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# A Citation Analysis about Scholarship on Zines

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**INTRODUCTION** Zine scholarship is a relatively new academic field that has emerged since the late 1990's. Now that two decades have passed since the publication of Stephen Duncombe's seminal text, *Notes From Underground*, it is possible to take a landscape view of how and why zine scholars have studied zines in peer-reviewed journal publications. Knowing how scholars have studied zines can teach us about how zines and zine culture have contributed to academic knowledge. We can also learn which subjects are understudied as zine scholars continue to investigate these curious ephemeral print objects. **METHODS** This study uses citation analysis to uncover how scholars have explored zines and zine culture as objects worthy of academic inquiry between the dates of 1990 and 2018. The purpose of this study is to examine whether (and how) zines have held influence as objects worthy of study over time, to determine which disciplines tend to treat zines as a valuable academic pursuit, and to reveal what subtopics those scholars tend to focus on. **RESULTS & DISCUSSION** This study analyzes 163 peer-reviewed articles published between 1990 and 2018, and finds that a) scholarly interest in zines has increased steadily and by 1,700% over 28 years; b) that scholars in the fields of Library Science, Education, Feminist Studies, and Media Studies are most likely to study zines; and c) that zine scholars pursue a wide and varied range of subtopics most prominently concentrated in "riot grrrl" studies, "collection development," "music criticism," and a suite of articles about aspects of art. More nuanced analysis based on discipline and subtopic are discussed in the findings. **CONCLUSION** This study makes clear that zines are influential and worthy objects of study, not just as a form of print media, but as educational and pedagogical tools in the classroom, as evidence of activism, political movements, third-wave feminism, cultural critiques, cultural movements, and much more. Future scholars may use this study to build upon more established topics as well as those that are understudied.

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Libraries and archives that hold zine collections play an important role in zine scholarship by making those collections available to scholars through librarian practices (cataloging, finding aids, metadata, outreach, instruction, best practices documentation, etc).
2. The interdisciplinary nature of zine scholarship included in this study reveals complex ways in which zine scholars might be approaching zine collections for scholarship and educational practices.
3. The number of articles from the Education discipline (30, or 18%) speaks to the ways in which instructional users (teachers, faculty) use zine collections. This has implications for librarian partnerships and outreach with the educational community.

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 1997, Stephen Duncombe published *Notes from Underground*, a book generally recognized as the first prominent academic monograph<sup>1</sup> exclusively devoted to the subject of zines and zine culture. Since then, the book has been updated twice, other academics have authored additional books, and hundreds of peer reviewed articles have used zines as a vehicle for exploring aspects of humanity through cultural studies, biography studies, education, feminism, and more. This study uses 1997 as a loose branching point to identify how academics have analyzed zines in their scholarship over time and from which disciplines. Using citation analysis as a methodology, this paper seeks to uncover patterns in publication dates, disciplinary inquiries, avenues of research, and subtopics explored between 1990 and 2018. Who is writing about zines and why? How is the burgeoning topic of zine culture research unfolding? By knowing how academics are addressing zines as a topic of research, we can better understand what makes these ephemeral objects valuable to scholarly inquiry.

First, let's define what zines are and are not, in order to establish the parameters of what scholarly works about zines encompass. In the midst of a chapter's long definition of the zine, including many caveats that zines intrinsically defy definition, Duncombe defines zines as "noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish, and distribute by themselves" (2008, p. 10). Jenna Freedman, the zine librarian at Barnard College Library, includes a list of characteristics in her definition of zines in a blog post titled, "Zines Are Not Blogs: A Not Unbiased Analysis." Freedman defines

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Wertham's *The World of Fanzines*, 1973, predates this publication by over 20 years, though it's rarely cited by zine scholars. Wertham analyzes science fiction fanzines as objects of fascination and peculiarity. As a psychologist, Wertham was concerned about their possible negative psychological impact on unsuspecting readers. He ends up changing his mind, however, and finds them to be full of amateur energy and a contrast to the mechanization and isolation of his time.

zines as: self-published “and the publisher doesn’t answer to anyone”; small print run; motivated by self-expression rather than profit; outside the mainstream; and low budget, among secondary characteristics. Freedman further defines zines in opposition to blogs, suggesting that the online format itself is antithetical to print zine credo, an assertion this study likewise employs by excluding articles about “e-zines” (Freedman 2005, n.p.). Duncombe’s book addresses zines of all styles and genres, and identifies a taxonomy, including: fanzines (fan culture zines), science fiction, music, sports, television and film, political, personal, scene, network, fringe culture, religious, vocational, and a final category he calls “etc.” Just as Duncombe analyzes zines of all genres in his text, this study includes articles *about* any genre of zine. One of the main goals of this study is to identify the larger disciplinary focus as well as the subtopics academics address when analyzing zines. To do this necessitates including academic articles about any genre of zine.

Stephen Duncombe’s *Notes from Underground* is frequently cited (Google Scholar reports 963 citations as of January 2020) in books and articles about zines and alternative media, and is often hailed a seminal academic text about zines in the articles included in this study. As Megan Le Masurier commented in a 2012 article, “Stephen Duncombe’s *Notes from Underground* (1997) is the touchstone for much of the scholarly work on zines in the past 15 years” (p. 387). As an author, Duncombe situated himself as an insider within radical subcultures by publishing the first edition with Verso, a radical publishing house in London, and subsequent editions with Microcosm, a punk small-press publisher in the Portland Oregon area that has grown from being a zine distro<sup>2</sup> to a small-press publishing house of DIY and radical titles. Stylistically, Duncombe’s book is fashioned to look more like a large zine than an academic textbook—the 2008 version is square-shaped, filled with reproduced images from zines, and uses what appears to be a throwback electric typewriter font. In his introduction, Duncombe describes the breadth and scope of his inquiry as well as its style: “Some might also find the structure of this book unorthodox and perhaps unsettling.” After describing his process, he concludes that the book, “mirrors the structure of zines themselves: at first glance a bit fragmentary, but coming together inevitably to reveal a world, provide an analysis, and make a point” (p. 20). And although his book is credited with being the seminal academic treatise on zines, Duncombe capitulates his academic allegiance by first identifying himself as a former zine creator and *of the culture*, and notes that “some readers will no doubt be disappointed—while others, I’m sure, will be thrilled—that in the pages that follow I engage more with the world of zines and less with the words of academics” (p. 19). Duncombe cites his sources, as any academic would, but his prose does not lean

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<sup>2</sup> A zine distro is a distributor of zines. Distros tend to accept submissions from zine authors, and take a percentage of the profit for selling them on the author’s behalf. Today, most distros sell their catalog of zines through online stores. They can be larger and more established operations like Microcosm, but often distros are run by one person selling zines from their apartment closet.

on academic theories and instead relies on direct interviews, quotes from zines, and other small press publications rather than critical analysis from academics. Subsequent academic authors who cite Duncombe's work, however, handily fill this gap.

Subsequent book-length academic works about zines start to appear in the following decade. In 2004, the librarian Julie Bartel published a how-to book for library collection development in the area of library zine collections, a book that arguably aids in the burgeoning zine library phenomenon of the 2000's and beyond (Hays, 2018 p. 61). In 2009, Alison Piepmeier published the first major full-length academic book focused on feminist zines with her influential *Girl Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism*. In 2010, Teal Triggs published her controversial book *Fanzines: The DIY Revolution* (controversial because she allegedly did not secure reproduction rights from the zine authors whose work she included), which could be described as an illustrated compendium, given that it is made up primarily of graphic reproductions rather than academic analysis. A similar claim can be made of other book length reproductions, such as Printed Matter's 2008 *Queer Zines volume 1 and 2*, described appropriately as exhibition catalogs. Aside from the front material, the bulk of the content is made up of archival reproductions. Lisa Darms's 2013 *The Riot Grrrl Collection* is likewise a (fabulous) book of reproductions. It includes introductions by Darms and Johanna Fateman, followed by reproductions of original zines, letters, and documents from key members of the riot grrrl movement from the Fales Library's Riot Grrrl Collection.

Zines make a mention in plenty of books about feminist publication strategies, library archives, or DIY subcultures (in books like Sara Marcus's *Girls to the Front: The True Story of the Riot Grrrl Revolution* from 2010, Amy Spencer's *DIY: The Rise of the Lo-Fi Culture* from 2008, Alana Kumbier's *Ephemeral Material* from 2009, and Chris Atton's *Alternative Media* from 2002, to name a few), but in these books zines provide an example of a larger phenomenon, and are not the sole focus of the work. Numerous academic books contain chapters about zines, such as Barbara J. Guzzetti's "Girl Zines as a Global Literacy Practice" from *Adolescent Literacies and the Gendered Self* (2012), Janice Radway's "Zines then and Now" in *From Codex to Hypertext* (2012), or Liz Bly and Kelly Wooten's edited book *Make Your Own History*, which includes an introduction by the aforementioned Alison Piepmeier and chapters about zines by Sarah Dyer, Jenna Freedman, Kate Eichhorn, Kelly Wooten, and Jenna Brager with Jami Sailor, for example. These texts in particular have the most in common with academic articles, but unfortunately due to logistical challenges in library database search mechanisms, book chapters are outside the scope of this article. Furthermore, for both simplicity's sake and for the sake of adhering to "academic" publishing standards (whether

those of us inside zine culture<sup>3</sup> agree with them or not), this study is limited to reviewing peer-reviewed academic articles.

Finally, non-academic books, such as Alex Wrekk's 2002 *Stolen Sharpie Revolution: A DIY Resource for Zines and Zine Culture*, and R. Seth Friedman's 1997 *A Factsheet Five Zine Reader*, to name a couple, share helpful material to readers both within the culture and outside it. Each of these books has value and merit, and contribute to the growing canon of works about zines and zine culture, even though they are not full-length text-based academic monographs. To locate the next truly book-length academic monograph devoted exclusively to zines, we have to wait until Adele Licon's *Zines in the Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric* from 2012, followed by Kate Eichhorn's *An Archival Turn in Feminism* from 2013 and Buchanan's *Writing a Riot: Riot Grrrl Zines and Feminist Rhetorics* in 2018.

Many of the academic articles included in this study's citation analysis commented on the dearth of zine research, especially among the earlier articles. Jennifer Sinor's 2003 article, a relatively early entry in the landscape of articles about zines, remarked that, "Because while these voices are powerful, they have largely remained unheard, at least within the academy and particularly within the field of life writing" (p. 242). A few years later, in 2008, Alison Piepmeier attempted to make sense of these unheard voices in the academy by commenting that, "Zines' trashiness may, in part, explain the reluctance of literary and art scholars to analyze them: zines revel in informality and threaten conventional boundaries" (p. 228). Anna Poletti made a slightly more hopeful suggestion that academics may simply not know about zines yet, in her 2008 article. "I believe it is how we, as scholars of life writing, come to think about the zine once we know of its existence which will yield these insights" (2008b, p. 86). Poletti was appealing to biography scholars to discover zines, and indeed, in addition to there being little academic work on zines in general, there was an even less dense penetration of work done within any particular discipline at that time. Susan Thomas, writing an article from an art librarian's perspective, commented that "a review of the library literature yields few articles about art zines in particular," so she instead included a short handful of worthy studies from other fields, including Piepmeier's work in feminist studies and Duncombe's in media studies (2009, p. 30). This continued to be a trend (zine scholars looking outside their specific discipline for influential zine scholarship) until a greater density of academic publications emerged within any particular discipline. As this study shows, by the close of 2018, a few disciplines have started to accrue a reasonably robust body of work to draw upon (library science, education, and feminist studies).

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<sup>3</sup> Like Stephen Duncombe, I should acknowledge my own "insider" status as a zine author. I have written zines since my high school days, and contemporary zines of mine are part of numerous zine library collections, including Barnard Library, SUNY New Paltz, Sherwood Forest Zine Library, and others.

By looking at the focus of these book-length works about zines, one can learn something about the ways in which zine scholars make a case for the cultural impact and relevance of zines. Four of the above-mentioned works focus on zines as a means of feminist cultural production (Piepmeier, Licon, Buchanan, Eichhorn). As we will see from this paper's analysis of scholarly article citations, many of the articles published about zines reproduce this trend. Librarian literature, such as Bartel's and Kumbier's works, is another strong avenue of inquiry in scholarly journal publications. By looking at 28 years of academic article citations, a far fuller picture emerges in terms of disciplinary interest in zines and the subtopics they explore. The goal of this study is to gather and analyze citations for articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals to see a fuller sense of how academic discourse has grown and changed over time. If we hope to understand how these quirky publications, which represent "hyper-democratic, ultra-creative, highly inclusive conversation that you'll likely not find elsewhere" and which "directly reflects the lives of its participants" merit scholarly study, it becomes important to view the academic canon of zine scholarship from a more complete lens than from monographs alone (Bartel, 2004, p. 34). By analyzing the publication dates, the disciplinary focus of the publishing journals, and the secondary topics associated with academic zine articles, one can attempt to make sense of the lens and scope through which scholars are engaging with zines and zine culture.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of the study was to gather a reasonably complete picture of how many academic articles were published in scholarly journals about zines in a few years preceding and the decades following Duncombe's book. The secondary goals were to create a timeline of publications by year, to see which disciplines tended to focus on zines as relevant and scholarship-worthy, and to see what subtopics (zines themselves should be the primary topic) academics write about.

### **Databases Consulted:**

Because academics from a variety of disciplines write about zines, the database selection needed to be wide and varied. Here is a list of databases included:

- Academic Search Complete
- Art Abstracts
- Communications & Mass Media
- Education Source
- ERIC

- Historical Abstracts
- Humanities Source
- JSTOR
- Library & Information Science Source
- LGBTQ Life
- PsychArticles
- PsychInfo
- SocIndex

### **Search Terms:**

Because “zine” is a distinctive word, finding articles about zines is thankfully fairly straightforward. To reduce the number of articles about online publications or websites referred to as “e-zines”, it became useful to officially exclude “e-zine” from the search. Here are the search terms that proved most fruitful:

- (zine OR zines) NOT “e-zines”

The criteria for what constitutes an academic article primarily “about” zines followed these guidelines:

### **The articles must be:**

1. published in a peer-reviewed academic journal
2. include empirical and/or critical analysis; all book reviews, Q&A interviews, or first-person narratives were excluded
3. about print-format zines and not digital zines (e-zines)
4. primarily about zines; all articles primarily about a different topic that merely mentioned zines as an example were excluded
5. to establish this based on search results, articles had to mention zines in either the title, the abstract, or subject terms (metadata)
6. additionally, the researcher read any questionable articles to fully establish inclusion criteria



### **Establishing Disciplines:**

The study seeks to ascertain which disciplines academics are writing from in an attempt to capture the value of zines as an academic subject. Taken on their most basic merits—as printed texts self-published by individuals in ways that both mimic and reject mainstream publishing aesthetics—one might assume that Media Studies would be the obvious discipline to interrogate the format of zines. In fact, scholars from fields as far ranging as Education, Art History, and Linguistics have studied zines as (for example) learning tools in the composition classroom, as a punk second-cousin to Artists' Books, or as rhetorical modalities for disrupting identity politics (enter Sociology, Psychology, and Political Science). These are mere examples; the full range of topics and subtopics discussed in articles about zines proved dazzling as well as challenging to categorize. The disciplines could only be categorized after collecting the zine citations, and were determined based on:

1. which database the article was indexed in—keeping in mind that most of the articles were indexed in more than one database because of the inherently interdisciplinary nature of zines-as-subject
2. the discipline of the journal—keeping in mind that many of the journals represented are interdisciplinary in nature
3. the subject terms associated with the article
4. additionally, the researcher read any questionable multidisciplinary articles to select a single, dominant discipline

*Note: For readability, disciplines will be capitalized, while subtopics will remain undercase but in quotation marks.*

### **Establishing Subtopics**

Creating coherent subtopics for these articles was more challenging than establishing discipline, given that “subjects” for articles are inherently less institutionally established than academic disciplines. Individual databases, even those in the EBSCO family, each have their separately established thesauri (some use “descriptors” while others use “subject terms”; in any case they each use different controlled language in their metadata). Additionally, the database-supplied subject terms were generally unhelpful for this particular project. Most articles used obvious subject terms like “zines,” for instance, whereas this study requires more nuanced descriptors in order to delineate what aspect of zines the researcher focused on. Unsurprisingly, the more interdisciplinary the topic, the more nuanced these “subtopic” descriptors needed to be. As an example: Dan Fraizer’s “Zines in the Composition Classroom,”

published in *Teaching English in the Two-Year Classroom*, can readily be categorized under “Education” as the discipline, and “composition” as the subtopic. A slightly more challenging example: Rosenberg and Garofalo’s “Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from Within,” published in the feminist journal *Signs*, reveals the need for “outside the box” subtopics. Because so many of the articles published between 1990 and 2018 were about how the women who participated in the riot grrrl movement used zines as a medium to communicate third-wave feminist ideologies, the researcher categorized this article under Feminist Studies as a discipline and “riot grrrl” as the subtopic. It should be noted that this study uses Feminist Studies instead of the more common Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) because articles about LGBTQ identity issues tended to be discussed from a solidly Sociological or Psychological perspective. This is not surprising, given that WGSS is in itself an interdisciplinary subject which overlaps with sociology, anthropology, history, English, and many other fields. For the purposes of this study, Feminist Studies is used only for those articles explicitly concerned with feminism and girlhood, rather than encompassing sexuality or transgender identities. Sexuality and gender identity are also treated as separate subtopics (“LGBTQ” for articles dealing with sexuality; “transgender” for articles dealing with transgender identity).

Because so many of these articles are interdisciplinary in nature, categorizing them using *only* two types of metadata proved challenging in many cases. Because it would unnecessarily complicate the study to categorize articles using more than one subtopic, or more than one discipline, it simply became part of the analytic process to identify the single term that best describes the article. In some cases, it made sense to compact two initially separate topics into one in order to clarify the subtopic’s impact. For instance, “activism” was incorporated into “political movements” as a term to capture articles explicitly concerned with zines as a modality for political action. However “riot grrrl” is separated out as its own category rather than included under “political movements,” because there were enough citations to warrant this distinction. Hopefully this discussion makes clear the level of thoughtfulness and specificity required when categorizing the articles.

### **Limitations:**

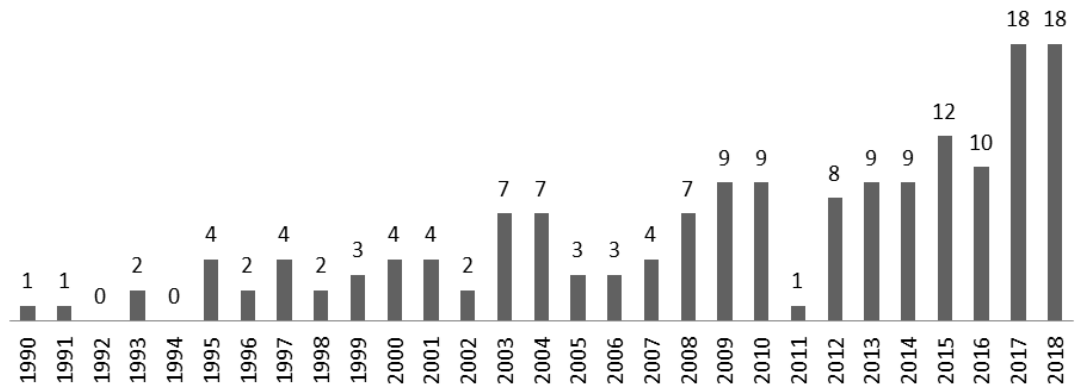
Because, as mentioned above, database thesauri did not provide useful metadata for assigning subtopics to these articles, I coded subtopics for the articles as carefully as possible based on the above-mentioned criteria. It should be noted that it would be possible for another researcher to code these same articles under slightly different terms, or make different coding decisions which would appear to affect the outcome of the results.

For practical reasons, this study excludes book chapters from this citation analysis of academic articles about zines and zine culture. Book chapters are poorly indexed in the data-

bases listed above, which unfortunately made it impractical to attempt an inclusive review. Future research will need to fill this gap.

## TRENDS IN SCHOLARSHIP ABOUT ZINES

### Overall Trends: Rise in article publications by year



**Figure 1.** Number of Articles Published by Year

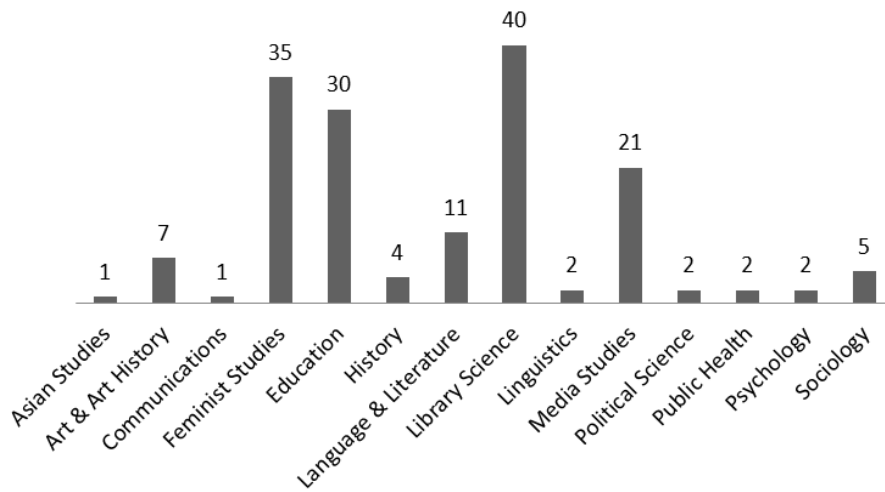
This study tracked article publications beginning in 1990, because this is when articles about zines started to appear with any consistency, though when extended back to 1980, one finds a 1982 and 1983 publication as well. As anticipated, the number of articles steadily rises from 4 in 1995, just before Duncombe’s book publication, to 18 in each of the past two years, which represents a 1,700% increase. There are two noteworthy aspects to the steadiness of the rise in academic interest in zines:

1. there has not been a singular climactic moment, nor a subsequent diminishing—the number has gone incrementally and consistently up, and,
2. while the timeframe could be considered “recent” in the course of human history, it’s also too long a timespan to ignore. These findings show a building increase in scholarly interest in zines for the past *twenty-eight years* that shows no sign of slowing down. Indeed, zine scholarship appears to be gaining momentum.

### Trends by Discipline: Library Science, Feminist Studies, Education, and Media Studies

The most dominant trends by discipline were library science, feminist studies, education, and media studies. The dominant number of articles from Library Science speaks to the fact

that libraries started collecting zines as a resource (the first major book about zine library collections hails from 2004, *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library*, by Julie Bartel). The next section will go into subtopics in greater detail, but 12 of the 40 articles within Library Science discussed how to collect zines, and most of those were case study descriptions of new collections. Other topics included zines as serials (4 articles), zines in archival collections (4 articles), how to catalog zines (4 articles), and zines in art libraries (7 articles). The representation on the topic of art libraries could be unusually high due to a special issue of *Art Libraries* journal dedicated to zines in 2018. Nonetheless, while these are distinct aspects of librarianship, their interests overlap more often than not—an article discussing the creation of a zine archive could easily speak to multiple “subtopics” such as zines as serials, collection development, or archival issues in the course of a single article. Librarian subtopics with fewer hits might be equally intriguing: an article about micro-aggressions in librarianship told through a library’s collection of POC zines (zines authored by People of Color), for instance, is one such example (Arroyo-Ramirez, 2018).



**Figure 2.** Number of Articles by Discipline

A group of zine librarians in the United States created a group website, [zinelibraries.info](http://zinelibraries.info), in 2007. This group also hosts a listserv, a blog, annual “unconferences,” a Code of Ethics for zine library collections, and are in the process of establishing authorized cataloging and metadata specific to zines. As of January 2020, one can search the contents of five collaborating zine libraries’ holdings ([browse.zinecat.org](http://browse.zinecat.org)). While it is outside the scope of this article to prove an absolute correlation between the production of academic knowledge about zines and zine culture because these zine collections exist, it logically follows that academic

authors from other disciplines would have an easier time locating and studying zines from institutionally managed zine collections, rather than authors relying on their own personal zine collections for evidence. Figure 1 does indicate an increase in article writing in the years following 2007 (but the number increases fairly steadily before 2007 as well). It is undeniably true, however, that zine librarians advocate for the value of zines in both academic and public spheres, and assist both academics and the general public work with zines through reference, instruction, cataloging efforts, and other forms of advocacy.

The second largest discipline represented was Feminist Studies, with 35 articles overall. Thirteen of these discussed the riot grrrl movement's use of zines as a medium to express third-wave feminist ideologies. Other feminist articles discussed how women (not identified as grrrls) use the materiality of the zine to embody feminist theories (3 articles), or use the zine as a mode of expression and rhetorical advantage (3 articles), or to address intersectional identities, such as LGBTQ (2 articles) or transgender identities (2 articles) from a feminist perspective. Feminist studies is inherently interdisciplinary, so it should not be surprising that a few articles overlapped with education and could have gone in either camp (their placement in these cases depended on the journal). For instance: Kimberly Creasap's "Zine-Making as Feminist Pedagogy," which appears in *Feminist Teacher*, and which addresses using zines as a pedagogical tool to help students connect to feminist theory in the classroom. The point here is that even articles that are categorized in Education may still be addressing aspects of zine production as third-wave feminist theory.

This study makes clear that educators have a strong interest in exploring zines as a tool for Education, with 30 articles. The most common subtopics in education were composition, with 6 articles (see Amy Wan's "Not Just for Kids Anymore: Using Zines in the Classroom") and as a tool for student literacy, also with 6 articles. While articles exploring composition and literacy often (but not always) included examples of students creating zines to increase their writing skills, the rest of the articles tended to use zines as *resources*, as in articles about math education (1 article), art education (5 articles), pedagogy (2 articles), political movements (2 articles), and social justice (1 article). It is worth repeating that, though beyond the scope of this paper, educators may have gained interest in using zines in the composition classroom after being made aware of zine library collections or through work with zine librarians.

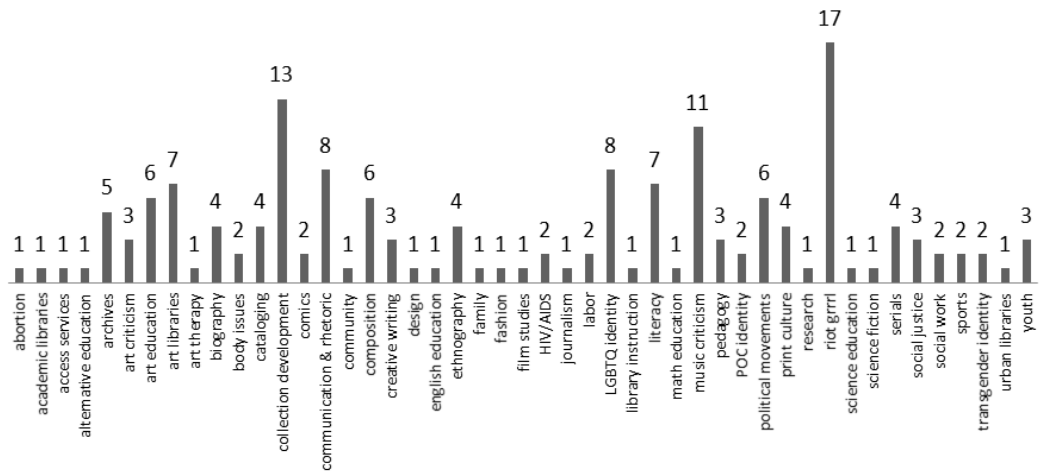
Given that zines are a form of media, the fact that media studies accounted for the fewest number of articles among the top disciplines could be surprising. The articles that fell under media studies tended to be traditionally media studies topics, like "music criticism" with 9 articles, comic zines (2 articles), film studies (1) or journalism (1). But like the other disci-

plines already mentioned, scholars publishing in media studies journals also addressed interdisciplinary issues, like how LGBTQ writers use the media to discuss sexuality (2 articles), or how zine authors manipulate the media as a rhetorical device (2 articles).

The common thread in all disciplines is that while some subtopics intrinsically fall under a classically disciplinary heading, the way “collection development” is an inherently librarian domain, every disciplinary category also included interdisciplinary subtopics. This speaks to the complex and varied ways in which zine scholars write about zines.

**Trends in Sub-Topic: riot grrrl, collection development, and nuanced intersection articulations**

The most intriguing consequence of further categorizing by subtopic is how many different recognizable subtopics emerged. As mentioned in the methodology section, the researcher looked for patterns and tried to pair articles with existing subtopic categories, rather than create new ones, and yet 57 distinct subtopics nonetheless emerged. Scholars who write about zines approach them from a wide range of unique focal points, ranging from “abortion” to “youth.” As one can see from Figure 3 below, the most popular subtopics for scholarly articles were “riot grrrl” with 17 articles, “collection development” (primarily from the Library Science discipline) with 13, and “music criticism” and “communication & rhetoric” with 8 each.



**Figure 3.** Number of Articles by Subtopic

At first glance, “riot grrrl” and “music criticism” could appear to be the same topic, but they are not in important ways. Articles categorized in the “music criticism” subtopic were about other genres of music zines, such as punk music zines, or zines about rap music (Forman, 1995), doowop music (Pruter, 1997), or progressive rock (Atton, 2001). Representative journals from the “music criticism” subtopic were likewise different from those in the “riot grrrl” category; an example journal of each, respectively, is *Punk & Post Punk* versus the prominent feminist journal *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. “Riot grrrl” was such a popular subtopic it demanded its own category, separate from other genres of music. In terms of the disciplines with articles about riot grrrl, the most common was Feminist Studies, with 13 of the 17 articles; other representative disciplines included Education with 2 (using riot grrrl zines to teach feminist pedagogy), Library Science with 1 (riot grrrl zines in the library), and History with 1 (history of riot grrrl).

“Communication & rhetoric” could likewise intersect with the “riot grrrl” subtopic, given that a few articles address zines as a vehicle for a style of communication and/or the use of rhetoric to push a political agenda. However, the zines in the “communication” category were not specifically about riot grrrl, such as Adela Licon’s “(B)Orderlands’ Rhetorics and Representations: The Transformative Potential of Feminist Third-Space Scholarship and Zines,” which looks at rhetorical moves used in feminist publications that are not associated with the riot grrrl movement. Another example would be Anna Poletti’s “Where the Popular Meets the Mundane: The Use of Lists in Personal Zines,” which zeroes in on the preponderance of list-making in personal zines as a form of communication. Other slightly similar, but ultimately different subtopics include ethnography (4 articles), and biography studies (4 articles). While “communication/rhetoric” articles tended to analyze how one expresses one’s realized sense of self, ethnographic zines approached identity issues and an analysis of the culture through the self (see Stanley’s “Writing the PhD Journey(s): An Autoethnography of Zine-Writing, Angst, Embodiment, and Backpacker Travels” in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*), while biography studies approached the zine as a way for the reader to understand the other (Poletti’s “Self-Publishing in the Global and Local: Situating Life Writing in Zines” in *Biography*). Additionally, biography studies articles tended to approach the concept of the self from a literary disciplinary point of view, rather than from a culture studies angle or linguistic angle.

As a subtopic, “Political movements” could equally have intersected with “riot grrrl,” except that the focus of these articles tended to reside in how a variety of activists use zines to either reflect or inspire political activism. Take, for instance, Sheila Liming’s “Of Anarchy and Amateurism: Zine Publication and Print Dissent,” or Jen and Carly Bagelman’s “Zines: Crafting Change and Repurposing the Neoliberal University.” A few articles in this subtopic do address feminist concerns, but not specifically riot grrrl, as per Zobl’s “Cultural



Production, Transnational Networking, and Critical Reflection in Feminist Zines” published in *Signs*. Despite these nuances, it is certainly noteworthy how many articles discuss feminism through zine-making, whether those zines are situated in the riot grrrl movement or outside it.

It’s worth noting overall that these subtopics did not correlate perfectly with the academic disciplines articulated in the previous section. The most diverse subtopic in terms of discipline proved to be “LGBQ identity” with 1 article from Art & Art History, 1 from Asian Studies, 2 from Feminist Studies, 2 from Media Studies, 1 from Psychology, and 1 from Sociology. Some would describe LGBQ issues as residing solidly in the Social Sciences, but when it comes to scholarship about zines, scholars clearly approach LGBQ issues from a far wider range of disciplines. An additional 2 articles about transgender zines were published in Feminist Studies journals.

Finally, there are a collection of articles focusing on zines as vehicles for art: 3 about “art criticism,” 6 about “art education,” 7 about “art libraries,” and 1 about “art therapy” (and using zines in nursing homes!). Taken together, 17 articles are about some aspect of art in zines, which rivals “riot grrrl” in popularity, and which is striking, especially because zines represent an uncommon vehicle for the art world. (For that matter, artists books, a far more mainstream genre than artists zines, are themselves an uncommon vehicle for art, compared to painting or photography.)

## CONCLUSION

This citation analysis of 163 scholarly article publications between 1990 and 2018 reveals numerous findings of interest to future scholars of zines. Publications have steadily risen in rate from 1 per year in both 1990 and 1991 to 18 per year in 2017 and 2018. While scholars from a total of 12 distinct disciplines authored articles about zines, the most heavily concentrated disciplines of scholarship hailed from four distinct fields: Library Science, Feminist Studies, Education, and Media Studies. When drilling down to the subtopic of these articles about zines, one finds an even greater plethora of topics of interest—57 distinct subtopics emerged, ranging from “abortion” to “youth.” The highest concentrations of subtopics included “riot grrrl,” “library collection development,” “music criticism,” “LGBQ identity,” “communication & rhetoric,” and a suite of articles about aspects of art. These conclusions reveal both the continued influence of zines and zine culture over academic scholarship, and also the extraordinary range of cross- and interdisciplinary interest zines hold over the academic imagination. Zine scholars may use this study to bolster arguments over the value of future zine studies. Zine librarians might use this study to argue the need for additional resources to support zine collections. Zines are influential and worthy objects



of study not just as a form of print media (as one might expect) but as educational and pedagogical tools in the classroom, as evidence of activism, political movements, third-wave feminism, cultural critiques, and cultural movements. Zines have value to scholars as articulations of identity—in the formulation of LGBTQ, transgender, POC, feminist, and riot grrrl identities—and as articulations of the self—in the cases of personal biographies, ethnographic studies, linguistic analyses, and rhetorical expressions of identity formulation. Some of the lesser-studied topics that emerged may prove equally important to future zine scholars as examples of topics to be more fully explored: fashion, labor movements, HIV/AIDS narratives, film studies, math education, science fiction, and sports, to name a few. This study can reveal topics scholars have pursued in the past when thinking about zines, but also reveal work to be done.

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## APPENDIX A

### Included Citations

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**APPENDIX B**

**Trends in Subtopic by Discipline**

Art & Art History	Art Criticism (3), Creative Writing (1), Design (1), Fashion (1), LGBTQ Identity (1)
Asian Studies	LGBTQ Identity (1)
Communications	HIV/AIDS (1)
Feminist & Gender Studies	Riot Grrrl (13), Communications/Rhetoric (3), Print Culture (3), Body Issues (2), LGBTQ Identity (2), Political Movements (2), Transgender Identity (2), Abortion (1), Art Education (1), Biography Studies (1), Collection Development (1), Labor (1), Literacy (1), Social Justice (1), Youth (1)
Education	Composition (6), Literacy (6), Art Ed (5), Pedagogy (2), Political Movements (2), Riot Grrrl (2), Alternative Ed (1), Creative Writing (1), English Education (1), Math Education (1), Science Ed (1), Social Justice (1), Social Work Ed (1)
History	Archives (1), Family (1), Music Criticism (1), Riot Grrrl (1)
Language & Literature	Biography Studies (3), Communications/Rhetoric (2), Political Movements (2), Creative Writing (1), Pedagogy (1), Science Fiction (1), Youth (1)
Library Science	Collection Development (12), Art Libraries (7), Archives (4), Cataloging (4), Serials (4), Academic Libraries (1), Access Services (1), Ethnography (1), Instruction (1), POC Identity (1), Research (1), Riot Grrrl (1), Science Fiction (1), Urban Libraries (1)
Linguistics	Ethnography (1), Science Fiction (1), Youth (1)
Media Studies	Music Criticism (9), Comics (2), Communications/Rhetoric (2), LGBTQ Identity (2), Film Studies (1), HIV/AIDS (1), Journalism (1), POC Identity (1), Print Culture (1), Sports (1)
Political Science	Labor (1), Social Justice (1)
Public Health	Art Therapy (1), Social Work (1)
Psychology	Ethnography (1), LGBTQ Identity (1)
Sociology	Community (1), Ethnography (1), LGBTQ Identity (1), Music Criticism (1), Sports (1)