

Escalating Recognition: Book Awards in Anthropology and Sociology, 1962-2019

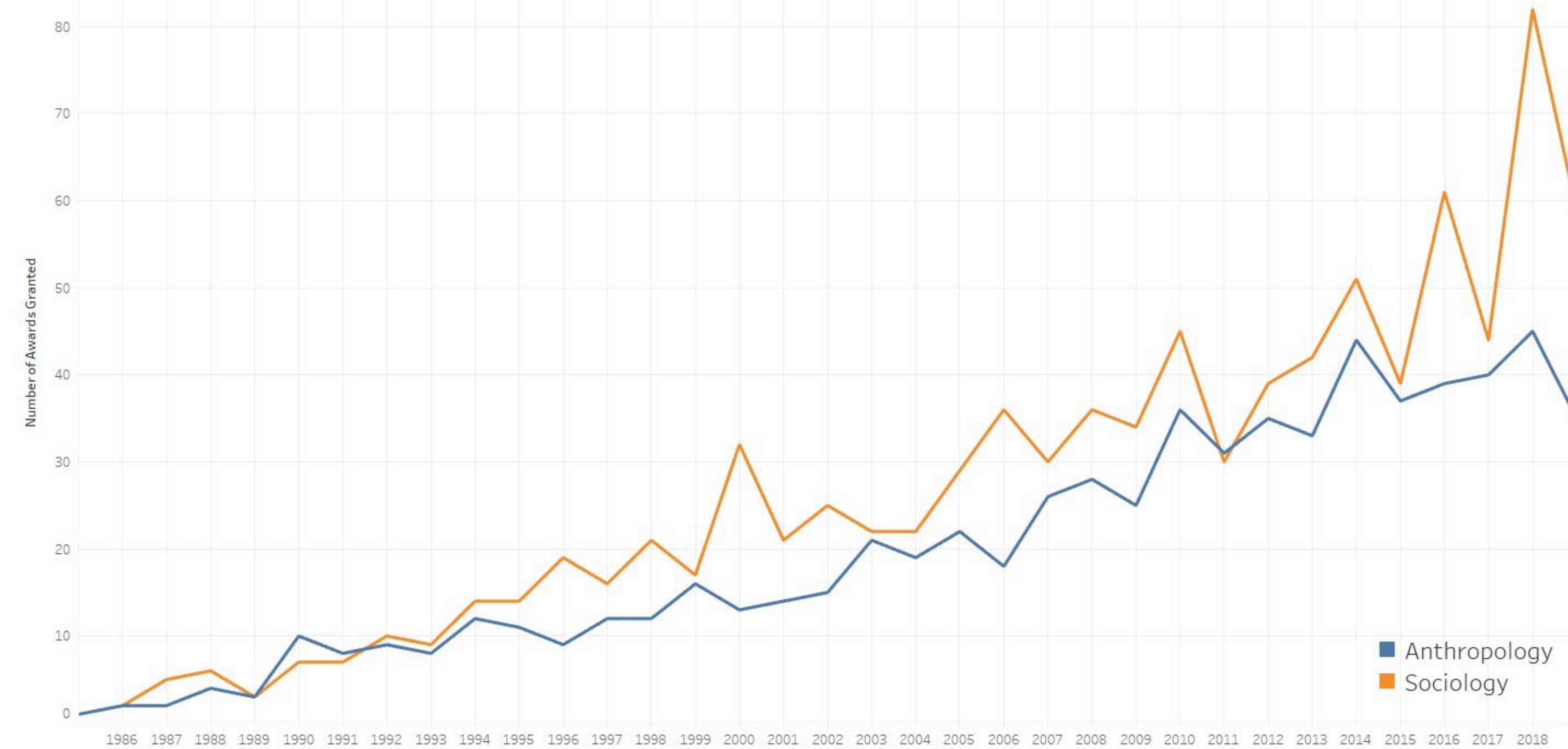
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ABSTRACT

Why so many book awards? In this poster, we examine the growth in scope and number of book awards in anthropology and sociology, considering them an analogue to what Joel Best (2008) calls “prize proliferation,” and what James F. English (2005) has described as “the economy of prestige.” As academic societies and sections expand, scholars use book awards as a legitimating device to establish their authority, honor their members, and draw attention to their respective subfields.

METHODS

As of 2020, we found 37 prizes for books in anthropology and 94 prizes for books and articles in sociology. To better understand the allocation of awards, we compiled a dataset of over 1500 awarding events, including book title, publisher, author and their affiliation, award year, subfield, and author’s location of fieldwork, where indicated. This data was drawn from society and section websites, and from public data on publisher and bookseller websites.

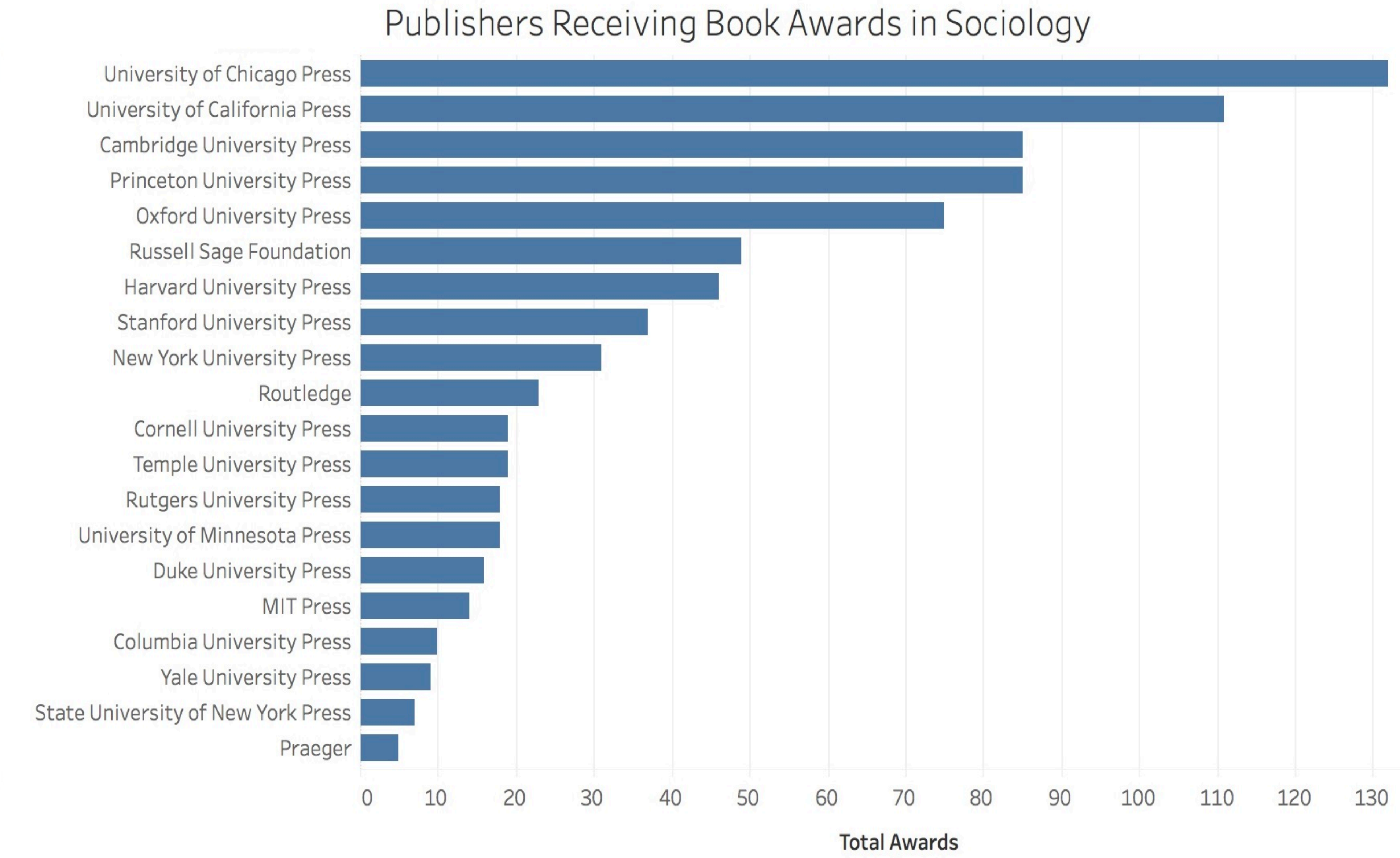
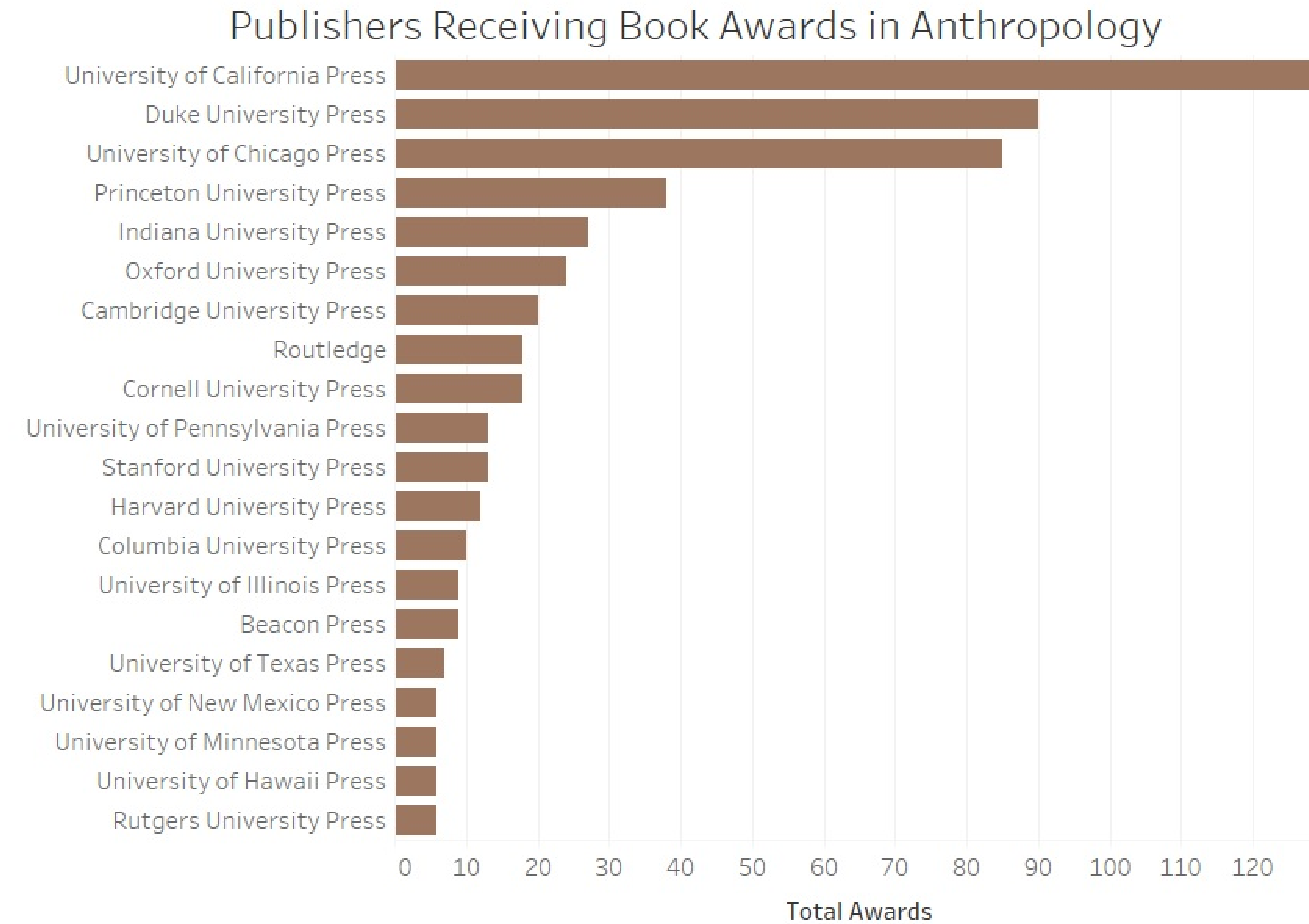


OBJECTIVES

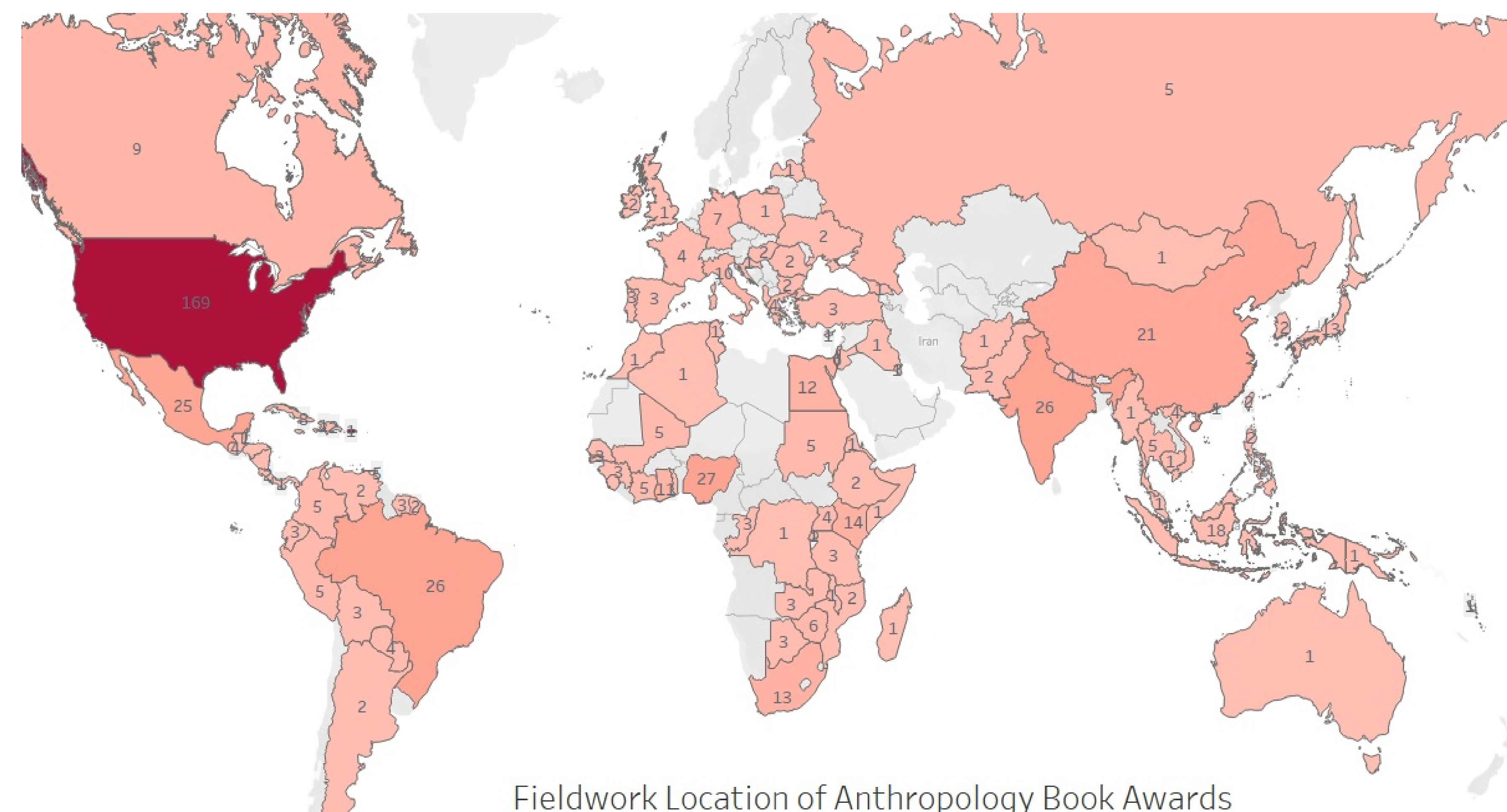
Our goal in this project was to:

- See if book awards would be a good signal of value for academic librarians choosing which books to purchase
- Check whether book awards seem to be systemically biased in some way
- Raise awareness of the types of book awards available in anthropology and sociology, and of their function in these disciplines

RESULTS: THE BENEFIT TO MAJOR PUBLISHERS



AWARD-WINNING FIELD LOCATIONS IN ANTHROPOLOGY



CONCLUSIONS

This poster finds evidence of prize proliferation in both anthropology and sociology, marked by a steady increase in number of awards granted per year. Award-winning authors often work at high-prestige universities and publish with top university presses. And even in our global professions, books published in English about the United States dominated the awards list.

As scholarly monographs are not evaluated via blind review, and can often be self-nominated, the recognition that authors, institutions, and publishers already possess can be leveraged to accrue further book awards. This escalating recognition comes to signal a scholar worth investing in, reinforcing existing markers of value in our scholarly economy.

This is a preliminary analysis of a project still under development. For further discussion, feel free to reach out to us at emmelhainz@berkeley.edu and cs7ww@virginia.edu!