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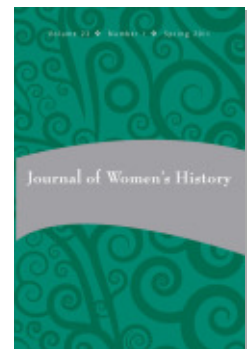
What, Where, When, and Sometimes Why: Data Mining Two  
Decades of Women's History Abstracts

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# WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND SOMETIMES WHY

## *Data Mining Two Decades of Women's History Abstracts*

Sharon Block and David Newman

*"What, Where, When and Sometimes Why" provides a quantitative overview of post-c.1450 women's history publications by data mining a half million abstracts from two widely used article databases. We assess changes in the field and track the relationship between women's history as a subfield and history as a whole. Among many other findings, we argue against two popular beliefs about women's history: that women's historians are overly-focused on recent history and that women's and gender history is an ever increasing proportion of the profession. We trace publication shifts from 1985–2005, showing, for example, an increasing focus on various non-Western and nineteenth-century histories. Our case study on the history of sexuality finds minimal attention to reproduction and same-sex sexuality, and more thematic similarities across time periods than regions. We conclude by suggesting areas for future research, including the expansion of quantitative studies, of non-Western histories, and of professional activism as means to further develop women's history scholarship.*

In the past half decade, prominent historians have quantified scholarship on women's history to analyze the state of the field. In a 2004 publication, Gerda Lerner tallied 720 recent U.S. women's history articles, books, and dissertations from the *Journal of American History's* list of "Current Scholarship" by time period and theme. In her 2006 book, Judith Bennett quantified scholarship in various women's history journals and conferences to show an overemphasis on more recent time periods. In 2007, Merry Wiesner-Hanks analyzed the regional focus of Berkshire Women's History Conference papers and *Journal of Women's History* publications in her essay on the place of women, gender, and sexuality in world history.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars have published state of the field pieces that provide qualitative analyses of women's and gender history.<sup>2</sup>

Quantitative and qualitative analyses provide these women's historians with a sense of the developments in much of our field and point to remaining shortcomings and opportunities. This article builds on the desire to understand the scope and achievements of women's history by providing a more comprehensive quantitative overview of women's history within a large segment of historical publishing between 1985 and 2005. Our analysis

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examines more than a half million abstracts from two widely used article databases that cover historical study since c.1450. We use these to explore the place of women and women's history within the historical field in general, and within regional and chronologic subfields in particular. While women's history reflects some overall shifts in the historical profession, it also has a demonstrably separable trajectory in terms of its expansion, content, and regional/chronological foci.

We then move to exploring the approximately 31,000 abstracts that we identified as women's history-focused. We look at shifts in article publication patterns between 1985 and 2005 to see how the field has—and has not—changed. We directly explore the content and range of post-c.1450 women's history across these two decades, and question whether a seemingly more twentieth-century focus of women's history is a byproduct of overall developments, a more complicated transformation, or less of a shift than it might originally appear. We also track the regional and chronological subject area variations within women's history abstracts, and suggest that this be a starting point for discussions of the place of women's history within various subfields. In the article's final section, we select a single topic area—sexuality—for deeper analysis. We identify broad subject areas covered within histories of sexuality and trace their variations across time and place of study, suggesting the value of this kind of quantitative exploration.

Thus, as our title suggests, we are addressing several “whats, wheres, and whens” of two decades of post-c.1450 women's history: *what* place does women's history have in the field at large and *what* kind of subjects are included within women's history; *where* in various regional histories does women's history most frequently appear; *when* do publications on women's history increase or decrease in numbers as well as *when*, chronologically, women's historians most focus their efforts.

The “sometimes why” is a more complicated venture. At various points we forward possible explanations, grounded in historiographical scholarship, for the trends we have identified. But for the most part, our broad analysis of tens of thousands of abstracts at a time, aims to recognize basic patterns that raise as many questions about the constitution of the field of women's history as they answer. We aim for this article to start a conversation about women's history as revealed through a large-scale quantitative analysis that provides hard facts, rather than qualitative impressions, about the field. We conclude by proposing questions about how we can benefit from this type of interdisciplinary collaboration, what it might suggest about how we understand the place of women's history in the field, and the role of the profession and academic institutions in the support of various kinds of historical study.

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## Methodology

The main source for this article is 513,259 substantive abstracts of articles and essays published between 1985–2005 in *America: History and Life* and *Historical Abstracts* databases. *America: History and Life* (hereafter AHL) focuses on the history of the geographic regions that now make up the United States and Canada. *Historical Abstracts* (hereafter HA) covers the history of the world outside of North America from approximately 1450 onward. Two of the most widely used abstract databases in the historical profession, AHL and HA, include English and non-English language publications and gather historically-oriented articles from more than 3,000 scholarly journals, including women's studies publications. These databases are not perfect representations of the historical profession by any means—the exclusion of pre-1450 scholarship may be one of the biggest handicaps—but they still provide a much larger corpus of information than heretofore examined.

We analyze this collection of abstracts using two main methodologies. First, word frequency counting (how often a given word occurs) reveals how and when terms related to women appear in historical abstracts.<sup>3</sup> Second, topic modeling, a computer science data mining technology that is arguably the state-of-the-art model for text document collections, allows for a more complex subject analysis.<sup>4</sup> Topic modeling learns subject categories without *a priori* subject definitions. Unlike traditional classification systems where texts are fit into preexisting schema (such as Library of Congress subject headings), topic modeling establishes a comprehensive list of subjects through its analysis of the word co-occurrences throughout the corpus. The content of the documents—not a human indexer—determines the topics collectively found in those documents, arguably making topic modeling's subject indices far more sophisticated than human classification.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout our analysis, we employ a broad definition of women's history. We include work that focuses on individual women, on women as a group or groups, and on the power dynamics of patriarchy that some have shorthanded with the term "gender." We do not single out feminist scholarship from that which addresses women's experiences without an interest in patriarchal power structures. In short, we use "women's history" expansively, to encompass all kinds of scholarship that addresses women's lives, experiences, and the societal beliefs that surround them.

We identified this broad field of women's history by including abstracts that ranked highly in women's history topics from our initial topic modeling runs; those that were published in women's studies or women's history journals; and those that the AHL/HA databases had given the terms of "women," "woman," or "gender" as a subject heading.<sup>6</sup> Together, our combination of subject word, topic model, and women's studies journals

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resulted in identification of about six percent of abstracts—30,891—as being substantially focused on women's history.

### **Women's History in the Field at Large**

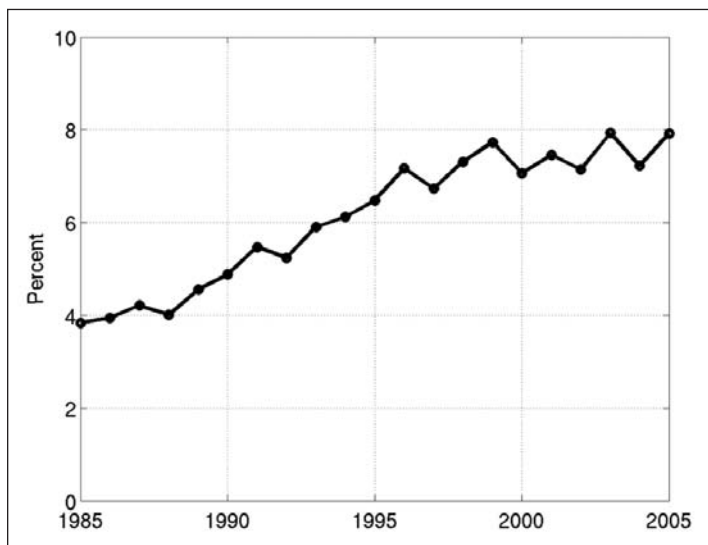
The amount of scholarship on women and gender within the historical profession has, unsurprisingly, grown since 1985. Our analysis shows that this growth has neither been steady over time, nor have particular historical time periods and regions seen equal amounts of women's history scholarship. Judging by an array of word counts, male figures still remain the overwhelming focus of historical study. In addition, several scholars have suggested that women's history disproportionately focuses on very recent and on U.S. history topics. Here we show that some of this concentration may actually be more a reflection of general scholarly trends than specific to the field of women's history.

Publications related to women's history have been increasing since the 1980s. Figure 1 shows that women's history articles accounted for about four percent of all abstracts in 1985, and grew to about eight percent by 2005. Some of this relative growth resulted from an increase in absolute numbers of women's history publications and some from a decline in the overall number of historical articles. In 1985, about 27,500 historical articles were abstracted in AHL and HA. Of these, about 1,058 related to women's history. By the second half of the 1990s, women's history articles began leveling off at the 1,500 per-year mark, while history articles overall continued to decline—to about 19,000 by 2005.

Despite overall increases, the growth rate of women's history abstracts seems to have slowed significantly by the second half of the 1990s; the small relative increases after that are due to an overall decrease in historical abstracts generally, not to an increase in absolute numbers of women's history abstracts. Do we interpret this as a positive: that women's history is becoming a bigger part of history? Or, given that women's history-related abstracts still only account for, at most, eight percent of all history article abstracts, is the slowdown in absolute numbers of women's history scholarship a cause for concern? At the very least, we can quantitatively confirm that women's history is not anywhere near a majority of publications.

While women's history articles have been increasing since 1985, their content (or at least the identification of their content) has changed dramatically over time. Most strikingly, the usage of the word "gender" increased exponentially (see Figure 2). In 1985, "gender" occurred less than once in every 10,000 words in abstracts. By 2005, "gender" occurred in about every 1,250 words—an eight-fold increase. In comparison, the use of the

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**Figure 1. Women's History Abstracts as Percent of Overall Abstracts versus Time**

word "women" grew by only thirty-three percent over this period. As most women's historians know, the discussion of "women" quickly took a back seat in the late 1980s and early 1990s to the use of "gender" in historical scholarship.

Some of this expansive use of "gender" undoubtedly reflects the introduction of the term as a powerful analytic category in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> Attention to gender undoubtedly also reflects (and helped to produce) a shift toward cultural histories of power relations rather than social histories of women's lives.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the frequency of the word "cultural" doubled between 1985 and 2005, while the word "social" saw a steady (though not as dramatic) downturn. It may also be that abstracters are relying more comfortably on "gender" as a catchall explanation of complex arguments about status and power that might have been classified with other terms a decade earlier.<sup>9</sup> Word frequency statistics bear this out: words such as "patriarchy" and "sexism" show no significant increase over this time period, and "feminism" shows little increase after the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps this reflects less attention to terms that might be seen by mainstream readers as more strident versions of feminist history: "gender" has been naturalized to a generic identifier less associated with activism (witness the regular appearance of "gender" as a checkbox category on institutional forms), whereas "patriarchy" and "sexism" still carry the imprint of a particular activist movement.<sup>11</sup>

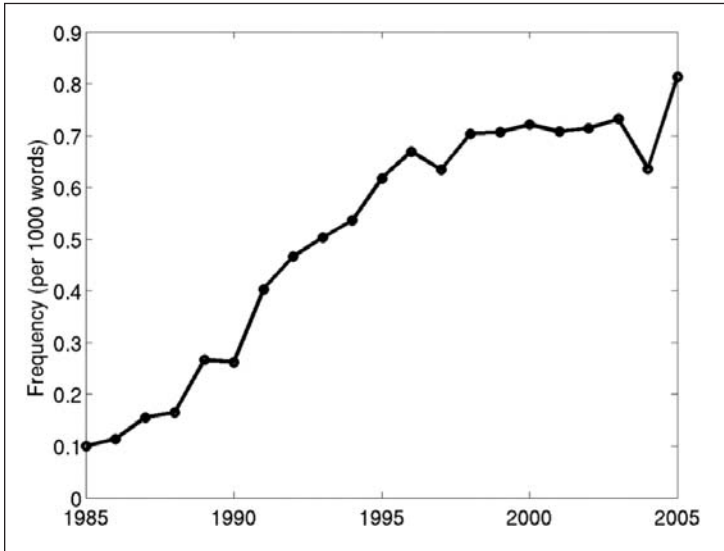


Figure 2. Frequency of the Word "Gender" in Abstracts from 1985–2005

Like the percentage of women's history abstracts generally, the increasing use of the word "gender" also leveled off by the mid-1990s. We certainly hope that this does not mean that women's and gender histories have already seen their heyday. A more positive interpretation may be that women's history is becoming more integrated into diverse topics, so that women's history content is not fully explained or easily identified in brief abstracts. It may also be possible that as women's history becomes mainstream history, abstractors see less need to mark such scholarship as focusing on women.

Still, this leveling off also raises several questions for women's historians and the profession more generally. First, what is an appropriate ultimate level of women's history publications within historical journals? Can we numerically quantify when women's history has "succeeded" and is suitably represented in historical publications? Should attention to women appear in half of all historical studies? Should a certain percent of studies include a feminist or gendered analysis? Second are more profession-based questions: do publication levels fairly reflect the percentage of women's historians? If not, are there material factors—likely related to women's place in the profession—that might account for any discrepancy? Women's historians are, of course, not all women, but they are disproportionately likely to be

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female, and thus the field is more impacted by professional equity issues than many other thematic fields.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, the overall increase in work on women's history does not translate into an equitable treatment of women and men in historical studies. Women do receive more attention as a group or subject of study in overall abstracts. The word "women" is used almost six times as often as the word "men." This likely reflects the scholarly interest in women as a category versus the appearance of individual men as incidental subjects of historical inquiry, without analytic attention to gender identity.

But what about attention given to individual male and female subjects? The comparative use of some objective and possessive personal pronouns, "her," "hers," "him," and "his," makes clear that individual men are still implicitly the focus of the majority of historical scholarship. Together, all of these pronouns are used over 200,000 times in the half million abstracts. Yet only fourteen percent of these uses are for "her" or "hers." While women, as a category, are a subject (perhaps even an over-essentialized subject) of analysis, historical scholarship still appears to be largely focusing on men's activities as a matter of course—not necessarily to analyze men as gendered beings, but as default individuals of study.

Nevertheless, analytic studies of masculinity studies have unequivocally been on the rise.<sup>13</sup> The appearance of the term "masculinity" shows a dramatic trajectory—from a virtually nonexistent frequency of one in about every 90,000 words in 1985, to appearing more than once every 2,000 words by the year 2000. This upswing reflects the ways that historical articles have begun to focus critically on men beyond their incidental appearance. This increase likely suggests a more widespread interest in fully understanding all aspects of gendered power dynamics. But does the increase in masculinity studies relate to the slowing expansion in women's history in the new millennium? We should be careful not to posit a zero-sum game of interest in gender-related studies, but it may be useful to consider the relationship between feminist, women-focused, and broadly-constituted gender histories.

Turning to a regional analysis of history abstracts shows that a higher percentage of articles are being published on women in North America than in the rest of the world. Almost twice as many North American abstracts as non-North American abstracts include either "woman," "women," or "gender" somewhere in the entry (almost ten percent versus about five percent, respectively). As Table 1 shows, a variety of words relating directly to women are almost twice as likely to appear in North American abstracts as non-North American abstracts.

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**Table 1. Select Women-Related Word Frequencies in Overall Abstracts**

<b>Word</b>	<b>North America</b>	<b>Non-North America</b>
Female(s)	1 in 2625 words	1 in 3786 words
Feminism(s)	1 in 5505 words	1 in 9619 words
Gender(s)	1 in 1334 words	1 in 2524 words
Her(s)	1 in 795 words	1 in 1513 words
Mother(s)	1 in 3956 words	1 in 7792 words
Wife	1 in 6062 words	1 in 11,346 words
Women	1 in 261 words	1 in 462 words

These word choices mark the larger presence of women's history abstracts within North American history overall. Women's history abstracts are twice as big a proportion of North American abstracts (almost nine percent) as non-North American abstracts (slightly more than four percent). This has been fairly consistent over time of publication: in 1985, women's history-focused abstracts accounted for over six percent of all North American abstracts, but just over two percent of non-North American abstracts. In 2005, women's history abstracts had expanded to almost eleven percent of North American abstracts and six percent of non-North American abstracts. We can view these increases as positive or negative trends: on the negative side, North American women's history was about the same proportion of its regional field in 1985 as non-North American women's history was two decades later. On the positive side, the amount of women's history on non-North American topics has tripled in two decades.

Table 2 compares the regional breakdown of overall abstracts and women's history abstracts in more detail. North American abstracts account for just over one-third of overall abstracts, but more than half of abstracts on women's history.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, several non-North American geographic regions are particularly underrepresented in women's history. Work on Eastern Europe and Soviet regions shows the biggest discrepancy, accounting for almost seventeen percent of all abstracts, but less than seven percent of women's history abstracts. Western Europe and, to a lesser degree, South Asia, are both overrepresented in women's history percentages in their fields.

Source availability, feminist activism, sexism, and acceptance of women's history as a legitimate field of study all contribute to these regional variations. In the case of Eastern Europe, scholars have already suggested that such underrepresentation results from a significant "infrastructural vacuum and institutional resistance" to women's history.<sup>15</sup> This is, perhaps, the case in other regions as well. And the reverse may also be true—it would

**Table 2. Regional Distribution in Women's History versus Overall Abstracts**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Women's History</b>	<b>Overall</b>
North America (AHL)	52.9%	35.9%
Non-North America (HA)	47.1%	64.1%
<i>Specific Regions Outside of North America:</i>		
Africa	5.9%	5.4%
East Asia	7.3%	8.0%
Eastern Europe/Soviet	6.7%	16.9%
Latin America	6.4%	7.6%
Middle East	3.1%	4.4%
South Asia	3.4%	2.2%
Western Europe	53.8%	41.9%
Other/Unknown	13.4%	13.5%

be worth investigating whether North American historians or journal editors are comparatively more supportive of women's history.

We might think that the overrepresentation of North American scholarship on women's history can be explained by chronology. If women's history tends to be disproportionately concentrated on the most recent centuries, a country with a relatively abbreviated early history would be likely to have an increased proportion of articles related to women's history. However, when we compare time periods addressed in women's history abstracts and overall abstracts from c.1450 through the twentieth century, it does not seem that women's history is significantly more recently-focused than the profession as a whole.

As Table 3 shows, the twentieth century accounts for the overwhelming majority of all historical abstracts from c.1450 onward.<sup>16</sup> However, women's history abstracts are not disproportionately focused there—if anything women's history is slightly *underrepresented* in twentieth-century scholarship. Work exclusively on the twentieth century accounted for about fifty-seven percent of women's history-focused articles, and about sixty-three percent of overall articles. Still, this analysis supports Judith M. Bennett's conclusion that women's history and overall historical scholarship focus primarily on post-1800 time periods.<sup>17</sup>

Our larger analysis adds to Bennett's by teasing out some of the differences between post-c.1450 women's history, and scholarship more broadly. Rather than unrelentingly focusing on the very recent past, women's history abstracts focus more on the nineteenth century than does overall scholarship—about sixteen percent of women's history abstracts but just twelve percent of general abstracts focus exclusively on the nineteenth

**Table 3. Distribution of Abstracts over Various Time Periods**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Women's History</b>	<b>Overall</b>
c. 1450 through 17th Century	5.1%	5.6%
18th Century	4.1%	3.8%
18th through 19th Centuries	2.2%	1.8%
19th Century	15.9%	12.2%
Turn of the 20th Century (1880-1920)	6.7%	3.7%
19th through 20th Centuries	5.0%	4.2%
20th Century (in total)	57.0%	63.1%
20th c: 1900-1945	16.9%	21.1%
20th c: Post-1945	30.2%	32.9%
3 or More Centuries	3.9%	5.6%

century. Likewise, women's history articles are more likely to focus on the turn-of-the-twentieth century period than does general scholarship (6.7% versus 3.7%), which focuses more broadly on the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

Bennett has also explicitly encouraged feminist scholars to avoid taking refuge within our historical era of expertise. However, women's historians seem reluctant to write across time periods: overall scholarship was much more likely to focus on three or more centuries than was women's history.<sup>19</sup> It may be that women's historians, already all too often battling the perception of "advocacy" or "ahistoric" scholarship, take great pains to stick closely to our historically-specific evidence. Yet we risk becoming timid about claiming expertise across wide swaths of time or place and, in so doing, we may be limiting the significance of our findings.

As we might expect, non-North American general abstracts are much more likely to focus on earlier time periods than are North American abstracts. Less than four percent of North American abstracts focus on the c.1450-1799 time period, compared to twelve percent of non-North American abstracts. In addition, non-North American women's history is actually *more* likely to focus on earlier time periods than general scholarship: more than fifteen percent of non-North American women's history abstracts focus exclusively on c.1450-1799. Correspondingly, non-North American women's history actually focused less on the twentieth century than did overall non-North American abstracts (fifty-one percent versus sixty-nine percent).

The limits of AHL and HA databases restrict us from including ancient and medieval history in this analysis. However, within these limitations, women's history is not disproportionately more recently-focused than history as a whole. Rather than women's historians abandoning earlier time periods, non-North American women's history appears to have focused more on c.1450–1800 topics than has the field at large. Still, because women's history is a bigger percentage of North American history—which is the biggest overall field—these chronologically earlier studies may not seem to hold as noticeable a place in women's history publications.

Focusing on the topics that account for women's history within all historical abstracts confirms that women's history publications make up a larger part of North American history abstracts than those focused on the rest of the world. Our topic model run of the half million abstracts identified seven major subject areas focused primarily on women and gender (Table 4). Within every area, women's history made up a bigger part of North American-focused scholarship. Thus part of the reason that U.S. Women's History can seem to dominate women's history overall is due to women's history's bigger place within North American history than within other regions.

Women's history-focused topics account for almost three percent of the content of all historical abstracts.<sup>20</sup> Because topic modeling identifies the *content overall*, rather than counting each abstract that mentions a women's history topic as being exclusively about women's history, this approximate three percent represents the content of all scholarship that focuses on women's history to the exclusion of other topics. In other words, topic modeling can separate out the parts of women's history abstracts that simultaneously address other scholarly subjects (for example: politics, religion, and labor) to focus exclusively women's history. Thus, six percent of all abstracts may have significant women's history content, but only about three percent *of the text* of all abstracts focus explicitly on women's history—concretely showing the full integration of women's history with other thematic areas of study.

Table 4 explores these thematic areas of women's history within historical scholarship. Work on feminism and suffrage is one of the largest topical categories, followed closely by scholarship on more intimate details of women's lives: families and kinship, and marriage and sexuality. Literary subjects—whether biographies of notable women or literary approaches to women's history—are also well represented. How are we to evaluate this broad variation of fields that make up women's history scholarship? Should there be more scholarship overtly on feminism or less on personal lives—however we might define those two categories? Rather than presum-

**Table 4. Percent of Major Women's History Topics in Overall Abstracts**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>North American</b>	<b>Non-North American</b>
Women & Biography	0.53%	0.22%
Family, Kinship	0.58%	0.42%
Feminism, Suffrage	0.71%	0.36%
Women's Labor & Work	0.48%	0.29%
Women & Literature	0.62%	0.16%
Marriage, Sexuality	0.55%	0.43%
Sex Roles	0.37%	0.22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.8%</b>	<b>2.1%</b>

ing to dictate what women's history should consist of, we note that even at this high level vantage point, there is a significant spread of topics across multiple aspects of women's lives. We also note that abstracts likely focus more on methodologies and source than full texts, which may account for the prominent percentage of literature and biography-related content.

There is no doubt that women's history accounts for a diverse and growing proportion of historical scholarship. Within this growth, however, its rate of increase has been slowing. An increased focus on "gender" in abstracts partly represents changed scholarly interests, but likely also reflects a changed shorthand for women's history. Even though references to women, as a group, far outnumber mention of men as a category for analysis, the overwhelming majority of abstracts still talk about individual men, not women, as historical subjects. Regionally, by multiple measures, women's history holds a significantly larger place in the North American and Western European historical fields than in many other regions. However, women's history's seemingly-disproportionate focus on more recent time periods appears to be a reflection of the historical profession as a whole. In the next section, we focus more in depth on women's history abstracts to further analyze the extent to which these trends relate to women's history rather than larger trends within the profession.

### **The Field of Women's History**

We explore here the 30,891 abstracts that focused significantly on women's history, surveying how the picture changes when we look within women's history abstracts, rather than at women's history as part of the historical field as a whole. We show that women's historians speak with a regionally-shared language, and that some regional variations in content relate more to the place of women's history within various subfields than

the content of women's history scholarship. We continue to dissect the notion that women's history has developed a twentieth-century bias and suggest that it is more complicated than a simple shift toward scholarly emphasis on the most recent time periods. In terms of absolute numbers, women's history has not turned away from the c.1450–1799 time periods; rather, work on the post-1800 period has increased, therefore changing the overall chronological balance.

Table 1 showed that women-related words appeared far more frequently in North American abstracts than in abstracts on the rest of the world. This regional difference largely disappears *within* the 30,891 women's history abstracts (Table 5), suggesting a transregionally shared language with which experts talk about women's history. Thus, the broad regional differences in overall word frequencies appear to have more to do with the place of women's history in different regions and less to do with the amount of work being done within women's history. Still, some of this lack of variation is likely due to the flattening of complex issues into abstract-friendly terms, and it does not mean that abstracts that focus on women's history in different regions and time periods take identical approaches to the field.

Within women's history abstracts, we can see an array of regional transformations between 1985 and 2005. In the mid-1980s, women's history was significantly dominated by North American scholarship, which made up close to sixty percent of all abstracts. But by the mid-1990s and continuing through the first years of the new millennium, women's history had become equally focused on regions outside of North America.<sup>21</sup> Of course, equality between one continent, made of two nations, and the rest of the world is not exactly parity, but it does suggest the expansion of women's history beyond its earlier regional foci.

Western Europe was overwhelmingly the largest non-U.S. regional focus of women's history abstracts (Figure 3). While both areas' article abstracts increased their absolute numbers fairly steadily over the twenty year period (with some leveling in the new millennium), this was a much bigger proportional increase for Western Europe—it increased about one hundred percent over its starting numbers, compared to only about a fifty percent increase for North America. So while women's historians may be turning to non-Western regions, the attention to Western history is still continuing to increase substantially.

Outside of Western Europe and North America, each regional field's women's history abstracts likewise increased over time. One of the most dramatic increases occurred in East Asian history: in 1985, it was barely the fourth highest number of abstracts; by the mid-1990s, it had more than doubled to have the highest number of abstracts of any regional field of

Table 5. Select Word Frequencies in Women's History Abstracts

Word	North America	Non-North America
Female(s)	1 in 295	1 in 227
Feminism(s)	1 in 618	1 in 604
Gender(s)	1 in 156	1 in 150
Her(s)	1 in 135	1 in 171
Mother(s)	1 in 750	1 in 818
Wife	1 in 1743	1 in 1759
Women	1 in 26	1 in 25

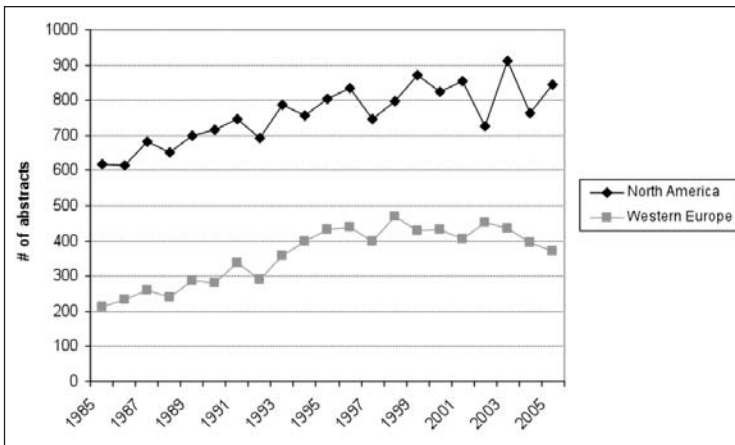


Figure 3: Regional Variation in Women's History Abstracts, 1985–2005 (Part I)

women's history outside of North America and Western Europe. Most regions seem to be declining in the first half decade of the twenty-first century, with African women's history abstracts showing the largest drop. Overall, scholarship still increased in each of these regions, showing the most pronounced gains occurring in the first half of the 1990s and then leveling after 2000. (Figure 4)

The chronological breakdown of women's history has recently received a great deal of analytic attention. While abstracts on all time periods of women's history have increased along broadly similar trajectories since 1985 (see Figure 5), the most marked increase has been in nineteenth—not twentieth—century women's history.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the numbers of twentieth-century women's history abstracts actually increased the *least* of any time

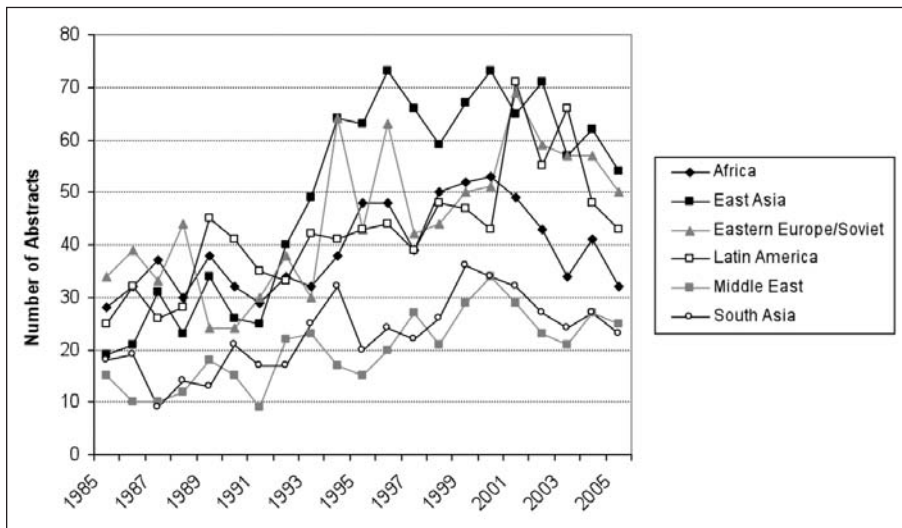


Figure 4: Regional Variation in Women's History Abstracts, 1985–2005 (Part II)

period between 1985 and 2005. Twentieth-century women's history abstracts grew to 1.4 times their 1985 number, while abstracts related to the c.1450–1699 period increased to 1.7 times; the eighteenth century grew to 1.9 times, and the nineteenth century grew to 2.1 times their 1985 numbers by 2005. Looked at alternatively as a percentage of women's history abstracts each year, twentieth-century women's history has actually declined—from seventy-five percent of all women's history abstracts in 1985 to sixty-eight percent in 2005.

Thus, twentieth-century women's history publications *have not been* increasingly dominating the scholarship on post-1450 women's history. But there are several reasons why women's history may still appear to be disproportionately focused on twentieth-century history. First, abstracts on twentieth-century history far outnumber all other time periods put together overall, meaning far more absolute numbers of women's history publications on the twentieth century. Second, overall abstracts that are identifiably on the twentieth century have declined fairly significantly since 1985—from a range of 16,000 abstracts per year for twentieth century scholarship in the late 1980s to a low of below 12,000 by the twenty-first century. In contrast, all other time periods have held steady or declined only slightly. Thus, even though women's history focusing on the nineteenth century has increased the most, women's history has become a much larger *percentage* of overall twentieth-century scholarship than of other time periods.



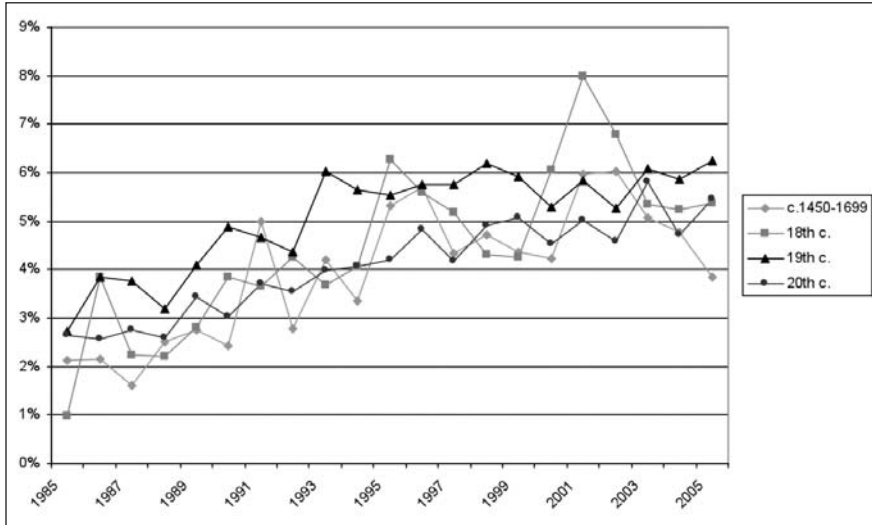


Figure 5: Percent of Women's History Abstracts within Time Period by Publication Date

In this light, even though the twentieth century remains the largest focus of history as a whole, it does not appear that women's history has any more disproportionately focused on that time period; the increases in twentieth-century women's history have not outpaced the increases in other time periods. Indeed, considering the limitations that face historians of periods predating the twentieth century, women's and gender historians have become increasingly creative in finding and mining primary sources related to women throughout history.

Thus far, we have focused on the amount, not the content, of women's history abstracts. Table 6 identifies, through topic modeling, the broad subject areas of study within women's history.<sup>23</sup> In contrast to the broad areas of women's history identified within the larger historical canon (Table 4), the subjects within women's history clearly cover many specific thematic fields. The largest topical area focuses, as does much general historical work, on various regional and national specificities. Other topics range from social to political to cultural to intellectual histories. As Gerda Lerner noted in her study of U.S. History scholarship, work on literary subjects (such as much of the Literature and Biography topics) remains a substantial segment of women's history publications.<sup>24</sup>

It is also worth remembering that the topic model creates multiple categories per abstract, so these topics measure the percentage of *overall content* of the abstracts, not *individual topics per abstract*. For instance, an

**Table 6. Broad Topic Areas in Women's History Abstracts**

<b>Topic Area</b>	<b>% of text addressing</b>
Regional Focus (inc. colonialism/nationalism)	12.7%
Labor, Economics, Class	11.7%
Literature, Biography	11.0%
Sexuality, Reproduction	9.0%
Historiography, Reviews	6.4%
Gender & Identity	6.2%
Politics, Political Movement	5.4%
Family, Marriage	5.1%
Race, Slavery, Civil Rights	4.3%
Suffrage, Feminism	3.6%
Religion	3.4%
Arts, Media	3.3%
War	3.2%
Education	2.6%
Welfare	2.5%
Other	9.7%

abstract on labor and family in Latin America would count toward each of those three subject or regional areas in proportion to the number of words in that abstract that were statistically assigned to each of these topics. Thus rather than marking each abstract with an exclusionary set of labels, each abstract contributes to a variety of topical areas in proportion to the amount that that abstract focuses on each area. This can produce more realistic subject categorizations and challenge the sometimes mainstream image of women's history as separable from other subfields.

There are some broad regional variations in these topics: not surprisingly, non-North American abstracts are more likely to focus on regional issues than are North American abstracts, while "Race," "Slavery," and "Civil Rights" appear three times as often in relation to North American abstracts. More specific regional differences suggest an array of areas for future analysis. African women's history focuses less on marriage and family than other regions, but words such as "power," "status," and "traditional" occur comparatively frequently. Commentary on religion was most common in Middle East women's history (about nineteen percent of the focus of its abstracts, compared to less than six percent for any other region). Middle East history also concentrated strongly on the study of feminism. East Asian history was most likely to focus on marriage and families. Latin American women's histories focused more than most regions on political movements, as well as labor and marriage. Eastern European and Soviet

abstracts were one of the most likely to reference "tradition" and concentrate on households and inheritance. South Asia scholars frequently addressed feminism and political movements, and were also the most likely to use the word "cultural"—perhaps partly because of the importance of literary and postcolonial scholars doing South Asian women's history. North American abstracts were some of the least likely to focus on marriage and family, and among the most likely to focus on sexuality, race, labor, and the term "public." Finally, Western Europe focused far more on families, households, and status than did North America.

Even though, as Table 5 shows, women's history abstracts use similar levels of women-focused language, this more complicated analysis of what women's historians address suggests that different thematic emphases predominate in various regional specialties within women's history. There are undoubtedly numerous reasons for these variations (for example source availability or disciplinary guidance), but it does seem that women's historians are responding to their regions' particular historiographic concerns.

In terms of chronologic comparisons, generalizable topics of study best traversed chronologic distance. Tables 7 and 8 compare the largest individual categories in distant and recent time periods. Chronologically distant women's history abstracts seemed to focus on more transhistorical topics, such as family and households, women, gender, or religion. In contrast, three of the four biggest topics in post-1945 abstracts focus on issues particularly pertinent to twentieth-century life, such as women's relation to political parties, civil rights, or employment discrimination. Ironically, the specificity allowed by twentieth-century sources may encourage more parochial topics; distantly-focused women's historians may be more likely to focus on topic areas that could be of broad scholarly applicability.<sup>25</sup>

To summarize, the field of women's history continues to expand in multiple directions. Even though all regional areas of women's history have increased since 1985, U.S. and Western Europe still dominate the field. How do we begin to explain the complex factors that may have accounted for regional variations in amount and subject of study? To what degree are they about reception to these fields *by* women's historians, reception within these regional fields *to* women's historians, or artifacts of particular tipping-point moments in training or individual scholarship? While an array of recent reflections on the state of women's history has endorsed the need for the continued internationalization of women's history, scholars might want to first more fully explore the limiting factors that produce these variant trends.

In terms of the time periods covered by the AHL and HA databases, the picture is a complicated one: women's history focuses on more recent

Table 7.

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11.5%	Economic Employment Disparities
8.3%	Gender and Identity
7.0%	Political Parties
5.1%	Civil Rights and Affirmative Action

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**Top Four Categories for post-1945 Women's History Abstracts**

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Table 8.

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10.5%	Family and Households
9.2%	Women and Men
6.9%	Gender and Identity
6.5%	Religion

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**Top Four Categories for c.1450-1799 Women's History Abstracts**

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time periods, but no more so than the field as a whole. Indeed, by several measures, twentieth-century women's history scholarship appears to have increased less than some earlier time periods. But the domination of overall twentieth-century scholarship can still leave women's history looking like a very recently-focused enterprise. Finally, a subject area analysis of women's history shows coverage of a diverse range of historical subjects, with differing emphases along lines of regional historiographical concerns. Despite these variations, broad topic areas of c.1450–1800 scholarship could easily provide productive intellectual connections to other chronologic times and places, and we hope scholars will increasingly consider chronologically and regionally broad thinking when doing women's history.

### Within Women's History: Case Study of Sexuality

Historical studies of sexuality have developed, in part, out of work on women and gender, and remain firmly related to the field.<sup>26</sup> Here we take sexuality as a case study to further explore the trends and patterns revealed by topic modeling. We break down the broad subject areas of histories of sexuality, examine the degree to which studies in sexuality topics vary across time periods and regions, and ask how the topics within sexuality vary along these two axes. We suggest that both the amount and content of sexuality histories appear to vary more by region than by chronology.

Like most women-related subjects, sexuality appeared to be discussed substantially more in North American than in non-North American abstracts overall. Of more than a dozen explicitly sex-related terms, only "prostitution" appeared more frequently in overall non-North American abstracts—and then, only slightly more often.<sup>27</sup> More informal (and less supposedly

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scientific) terms on homosexuality show some of the biggest regional differences: "lesbian" and "gay" occur three to five times more often in North American than non-North American abstracts overall.

When we examine sexuality-related words in women's history abstracts alone, much—but not all—of these differences begin to disappear (Table 9). For instance, "sex," "sexual," and "sexuality," combined appeared in North American and non-North American women's history abstracts roughly equally, even though they appeared almost twice as often in overall North American abstracts as overall Non-North American abstracts. Likewise, "homosexual" occurred almost evenly in and outside of North American regions within women's history abstracts, even though the term was almost twice as common in North American as non-North American overall abstracts. Some terms for same-sex sexual behavior remain unevenly distributed within women's history abstracts: "queer," "gay," and "lesbian" show some of the starkest regional differences. Future research could explain the degree to which such variations reflect differing historical subject foci and abstracting norms, whether terms such as "queer" carry unacceptable meanings in some contexts or language translations and, more generally, the complexity of differing local and global understandings of same-sex sexuality. In contrast, and following lesser discrepancies in overall abstracts, "prostitution" and "rape" appear more frequently in non-North American women's histories, perhaps suggesting more overall attention to particular kinds of (heterosexual?) transgressive sexual behavior outside of North America.

The sexuality-related subject content of women's history abstracts reveals more comprehensively the distribution of subject areas within history of sexuality. Table 10 summarizes the five main sexuality-related topic areas within a forty topic breakdown, alongside the keywords that most represent those topics. Together, these topics account for nine percent of the text of women's history abstracts. Work on sexuality generally, is the largest topic, while work on same-sex sexual behavior and reproduction are the smallest. The second largest category focuses on sexual regulation and social control of sexuality, likely reflecting sexuality study's longtime focus on transgressive behavior and use of legal records for evidence on prohibited sexual practices.

Figure 6 shows the regional variations in these sexuality topics within women's history abstracts. Work related to sexuality makes up the biggest proportion of Western European abstracts, and the smallest of Middle Eastern abstracts. Work on same-sex sexual behavior is the smallest portion of every region's scholarship on sexuality, and also varies greatly—from a low of 0.4% in South Asian abstracts to a high of 1.7% in North American

**Table 9. Sex-Related Word Frequency in Women's History Abstracts**

<b>Word</b>	<b>North America</b>	<b>Non-North America</b>
Abortion	1 in 3065	1 in 4025
Gay	1 in 2512	1 in 10393
Homosexual	1 in 5448	1 in 6587
Homosexuality	1 in 2761	1 in 2885
Lesbian	1 in 2222	1 in 4371
Queer	1 in 8641	1 in >29,000
Pregnancy	1 in 7652	1 in 8148
Prostitution	1 in 3977	1 in 1741
Rape	1 in 5332	1 in 4588
Reproduction	1 in 6961	1 in 4588
Sex	1 in 430	1 in 577
Sexual	1 in 824	1 in 607
Sexuality	1 in 1264	1 in 778

**Table 10. Sexuality Topics within Women's History Abstracts**

<b>Topic Label</b>	<b>Keywords associated with Topic</b>	<b>%</b>
Sexuality	Sex, sexual, sexuality, body, images, representation	3.4%
Sexual Regulation	Sexual violence, prostitution, social control, honor, rape, criminal	2.6%
Reproductive Health	Birth, pregnancy, health, disease, abortion	1.7%
Same-Sex Sexuality	Lesbian, gay, homosexual, film, sex, sexual	1.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>9.0%</b>

women's history abstracts. Discussion of sexual regulation was a significant part of all abstracts; in most cases about twice the focus on reproduction. Overall, even regions with similar amounts of sexuality scholarship focused on rather different mixtures of subtopics.

In fact, it appears that there is more clear variation across regional lines of topics on sexuality than across time periods. Table 11 shows that the most recent and most distant chronological eras studied address sexuality in near identical amounts (8.5% and 8.6% of each period's women's history abstracts, respectively), and that there is no linear pattern of increased work on sexuality as scholarship moves chronologically forward. Even work on same-sex sexual behavior is more common between c.1450–1599 than at any time except the twentieth century. The (slight) low point of work related to

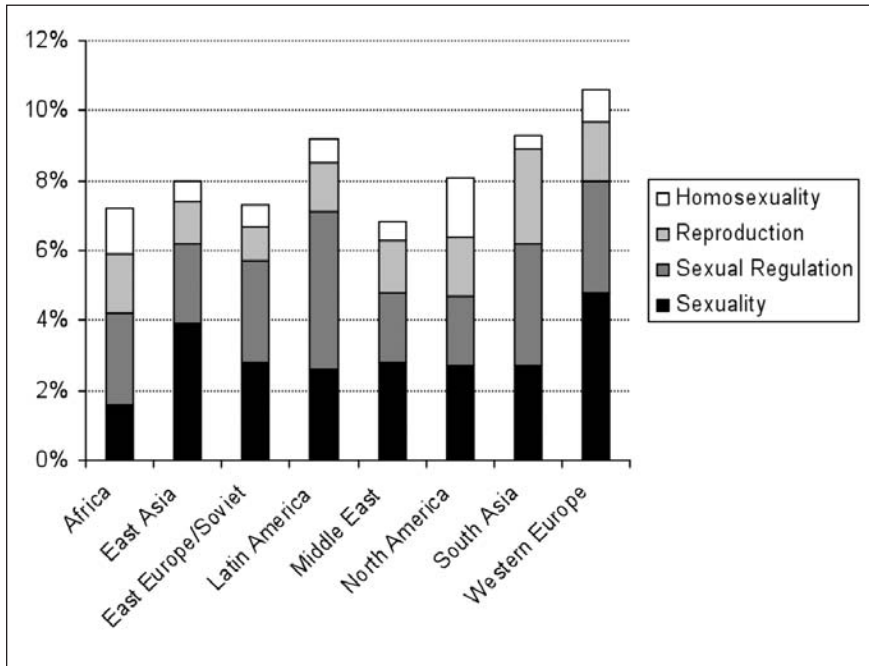


Figure 6: Regional Variation of Sexuality Topics Within Women's History Abstracts

sexuality appears to be in the eighteenth century—perhaps scholars interested in the early expressions of sexuality predate that century, and scholars interested in the rise of modern sexuality gravitate toward the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Overall, such results suggest that despite much more difficult to find sources in earlier centuries, scholars have been publishing on sexuality across time in roughly similar proportions—earlier periods are smaller raw numbers, but overall reflect roughly similar transhistorical women's history interest in sexuality studies.

This brief case study suggests the ways that we might use data mining technologies to better understand the content of women's history. In terms of sexuality specifically, women's historians might consider focusing more attention on reproduction's relation to sexuality, moving beyond transgressive (hetero)sexuality, and more fully integrating same-sex sexuality. The diversity of chronologic interest in sexuality also reminds scholars to not presume that sexuality scholarship is most vibrant in recent eras, and might

**Table 11. Percent of Sexuality Topics within Select Time Periods of Women's History**

Time Period	Sexuality	Sexual Regulation	Reproduction	Homo-sexuality	Total %
c.1450-1599	3.6%	2.2%	1.7%	1.1%	8.6%
17th Century	2.7%	2.3%	1.5%	1.2%	7.7%
18th Century	2.8%	2.3%	1.1%	0.8%	7.0%
19th Century	3.2%	2.2%	1.8%	0.9%	8.1%
20th Century	2.5%	2.3%	2.0%	1.7%	8.5%

again serve to encourage scholars' in-depth conversations about sexuality across multiple centuries.

## Conclusion

In June 2009, the *New York Times* published an article on the decline of "traditional history" courses, and held women's and gender history largely accountable for this decline.<sup>28</sup> The author made these claims using a very limited (and as some have argued, quite flawed) quantitative analysis. We counteract this kind of misrepresentation of women's history as a behemoth threat to the field with our analysis of a half a million article abstracts to show that women's history is not even ten percent of historical abstracts from 1985 to 2005. And unlike the *New York Times* article, topic modeling shows that all of these women's history abstracts focus on other thematic areas as well—including national, political, and military histories.

Underlying our work is not only the desire to better understand the field of women's history, but also to ask where and when women's history might best benefit from activist efforts. Armed with concrete information about the progress, gaps, and trends in the field, we can better identify needs and formulate discrete plans of action. It is one thing to encourage internationalization of publications, it is another to ask why a particular regional field seems demonstrably less engaged with women's history, to directly mentor scholars in those fields for submission to journals, or to engage leaders in those fields with the evidence of their field's (in)attention to women's history.

Without doubt, women's history, like the profession as a whole, is focused on more recent time periods. Women's historians could certainly have more conversations across centuries and be attentive to the ways that much of the analytic threads running through work being done on pre-



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1800 time periods may be broadly applicable to other times and places. Women's historians can also continue to find productive ways to integrate the outstanding nonhistorical feminist work done in interdisciplinary-study programs into our chronologically distant historic studies—and to encourage interdisciplinary scholars to better integrate historical work into their own.

We also endorse the suggestion, in a recent AHA *Perspectives* forum on new media histories, that digital advances can change how we can do history, not just how we present history. Our collaboration between a women's historian and a computer scientist has allowed us to manipulate huge quantities of data and apply cutting-edge data mining techniques to women's history: in other words, not just to access the ever-growing quantity of digital documents, but to find new ways to analyze them.<sup>29</sup>

This work, however, is just a beginning overview of how we might investigate this field's historiography. Although we have presented a wide array of information about two decades of women's history abstracts, we have been able to include only rudimentary speculation. The massive amounts of data—starting with more than half a million abstracts—that we were able to analyze lends itself to almost unending tables, figures, and data points. We chose broad areas of analysis based on our own perceptions of women's and sexuality history, as well as those that spoke to recent historiographical debates in the field. But there are still countless areas open for investigation.

We could easily incorporate forty or fifty years of abstracts to track longer-term trends; for example, seeing whether the slowing increase in women's history abstracts in the new millennium proves to be a temporary blip. No database is perfect—in this case, the biggest problem with AHL and HA is their chronological starting point at c.1450. This limitation means that we have not been able to include ancient and medieval women's history in our analysis. Moreover, abstracts are a mediated source that may tell us as much about abstracting patterns as about actual scholarship: are foreign language articles underrepresented? Who are the abstractors, how might their own perspectives affect the content of the abstract, and to what degree do changes in language reflect abstractors' shifting *termes d'art* as much as shifts in scholarly approaches? Analyzing full-text articles would thus be a logical next step for topic model analysis. Full-text articles would remove the mediation of abstracts and allow for much more sophisticated and in-depth analyses of subfields of scholarship.

Future research might look more at regional variations, and the growing interest in transnational scholarship might be used to productively

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complicate national and regional identities. Likewise, looking in-depth at specific centuries might help identify the extent to which women's history is shifting its focus to time periods within particular regions. Should we expect women's history to map proportionately to overall regional and chronologic divisions, or can we explicitly account for women's history choosing its own paths of study, sometimes in contrast to the field at large?

Such analysis also has the potential to raise political issues. Should women, as roughly fifty percent of any given population, expect to be the focus of half of all historical scholarship? Would this inclusion of women necessarily make all history partly women's history? More specifically, what are we to make of the leveling-off of work on women's history in the late 1990s? Has women's history reached a saturation point where it is incorporated into mainstream histories, and has thus become unremarkable? Has the shift to cultural history, with its attendant focus on gender and subtopics, such as masculinity, moved the focus away from publications that are classifiable as women's history? Or can we identify a backlash against women as subjects of study in what some have called a postfeminist era?

Ultimately, we might ask how women's place in the academy relates to the expansion of women's history. If women's historians are likely to be women, how does equity within the profession relate to the future of the field? Do disproportionate numbers of female adjuncts, who may be less able to publish under heavy teaching loads, decrease women's history publications? While somewhat far removed from a direct analysis of historical scholarship, these kinds of issues form the institutional background against which scholarship is produced and selected for publication.

To conclude, our analysis had tried to provide a bird's eye view of roughly two decades of abstracts in post-c.1450 women's history. Much of our purpose has been to provide useful data, rather than totalizing conclusions. We hope students and scholars will be able to use this data to pursue their own lines of inquiry. Getting a broad sense of where the field has been, how it has changed, and how it relates to the historical field in general will allow us all to better formulate informed opinions about what the next decades of women's history might accomplish.

## NOTES

Thanks to Kirsten Fischer, Shanon Fitzpatrick, Vicki L. Ruiz, Leila J. Rupp, and anonymous *JWH* reviewers.

<sup>1</sup>Nancy Cott et. al., "Considering the State of U.S. Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 15, no.1 (Winter, 2003): 146; Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

2006), 30–53; Merry Wiesner-Hanks, “World History and the History of Women, Gender, and Sexuality,” *Journal of World History* 18, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 55–56.

<sup>2</sup>For example, Anne Firor Scott, Sara M. Evans, Susan K. Cahn, and Elizabeth Faue, “A Conversation across Three ‘Generations’: Part 1,” *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 1 (Spring, 1999): 9–30, and “Part 2,” *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 2 (Summer, 1999): 199–220; *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2003) Special Issue edited by Jean Allman and Antionette Burton; Johanna Alberti, *Gender and the Historian* (New York: Longman, 2002); “Series: Women's History in the New Millennium,” *Journal of Women's History* 12, no. 3 (Fall, 2000); 15, no. 1 (Spring, 2003); 16, no. 4 (Winter, 2004); Karen Adler et al., “Practicing Gender History,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 1 (April 2008): 1–7.

<sup>3</sup>Word frequency rates were calculated after standard pre-processing, meaning without stopwords (e.g., a, an, the, is, it) and infrequently appearing words (those appearing fewer than twenty times in the thirty-two million words).

<sup>4</sup>In technical terms: topic modeling uses probability algorithms to automatically cluster topically similar documents by determining groups of words that tend to co-occur. See Mark Steyvers and Thomas Griffiths, “Probabilistic topic models,” in *Handbook of Latent Semantic Analysis*, ed. Thomas K. Landauer, et. al., (Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, 2007), 427–428. On the value of topic models for indexing large digital libraries, see Kat Hagedorn, et. al., “Enhancing Search and Browse Using Automated Clustering of Subject Metadata,” *D-Lib Magazine* 13, no. 7/8 (2007), <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/july07/hagedorn/07hagedorn.html>.

<sup>5</sup>Readers may notice that we do not use significance tests (for example, p-values); they are not appropriate for topic modeling. Significance tests compare how often a given outcome would be expected to occur at random. However, word co-occurrences in text are far from random, making the comparison to such a simple null hypothesis unenlightening. Thanks to Alexander Ihler for helping formulate this explanation.

<sup>6</sup>The librarians' standard source, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, identified women's studies-focused journals. See <http://www.ulrichsweb.com>. Thanks to Becky Imamoto. We ran an array of human and computerized checks to insure the accuracy of the categorization of the 30,891 abstracts.

<sup>7</sup>Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 28–50, was foundational, and the 1989 inception of *Gender & History* also reflected the increasing focus on gender. For just some of the ongoing discussion of gender versus women's history, see Gisela Bock, “Women's History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate,” *Gender & History* 1, no. 1 (March 1989): 7–30; Susan Kingsley Kent, “Mistrials and Diatribulations: A Reply to Joan Hoff,” and Joan Hoff, “A Reply to My Critics,” *Women's History Review* 5, no. 1 (1996): 9–18, 25–30; Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class & Citizenship* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), especially 3–121; Alice Kessler-Harris, “A Rich and Adventurous Journey: The Transnational Journey of Gender History in the United States,” *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 1 (Spring,

2007): 153–159; Christie Anne Farnham, “The *Journal of Women’s History*: Forerunner of the Future,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 1 (Spring, 2008), 17.

<sup>8</sup>On the relation of gender and cultural histories, see Dror Wahrman, “Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History Be Rigorous?,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (November 2008): 584–602.

<sup>9</sup>On the dangers of gender as an unexamined category, see Jeanne Boydston, “Gender as a Question of Historical Analysis,” *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (2008): 558–583.

<sup>10</sup>On feminist history within women’s history, see Hilda L. Smith, “Women’s History as Intellectual History: A Perspective on the *Journal of Women’s History*,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 1 (Spring, 2008): 26–27.

<sup>11</sup>On the relationship between activism and women’s history, see, for instance, Joan Hoff, “Agency and Collective Action vs. Diversity and Difference,” *Journal of Women’s History* 20, no. 1 (Spring, 2008): 19–20; “Should politics be historical? Should history be political?,” *The Adventures of Notorious Ph.D., Girl Scholar Blog*, posted March 2, 2009, <http://girlscholar.blogspot.com/2009/03/should-politics-be-historical-should.html>.

<sup>12</sup>On women’s status in the profession, see Elizabeth Lunbeck, et. al., “The Status of Women in the Historical Profession 2005,” [http://www.historians.org/governance/cwh/CWH-Report\\_5.20.05.pdf](http://www.historians.org/governance/cwh/CWH-Report_5.20.05.pdf); Robert B. Townsend, “What the Data Tells US about Women Historians,” posted April 12, 2010, <http://blog.historians.org/profession/1024/what-the-data-tells-us-about-women-historians>.

<sup>13</sup>On masculinity studies, see Robert W. Connell, “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History,” *Theory and Society* 22, no. 5 (1993): 595–624; Kathleen M. Brown, “Brave New World: Women’s and Gender History,” *William & Mary Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (1993), especially 325–327; Robert Nye, “Locating Masculinity: Some Recent Work on Men,” *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1937–1962; Karen Harvey, “The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800,” *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (2005): 296–311; Wiesner-Hanks, “World History,” 65.

<sup>14</sup>Abstracts noting nation(s) in more than one region were counted in multiple regions for all of our regional breakdowns. We were able to link 13,535 women’s history abstracts and 306,490 overall abstracts to specific countries. Due to the comparatively few women’s history abstracts, we were unable to analyze several regions. On Southeast Asia, see Barbara Watson Andaya, “Studying Women and Gender in Southeast Asia,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007): 113–136; on Australia, see “Susan Magarey, “What is happening to Women’s History in Australia at the Beginning of the Third Millenium,” *Women’s History Review* 16, no. 1 (2007): 1–18.

<sup>15</sup>Andrea Peto and Judith Szapor, “The State of Women’s and Gender History in Eastern Europe: The Case of Hungary,” *Journal of Women’s History* 19, no. 1 (Spring, 2007): 160–166. On structural changes that impact chronological focus,

see, "Teach this Book! Judith Bennett's *History Matters* . . ." Tenured Radical Blog, posted March 16, 2009 <http://tenured-radical.blogspot.com/2009/03/teach-this-book-judith-bennetts-history.html>.

<sup>16</sup>We created the broad chronological categories for our analysis. Cross-century categorizations include abstracts that were substantially on both centuries (for example, we categorized an abstract labeled 1799–1850 as "19th century," while an abstract labeled 1750–1820 we counted as "18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries"). We were able to identify 18,754 of the women's history abstracts, and 302,909 of overall abstracts.

<sup>17</sup>Bennett, *History Matters*, 30–53. Again, because AHL and HA do not regularly include abstracts on ancient or premodern scholarship, we only analyze post-c.1450 time periods.

<sup>18</sup>This supports Joan Hoff's suspicion that the Progressive Era may be over-represented in women's history. Hoff, "Agency and Collective Action," 23.

<sup>19</sup>Judith Bennett, "Forgetting the Past," *Gender & History* 20, no. 3 (2008): 671, 673.

<sup>20</sup>Table based on 40-topic run; 80-topic and 120-topic runs similarly found content that exclusively focused on women's history topics varying from about 2.6% to 3.2%.

<sup>21</sup>Beginning in 1995, North American and non-North American abstracts each alternatively accounted for between approximately forty-eight percent and fifty-two percent of overall abstracts.

<sup>22</sup>To make calculations less convoluted, we simplified chronological time periods by splitting cross-century categories equally into each of the two centuries they address. Thus, an abstract covering two centuries was counted as one-half of an abstract in each century it covered.

<sup>23</sup>Tables 6–8 are based on a 40-topic topic model of the approximately 31,000 women's history abstracts included. Multiple topics were manually combined into broad subject categories (for example, topics on particular nations were grouped into the "Regional Focus" category).

<sup>24</sup>Lerner, 146–147.

<sup>25</sup>On myths about the parochial nature of chronologically-distant histories, see Bennett, *History Matters*, 51.

<sup>26</sup>See, for example, Joanne Meyerowitz and Gail Hershatter, eds. "Sexing Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 4 (Winter, 1998), especially Nan Enstad, "Narrating Women's Sexuality," *ibid.*, 202; Leisa D. Meyer, "Interrupting Norms and Constructing Deviances: Competing Frameworks in the Histories of Sexualities in the United States," in *The Practice of U.S. Women's History*, eds. S. Jay Kelinberg, Eileen Boris and Vicki L. Ruiz, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 280–307.

<sup>27</sup>Terms that focused on reproduction were more common in HA abstracts, but such words largely occurred in non-women's history scholarship on demography, which was far more frequent within non-North American abstracts than North American abstracts. ("Demography" appeared one in every 33,908 words in AHL versus one in every 10,713 words in HA.) On the need to better integrate histories of reproduction into sexuality histories, see the "Call for Papers: Reproduction, Sex, and Power," for *The Journal of Women's History* Special Issue, Edited by Leslie J. Reagan.

<sup>28</sup>Patricia Cohen, "Great Caesar's Ghost! Are Traditional History Courses Vanishing?," *New York Times*, June 9, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/11/books/11hist.html>; "Let's Run away from the Girls! . . ." Tenured Radical Blog, posted June 11, 2009, <http://tenured-radical.blogspot.com/2009/06/lets-run-away-from-girls-and-other.html>.

<sup>29</sup>Douglas Seefeldt and William G. Thomas, "What is Digital History? A Look at Some Exemplar Projects," *AHA Perspectives* (May 2009), <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2009/0905/0905for8.cfm>. On the increasing need for collaboration, see Robert B. Townsend, "Viewing History at the Intersection of Past and Future," *AHA Perspectives*, May 2009, <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2009/0905/0905for1.cfm>; "The Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0," [http://digitalhumanities.ucla.edu/images/stories/mellon\\_seminar\\_readings/manifesto20.pdf](http://digitalhumanities.ucla.edu/images/stories/mellon_seminar_readings/manifesto20.pdf).