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Transcending the Boundaries:
The Case of Simone de Beauvoir

Gabriella Hochmann

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

Transcending the Boundaries: The Case of Simone de Beauvoir

Gabriella Hochmann

The study is a reassessment of the intellectual influence of Simone de Beauvoir, the hypothesis being that de Beauvoir's impact on knowledge overall has been greatly underestimated. Viewed from a sociology of knowledge perspective, that is, consideration of social factors in the acquisition, diffusion, and growth of knowledge, it attempts to show that perceived significance, or the lack of it, may be a direct result of the structure and organization of knowledge itself.

Certain existing social, economic and political conditions may have initially contributed to a delayed recognition of de Beauvoir's work. More importantly however, the masking of the significance of interdisciplinary scholarship, a lack of awareness of both its diffusion and the extent of its overall impact, may well be a result of intellectual segmentation and the lack of communication between disciplines. In addition, interdisciplinary work, lacking the requisite academic base of institutional supports and intellectual collaborators particular to individual fields of inquiry, is unlikely to attain the necessary 'centrality' and thus fail to achieve legitimation.

ABSTRACT cont'd

The methodology used in the study is citation analysis, data gathered from across all the Humanities and Social Sciences. Analysis is based on the assumption that citation counts provide an objective measure of the utility or impact of intellectual production.

DEDICATION

To my parents, who instilled in me the belief that education and learning were the only things no one could ever take away.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Susan Russell who was always there with assistance and encouragement over the long haul, Guy LeCavalier who suggested the sociological 'hook' for an interdisciplinary study, and Susan Hoecker-Drysdale who meticulously helped organize and structure it.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Simone de Beauvoir, novelist, essayist, philosopher, feminist, first became known with the publication in France of L'Invitée in 1943 with its English translation, She Came to Stay, appearing at the end of the decade. Since then, her works have continued to be published and translated in over a dozen languages. Her ideas have been assimilated into a number of disciplines, yet, to date, there has been limited recognition of the overall range and extent of her influence on 20th century thought.

The realization that her influence has been inadequately acknowledged came about during the compilation of an annotated bibliography on de Beauvoir.¹ As the research progressed, hundreds and then thousands of items referring to Simone de Beauvoir were discovered, and duly ordered and scanned for abstracting purposes. The sheer volume of material found was the initial surprise. The second surprise and one that took longer to assimilate was the range and diversity of the books and articles citing her. It became readily apparent that her ideas had infiltrated a much wider area than anticipated. This in turn led to the question of whether there was adequate recognition of the range of her influence, and, if not, the reasons for such limitations of perception.

There are a number of factors which might have contributed to a delay in recognition. The general social, economic and political situation which prevailed

¹ Joy Bennett and Gabriella Hochmann, Simone de Beauvoir: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Pub., 1988).

in North America in the post-war period would have been less than sympathetic to Simone de Beauvoir and her radical message. In the McCarthy era most liberals, reformers, intellectuals and of course socialist/communist sympathizers were seen as subversive elements of society, and Simone de Beauvoir fit quite neatly into a good number of the tainted categories. As a self-professed intellectual, she would have been categorized as elitist, a position with which the general public had little empathy. As well, her anti-bourgeois sentiments so boldly expressed would have alienated a large portion of middle class women, the same audience who only a decade later would flock to read The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan, a work that could be viewed as a deradicalized version of de Beauvoir's The Second Sex.

This era was also an anti-feminist one, a time when the cult of true womanhood and its concomitant myth of togetherness, were in the ascent. Simone de Beauvoir's views on the place of women would have been on collision course with the prevailing propaganda. And as for those with nascent feminist leanings, they too might have found difficulty accepting de Beauvoir because of her privileged status. The role of theoretician and expert within the traditional patriarchal system had been almost exclusively male, and for the most part alien and oppressive to women. The absolute authority and certitude of her writing might well have worked to categorize de Beauvoir as one of 'them' rather than one of 'us'.

In addition, her adherence to existentialism, a philosophy grounded in the most radical definition of individual freedom in western political thought, would

have been in sharp contrast with the idea of sisterhood espoused by a burgeoning feminist movement. Existentialist doctrine diametrically opposed the submerging of the individual into the collectivity and rejected any external factors that might impede the self's progress. The artist in particular represented the ultimate in individualism. The role of women artists therefore has often tended to be an ambiguous one, the frequent expectation being that they should represent at once a unique voice and the collective voice of women. De Beauvoir's privileged position distanced her from the majority and at least implicitly implied some scorn towards those who led more mundane, less advantaged, lives in the 'real' world.

Finally, her style of writing in itself presented a problem. As opposed to the journalese of The Feminine Mystique, The Second Sex, when it appeared in English translation in 1952, had an intellectual density particular to French writing. This made it virtually inaccessible to all but a small minority who would have had both the philosophical background and the belief in the value of abstract thought necessary to comprehend and appreciate her writing.

Much of the aforementioned has been at least alluded to over the years. However there may be an additional factor that has worked against the awareness of her influence, one that has not to date been considered, and which may well be of primary importance. This is the actual structure and organization of knowledge itself, the separation between disciplines and the gaps between them. Unlike the various factors mentioned previously which, with the passing of time would have for the most part had a diminishing

influence on any adverse reaction to Simone de Beauvoir in North America, the organization and institutionalization of knowledge has shown minimal change. As such it would exhibit as strong an influence as ever in working against the recognition of a 'Renaissance woman'.

CHAPTER II: **PROBLEM/PERSPECTIVE/METHODOLOGY**

The Problem

In her compilation and re-evaluation of classic feminist writings, Alice Rossi recognized that research and scholarship in the 20th Century showed increasingly narrowed areas of specialization. Academic scholarly values would have therefore virtually precluded the broad analytic overview as practiced by Simone de Beauvoir from the realm of 'appropriate scholarship'. With reference to The Second Sex in particular, Rossi foresaw that "in academic circles the very strength that flowed from its broad synthesizing framework was criticized as a weakness; since no one, the view went, could be a specialist in so many areas..."¹

Rossi was not alone in realizing the difficulties inherent in being an interdisciplinary individual in a disciplinary world. In the case of Simone de Beauvoir however, as this study will attempt to demonstrate, her work did manage to transcend disciplinary boundaries and indeed was utilized by scholars across a wide range of disciplines. The major consequence of the interdisciplinary aspect of her work was not therefore a lack of diffusion, but a lack of awareness that such diffusion had indeed taken place. This is not to imply a deliberate, concerted denial of influence on the part of scholars who used various aspects of her work, but rather to say that intellectual segmentation and lack of communication between the disciplines allowed for

¹ Alice S. Rossi, The Feminist Papers: from Adams to de Beauvoir (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 673.

only a limited perception of her actual overall influence. The aim of this study is therefore not to discover how such diffusion occurred, but to show, in a concrete fashion, its range and extent, and thereby present a more accurate picture of the influence of Simone de Beauvoir.

Perspective

In order to examine the effect that the structure and organization of knowledge has had on the recognition of the influence of Simone de Beauvoir, a sociology of knowledge perspective has been utilized. As enunciated by Jessie Bernard, in her case with reference to research in the area of sex differences, but equally applicable to any other field of inquiry, from a sociology of knowledge perspective, the activity of research, as differentiated from its specific findings, could be viewed as "a sociological phenomenon, an institution".²

Historically, the sociology of knowledge focused largely on the problem of objectivity in knowledge. A relatively recent development however is the "systematic consideration of the social factors in the acquisition, diffusion and growth of knowledge".³ Among the existential factors that influence knowledge, Merton listed occupational roles and organizational structures, human activities that create and disseminate knowledge within particular human institutions. Although Merton's particular interest lay in the field of the sociology of science,

² Jessie Bernard, Women, Wives, Mothers: Values and Options (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1975), p. 7.

³ Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: Free Press, enl. ed., c1968), p. 543.

his stated focus was a more all encompassing one, the "dynamic interdependence" of scholarly work and society, "an ongoing social activity giving rise to cultural and civilizational products, and the environing social structure".⁴

In the case of Simone de Beauvoir and the larger picture of twentieth century thought, the sociological question is thus whether the 'institution' represented by the structure and organization of knowledge, the existence of scholarly 'communities' represented by disciplinary divisions and the varying communication mechanisms, can be seen to have masked the diffusion of her ideas, and minimized the awareness of the range of her influence.

If one begins with the premise that Simone de Beauvoir has not been adequately recognized, and postulates that such limitation in recognition is due at least in part to the structure and organization of knowledge, the obvious next question is why interdisciplinary scholarship such as that exemplified by de Beauvoir may have greater difficulty than traditional scholarship in being accepted as significant.

In a recent article by Michele Lamont entitled "How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: the Case of Jacques Derrida", a sociological study of the legitimation of theories, the author attempts to set out the conditions under which a cultural product becomes defined as important. Lamont defines intellectual legitimation as "the process by which a theory becomes recognized as part of a field - as something that cannot be ignored by those who define

⁴ Ibid., p. 585.

themselves, and are defined, as legitimate participants in the construction of a cognitive field".⁵ In addition, and more importantly in the context of Simone de Beauvoir and her work, Lamont contends that "the legitimation of interpretive theories does not proceed from their intrinsic value but results from coexisting, highly structured interrelated cultural and institutional systems",⁶ in other words, the 'fit' between the work and the features of the cultural market.

In her consideration of conditions affecting the reception and intellectual legitimation of Derrida's work, Lamont differentiates between the cultural markets of France and North America. Her discussion of the features of Derrida's work that facilitated its diffusion in French intellectual circles, the greater importance of access to a large intellectual public through the cultural media, could as well be applied to Simone de Beauvoir. In the context of the North American market however, the acceptance or legitimation of Derrida and de Beauvoir can be seen to be markedly different, a difference that can serve to highlight the difficulties faced in interdisciplinary scholarship.

Lamont states that "academic works need to be framed in relation to the major debates of a field and associated with the major authors in order to be legitimated"⁷ and further that "institutional supports and intellectual collaborators"

⁵ Michele Lamont, "How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: the Case of Jacques Derrida", American Journal of Sociology, 93(3) (November, 1987), p. 586.

⁶ Ibid..

⁷ Ibid., p. 592.

are the "sine qua non for intellectual legitimation".⁶ In Derrida's case, when specialized philosophy audiences appeared to have lost interest in his work due to his deviation from the traditional norms of the discipline, he seems to have made a conscious effort to adapt his work in such a way as to derive a broader legitimacy base. Yet while his audience may have changed, his legitimation in North America was still the result of his strength of support from a single discipline, in this case, literature. Its professional journals and institutes gave Derrida a strong academic base, established his work as 'relevant' and conferred upon him the mantle of legitimacy.

Simone de Beauvoir, on the other hand, working in an interdisciplinary mode, would not have had the concentrated backing of any single discipline. The use of selected aspects of her work by a wide range of disciplines would not have given it the centrality, the 'fit' required for legitimation by any one discipline.

In order to pursue the hypothesis that Simone de Beauvoir's influence has been far greater than has been recognized, there is a need to establish a base line. Although a concept such as generally accepted perception is virtually impossible to operationalize, an examination of recent monographs on de Beauvoir should give a fair approximation. Chapter IV, "Perceptions of Significance," is therefore an examination of all English language, full length studies of Simone de Beauvoir published to date. These include works that fall into the categories of general biography, literary criticism, and feminist analyses. They focus on different aspects of de Beauvoir, as writer engagé, as Sartre's

⁶ Ibid., p. 616.

'companion', or as a model for feminism, but almost without exception, they tend to situate her within fairly narrow and individually defined constraints. Although generally conceding her importance, they demonstrate an unwillingness or perhaps inability to see her influence on a larger canvas, that of scholarship overall.

In the last fifteen years or so, there has been increased interest in and scholarship on Simone de Beauvoir. This can be attributed in part to a dramatic escalation in research in what has been termed The Feminist Enlightenment.⁹ A primary and explicit aim of those involved in Women's Studies has been the reintegration of knowledge, a striving for interdisciplinarity. This has led to the re-examination and rediscovery of women such as de Beauvoir. While one might argue that increased specialization at least initially enhances cohesiveness and commonality within the disciplines themselves by facilitating patterns of cooperation and competition, the end result would appear to be divisive. The fragmentation of knowledge creates mutually exclusive areas and the proliferation of interdisciplinary gaps. Dialogue between disciplines becomes increasingly difficult, the possibility of communication lessens, and with it, the understanding of the interconnectedness of all knowledge.

⁹ Angela Simeone, Academic Women: Working toward Equality (South Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey, 1987).

Methodology

The aim of the study is to reassess Simone de Beauvoir's intellectual influence from a multidisciplinary point of view. In order to do so, citation indexing will be used as a scientometric tool, the potential of which has only begun to be realized in sociological and historical research. In order to achieve an integrated view unrestricted by disciplinary boundaries, the study will be based on data obtained from Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts and Humanities Citation Index. Citation frequencies will be used as a measure of the range and extent of de Beauvoir's influence across the social sciences and the humanities. Since The Second Sex is the work most frequently associated with the name of Simone de Beauvoir, it seemed worthwhile to divide the analysis into two sections, the first consisting of references to the entire body of her work, and the second focusing on The Second Sex alone. With reference to The Second Sex, a context/content analysis of selected articles citing this work within the area of sociology is also included in order to examine in greater depth its diffusion and utilization within a single discipline.

Citation analysis is based on the methodological assumption that citation counts provide an objective measure of the utility or impact of intellectual production. If one accepts Robert Merton's view that "scientific work is esteemed in the measure that others can draw upon it to advance their own future inquiry",¹⁰ then this impact factor can be used to discover who

¹⁰ Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing: its Theory and Application in Science, Technology and Humanities (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), p. viii.

read/discussed/absorbed/built upon Simone de Beauvoir's work and therefore present a clearer picture of her overall influence.

The hypothesis that Simone de Beauvoir's impact has been underestimated by those involved in scholarly activity is fully expected to be validated. The analysis herein intends to show the actual extent and range of her influence, the disciplines affected and the fluctuations within individual disciplines.

CHAPTER III: THE INITIAL RESISTANCE

Although many of Simone de Beauvoir's concepts have infiltrated a wide range of knowledge, her name is today primarily associated with the women's movement. The view of Simone de Beauvoir as one of the 'foremothers' of feminism rests in large part on The Second Sex, which has been called the major feminist text of the twentieth century. Yet, although it was originally published in France in 1949, and by 1952 was available in English translation, it has only been in the last decade or so that North American feminism has openly demonstrated an awareness and acknowledgment of her contribution.

In recent re-evaluations of writers in the feminist tradition, it has been noted that often "it was not simply a question of what they wrote", but also "how their audience received it".¹ Often this was a "slow-release" effect. In the words of Sheila Rowbotham, although she found the ideas of The Second Sex inaccessible at first, they "must have been seeping through my way of seeing everything".²

In a tentative examination of Simone de Beauvoir's contribution to feminism and the writings of the feminist vanguard, but in the majority of instances equally applicable to her contributions to knowledge overall, Sandra Dijkstra offers a number of factors which might have contributed to the initial resistance to de

¹ Elizabeth Wilson, Hidden Agendas: Theory, Politics and Experience in the Women's Movement (London: Tavistock, 1986), p. 184.

² R.A. Sydnie, Natural Women, Cultured Men: a Feminist Perspective of Sociological Theory (Toronto: Methuen, 1987), p. 142.

Beauvoir's work. Questioning why Betty Friedan and not Simone de Beauvoir became the 'prophet' of women's liberation in North America, Dijkstra touches upon "social, economic and political conditions as well as intellectual and ideological predilections" which she sees as possible obstacles to the reception of The Second Sex.³ Amongst these were de Beauvoir's suspect political leanings, her advocacy of economic autonomy for women in an era that discouraged women's participation in the work force, and perhaps most significantly, the radical potential inherent in her portrayal of the commonality of women's problems and the necessity for collective action.

The general socio-economic climate in North America in the post-war period was marked by a predisposition against any ideas with a radical and/or leftist cast. Feminism would have been seen to fall under this rubric, a threat to the re-introduction of the cult of true womanhood, which was based on the principle that "a woman's place was in the home, that her normal role was nurturing children and caring for her husband, and that any show of independence, ambition or artistic spirit represented 'penis-envy', a 'masculine complex', and a neurotic hatred of self"⁴ In the 1950s, The Second Sex would have simply been too radical for America. Some ten years later, Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, a boiled-down, deradicalized, Americanized 'translation' would penetrate the

³ Sandra Dijkstra, "Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan: the Politics of Omission", Feminist Studies 6(2) (Summer, 1980), p. 290.

⁴ Marty Jerzer, The Dark Ages: Life in the United States 1945-1960 (Boston: South End Press, 1982), p. 228.

consciousness of the masses in a way that The Second Sex had been unable to do.

The life and work of Simone de Beauvoir are inextricably linked, and the deep rooted suspicion that Americans felt towards intellectuals as a class must also have been influential in the resistance and lack of understanding shown towards her work. Unlike France, where a traditional respect for intellect and culture afforded intellectuals a certain status and public eminence, America in the 1950s was distinctly anti-intellectual. Although this was not the first manifestation of anti-intellectualism, during this period Americans were clearly repudiating intellectuals and their values. A dichotomy had been set up; Adlai Stevenson versus Dwight D. Eisenhower, "intellect versus philistinism", with Eisenhower clearly the victor.⁵ The case against intellectualism, the perennial assumptions of its opponents, have been capsulized adroitly in the following:

intellect is pitted against feeling, on the ground that it is somehow inconsistent with warm emotion. It is pitted against character, because it is widely believed that intellect stands for mere cleverness, which transmutes easily into the sly or the diabolical. It is pitted against practicality, since theory is held to be opposed to practice ... It is pitted against democracy since intellect is felt to be a form of distinction that defies egalitarianism.⁶

To a large extent, this increased resentment was not against intellectuals per se, but intellectuals in their guise as experts, which was viewed as a form of power or privilege. But the two went largely undifferentiated. It was generally

⁵ Richard Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism in American Life (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 3.

⁶ Ibid., p. 45/46.

held that plain common sense was equal to or more important than formal knowledge and expertise.

And as for the intellectual class itself, representing the conservative element at least, is a 1972 publication by Edward Shils, one of the most influential social theorists of the time. Consisting of a compilation of essays written between 1954 and 1969, Shils' study of the nature of intellectuals and their relationship to an ordered society rests on his belief in a cultural tradition based on "the accepted body of rules of procedure, standards of judgment, criteria for the selection of subject matters and problems, modes of presentation, canons for the assessment of excellence, models of previous achievement and prospective emulation."⁷ It is obviously a tradition based on stability and wary of change.

Although Shils too decried the growth of specialization and felt that "the well-trained and competent American scientist, scholar, or technologist possesses a very meager and miscellaneous knowledge outside his special subject",⁸ his objection was not so much to disciplinary fragmentation leading to black holes in knowledge, but a fear for a lessening coherence of the intellectual community, leaving unsatisfied cultural needs to "the mediocre and brutal culture of the mass media..."⁹ Even those individuals who belonged to the educated classes,

⁷ Edward Shils, The Intellectuals and the Powers and other Essays (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 15

⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

⁹ Ibid., p. 126.

but who did not 'fit' Shils' aesthetic, intellectual and moral standards are variously labelled frivolous, featherbrained or guilty of dilettantism. For Shils, stability and authority of tradition went hand in hand, and rapid social change, as well as its advocates, would have been deemed, at the very least, guilty of 'incorrect' patterns of thought.

Shils' value system requires a coherent, unified elite, and thus, he disdainfully dismisses the rise of the 'people' and those who 'clamour' on their behalf, "... Negroes, Puerto Ricans, discontented females, and rebellious university students", in fact, "... any minority of outcasts who are impoverished, unemployed, on relief rolls, and in need of support by the welfare services of the state."¹⁰

Clearly Simone de Beauvoir's socialism and her advocacy of women as a group would have cast her in the role of alienated intellectual. And as to what Shils would have thought of a new, nontraditional branch of learning focused upon the interdisciplinary study of women, one which, to some extent, grew out of de Beauvoir's pioneering efforts, one need only extrapolate from his facetious portrayal of this possible futurist scenario. "There might even be black studies 'faculties' with 'black teachers' chosen by 'black students' teaching 'black perspectives' in some ill-guided American universities and colleges."¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 185.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 296.

Over and above the broadly diffused anti-intellectualism of North American society, feminism as a movement has always shown an inherent bias against intellectuals/elites/theoreticians/ experts, all of whom were seen as in some way representative of a patriarchal system. In the preface to a very curious 1975 article by Betty Friedan, she says that she sought an interview with Simone de Beauvoir in order to find "the right answer", although she herself "had not such sure answers and distrusted those who did". And although she does, if somewhat belatedly and begrudgingly, acknowledge de Beauvoir's influence, her emphasis in the article is on de Beauvoir's voice of authority, "sterile, cold, an abstraction" in which she recognized "the authoritarian overtones of that supposed Marxist party line that I've heard before from sophomoric, self-styled radical feminists in America". In a distinctly facetious tone, Friedan seems to be saying that she (and by implication, the feminist movement) has outgrown Simone de Beauvoir. "There are no gods, no goddesses, no outside authorities, however radical their credentials, or even authorities we create ourselves from childish needs ... we can trust no other authority than our own personal truth."¹² To this day this tension persists, the role of intellectuals vis a vis the women's movement largely unreconciled.

Ideological considerations aside, the problem that many had with The Second Sex was simply that they found it too difficult. In the introduction to his book Understanding "The Second Sex", Donald Hatcher credits The Second

¹² Betty Friedan, "No Gods, No Goddesses", Saturday Review (June 14, 1975), p. 16/17.

Sex with being "the most comprehensive, stimulating and philosophically rigorous" of all the works dealing with women and feminism, while acknowledging at the same time that it is the most difficult to understand. He attributes this to the fact that de Beauvoir presupposes the reader's knowledge of Sartrean existentialism as well as a familiarity with Marx, Hegel, Nietzsche.¹³ A large proportion of her audience in France would have had at least some grounding in philosophy and abstract intellectual inquiry due to its institutionalization in the French educational system, but the North American readership for the most part lacked the necessary philosophical background.

And all the aforementioned would have been exacerbated by certain of de Beauvoir's personality traits which permeate all her writing. Even Alice Schwarzer, well-known German feminist, journalist and long-time friend and colleague, who held Simone de Beauvoir to be the greatest source of inspiration for feminism and a symbol of emancipation, realized that she could be "a very uncompromising person" with a "notoriously dismissive manner when situations or people did not suit her".¹⁴ She has often been faulted for the absolute authority and absence of hesitation in her prose which was seen as indicative of a lack of warmth and generosity of spirit. She was not unaware of these attributes. As she said in The Prime of life, "I was always readier to judge

¹³ Donald L. Hatcher, Understanding "The Second Sex" (New York: Peter lang, 1984), p. 1.

¹⁴ Alice Schwarzer, After The Second Sex: Conversations with Simone de Beauvoir (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 12.

people than to understand them."¹⁵

In a more recent interview with John Gerassi, de Beauvoir conceded that she had shown scorn for those incapable of the transcendence she advocated, and in so doing, might have played the part of a class collaborationist, or its equivalent in the sex struggle. "In effect, I was thinking, without even saying it to myself, 'If I can, so can they'"¹⁶

The very writing of The Second Sex however constituted for de Beauvoir a process of growing self-awareness. She began to see how privileged was her own position. In her role as an intellectual she had in large part abdicated most aspects of traditional womanhood and in so doing profited from the values of a male-oriented society. The realization that the vast majority of women did not have the options open to her, coupled with a growing conviction that class struggle did not obviate the need for sex struggle, that the socialist revolution left patriarchal values largely intact, served as the impetus for her outspoken conversion to feminism in the early 1970's and her acceptance of the need for and support of collective action.

¹⁵ Simone de Beauvoir, The Prime of Life (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 125.

¹⁶ John Gerassi, "Simone de Beauvoir. The Second Sex: 25 years later, Society 13(2) (Jan/Feb, 1976), p. 80.

CHAPTER IV: PERCEPTIONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Although the majority of Simone de Beauvoir's works were published within a thirty year period from the mid 1940s to the mid 1970s, it has only been in the last ten to fifteen years that there have appeared full length studies of her work in the English language. An examination of all such studies published to date would therefore appear to be a valid means of ascertaining the commonly accepted view of her significance. As stated previously, the hypothesis herein is that due to a variety of factors, her significance has not been adequately recognized. This is substantiated by a reading of these authors who, while obviously of the opinion that de Beauvoir's work is of sufficient importance to merit their attention, seemed largely unaware of her overall significance and the wide range of scholarship that has drawn upon her work. The argument for significance as understood in this study is not based primarily on intrinsic value but on impact, the capacity to stimulate interest and further inquiry over so long a period of time and across so many fields of inquiry.

The English language full length studies on de Beauvoir which have been published to date number eight in total and fall into three general categories, although the lines of demarcation are somewhat fluid. One is a standard biographical treatment, two are literary criticism, and the other five interdisciplinary in orientation but linked by a feminist perspective. The first, and only standard biography is Robert Cottrell's Simone de Beauvoir published in 1975. While he prefaces most of his opinions on de Beauvoir's works with statements such as "flawed though it may be", Cottrell nevertheless does grant

that The Mandarins "must surely be counted among the most significant French novels published since World War II" and The Second Sex "the most important, the most forceful vindication of women's rights to have appeared in the twentieth century."²

Although he professes to accept Simone de Beauvoir's work as distinctive and very much her own, Cottrell continuously and consistently stresses the extent of Sartre's influence. He sees The Second Sex as "a mammoth edifice that rests on two slender postulates", the first that man, in conceiving of himself as essential, and therefore Subject, has made of woman the unessential, the Object, the Other; and second, that there is no such thing as feminine nature. Both of these are seen as "derived from concepts elaborated by Sartre in L'Être et le Néant, a book to which Beauvoir frequently refers as if to a sacred text whose validity and authority no right thinking person could question". Although de Beauvoir clearly stated that The Second Sex was written from an existentialist perspective, Cottrell is not satisfied with this admission. He sees the concept of otherness as "borrowing directly from Sartre", and her most well known precept "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman", derived from the most fundamental principles of existentialism, expressed by Sartre in his famous formula, existence precedes essence.³ In the same vein, he ascribes her later

¹ Robert D. Cottrell, Simone de Beauvoir (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub., 1975), p. 121.

² Ibid., p. 107

³ Ibid., p. 95/96.

statements that The Second Sex should have put greater emphasis on economic considerations as but another example of de Beauvoir's apparent need to bring her views in line with Sartre's political and philosophical theories. In 1960 Sartre published Critique of Dialectical Reason in which he argued that human history has been in the main economically based, a history of struggle to overcome scarcity. De Beauvoir, "the most faithful of disciples ... clearly (and admittedly) takes her cue from Sartre in all matters relating to existentialist doctrine."⁴

Cottrell therefore, while accepting de Beauvoir's works as important, ascribes her significance to her role as Sartre's 'companion and associate'. This of course would place her precisely in the role of woman as 'relative being' which she rebelled against in The Second Sex.

Of the books somewhat loosely categorized as literary criticism, the first is Konrad Bieber's Simone de Beauvoir (1979). Among the works discussed, his seems to be by far the most cognisant of the extent and range of her influence, calling her "one of the major figures in twentieth century thought".⁵ While he is certainly aware of Sartre's undeniable influence, he nevertheless sees de Beauvoir as entirely independent in her thinking and original in her writing. Even more interestingly, he intuitively places her in a category of writers whose "influences are felt strongly even by those who never studied the works of

⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

⁵ Konrad Bieber, Simone de Beauvoir (Boston, Twayne Pub., 1979), p. 184.

thinkers whose doctrines affected them in one way or another".⁶ He not only views her work as integral to French literature, but in a much wider context, says that "her stature rests on the impact she has had on society both by her pen and her voice".⁷

Bieber foresees long term influence for The Second Sex, "one of her best works, the least likely to become obsolete, despite the rapid pace of scientific discovery and the immense amount of publications on the question of women. Her data may go out of fashion. Her ideas stand and are as clear and cogent as at the time of her writing."⁸

Although he has since been taken to task by some feminist critics for his assertion that "she speaks and writes in such a way that one might forget about the sex of the novelist or the essayist were it not for the constant concern she voices for the cause of women",⁹ his overall assessment of de Beauvoir would lead one to believe that the intent of this statement, at least on a conscious level, was more a rejection of prescribed boundaries for 'women's writing' than implied condescension.

In conclusion, Bieber ranks Simone de Beauvoir among the important thinkers of our time based on her interweaving of life and work in all of the

⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

various genres she practiced, and credits her with opening not only our eyes but also our minds.

Terry Keefe in his Simone de Beauvoir: a Study of her Writings (1983) clearly delineates the parameters of his study; de Beauvoir as writer, rather than as feminist or companion to Sartre.

He too seems to sense that in the long term, and at the social and historical levels, de Beauvoir's work has been undervalued. With reference to The Second Sex for example, while conceding that there are certain deficiencies in both composition and style of writing, he nevertheless acknowledges that "in a number of ways, both direct and indirect, the influence of Le Deuxième Sexe has undoubtedly been much greater than is commonly acknowledged."¹⁰

Keefe feels that there has not yet been a proper evaluation of her writing, due in part at least to what he terms a distinctive 'vulnerability' marking so much of her work.

She is often so emphatic and so sweeping in her assertions in essays that they immediately set up resistance on the readers' part. A number of her novels do have such obvious aesthetic defects that one may be disinclined even to consider whether they are accomplished works of art. And her autobiographical writings leave us such strong impressions of contingency or facticity that we are easily drawn into reading them for the information of various kinds that they convey rather than for anything else."¹¹

¹⁰ Terry Keefe, Simone de Beauvoir: a Study of her Writings (Totowa, N.J.; Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), p. 111.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 228/229.

Nevertheless, in his final analysis, Keefe finds de Beauvoir had the ability to communicate and thus succeeds in fulfilling the proper function of literature as she perceived it.

The first of the works placed in the category of feminist, and also one of the earliest, is Jean Leighton's Simone de Beauvoir on Woman (1975). While this is the only work examined that can in some sense be said to be subject-oriented, Leighton feels justified in using this perspective to analyze all of de Beauvoir's writings in the belief that since the subject of woman is de Beauvoir's unifying theme, such an analysis can help clarify Simone de Beauvoir's true feelings about what it means to be a woman. This avowed intent clearly sets very definite limitations on Leighton's assessment of de Beauvoir's stature or overall value of her works.

The Foreword written by Henri Peyre foreshadows the views that Leighton espouses in her work. Peyre begins by placing Simone de Beauvoir in her 'proper' context as a woman writer. "Simone de Beauvoir, since the end of World War II, towered above all other women writers in her own country, and probably in Continental Europe".¹² In his view, de Beauvoir is unlikely to be remembered as philosopher or novelist in that

as a thinker, she has echoed Sartre's ideas too faithfully, bowed to his lead, espoused all his political views, and independently contributed all too little to the ethics and to the politics of Existentialism. As an imaginative writer, she has not once, strangely enough, presented a female character whom we might

¹² Jean Leighton, Simone de Beauvoir on Woman (London; Associated University Presses, 1975), p. 7.

admire, or merely remember lastingly as a complex, winning, mature, true woman.¹³

Is the latter a criteria he would apply to all novelists, or merely the proper expectation of a woman writer? He grants de Beauvoir a place as pioneer for women's rights, a movement which he concedes may be one of the most important events of the 20th Century, yet his descriptions of The Second Sex are somewhat ambivalent to say the least, "eagerly amassed second-hand information", and her "hasty reasoning" showing "lack of rigour and at times plain common sense".¹⁴ Towards Leighton's book however he shows no such ambivalence. It is "easily the most searching, the most subtle, and the most courageous yet written on Simone de Beauvoir in English or in French".¹⁵ And, of the ones examined, by far the most devastating.

In her introduction, Leighton allows Simone de Beauvoir "a creditable place in twentieth-century French letters" and describes her as "an acknowledged voice" in "woman question" debate.¹⁶ Her analysis however concentrates on, and judges de Beauvoir on, ideas and attitudes Leighton feels de Beauvoir should not only have espoused, but should have given priority. For example, "Why should a liberated woman, the author of a brilliant polemical feminist

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

document fail to create in her novels a single woman who embodies the feminist ideal of independence, freedom of spirit and strength of character."¹⁷

Leighton was not of course alone in her expectation that as a woman writer de Beauvoir had an obligation to portray admirable female characters. In a 1978 interview de Beauvoir responded: "Some women complained that I did not present positive heroines, because I showed mostly broken, unhappy women. I did so because that is how I see and feel today's feminine condition. I have no desire to present heroic, militant women who I feel are nonexistent and utopian."¹⁸ Leighton does call The Second Sex "a classic in feminist literature", and Simone de Beauvoir "a heroine in women's liberation" deserving an "honourable place in the history of that movement"¹⁹ but at the same time calls the book "a diatribe against the female sex".²⁰ Leighton does not in any way seem to accept de Beauvoir's statement that she was writing of what was, as opposed to what could or should be, and faults her for it. In Leighton's final analysis, Simone de Beauvoir is labeled as misogynist, which 'disturbs' Leighton because

twenty centuries of misogyny is enough. Women are not inferior human beings, they are oppressed, and it is time they proudly hold up their heads and proclaim their worth. Feminist critics

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸ Jessie Bernard, The Female World (New York: Free Press, 1981), p. 435.

¹⁹ Leighton, Op. Cit., p.219/220.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 118.

should not add fuel to the ancient irrational and unjust claims of male chauvinists about woman's inferiority.²¹

Leighton's book is a strong, angry indictment. Although Peyre insists that Leighton sincerely admires Simone de Beauvoir, her assessment of de Beauvoir's work, while certainly her prerogative, is far too narrowly conceived to give any larger picture of de Beauvoir's influence.

Apart from Leighton however, it is generally the feminist critics who have begun to realize that de Beauvoir's influence is greater than heretofore acknowledged. Dale Spender, a prolific feminist writer, muses that "what is strange now about the 1970s publications is the very few references they contain to the work of other women."²² Sandra Dijkstra sees Betty Friedan's admission of de Beauvoir's influence as belated and begrudging. Kate Millet's Sexual Politics, a clear descendant of The Second Sex was never acknowledged as such. The actual influence of Simone de Beauvoir on the feminist intellectual vanguard, and perhaps through them, the mass of American women, is in need of further evaluation. But styles change. In a graphic description of such stylistic changes, Margaret McDowell states: "... de Beauvoir philosophically argues with the mirror, ... Millett tries to knock the door down, Ellman gnaws away at the door with razor-sharp teeth".²³ Perhaps the most telling reason for

²¹ Ibid., p. 221.

²² Dale Spender, For the Record: the Making and Meaning of Feminist Knowledge (London, The Women's Press, 1985), p. 119.

²³ Margaret B. McDowell, "Reflections on the New Feminism", The Midwest Quarterly, XII(3) (Spring, 1971), p. 314.

feminists' often unacknowledged debt to Simone de Beauvoir has been advanced by Dale Spender. She sees it as due to the centrality and unconscious absorption of de Beauvoir's concepts, which have become "part of the taken-for-granted feminist reality".²⁴

Yet even while acknowledgment of Simone de Beauvoir's influence becomes more prevalent among feminists, it is still for the most part restricted to her influence on feminism. They too fail to realize the wide ranging impact she has had on modern thought and knowledge.

Anne Whitmarsh's Simone de Beauvoir and the Limits of Commitment (1981) focuses on the ethical, social and above all political implications of commitment to a 'revolutionary' ideal. De Beauvoir's writings are analyzed as manifestations of such a commitment.

Simone de Beauvoir is here found wanting. Although she was "a morally committed writer with deeply held political convictions, ... the very nature of these has the consequence of restricting her range of activities and thereby the possibilities open to her for exerting influence and so 'changing the world'".²⁵ Simone de Beauvoir felt the role of the intellectual to be outside the system, as well as independent of its opponents. Whitmarsh has difficulty in accepting this stance, in that "If the usual avenues of political influence are closed to him (sic), then the left-wing intellectual can only work through his writing, or by using the

²⁴ Dale Spender, Women of Ideas and what Men have done to them (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. 513.

²⁵ Anne Whitmarsh, Simone de Beauvoir and the Limits of Commitment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 164.

name he has made for himself in a publicity exercise ... This presupposes that the intellectual can have influence in this way."²⁶

Although the difficulty of reconciling scholarship with effective political action has been a source of endless discussion, Whitmarsh clearly opts for political action. While acknowledging that Simone de Beauvoir's name "evokes images of belles-lettres, politics, and women's rights", and places her, together with Sartre, under the rubric of "a French national institution"²⁷ she nevertheless questions the actual influence of a work such as The Second Sex. "Had it not been written, would anything be different?"²⁸

Although not ruling out the possibility, Whitmarsh sees the influence of 'intellectual' commitment as more than somewhat uncertain.

In reality, of course, the influence of intellectuals (and in particular of literary figures) is impossible to evaluate except in very narrowly defined areas. The whole question is such an imponderable that nothing can be concluded with any certainty. Their effect, although it tends to be long-term and is only rarely immediate, depends upon the power of ideas to shape human consciousness and therefore social forms.²⁹

While obviously not ascribing necessary or direct causal relationships, others have seen the written word as potentially playing a much greater role in the changing of mass consciousness. "While books don't start revolutions, they

²⁶ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 1/2.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 152.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

may help people to recognize shared experiences and to question conditions of life which they had accepted as natural and inevitable."³⁰

Simone de Beauvoir: a Feminist Mandarin (1985) by Mary Evans has a stated twofold purpose, to examine "how the feminism of this extraordinary and gifted woman was shaped by the very patriarchal values and habits that her later followers would question and condemn"³¹ and in doing so attempt a definition of feminism and feminists, and secondly, to examine the values implicit in de Beauvoir's work.

While Evans agrees that Simone de Beauvoir came to a feminist consciousness in "a cerebral way",³² she is critical of Whitmarsh's allegations that de Beauvoir was guilty of insufficient engagement in practical politics, and consequent downplaying of the importance of the written word on the part of Whitmarsh that this implies.³³

In a discussion of the seemingly 'limited' critical attention that has been paid to de Beauvoir, Evans differentiates between feminist critics and others. She attributes the feminist position to an unwillingness to challenge or criticize one who has contributed so much. In the case of academics and literary critics she feels that what is operational is a combination of traditional sexism which

³⁰ David Bouchier, The Feminist Challenge: the Movement for Women's Liberation in Britain and the USA (London: Macmillan Press, 1983), p. 44.

³¹ Mary Evans, Simone de Beauvoir: a Feminist Mandarin (London: Tavistock, 1985), p. X.

³² Ibid , p. 60.

³³ Ibid., p. 102.

dismisses work on women as outside the consideration of serious critics, and the view that de Beauvoir's work was merely ancillary to that of Sartre.³⁴

In conclusion, Evans awards Simone de Beauvoir a prominent place, as "a source of inspiration, if not direction", to feminism.³⁵

The last two books, Carol Ascher's Simone de Beauvoir: a Life of Freedom (1981), and Judith Okely's Simone de Beauvoir: a Rereading (1986), should be looked at together, as they present an unusual mix of biography, literary criticism and personal commentary, infused with a feminist sensibility, almost a form of testimonial.

They both adopt a feminist methodology that defies standard academic practice, in viewing objectivity as 'myth'. Ascher states outright that "I don't believe in objectivity, and I can't pretend my attitude is neutral",³⁶ while Okely contends "Fear of subjectivity is more a masculine attribute which is concealed behind inappropriate claims to scientific objectivity".³⁷

Ascher admits to being ill equipped to discuss philosophical principles, and being untrained in literary criticism. This is a very personal book, almost a quest, to find "what help you could give me and my friends in our struggle".³⁸

³⁴ Ibid., p. 121.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

³⁶ Carol Ascher, Simone de Beauvoir: a Life of Freedom (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981), p. viii.

³⁷ Judith Okely, Simone de Beauvoir: a Rereading (London: Virago Press, 1986), p. viii.

³⁸ Ascher, Op. cit., p. 115.

She sees The Second Sex as "probably the most important work for American feminism, as well as for feminism in most Western European countries".³⁹

Judith Okely's book is an exploration of the 'dynamic relationship' between reader and author, which "cannot be treated as a detached academic exercise".⁴⁰ As the author of this most recent of all the aforementioned books, Okely is aware of the increased scholarly attention being paid to de Beauvoir, but she regards this as academia busily "working over her", awarding her "renewed respectability as an honorary male among intellectuals".⁴¹

In her reading of The Second Sex however, Okely does touch upon its potential influence, as well as the factor which I see as the foremost cause of the seeming lack of recognition of Simone de Beauvoir to date, the 'gap' between the disciplines.

The Second Sex is a remarkable multi-disciplinary undertaking which few intellectuals and academics would repeat today. Specialists ... would hardly dare stray beyond their own expertise ... Not only are the social sciences more demarcated as separate disciplines ... but they also have their own sub-specialisms ... Back in the 1940s de Beauvoir set herself the task of a Renaissance woman, covering an enormous range of disciplines.⁴²

In the works examined, it appears that Simone de Beauvoir's overall influence has been seen, in the majority of cases, as falling within carefully

³⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

⁴⁰ Okely, Op. cit., p. vii.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴² Ibid., p. 55.

defined boundaries. Interestingly enough, it is a male critic, Konrad Bieber, who consistently comes the closest to acknowledging her significance in the much wider range of scholarship which she deserves. With reference to feminist interpretations at least, this may be due in part to the view (as exemplified by Okely) that wider recognition can only be the result of patriarchal condescension and/or co-optation, allowing Simone de Beauvoir into the ranks as token female, androgynous being, or in the most extreme instance, a woman with a 'male' mind.

CHAPTER V: THE ORGANIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

... a typical meeting of a university faculty can sound like the clash of foreign tongues, each speaking from its own specialization with its particular assumptions, viewpoint, and very different body of information. Not only do scientists and humanists stand on different ground, but the scientists quarrel among themselves; sociologists may be at loggerheads with the economists, and psychologists with both; the schools of philosophers do not even condescend to try to understand each other; and even in mathematics, the universal language where unity of mind should be attained if anywhere, the quarrels among mathematicians provoked the great Poincaré to remark, "Les hommes ne s'entendent pas parce qu'ils ne parlent pas la même langue". Our culture has brought down the tower of Babel from heaven to earth.¹

A somewhat facetious view of scholarly activity to be sure, yet indicative of a very real problem, the separation and lack of communication between the disciplines, and one that might well obscure the influence of those who, themselves unrestrained by disciplinary boundaries, have an unrecognized cumulative impact.

One of the best expressions of this problem is C.P. Snow's Rede Lecture of 1959, in which he first introduced the term, the two cultures. He saw western society as split into two polar groups, with literary intellectuals at one end and scientists at the other, between them "a gulf of mutual incomprehension".² Snow was aware of the problems inherent in his choice of the dialectic, but

¹ David Kirby, The Plural World: an Interdisciplinary Glossary of Contemporary Thought (New York: Garland Pub., 1984), p. xvii.

² C.P. Snow, The Two Cultures: and a Second Look (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 4.

resisted expanding his concept to a proposed three cultures ("... some of my American sociological friends have said they vigorously refuse to be corralled in a cultural box with people they wouldn't be seen dead with"), or for that matter, two thousand and two, the logical extension of the "excessive unsimplicity" school of thought. His two cultures was meant to be "a little more than a dashing metaphor, a good deal less than a cultural map".³ In his view scientists saw the literature of traditional culture as largely irrelevant, while the other side pretended the natural order does not exist. The result of this polarization: a loss not only in the intellectual field, but also the practical and the creative.

The organization of knowledge into separate areas of learning has often been seen as an artificial one, based not so much upon a systematic division of social-scientific labor as upon largely arbitrary consequences of particular social processes.⁴ Among these factors are the rapid expansion of the output of formal knowledge, the growth of specialization, the process of professionalization and setting up of scientific societies, the desire for occupational control and autonomy, and the standardization of institutions established to advance and transmit knowledge.⁵ What is at issue here however

³ Ibid., p. 9.

⁴ Murray L. Wax, "Myth and Interrelationship in Social Science: Illustrated through Anthropology and Sociology," in Interdisciplinary Relationships in Social Science, ed. by Muzafer Sherif & Carolyn W. Sherif (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969), p. 80.

⁵ Alexandra Oleson & John Voss, eds., The Organization of knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. xiv.

is not the causes, but the effects of this fragmentation. The organization of knowledge into isolated conceptual spheres has been regarded as artificially enhancing cohesiveness and commonality within the disciplines and sub-disciplines, while at the same time impeding communication between them and producing wider and wider interdisciplinary gaps. The disciplines have become mutually exclusive enterprises, increasingly distant from each other and from the common sense world. Depending upon one's point of view, the results of this intellectual segmentation can be felt to be anything ranging from problematic to destructive.

Thomas Kuhn's theories regarding the constitution and functioning of academic disciplines, based on the actual behavior of scholarly communities as opposed to a fixed and idealized structure of knowledge, revolves around the notion of paradigms.⁶ Paradigms can be described as networks of organizational norms, indicating the problems to be studied, the methodology used, and the perspective adopted. Paradigms thus not only organize knowledge, but implicitly at least, rank data, problems and techniques. It is therefore not inappropriate to question whether the acceptance of any single paradigm may not entail a narrowing of perspective, thereby inhibiting the exchange and dispersal of ideas.⁷

⁶ Thomas S. Kuhn. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1970).

⁷ Diana Crane. Invisible Colleges: Diffusion of Knowledge in Scientific Communities (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 100.

Paradigmatic development can clearly be linked to Merton's discussion of insiders and outsiders, in which he invokes the notion of ethnocentrism as defined by William Sumner, "the technical name for the view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it".⁸ Decrying the fixed boundaries of the sociological canon, he ends his paper: "Insiders and Outsiders, unite. You have nothing to lose but your claims. You have a world of understanding to win".⁹

The area of Women's Studies has been in the forefront of the effort to decompartmentalize and reintegrate knowledge, to combat the ethnocentrism of the disciplines.

Boundary crossing, a move away from disciplinary specialization, is an explicit aim of Women's Studies. The creation of Women's Studies programs in itself implies an implicit criticism of the traditional organization of knowledge by discipline.

As exemplified by the title of a book edited by Julia Sherman, The Prism of Sex, women's studies scholars have long questioned whether the world seen through the eyes of one sex was identical to knowledge about a world seen through the eyes of the other.¹⁰ Analogous to this realization is one that recognizes that "each

⁸ Robert K. Merton. The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 107.

⁹ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁰ Julia A. Sherman and Evelyn Torton Beck, The Prism of Sex: Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979).

discipline perceives the world through a different coloured lens and is committed to that hue".¹¹ Both can result in unidimensional if not distorted views.

Dualities abound in feminist scholarship. Essentially rooted in the women's movement, it must nevertheless function primarily within the pre-established structures of academia. In addition, the majority of feminist scholars, while committed to work that "expands, modifies, or even overturns the presumptions of 'traditional' academic inquiry",¹² are nevertheless trained in the methods and assumptions of particular disciplines, and thus to varying degrees shaped by them. This cannot but result at times in contradictory impulses and allegiances.

In an attempt to bring together work from various disciplines, feminist scholars, whether working independently or collectively, have become aware of the surprisingly deep chasms that separate the disciplines. Although true interdisciplinarity may be forever out of reach, the striving for this goal on the part of those who believe in its value has made them recognize the interconnectedness of ideas and appreciate the integrative impulse.

In their endeavour to bring together the various sub-worlds of the realm of knowledge, feminist scholars have begun to detect the wide ranging impact of one such as Simone de Beauvoir.

¹¹ Taly Rutenberg, "Learning Women's Studies," in Theories of Women's Studies, ed. by Gloria Bowles & Renate Duelli Klein (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 73.

¹² Ellen Carol DuBois et al, Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 157.

CHAPTER VI: CITATION INDEXING

The contention of this study is that Simone de Beauvoir's work has been influential on a very wide range of knowledge and that the lack of adequate recognition of her contribution has been due in large part to precisely that very diffusion of her ideas. They have made themselves felt in a myriad of separate spheres which till now have remained dispersed and isolated. Citation indexing can provide the means for reintegration and subsequent reassessment.

References or citations traditionally form an integral part of almost all academically oriented books, articles, papers, etc. They provide access to documents that "support, provide precedents for, illustrate or elaborate on what the author has to say". Citation indexing is a relatively new method for the processing of information which builds on these "formal, explicit linkages".¹

Citation indexing came about as a result of efforts in the post-war period to expand and improve the management of information. The production and use of traditional subject indexes had become increasingly problematic due to a number of factors, some of which included: the rapid growth in the size of scientific literature, which in turn required either the hiring of new indexers in unprecedented numbers, or increasing delays between reception and classification of documents; growing interdependence of subjects which rendered subject indexes, the majority of which covered single disciplines or fields, increasingly inadequate; semantic difficulties arising out of differing

¹ Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing: its Theory and Application in Science, Technology and Humanities (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), p. 1.

interpretations by indexers, the proliferation of new concepts, and overall the dynamic nature of language.² The original purpose of citation indexes was thus to enable the user "to search back and forth in time from the past literature to the current literature, to identify cross-disciplinary developments, to eliminate the search restrictions and complexity imposed by semantic problems, and to provide an indepth index to the literature with a practical time and cost framework."³

Initially developed for bibliographic purposes, citation indexes have been used increasingly for evaluative, analytic and predictive purposes. These new applications may in time be of even greater importance in the study of the structure and process of the development of knowledge as they are used to

evaluate the research role of individual journals, scientists, organizations and communities; define the relationship between journals and between journals and fields of study, measure the impact of current research, provide early warning signs of important, new interdisciplinary relationships, spot fields of study whose rate of progress suddenly begins accelerating and define the sequence of developments that led to major scientific advances.⁴

As an objective measure of the contributions of individuals, documents, journals, programs etc., the weighting of publications by readership appears to provide a qualitative factor not found in a simple publication count. The addition

² Eugene Garfield, Essays of an Information Scientist (Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1977), I, p. 189/190.

³ Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing, p. 5.

⁴ Ibid., p. 62.

of this qualitative element still would not however 'fix' the nature of the quality citation rates do measure, a quality which has variously been described as 'significance', 'impact', 'utility', and 'effectiveness'.

In an attempt to answer objections to the use of citation counts as a measure of quality, a number of validation studies have been done. The generalized findings indicate that "of all the variables that can influence citation rates, the scientific quality of the work published is the dominant one".⁵ These studies include: K.E. Clark - of individuals (psychology); Bayer and Folger - correlation of citation counts with peer judgments about quality of educational institutions (biochemistry); Orr and Kassab - citation rates versus peer judgments implied by editorial rating of papers selected for publication (biomedicine); Virgo - correlation of citation rates and peer judgments of quality (surgery and radiology).⁶ And in yet another study, Cole and Cole, while cautioning against viewing minor differences in citation rates as significant, have made an even wider ranging assertion, that "the data available indicate that straight citation counts are highly correlated with virtually every measure of quality".⁷

As citation rates find increasing use as measures of performance of individuals and small groups, the criticism elicited has understandably been more vocal and heated. Opposition to the use of citation counts have been of

⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶ Ibid., p. 64-70.

⁷ Eugene Garfield, Essays of an Information Scientist, II, p. 290.

two major types, one based on the mechanics of data compilation, the second on its intrinsic characteristics. The first set of objections, based primarily on the indexing of primary authors only, and the uneven incidence of multi-author papers from field to field, seems to be the lesser of the two difficulties, amenable to changes in indexing practice and/or more astute use. With reference to the second, the basic question revolves around what exactly citation counts do or do not measure. To take the negative first, what they do not measure are premature discoveries, obliteration (a work so generic in a field that it is no longer explicitly cited and so may fail to reflect the full magnitude of contribution), the prestige of journal of publication, and citation potential across fields of study. With reference to citation potential, studies have shown that wide variation in citation practices exist between different disciplines. They range from the physical sciences, where 60 to 70% of citations refer to publications appearing in the preceding five years, to the humanities, which for the same period, average only 10 to 20%, with the social sciences somewhere in between. The difference has been dramatically verbalized thus: hard science attempts to "grow from the skin", while the humanities grow "from the body".⁸

While valid objections, for the most part these ambiguities appear to be answerable or circumventable. With reference to the criticisms that claim that citation counts measure too much, these appear to be more theoretical than real. They include negative citations, self-citations and methodological papers.

⁸ Price, Derek De Solla, Little Science, Big Science ... and beyond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 177.

Regarding negative citations, sociologist A.J. Meadow has noted that "surprisingly enough, despite its acceptance of the need for organized skepticism, the scientific community does not normally go out of its way to refute incorrect results ... it generally takes less time and energy to bypass erroneous material, and simply allow it to fade into obscurity".⁹ Furthermore, citations have never purported to be "a precise measure of the number of times an individual was right" but a measure of contribution. Since the trivial tends to be ignored, "negative citations seem to say as much about that rather abstract facet of scientific performance as positive ones".¹⁰ The practice of citing oneself as a deliberate method of inflating statistics would seem to be eventually self-defeating and thus not a major problem. As to the criticism of those who feel that the generally higher citation counts garnered by methodological papers create an unwarranted bias in their favour, this appears to be largely a result of a value judgment that in fact methods are inherently less important than theories, "a classic subject of debate, rather than a scientific truth".¹¹

One last possible objection which Robert Merton termed The Matthew Effect needs be taken into consideration. As per the gospel according to St. Matthew: "For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even which he hath." Recognition in

⁹ Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing, p. 244.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 245.

¹¹ Ibid.

the form of citations may well be skewed in favor of those already established, the rich getting richer, and the poor, poorer, and Merton acknowledged this to be dysfunctional for certain individuals. However, in shifting his view from the individual to the system, from manifest to latent functions, he considered the heightened visibility of certain individuals as contributing to a more efficient communication mechanism in that "only work that is effectively perceived and utilized ... matters." ¹²

In summing up the pros and cons of citation analysis, Eugene Garfield, the virtual 'Godfather' of citation indexing, concludes that

the only responsible claim made for citation counts as an aid to evaluating individuals is that they provide a measure of the utility or impact of scientific work. They say nothing about the nature of the work, nothing about the reason for its utility or impact. Those factors can be dealt with only by content analysis of the cited material and the exercise of knowledgeable peer judgment. Citation analysis is not meant to replace such judgment, but to make it more objective and astute. ¹³

Citations have been viewed as indicators of "cognitive influence, ceremonial acknowledgments of intellectual forbears, supporting evidence, or part of the rhetoric of persuasion".¹⁴ Originally a bibliographic tool, in recent years citation indexing has begun to gain acceptance as a new and powerful instrument in historical and sociological research. Basic to its enlarged use is an understanding that "among institutionalized forms of recognition, the citation has

¹² Robert K. Merton, The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations, p. 450.

¹³ Ibid., p. 246.

¹⁴ Eugene Garfield, Essays of an Information Scientist, IV, p. vii.

considerable sociological significance. Its meaning derives from neither positive nor negative appraisal, but from continuity".¹⁵

Robert Merton, in his foreward to Garfield's Citation Indexing: its Theory and Application in Science, Technology and Humanities states:

citations and references thus operate within a jointly cognitive and moral framework. In their cognitive aspect, they are designed to provide the historical lineage of knowledge ... In their moral aspect, they are designed to repay intellectual debts in the only form in which this can be done through open acknowledgment of them.¹⁶

In the 1960s Derek de Solla Price saw citation links as a "radically new kind of data with far-reaching potential".¹⁷ Since that time the uses of citation data have been ever increasing and expanding. It may well still have 'promises to keep'. In Merton's words, "its sociological and historical research potentials presumably have not yet been fully realized".¹⁸

¹⁵ Thomas Roche and David Lewis Smith, "Frequency of Citations as Criterion for the Ranking of Departments, Journals and Individuals", Sociological Inquiry, 48(1) (1978), p. 49.

¹⁶ Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing, p. viii.

¹⁷ Eugene Garfield, Essays of an Information Scientist, III, p. v.

¹⁸ Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing, p. x.

CHAPTER VII: ANALYSIS

This study of citation frequencies demonstrates impact, one measure of the influence of Simone de Beauvoir. The data were compiled from Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) 1966-1985 and Arts & Humanities Index (AHCI) 1976-1985, the periods for which citation data are available at the present time. The Citation Indexes used provide indepth multi-disciplinary coverage of virtually all disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. By linking current and past publications, they can provide the answer to the fundamental questions of where and by whom an author has been cited. The indexes consist of annual compilations of cited authors, subdivided by cited work, each followed by a listing of source articles which have made reference to them during the relevant time period.

It should be noted that neither the authors nor the specific contents of individual source items are of primary concern in this study. Analysis is by area of knowledge, the intent being to map the dispersal of Simone de Beauvoir's influence, the range and extent of coverage within disciplines as well as variations that may have occurred over time.

Both Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts & Humanities Index were searched for all items that cited works by Simone de Beauvoir. Book review citations were excluded for purposes of analysis as they do not reflect impact in the strict sense of recognition and/or utility. The items were then grouped by publishing journal, and the journals assigned subject categories. For purposes of this study, the subject area of the item was classified as that of the publishing

journal. (e.g. articles found in journals such as Sociological Review or Social Problems were classified as Sociology). Enumeration is on the basis of individual source items as opposed to total number of citations. This means that in cases where an item referred to more than one work by de Beauvoir, note was taken of the first citation only. This method of enumeration will obviously result in citation counts lower than actually exist. In particular it may adversely affect citations figures for The Second Sex, the only work to be examined on an individual basis. Nevertheless, since the aim of the study is to assess and map the range and extent of Simone de Beauvoir's impact, it was felt that a count of source items rather than citations in themselves would present a more realistic picture.

Several limitations on the data need be noted. The first is that citation indexes primarily cover periodical literature (although a small number of monographs have been included in total counts). Also the particular citation indexes used have a definite Anglo-American orientation, although this has lessened somewhat over the years, as journal coverage has expanded. Lastly, one should be aware that there is some degree of overlap between SSCI and AHCI, as both include some selective indexing of areas more thoroughly covered by the other.

With reference to presentation, the data has been divided into two major sections, the first analyzing references to the entire body of work of Simone de Beauvoir, and the second, references to The Second Sex alone. Each of these sections is further subdivided into a summary of overall citation frequencies by

five year period for the twenty years covered by SSCI and the ten years of AHCI; a comparative citation distribution of social sciences versus the humanities over the ten year common time frame (the more recently published AHCI being only available 1976-1985); a breakdown of distribution into individual disciplines and then within certain selected disciplines for both SSCI and AHCI. The first section concludes with a comparison of Simone de Beauvoir's annual citation figures with those of other authors cited in the Indexes, while the second compares annual citation figures for The Second Sex to those of other individual works. With reference to The Second Sex, there is also included a content/context analysis to examine the diffusion and utilization of this work within a single selected discipline, that of sociology. And finally, an impressionistic rendering of Simone de Beauvoir's 'revised' status among the influential thinkers of the 20th century.

The Overall Body of Work

**Table I - Summary of Social Science Citation
Articles Citing Simone de Beauvoir 1966-1985**

	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1966-1970	56	9
1971-1975	123	19
1976-1980	240	38
1981-1985	212	34
Total	<u>631</u>	<u>100</u>

In the area of the social sciences, it can be noted that the number of citations to de Beauvoir more than doubled in the second five year span, just about doubled once again in the third, and showed but a minor decrease for the 1981-1985 period.

**Table II - Summary of Arts and Humanities
Citation Articles Citing Simone de Beauvoir
1975-1985**

	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1976-1980	191	38.5
1981-1985	305	61.5
Total	<u>496</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Although data comparable to the periods of greatest increase in the social sciences is unavailable in the arts and humanities, it can nevertheless be noted that there has been a greatly increased citation rate in these areas in the 1980s.

For general comparative purposes, in order to show the distribution of citations to Simone de Beauvoir's work in the social sciences as compared to the arts and humanities, the following is a breakdown of social science versus arts and humanities items citing de Beauvoir over a common ten year time frame.

Table III - Comparison of SSCI/AHCI Articles Citing Simone de Beauvoir 1976-1985

<u>Area of Citing Journals</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
SSCI	450	48
AHCI	496	52
Total	<u>948</u>	<u>100</u>

It is interesting to note that there is almost an even distribution between the two areas.

Table IV - Distribution by Discipline of SSCI Articles Citing Simone de Beauvoir 1966-1985

<u>Discipline of Citing Journals</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Anthropology	9	1.5
Criminology/Penology	7	1.2
Economics	6	1.0
Education	25	4.2
Gerontology/Geriatrics	56	9.5
Health/Medicine	22	3.7
History	13	2.2
Law	33	5.6
Philosophy	30	5.1
Political Science	28	4.7
Psychiatry/Psychoanalysis	46	7.8
Psychology	63	10.7
Social Work	17	2.9
Sociology	69	11.7
Social Sciences-Interdisc. ¹	116	19.7
Other ²	50	8.5
Total	<u>590</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Note 1 - An integration of disciplinary perspectives

2 - Includes those areas with counts too small to be differentiated as separate entities - area studies/ ethnic studies/ communication/ demography/ geography/ linguistics/ business/ public administration/ religious studies/ planning & development/ information and library science/

3 - Discrepancy between totals by discipline and overall totals to be found in Table I due to inclusion for a number of years of some monographs in both SSCI and AHCI. While included in grand totals, they were not broken down into subject categories.

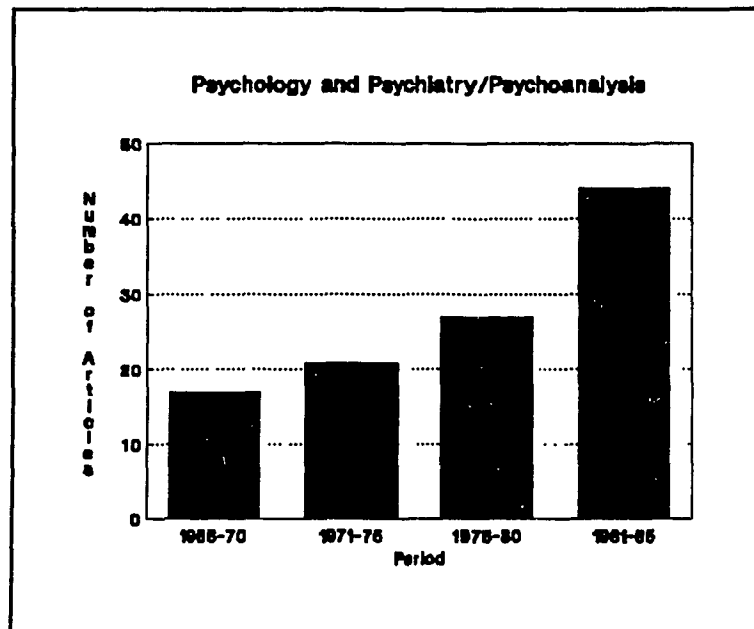
The highest category, with almost 20% of the total citations is Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, which reinforces my perception of the multidisciplinary aspect of Simone de Beauvoir's writing. The other category can also be looked at in this light, covering a range of over a dozen fields, and comprising 8.5% of total citations. The highest discipline-specific category is Sociology, with Psychology following very close behind. Next in rank is Gerontology, with a surprisingly high number of citations for a relatively small, new field. (This unexpected finding is most probably a result of references to one specific work, The Coming of

Age.) In fact, proportional to the size of the discipline, this would indicate an even greater impact on the field than the numbers themselves indicate. The seemingly small number of citations in Philosophy could be partially attributed to the position of this discipline in the social sciences, with far from full coverage in this index. Aside from an unexpectedly high showing in Law, the rest of the citations are well spread out over a wide range of disciplines.

In order to ascertain the impact of Simone de Beauvoir's work on specific disciplines over time, those areas with the highest overall citation frequencies were examined in greater detail. Results have been collapsed into five year periods to allow for the possibility of random annual variation. In the social sciences, the selected areas are Psychology and Psychiatry/Psychoanalysis, Sociology, Political Science & Law, and Social Sciences - Interdisciplinary.

Distribution of Articles Citing Simone de Beauvoir Within Selected Disciplines - SSCI

Table V



In collapsing the categories of Psychology and Psychiatry/Psychoanalysis to show a less fragmented picture of the field, there can be seen a clear and continuous increase over the twenty year period, markedly so in the last five years.

Table VI

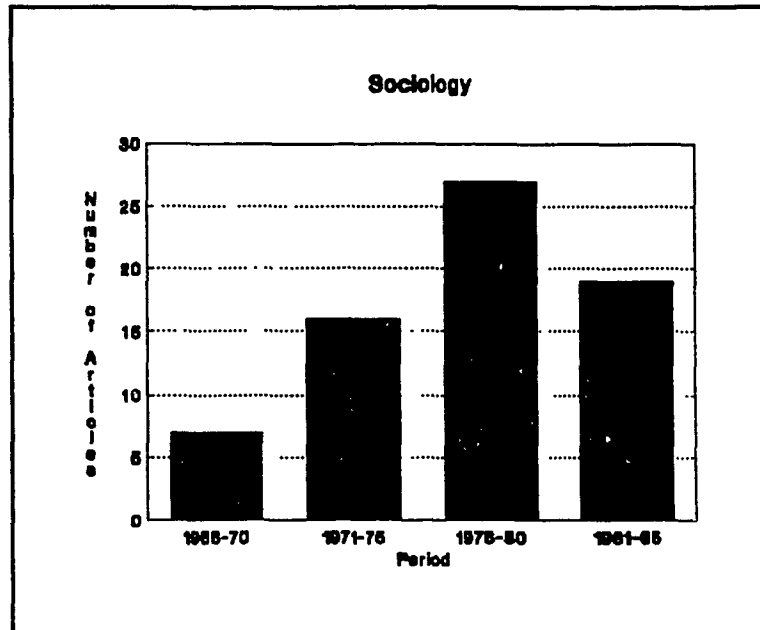
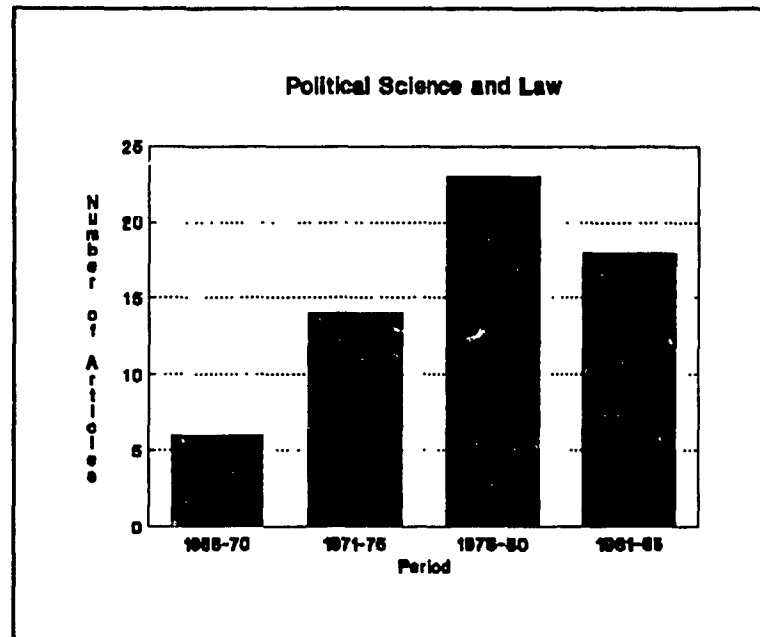


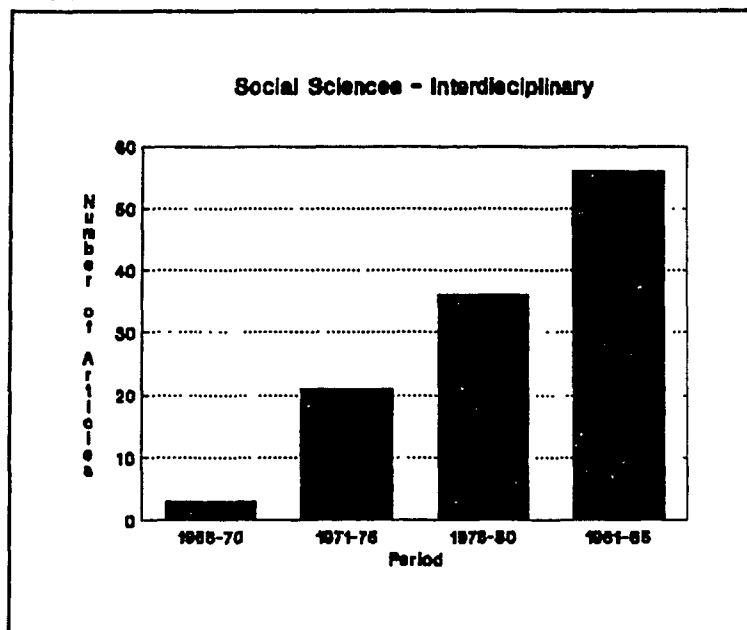
Table VII



Having once again collapsed two categories, it is interesting to note that the curve for Political Science/Law, although showing marginally fewer citations, is

virtually identical to that of Sociology (Table VI), increasing steadily over the first fifteen years, with a slight decline in the last five.

Table VIII



Interdisciplinary scholarship shows a clear escalation, which would indicate that Simone de Beauvoir's influence has been truly multi-dimensional and recognition of this fact has grown over the years.

Table IX - Distribution by Discipline by AHCI Articles Citing Simone de Beauvoir 1976-1985

<u>Discipline of Citing Journals</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Art	10	2.1
Film/Radio/TV	10	2.1
History	19	4.0
Language/Linguistics	24	5.1
Literature	204	43.8
Philosophy	48	10.2
Religion	20	4.2
Theatre	10	2.1
Arts & Humanities ¹	90	19.1
Other ²	33	7.0
Total	<u>470³</u>	<u>99.7</u>

Note 1 - An integration of disciplinary perspectives

2 - In this instance consists mainly of selectively indexed social science journals.

3 - Discrepancy between totals by discipline and overall totals as found in Table II due to inclusion of some monograph material included in grand totals, but not broken down into subject categories.

As opposed to the discipline distribution in the social sciences, one category, Literature (including classics and poetry) here comprises over 43% of the total. Arts & Humanities Interdisciplinary titles once again account for nearly 20%, while Philosophy, with far more inclusive coverage in this Index than in SSCI, is up over 10%.

Once again selected areas have been chosen for more detailed examination. In the humanities, where the spread of influence appears more narrow, the areas selected are Literature, Philosophy, and Arts & Humanities Interdisciplinary.

Distribution of Articles Citing The Second Sex Within Selected Disciplines - SSCI

Table X

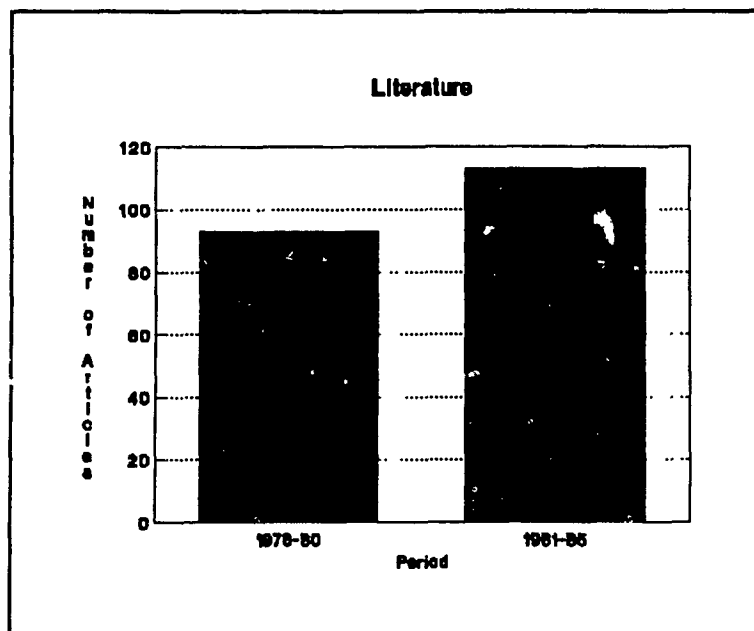
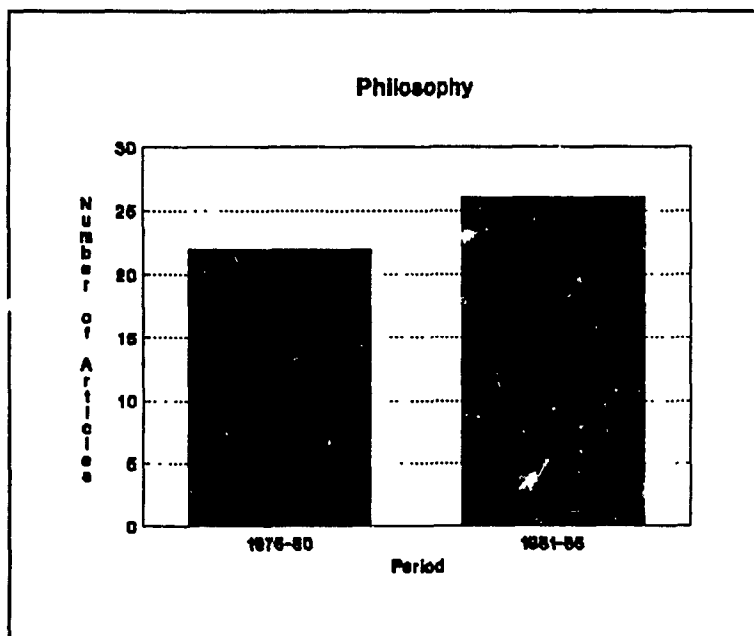
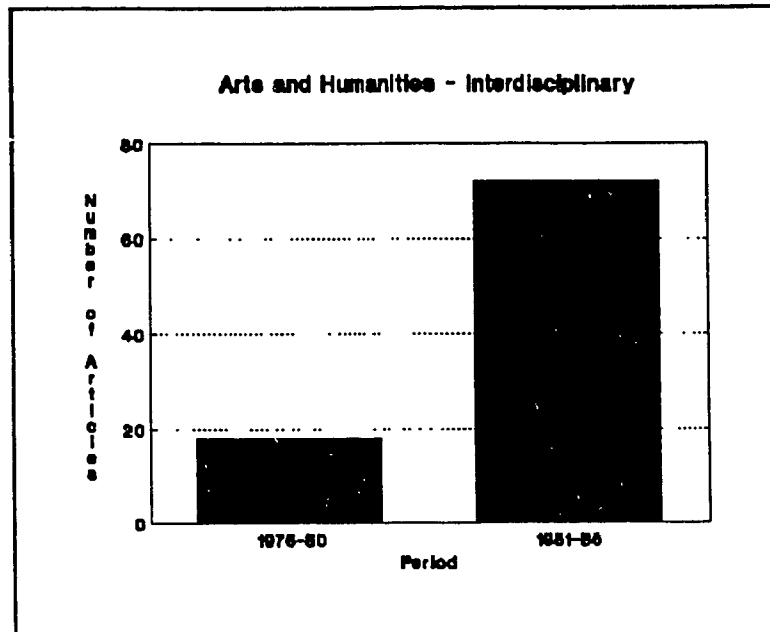


Table XI



With only two five year periods for which data are available, all that can really be said is that there is an upward trend.

Table XII



Again, one must be careful in the amount of significance to be ascribed to these figures because of the fairly short time frame involved. Nevertheless, the 300% increase can only be called dramatic.

In order to give some contextual meaning to this litany of numbers, comparison can be made to annual citation figures for all other authors cited in Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts & Humanities Citation Index.

A comparative statistical survey done for SSCI for the period 1966-1979 showed the average number of citations to cited authors range from a low of 3.27 average per year to 3.42.¹ For this same period the average annual citation figure for de Beauvoir is 26.71. For the more recent 1980-1985 period, the average annual citation rate has increased somewhat, 3.94 average per year to 4.42, but proportionately Simone de Beauvoir shows a greater increase, at

¹Social Sciences Citation Index, 1986. Source Volume. p. 33.

42.83. To reinforce the significance of this figure, it may be noted that studies done inhouse at the Institute for Scientific Information, the producer of SSCI, show that fewer than 1,000 authors were cited more than 500 times for this period.² Simone de Beauvoir's cumulative total of 374 citations does not put her quite into that category, but taking into account the fact that the number of authors included yearly in SSCI began at about 100,000 in the early years and was over 345,000 in 1979, any author with numbers in her range must be seen as belonging in the upper echelons.

For the Arts & Humanities Citation Index, for the available period 1976-1985, the average annual citation rate is 2.70 to 3.26. For Simone de Beauvoir, 49.6.

Additionally, it should be taken into consideration that the average annual rates given do not necessarily refer to the same authors year after year, and therefore cannot be multiplied by the number of years to arrive at a comparative cumulative figure. The average author is not cited every year, and therefore any estimation of the relative impact of Simone de Beauvoir based on these figures would certainly be on the conservative side.

The Second Sex

In tracing the influence of Simone de Beauvoir, it becomes clear, both on an intuitive level and on the basis of citation rates, that her most influential work has been The Second Sex. It would therefore seem worthwhile to follow up on what Garfield has termed the 'arborization' of a single work, to track the impact of

²Eugene Garfield. Essays of an Information Scientist. (Philadelphia: ISI Press, 1983), V, p. 197.

The Second Sex. Due to the great variation in the manner in which the work has been cited, no attempt has been made to differentiate between references to the original 1949 French publication, Le Deuxieme Sexe and references to the 1952 English translation. The data presented in this section therefore includes both and follows the same sequence as that of the first section.

**Table XIII - Summary of Social Science Citation
Articles Citing The Second Sex 1966-1985**

	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1966-1970	29	8.1
1971-1975	84	23.5
1976-1980	125	35.0
1981-1985	119	33.0
Total	<u>357</u>	<u>99.9</u>

The delayed recognition given to The Second Sex is demonstrated very clearly here. It must be remembered that the 1971-1975 period, which shows an almost tripled citation rate, was some twenty years after the publication of the book. The following five year period again shows an increase, of about two-thirds while the 1980s to date are holding fairly stable.

**Table XIV - Summary of Arts and Humanities
Citation Index Articles Citing The Second Sex
1976-1985**

	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1976-1980	98	35.1
1981-1985	181	64.9
Total	<u>279</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Although not as clear cut in the Arts and Humanities due to the shorter time frame involved, the idea of delayed recognition is borne out at least as much here as in the Social Sciences. Acknowledgment in fact seems to be forthcoming somewhat later, perhaps as a result of an ingrained insularity in the arts, a greater resistance to interdisciplinarity.

Once again, for comparative purposes, Social Sciences and Art and Humanities have been put into a common time frame.

Table XV - Comparison of SSCI/AHCI Articles Citing The Second Sex 1976-1985

<u>Area of Citing Journals</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
SSCI	244	46.6
AHCI	271	53.3
Total	<u>523</u>	<u>99.9</u>

The breakdown of citation figures for The Second Sex are virtually identical to that of her work overall. This is a surprising finding, as one would have expected the Social Sciences to account for the majority of references to this

book, with the greatest concentration in the Arts and Humanities consisting of references to her literary works.

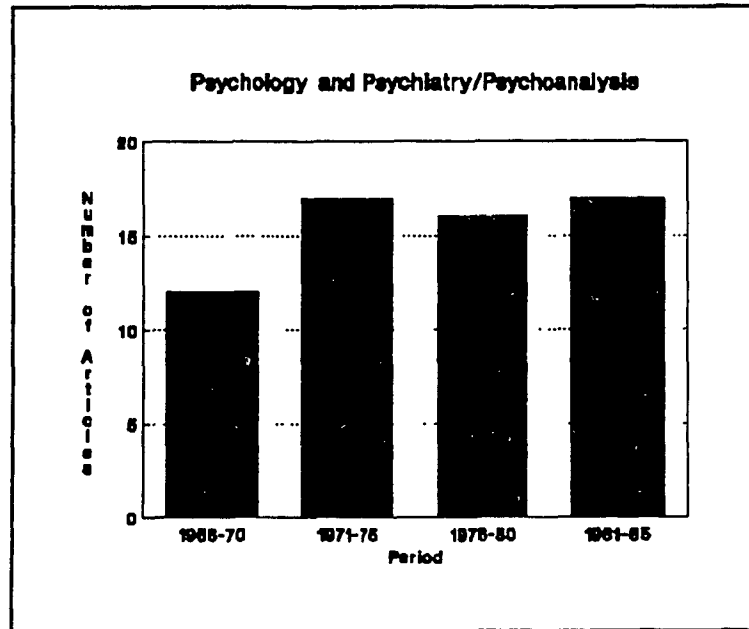
Table XVI - Distribution of Discipline of SSCI Articles Citing The Second Sex 1966-1985

<u>Discipline of Citing Journals</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Anthropology	6	1.8
Criminology/Penology	5	1.5
Economics	5	1.5
Gerontology/Geriatrics	14	4.2
Health/Medicine	8	2.4
History	7	.9
Law	21	2.1
Philosophy	10	6.3
Political Science	16	4.8
Psychiatry/		
Psychoanalysis	27	8.1
Psychology	35	10.5
Social Work	10	3.0
Sociology	56	16.8
Social Sciences/		
Interdisc.	85	25.5
Other	25	7.5
Total	<u>333</u>	<u>99.9</u>

If categories are ranked, results are much the same as for Simone de Beauvoir's work overall. Social Sciences - Interdisciplinary is the highest with over 25% of citations, Sociology is again the highest subject discipline and Psychology next. The only major difference is to be found in the drop in Gerontology. As noted previously, this is probably due to the fact that the majority of references in this field would be to The Coming of Age.

Distribution of Articles Citing The Second Sex Within Selected Disciplines - SSCI

Table XVII



The area of psychology seems to have been one of the earliest discoverers of The Second Sex. Over the twenty year period, references to this work remain stable.

Table XVIII

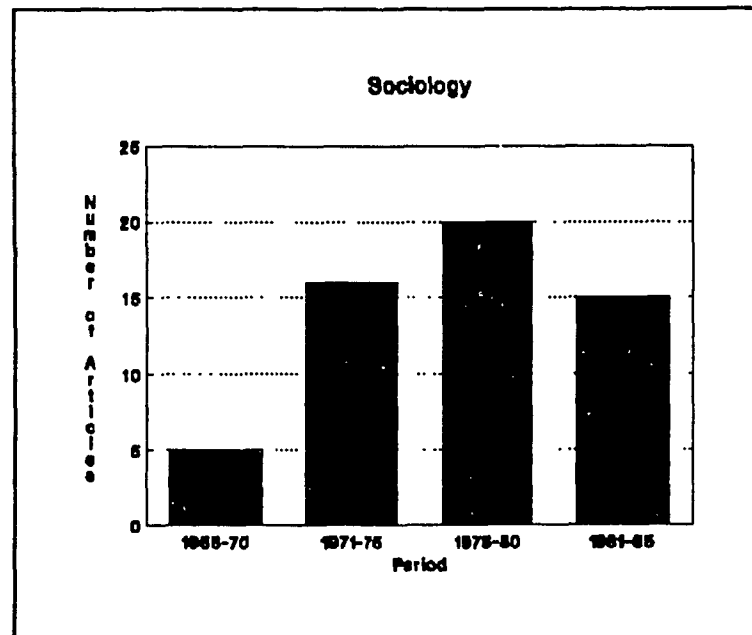
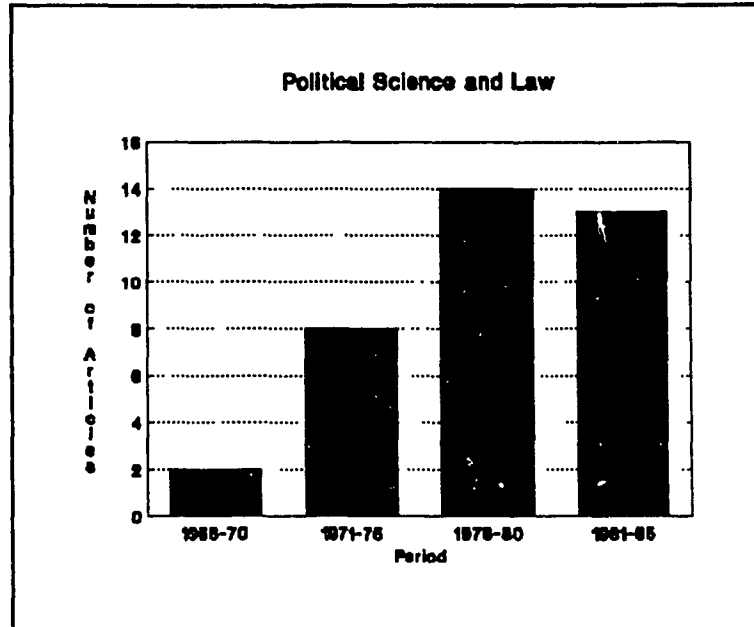
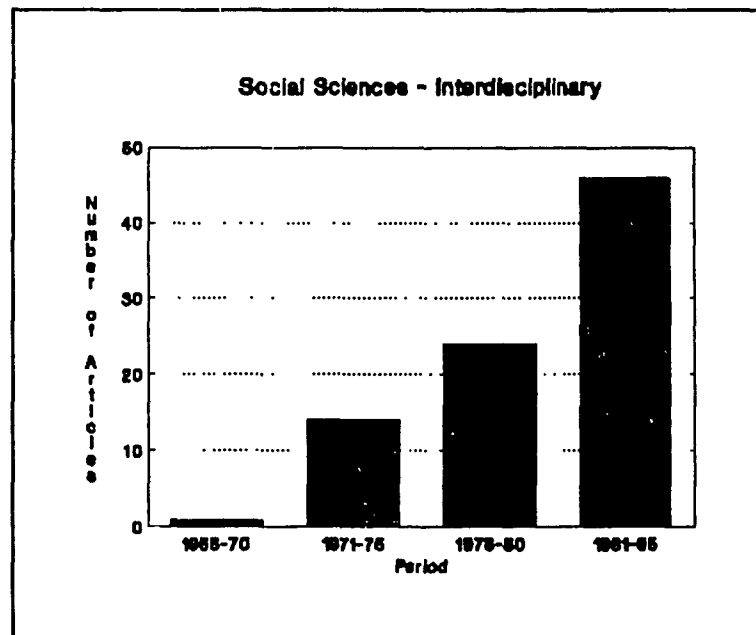


Table XIX



Political Science and Law once again show the same curve as sociology, and both, with a slightly smaller decrease over the last five year period, the same curve as holds for the fields' references to de Beauvoir's total works.

Table XX



If the influence of Simone de Beauvoir has broadened over time, the spread of The Second Sex seems to have been even proportionately wider, almost doubling in the last two five year periods shown.

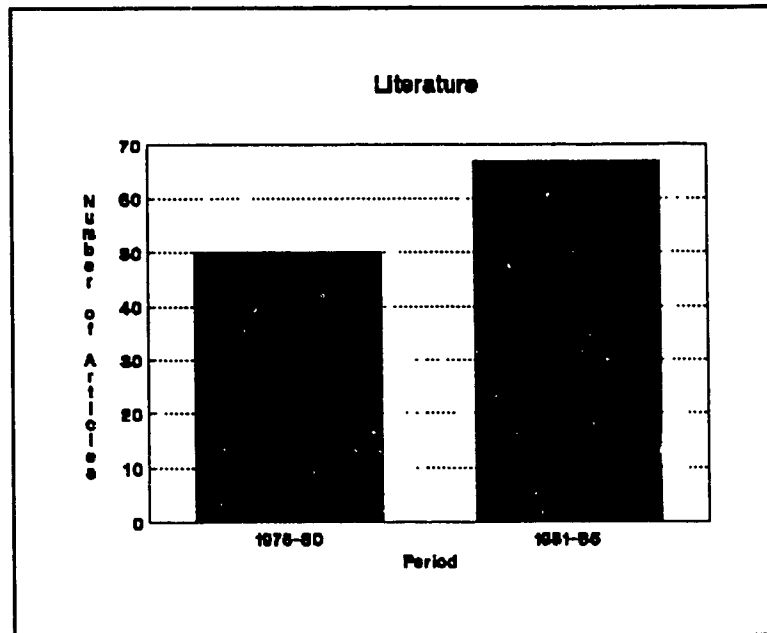
Table XXI - Distribution by Discipline of AHCI Articles Citing The Second Sex 1976-1985

<u>Discipline of Citing Journals</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Art	6	2.3
Film/Radio/TV	5	1.9
History	11	4.3
Language/Ling.	13	5.0
Literature	117	45.0
Philosophy	10	3.7
Religion	14	5.4
Theatre	3	1.1
Arts & Humanities	64	24.4
Other	15	5.8
Total	<u>258</u>	<u>99.8</u>

The consistency in distribution of citations between those to The Second Sex and to her works in totality is once again demonstrated. Literature ranks the highest with over 45% of citation as compared to 43.8% for overall works. Arts & Humanities General once again ranks second. The only major discrepancy, and one not unexpected, is the drop in Philosophy. For the rest, there is again reinforcement of the notion that The Second Sex has had considerable impact across the Arts and Humanities.

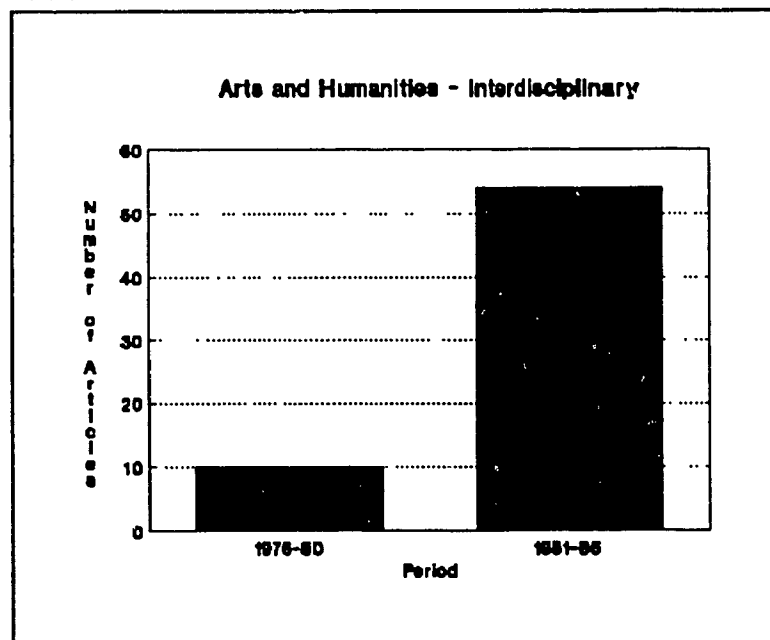
Distribution of Articles Citing The Second Sex: Limited Selected Disciplines - AHCI

Table XXII



The same upward trend is here discernable as it was with reference to de Beauvoir's other works.

Table XXIII



Almost 5 1/2 times the number of citations in 1981-1985 as those found in 1976-1980. The Second Sex seems to have become entrenched in a number of disciplines in the arts and humanities.

As with author citation rates, it is possible to compare citation figures for The Second Sex to annual citation figures for individual works in Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts & Humanities Citation Index.

The statistical comparison of SSCI data for 1966-1979 shows average number of citations per authored item to range from 1.28 annual average to 1.36. The average number for The Second Sex is 15.57. For 1980-1985, the average annual citation rate per item shows an increase, as it did for cited authors, to 1.40 to 1.54. Once again, the increase for The Second Sex is far greater, at 23.17.

In the Arts & Humanities Citation Index, for 1976-1985, the average annual citation rate per item is 1.01 annual average to 1.14. For The Second Sex, 27.9.

As noted previously with reference to the comparison for cited authors, the average annual figures given do not necessarily refer to the same work year after year. Although the data are not available, it would appear highly likely that works consistently cited at such high rates over a twenty year span are few and far between.

Focus on Sociology: Context and Content

Although the major premise of the study is that Simone de Beauvoir's impact has been felt over a wide breadth of scholarship, an emphasis on the horizontal rather than the vertical, it nevertheless seemed instructive to focus in greater

detail on one specific discipline in order to ascertain whether the idea of a range of influence would hold true, albeit on a narrower scale, even within a single discipline.

The initial sample selected was composed of articles citing The Second Sex which were found in journals designated as Sociology. This greatly narrowed scope would be the most likely to bring to the fore any possible networks or channels of communication which might be operant. If, on the other hand, no such linkages were discovered, this would reinforce the findings of the overall dispersal of Simone de Beauvoir's influence.

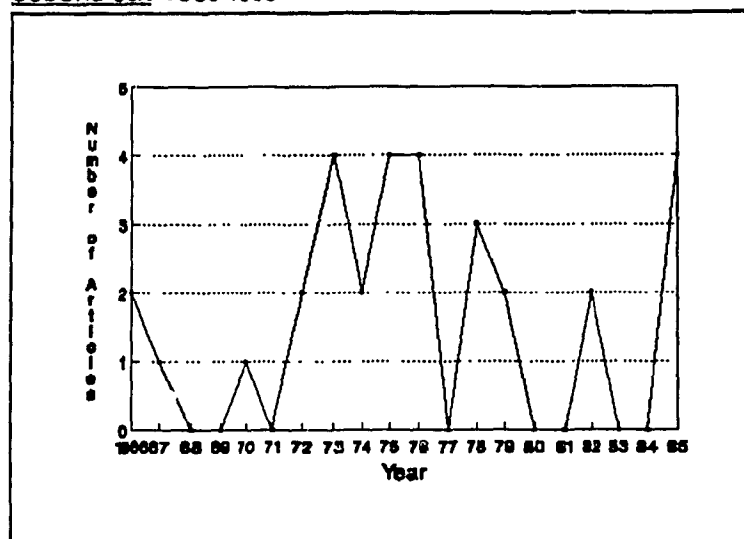
In order to place the articles citing The Second Sex in Sociology journals within a context, analysis was done by author, by author affiliation, by sex of author, and by classification of articles within subcategories of Sociology. In addition, a fairly simple content analysis was done to indicate how Simone de Beauvoir and The Second Sex were utilized in the sample articles.

The original sample of 56 articles citing The Second Sex in sociology journals was found to have been published in 32 separate journals, clearly contraindicating any view that they would have clustered in a small number of sources. Of the 32 journals, 19 were U.S. publications, as to be expected based on the Anglo-American bias of the Indexes used, 3 were British, 2 each were from India and the Netherlands, and a single journal from each of Canada, Ireland, Belgium, France, New Zealand and Norway. Since American coverage was by far the most comprehensive, and thus most likely to reveal any existing linkages, it was decided to restrict the sample to American journals, resulting in a sample of 34 articles. This number was further slightly reduced based on

journal availability with a resultant sample of 16 journals covering 30 articles (See Appendix)

The final sample of articles was then broken down on a year by year analysis for the 20 year span, rather than the 5 year aggregates used in the initial analysis.

Table XXIV - Articles in Selected Sociology Journals Citing The Second Sex 1966-1985



As in the 5 year analysis, there appears to be no particular pattern, the number of articles fluctuating over the years, although as previously noted, the mid 70s show the greatest concentration.

With reference to the authors of these articles, the 30 articles were each found to have different authors. As well, for the 25 of the 30 authors for whom American institutional affiliation could be determined, no two were from the same institution. They were in fact spread over 11 states, the greatest numbers from New York and California.

Sex of authors was also checked, and while female authors were found in greater numbers than males (Female = 15, Male = 9, Multi-authored M/F = 3,

Unidentified as to Sex = 3), there is no evidence to suggest that The Second Sex was looked upon as 'women's literature' to be cited exclusively by women.

The designated sub-specialities within sociology were as far as possible aligned to those used in Sociological Abstracts. The articles were found to fall within ten different categories, with the largest number classified as Feminist/Gender Studies (10), then Social Psychology and Family & Society (5 each), Social Differentiation (4), and one each in the areas of Sociology of Health and Medicine, Social Problems, Sociology of Language & the Arts, Group Interaction, Complex Organizations, and Studies in Violence.

Even if one accepts the breakdown as is, The Second Sex can clearly be seen to have been utilized by a range of sociology sub-disciplines, but a further qualification should be noted. Feminist/Gender Studies, in which category fully a third of the articles have been classified, is in itself a multi-disciplinary, transcendent category, based not so much on subject matter as by orientation of article, its aim to modify or overturn 'traditional' academic inquiry³, to use a critical approach that has as its primary concern the nature of female experience.

An examination of all the aforementioned variables, whether authors, author affiliation, sex, or Sociology sub-discipline, taken over a period of twenty years, gives no indication whatsoever of any 'closed circle' effect in operation. It has been noted in a number of studies that "a reasonable case can be made that citations generally represent an authentic indicator of influence", are at the very

³ Ellen Carol Dubois et al, Feminist Scholarship: Kindling in the Groves of Academe (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 157.

least, an "indicator of intellectual connections"⁴ as well as that "amount of usage provides a reasonable measure of scientific importance".⁵ In a number of instances this has been seen to be linked to the notion of in-groups or invisible colleges, informal groups of a size "that can be handled by interpersonal relations".⁶ The fact that no such linkages can be discerned among sociologists utilizing The Second Sex indicates an unusual open ended, wide spread influence.

The content analysis following is a somewhat abbreviated version of that used by Stephen Cole in his study of the influence of Robert Merton's theory of social structure and anomie.⁷ The sample articles were skimmed to obtain an overview of the thrust of each, with a more detailed reading of those portions of the article which contained reference to Simone de Beauvoir. The citations have been classified in eight categories, which categories and frequency distributions are listed below. Each category has been treated as exclusive. In instances where citations might have, to some extent, be seen to span two or more categories, the articles was placed in the one category deemed most appropriate.

⁴ Jonathan P. Cole, "Patterns of Intellectual Influence in Scientific Research," Sociology of Education 43 (Fall, 1970), p. 381/382.

⁵ Derek J. De Solla Price, Little Science, Big Science ... and Beyond (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 69.

⁶ Ibid., p. 76.

⁷ Stephen Cole, "The Growth of Scientific Knowledge: Theories of Deviance as a Case Study," in The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton, ed. by Lewis S. Coser (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975).

Table XXV - Utilization of The Second Sex in Articles in Selected Sociology Journals 1976-1985

<u>Type of Use</u>	<u>No. of Art.</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Relevant literature - no explicit use in analysis	15	50.0
2. Supports/legitimizes author's ideas & interpretations	3	10.0
3. Use of concept	2	6.7
4. Extends/modifies/clarifies author's own theory	1	3.3
5. Used in formulating research problem/hypothesis	1	3.3
6. Used in interpreting results of study	1	3.3
7. Critical of The Second Sex	2	6.7
8. Other	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

In his study, Cole, in combining categories 1 and 2 found 42% of his sample citing in what he called a 'ceremonial' fashion, and hypothesized that such a proportion of ceremonial citations may be relatively low in relation to other theoreticians. He also appeared not in the least surprised by what could be viewed as an unusually high proportion of such citations, postulating that "one function that they serve is the legitimation of the work of the utilizer" and that often "it is the theoretician as an authority that is being utilized rather than substantive theory."⁸

⁸ Ibid., p. 208.

In another study of citing behavior, G. Nigel Gilbert also proposes that citations are often used as "tools of persuasion", in building on work that has been accepted as valid. He theorizes that authors "typically show how the results of their work represent an advance on previous research; they relate their particular findings to the current literature of the field; and they produce evidence and argument to persuade their audience that their work has not been vitiated by error, that appropriate and adequate techniques have been employed, and that alternative, contradicting hypotheses have been examined and rejected."⁹

Taking the above into consideration, the large proportion of citations to The Second Sex which can be counted as 'ceremonial' seems to in no way invalidate their importance, for as Cole states, one "gets to be a legitimator by publishing work that is highly valued".¹⁰

With reference to the citations deemed critical of The Second Sex, their small number appears to be in line with the findings of most such studies, as exemplified by M. Edward Rowe's own analysis in his content analysis of citations to philosophers of science in sociology journals, which reaffirmed that "scientists in a range of disciplines generally do not cite works with which they do not agree".¹¹

⁹ G. Nigel Gilbert, "Referencing as Persuasion," Social Studies of Science 7 (1977), p. 116.

¹⁰ Stephen Cole, Op. Cit., p. 208.

¹¹ M. Edward Rowe, "A Content Analysis of Citations to Four Prominent Philosophers of Science in Selected Sociology Journals," (PhD. Diss., North Texas State University, 1985), p. 73.

And so, while the extent of influence indicated by different forms of citations no doubt vary, from repayment of intellectual debts, through demonstration of knowledge, to specific antecedents, there is no doubt that Simone de Beauvoir's social theories, by reconceptualizing the 'taken-for-granted-world', have had an impact on a range of sociological sub-disciplines, and in the words of Murray S. Davis, "the capacity to stimulate interest is a necessary if not sufficient characteristic of greatness".¹²

In the process of doing a study on the relationship between citation data and the recipients of Nobel Prizes, a list was compiled by the Institute for Scientific Information of the most cited authors of 20th Century literature.¹³ Based on AHCI data for 1977/78, the highest ranked author turned out to be Jean Paul Sartre with 319 citations. For purposes of this study however, what was interesting was the fact that Simone de Beauvoir placed 59th with 48 citations. (As an aside, and yet once again to show how narrowly de Beauvoir has been viewed, Sartre is here described as "French novelist, playwright, critic and philosopher", while de Beauvoir is limited to "French novelist".)

The fact that Simone de Beauvoir is included in the top 100 authors in the arts and humanities is significant enough in and of itself, but to reiterate, this takes into account only a limited area of her influence. In order to more realistically compare her with others influential in the 20th Century, one should take into

¹² Murray S. Davis, "That's Interesting: Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology," Philosophy of the Social Sciences 1 (1971), p. 309.

¹³ Eugene Garfield. Essays of an Information Scientist. IV, p. 363.

account impact on the social sciences as well. I am fully aware that the addition of citation rates over widely differing disciplines is problematic, due to significant variations in citation potential in different fields. However if one looks at the results not as absolutes but as impressions, an interesting picture will emerge.

I initially rechecked the numbers allocated to Simone de Beauvoir in AHCI for 1977/78 and found a total of 57 citations as opposed to the 48 noted in the study. This discrepancy is almost certainly due to variations in the spelling of her name (half a dozen of which were found in the overall data). A careful manual search turned up more than the automated search had apparently found. I then added citation figures for Simone de Beauvoir obtained from SSCI for 1977/78 to the 57 from AHCI, for a result of 151. Next I did a quick check of citation figures in SSCI for a sampling of the authors in the AHCI top 100 listing, (every tenth name, from number 11 to number 51) and added these to the figures noted in the original study. The SSCI numbers I recorded might also be minimally distorted, either lessened by a failure to pick up variations in the selected authors' names, (as found in the ISI numbers given for de Beauvoir), or conversely, inflated by inclusion of citations to authors with identical names which should have been identified and deleted. However, for purposes of creating a snap-shot portrait, I believe they should suffice. The results are as follows:

**Table XXVI - Summary of Composite Citations (SSCI/AHCI) 1977/78:
Most Cited Twentieth Century Authors**

<u>Original Ranking</u>	<u>No. of Citing Articles-AHCI</u>	<u>No. of Citing Articles-SSCI</u>	<u>Total</u>
No. 11 Mann, Thomas	128	59	187
21 Auden, W.H.	97	22	119
31 Paz, Octavio	78	36	114
41 Malraux, André	58	21	79
51 Bellow, Saul	54	27	81
For Simone de Beauvoir, formerly No. 59	57	94	151

In such a revised list, Simone de Beauvoir can be seen to have moved up into the top 20. Once again, my impression has been substantiated. In order to fully appreciate de Beauvoir's influence, a wide angle lens must be used.

On a more general note, one further question might come to mind. Of the top 50 authors included in the original listing, only two women appear, Virginia Woolfe and Gertrude Stein. When extended to the top 100, women still constitute only 10% of the total. More than twenty years ago, Jessie Bernard wondered "what, if any, is the effect on learning of the sex of the transmitter of human knowledge", and further, the effect, if any, of "the sex of the innovator on the acceptance of ideas."¹⁴ Following directly from that question, one might ask, what if any, was the relevance of the fact that Simone de Beauvoir was a woman on the reception of her work?

¹⁴ Jessie Bernard. "Reviewing the Impact of Women's Studies in Sociology." The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy. Edited by Christine Farnham. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 193.

CHAPTER VIII: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The sociology of knowledge focuses on the relationship between the production and acceptance of knowledge within a society at a particular time and place, and the other dimensions of that society. It includes specifically the sociological problem of how communities of scholars and the communication patterns between them affect the growth and development of knowledge.

In contemporary American society, the 'public intellectual', one who is committed to a 'public world' and a 'public language' has virtually disappeared. The appellation of intellectual has become virtually synonymous with that of academic, with an audience consisting of colleagues, a media of monographs and specialized journals. A further impediment to the transmission of knowledge is the fact that not only has there been a loss of public culture, but the individual disciplines themselves act as differentiating forces. "Academics write for professional journals that, unlike the little magazines, create insular societies ... the professors share an idiom and a discipline. Gathering in annual conferences to compare notes, they constitute their own universe. A 'famous' sociologist or art historian means famous to other sociologists or art historians, not to anyone else."¹

For those individuals utilizing an interdisciplinary perspective, this causes particular problems in that it results in a lack of visibility. In the North American cultural market in particular, intellectual legitimization is for the most part an

¹ Russell Jacoby, The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 7.

academic process contingent upon the acceptance of a body of work as essential to a specific discipline. The very breadth of a truly interdisciplinary body of work, selected aspects of which have had an impact on a wide range of disciplines, would make it unlikely that the overall work would fit within the basic paradigms of any one discipline. Legitimation, based not so much on intrinsic value as the 'fit' between the work and the cultural market, may therefore be withheld. In the absence of traditional mechanisms which confer legitimation, such as institutional supports and intellectual collaborators, the significance of interdisciplinary work is often obscured.

The use of citation analysis as a measure of impact of one such interdisciplinary writer, Simone de Beauvoir, offers an alternate avenue for legitimation. In gathering together fragmented perspectives, this study attempts to show that perceived significance, or the lack of it, may in large part be a direct result of the structure and organization of knowledge itself, and the professional intellectuals who work within its established guidelines.

The analysis of the data confirms to a high degree the overall range and extent of Simone de Beauvoir's impact. The data derived from Social Sciences Citation Index, which covers nearly every social science discipline over a twenty year span, shows that references to de Beauvoir's work doubled for each five year period with the exception of the 1980s which shows a minimal decline. The Arts & Humanities Citation Index data was available for only the last ten years; however it does show a greatly increased count for the 1980s, up almost two-thirds over the previous five year period. And interestingly enough, if a

common time frame is adopted for the two Indexes, results are almost evenly distributed between the social sciences and the arts and humanities. A similar examination of data for The Second Sex alone, to test the impact of a single work, showed the greatest increase in references in the social sciences occurring in the years 1970-1975, some twenty years after the publication of the book, and of course the period which saw the advent of second wave feminism. Citation figures for The Second Sex do continue increasing through the rest of the decade, and then show a leveling off in the 1980s. Data for the arts and humanities is unfortunately not available for the early 1970s, but an increase in numbers does appear thereafter, even greater for The Second Sex than for her work overall. Once again, over a common time frame, results for The Second Sex show an almost identical division between social sciences and arts and humanities. This is a rather surprising finding in that one would have expected the social sciences to have accounted for the majority of references to this work.

With reference either to the single work, or her writing in its entirety, the idea of delayed recognition is borne out, even more noticeably in the arts and humanities than in the social sciences.

If one examines the social sciences in greater depth and for the entire time span, the Social Sciences - Interdisciplinary category constitutes the largest one, reinforcing the multi-disciplinary aspect of de Beauvoir's work. Within the specific disciplines, Sociology is in first place, with Psychology a close second. A breakdown of Sociology into five year periods shows a strong increase over

the first fifteen years, declining slightly in the 1980s. (A composite category of Political Science/Law shows virtually the same profile, indicating the possibility of linkages between these disciplines with references to certain of Simone de Beauvoir's themes or concepts.) Psychology on the other hand shows a steady and continuous increase for the entire time, with the greatest proportion occurring in the 1980s. The most notable increases however are evident in Social Sciences - Interdisciplinary, an indication that de Beauvoir's influence has continued to branch out as the years go by.

The Arts and Humanities in general do not show as wide a profile distribution as that found in the social sciences, although it should be noted that there are far fewer disciplines constituting this area. Literature accounts for nearly half of the total citations, with Arts & Humanities - Interdisciplinary the second highest category. Once again it should be noted that data for the Arts and Humanities was available for only ten years and thus it is difficult to ascribe major trends to the individual disciplines. Nonetheless, Literature does show a definite increase in the 1980s, Philosophy a minimal one, and Arts & Humanities - Interdisciplinary a 300% increase definitely worthy of note.

When the data for The Second Sex are examined more closely for the social sciences, the proportional rankings for the highest categories remain virtually identical to those found for de Beauvoir's work overall. The Interdisciplinary category remains first, sociology second, followed by psychology. Here too Sociology and Political Science/Law present virtually identical curves, increasing for the first fifteen years and diminishing minimally in

the 1980s. Psychology shows fairly consistent figures during the entire time, while the Interdisciplinary category, as in the case for her overall work, shows the greatest increase, one on-going to the present.

The Arts & Humanities rankings for The Second Sex once again are led by Literature, showing a somewhat greater increase in citations than that found for de Beauvoir's overall work. The figures for the Interdisciplinary category can only be termed dramatic however, even the three fold increase for de Beauvoir's work overall overshadowed by the 5 1/2 times increase found here, yet another indication of the ever broadening base of Simone de Beauvoir's influence.

While the foregoing figures in themselves present a clear picture of the extent of de Beauvoir's influence, it was felt that a comparison of her citation rates with those of other authors represented in the Social Sciences Citation Index and the Arts & Humanities Citation Index would reveal another dimension, one of comparative influence. All results indicate Simone de Beauvoir definitely among the ranks of the 'elite'. Scrutinizing The Second Sex in the same manner, with comparisons to other single works in Social Sciences Citation Index and Arts & Humanities Citation Index places this work also as one of the front runners.

In focusing on the utilization of a single work, The Second Sex, within a single discipline, sociology, the aim was to ascertain whether a range of influence could likewise be found within a narrower field of knowledge. The examination of a number of variables such as author, author affiliation, sex of

author, and sociology sub-discipline, showed no discernable pattern, but further reinforced the hypothesis of widely dispersed influence.

While the content analysis did indeed reveal the majority of references to be ceremonial, that is, without explicit reference to the analysis undertaken within the individual articles, in the case of heavily cited theorists, this would seem to be the norm rather than the exception.

And finally, to end on somewhat of a whimsical note, a further comparison was made to those twentieth century authors in Arts & Humanities Citation Index noted as the ones most cited. For a sample taken from the top one hundred authors of twentieth century literature, citation figures were noted from both Arts & Humanities Citation Index and Social Sciences Citation Index and a total figure derived, to see how Simone de Beauvoir would fare in a less fragmented arena. In the original list, Simone de Beauvoir had ranked fifty-ninth; in the revised version she had moved up into the top twenty, a further substantiation of the premise that the understanding of de Beauvoir's influence has been distorted and minimized by limited and often unidimensional viewpoints.

The 1980s have shown no sign of the abatement of Simone de Beauvoir's influence. Whether her recent death will make any appreciable difference is yet to be determined, but apart from an anticipated short term upsurge of interest during a period of re-evaluation (noticeable in a number of 1987/1988 publications already out or forthcoming) there is no reason to anticipate any major change for years to come. The one factor which might have an increased effect as time goes by is the obliteration phenomenon, a concept first

introduced by Robert Merton, whereby concepts are incorporated into the realm of common knowledge, and therefore no longer attributed to specific individuals.²

Several suggestions for future research are here advanced in order to provide a more concise picture of the nature of Simone de Beauvoir's influence.

The first is based on the concept that all citations are not inherently equal. A two fold context/content analysis could be done on a much wider sample of the data then is included in this study: to discover what aspects of her work overall are being cited across the disciplines and then to determine whether the citing authors are fundamentally supportive or in disagreement with de Beauvoir. This would expand the meaning of her impact well beyond the quantitative level and include a greater measure of intrinsic value.

In a somewhat wider framework, and in the context of Simone de Beauvoir's influence on the emerging feminist movement of the 70s, one of the major difficulties in assessing the extent of her influence has always been the surprising lack of acknowledgment of her work in the writings of most of the feminist vanguard. To compensate for this lack of documentary evidence, a co-citation study could be done with the writings of some of the major feminist writers of the 1980s. The object would be to discover parallel references to Simone de Beauvoir's works and to the classics of the 1970s occurring simultaneously, thus highlighting a lineage of ideas, possible linkages whether conscious or unconscious.

² Eugene Garfield, Citation Indexing, p. 247.

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