reflect this shift. However, our data do not at all suggest the demise of social science methodologies in *LSR*.

Turning to the form and texture of the articles, what we might think of as their representational style, we looked at the



number of pages, references, and acknowledgements, and whether these had changed over time. Such data have the capacity to reveal interesting features of the social organization of scholarship as well as the criteria for academic production. Contrast, for example, the way many 18th- and 19th-century scholars worked and wrote in relative seclusion, with limited collaboration with others, from the ways in which contemporary physical and social scientists work, in small groups with complex divisions of labor, interacting regularly about the intersecting parts of their research. Or consider a more popular example. Perhaps veteran moviegoers have noticed the recent expansion in the number of roles and persons listed in the credits at the end of a movie. Currently, it takes five minutes or more to scroll through the list of people who contribute to the making of a motion picture (whether it is an independent film or the product of a major studio). The list includes the caterers, the members of logistics companies, and the lawyers representing various participants in the production, as well as those you might expect: the writers, actors, cinematographers, and the director. Although all intellectual and artistic production is a collective process, the acknowledgment of this collaboration in popular culture has become more common. We wondered whether increasing acknowledgment of collaboration was also the case for scholarship published in *LSR*.

The data we analyzed tell a story of more pages, more references, and more acknowledgments per article (Table 3). The number of pages per volume varied slightly from year to year, with a distinct upward slope over the 34 volumes.<sup>5</sup>

These data concerning the social organization of scholarly production, specifically collaboration and acknowledgment, suggest that law and society research is not unlike the movies or scientific research generally: more of everything and more celebra-

**Table 3.** Changes in the Content of *LSR* Over Time

Content	Years							
	1966–1969	1970–1974	1975–1979	1980–1984	1985–1989	1990–1994	1995–2000	1966–2000
Mean pages per volume	522	631	800	803	857	810	953	799
Pages per article	16.9	21.0	22.0	25.2	19.9	23.4	31.5	23.9
Authors per article	1.1	1.5	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4
References per article	23.2	34.8	43.4	40.7	35.5	53.3	68.4	47.1
Acknowledgments per article	0.9	2.1	3.0	3.7	4.1	4.3	6.3	4.0
Graphics per article	1.4	5.1	2.5	3.5	2.6	1.8	2.9	2.8

<sup>5</sup> In 1996, Board of Trustees decided officially to increase the journal's total pages by 200 pages (25%). From 1987 through 1994, the total pages per volume had been closer to 1,000 than 800 (its budgeted size). The vote merely ratified a fact and authorized a more realistic budget. Notably, the acceptance rate rose only 3% as a result of the formal increase in the journal's size, varying between 8% and 15% during the 1980s, and between 13% and 18% during the 1990s.

tion of the collective production. There is a theme emerging here, perhaps a distinctly 20th- or 21st-century theme: *more* law and society research, *more* pages, *more* acknowledgments, *more* references, and importantly, *more* authors and *more* collaboration. Perhaps these too are signs of an increasingly mature field.

Who are these authors of law and society research? They are predominantly sociologists, with political scientists and legal scholars together representing the major share of the authors published in *LSR* (Table 4). This is not to say that one will not find historians, economists, anthropologists, and psychologists as authors of *LSR* articles; it is only that their absolute numbers and relative proportion have been quite small. These distributions did not change significantly over time, with the notable exception of a decline in political scientists. Perhaps this is because there are now more than a half dozen journals for social science research on law, or sociolegal studies. Some of these journals publish research on law primarily from some of the disciplinary perspectives underrepresented in *LSR* (e.g., *Journal of Legal Studies* for law and economics, *Journal of Legal History* for historical research, *POLAR* for political and legal anthropology, *Law and Human Behavior* for psychology, or *Journal of Politics* for political science). Shifts in the research agendas of different disciplines, the preferential locations for publication in different disciplines, as well as the accounting procedures of departments and universities that commodify publications and journals for evaluation, promotion, and merit, might also have had an effect in shifting disciplinary representation.

**Table 4.** *LSR* Authors by Disciplinary Identification

Discipline of Author	Years (N)				Totals
	1966–1969	1970–1979	1980–1989	1990–2000	Totals
Sociology	(14) 31.1%	(73) 35.4%	(84) 36.8%	(123) 36.4%	(295) 36%
Political Science	(12) 26.7%	(61) 29.6%	(55) 24.1%	(61) 18.2%	(190) 23.2%
Law	(12) 26.7%	(38) 18.4%	(33) 14.5%	(76) 22.0%	(158) 19.3%
Psychology	—	(13) 6.3%	(22) 9.6%	(18) 5.3%	(53) 6.5%
Justice/Public Policy	—	(1) 0.5%	(10) 4.4%	(31) 9.1%	(42) 5.1%
Anthropology	(5) 11.1%	(12) 5.8%	(9) 3.9%	(11) 3.9%	(37) 4.5%
Economics	—	(3) 1.3%	(6) 2.6%	(10) 2.9%	(19) 2.3%
History	(1) 2.2%	(2) 1.0%	(4) 1.8%	(4) 1.2%	(11) 1.3%
Philosophy	(1) 2.2%	(2) 1.0%	—	(1) 0.3%	(4) 0.5%
Other	—	(1) 0.5%	(5) 2.2%	(4) 1.5%	(10) 1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>820</b>



Two characteristics of the authors were of particular interest: gender and occupational status.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the percentage of articles with female first authors has steadily increased over the years, from 9.1% in the years 1970–1974 to 37.1% in the years 1995–2000 (Table 5). It appears however that women are more likely to publish in *LSR* in collaboration with others: 59.4% of female authors have coauthored their *LSR* articles, compared to 40.9% of male authors (Table 6).

**Table 5.** Women as First Authors in *LSR*

Years	Female Authors %	First Authors Female Authors <i>N</i>
1966–1969	0.0	44
1970–1974	9.1	66
1975–1979	12.3	81
1980–1984	21.7	60
1985–1989	22.8	92
1990–1994	29.7	101
1995–2000	37.1	140
For All Years	22.6	584

**Table 6.** Co-authorship of *LSR* Articles by Gender

	One Author	Two or More Authors	Totals
Male author	51.1%	48.9%	73.8%
Female author	40.6%	59.4%	26.2%
Total ( <i>N</i> )	(405)	(432)	(837)

Although the number and percentage of female authors of *LSR* articles is generally increasing, it turns out that female editors were more likely than males to publish the work of female authors: a total of 213 authors have been published by female editors. Of these 213, 37.6% of authors were female. For male editors, the comparable percentage is only 22.3% (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Gender of *LSR* Authors by Gender of Editor's (all years)

	Male Author	Female Author	Totals
Male Editor	77.7%	22.3%	74.6%
Female Editor	62.4%	37.6%	25.4%
Total ( <i>N</i> )	(618)	(219)	(837)

<sup>6</sup> We were unable to identify authors by race or ethnicity. Thus, we cannot comment on what many readers may find important and interesting, that is, the changing racial composition of the field.

**Table 8.** Gender of *LSR* Authors by Gender of Editor (1985-2000)

	Male Author	Female Author	Totals
Male Editor	72.8%	27.2%	55.4%
Female Editor	62.4%	37.6%	44.6%
Total ( <i>N</i> )	(326)	(152)	(478)

To a certain extent, the difference in the percentage of women authors whose articles were published by women editors is a function of the fact that for the first two decades of its existence, when female participation in the professions was generally lower, the editors of *LSR* were male. The portion of women authors generally rose in the 1980s, when the first woman editor was appointed to the *Review*. To determine whether the relationship between editor's and author's gender was merely historical, we looked at the relationship between the gender of editors and the gender of authors for only the past 15 years (Table 8). We found the same relationship, but not as large a gap between the number of women published by male and female editors. There remains, however, a significant, nearly 40%, increase in the number of women published by women editors. Any number of hypotheses might explain this association. The association may be a product of variation in acceptance rates by gender of the editor. This would have to be tested by submission data that unfortunately I did not have available for the lifetime of the *Review*. Or, the association may be due to variation in submission rates by gender depending on the gender of the editor. In this case, it might even be that women submit more but are accepted less under women editors, but again, I could not test this. My inclination, however, is that the variation is a result of special issues of the *Review* that attracted authors differentially by gender, and that these special issues reflected the interests of different editors. Suffice to say that this data should be taken as provocative more than definitive, certainly demanding further research. This pattern of more women authors with female editors also holds for first authorship. Women were twice as likely to be first authors under a female editor, but during the past 15 years the gap narrowed.

The pattern for graduate students as *LSR* authors is not quite as clear as the pattern for women. We had thought that there would be an increasing number of graduate students publishing over the 34 years, especially with the development of more law and society programs at the graduate level and more law and society scholars pursuing more than one graduate degree. But the pattern is not clearly in one direction (Table 9). However, when we looked at the disciplines of the graduate students publishing in the years 1970–1974 and those publishing in the years 1990–2000, we observed a wider spread in the disciplines, en-

couraging our interpretation that law and society is sustaining a multidisciplinary field.

**Table 9.** Graduate Student Authors of *LSR* Articles (*N*)

Years	Non-Graduate Student Authors	Graduate Student Authors	Totals
1966–1969	95.7%	4.3%	5.7%
1970–1974	85.9%	14.1%*	12.0%
1975–1979	93.5%	6.5%	12.9%
1980–1984	89.5%	10.5%	12.7%
1985–1989	96.0%	4.0%	15.0%
1990–1994	92.1%	7.9%**	16.9%
1995–2000	91.3%	8.7%**	24.9%
Total ( <i>N</i> )	(760)	(68)	(828)

\* Graduate student authors 1970–1974: 50% sociology, 21% political science, 21% law, and 7% anthropology.

\*\* Graduate student authors 1990–2000: 59% sociology, 17% political science, 10% psychology, 7% interdisciplinary degree, 3% law, and 3% history.

Graduate students were also less likely than others to publish single-author articles in *LSR*. Only 17 of the 68 (25%) graduate student authors whose articles have appeared in *LSR* over the years were sole authors. This figure is significantly lower than the overall percentage of authors who were single authors (48.4%) or even the women authors (40.6%) who are first authors less often than men (51.1%). This is hardly surprising.

Both female and graduate student authorship seems to be a function of the number of authors writing any one article: the more authors, the more likely that there will be women and graduate students among them. This is also not surprising, given the organization and distribution of labor on major research projects, especially research involving complex data analysis where the number of authors is usually higher (Table 2). Mary Jo Deegan has commented that women often do the “shadow work” in social science: “they do the tasks of clerical labor, library research, and data collection” (1995: 326), as well as theorizing, data analysis, and writing. Perhaps previously rendered invisible in the male dominated hierarchy of academia, graduate students and women are now being recognized for their significant as well as “shadow work” contributions. In other words, perhaps women (and to whatever degree there may be an increase in graduate student authors in *LSR*) are not necessarily more numerous in the research process but are increasingly recognized and acknowledged as collaborators, just like in the movies and popular culture. In addition, changes in graduate education (beginning 20 to 30 years ago, now yielding a more mature cohort of female scholars), tenure, and funding have provided more opportunities for research and publication that may also account for more women appearing on the pages of *LSR*.

When we looked at the topics of research, that is, the aspect or feature of legal phenomena examined in an article, we observed no consistent pattern. Some clusters of topics (e.g., on the legal profession or dispute processing) seem to be associated with specific projects, large projects that had many authors, and from special symposia calling for papers on particular topics, but the numbers were not large enough to be significant. In his final issue as editor of *LSR*, Mack O'Barr (1997:633) published an analysis of the *Review's* inclusion of articles on race, class, and gender, showing that the focus of an article on these issues was periodic and associated with specific projects and symposia. It seems that more intensive analyses would need to be done to make better sense of this aspect of the field. These analyses could produce a thorough and theorized account of substantive developments, rather than merely this brief look at the shape of *LSR* publication.

When Marc Galanter assumed the editorship for Volume 8 of *LSR* in 1973, he aspired to offer a "broad coverage of interdisciplinary exchange." He hoped to stimulate "convergence among disparate lines of inquiry," and to help develop "a coherent social scientific understanding of the legal process" (1973:7). Signs exist that such convergences and shared accounts of the legal process have been developing in and from sociolegal research, but these indicators may be more apparent outside the pages of the *Review* than within it. The appearance of an increasing number of synthetic texts for undergraduate students, of dictionaries and encyclopedia entries in production, of the more than five dozen undergraduate programs with majors or minors in law and society, and of the half-dozen Ph.D. programs in existence testify to an increasingly mature and institutionalized field.

Nevertheless, without a closer reading of the substance of the *Review*, we cannot say whether, 27 years later, we have fulfilled Galanter's ambitions. The desire for a distinctive paradigm for law and society research or a "coherent theory about . . . legal systems" (Lempert 1985:4; Diamond 1989:3) is less often heard today. Perhaps such aspirations are rarely heard anywhere in the 21st century, the illusion of coherence having been shattered by much 20th-century philosophy and social theory. Perhaps, too, early ambitions have been achieved, to a large extent, merely by the continuity and prestige of *LSR* for these 34 years, and maybe institutionalization has been achieved as well but without the stultifying orthodoxy of a coherent paradigm associated with some forms of professionalization. Moreover, the usual indicators of a mature field, such as increasingly narrow specialization, as well as splintering and sectioning into competing subfields,

may not be as applicable to a self-consciously interdisciplinary subject.<sup>7</sup>

The ambition to develop a coherent social scientific understanding of the legal process is probably fulfilled more in the vibrancy of the multidisciplinary exchanges and approaches than in any narrow consensus about a core set of questions or methods for understanding law and legal institutions. This multidisciplinaryity brings greater depth and variation in topics and methods, as well as dissensus (e.g., in definitions and conceptualization). The cost may be, as one of my students recently mentioned, that sociolegal studies are hard to define. I have noticed, however, as I have listened to presentations and discussions at more discipline-focused meetings, that sociolegal scholars have made more rapid and theoretically developed movements toward a cultural understanding of law, long before “culture” became the central focus it has become in many of the social sciences. I surmise that this theoretical advance in understanding the cultural dimensions of law, and theorizing about culture itself, may have happened because of the intense, perhaps difficult but nonetheless intersecting, conversations concerning particular legal phenomena among lawyers, psychologists, anthropologists, historians, political scientists, economists, and sociologists. In other words, while multidisciplinaryity may make sociolegal studies a “fuzzy set,” it seems to me—from three years of concerted reading of what authors think is law and society scholarship—that this is a lively and challenging field. Despite the softness in its borders, or perhaps because of those porous boundaries, sociolegal scholarship has produced a body of durable and sound observations about the way the law works.

Perhaps by trying simply “to understand how law works” (with an emphasis on “works”), we achieve the endurance that Abbott ascribes to structures that “acquire a certain internal resonance.” Attempting to define what a field is may produce an internal resonance, but short of that, the “jostling and mutual criticism” may also succeed in “aligning the mirrors and light sources into a powerful something indeed” (1999:79). I believe that understanding how the law works is just such a powerful something indeed.

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<sup>7</sup> Comparisons could be made to other interdisciplinary fields, however, such as urban planning or race or gender studies.

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