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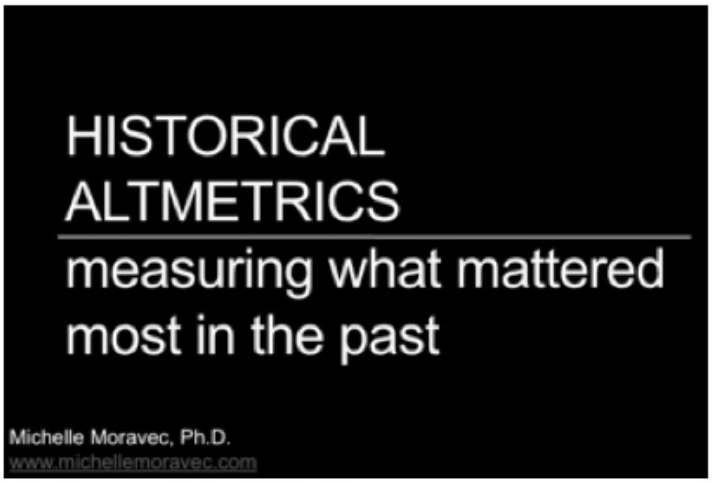
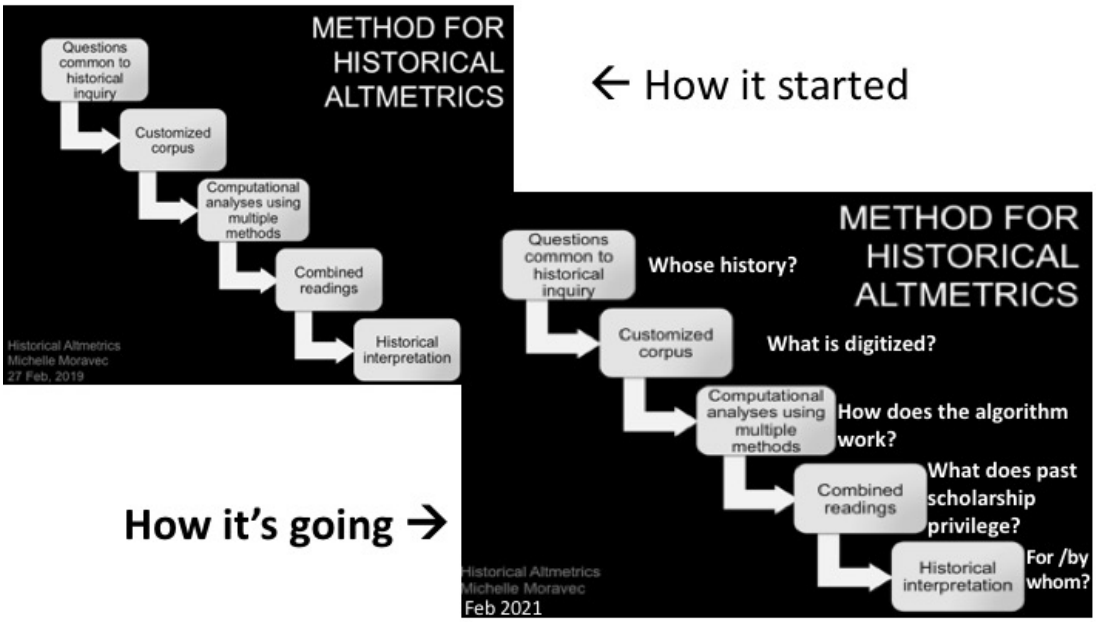


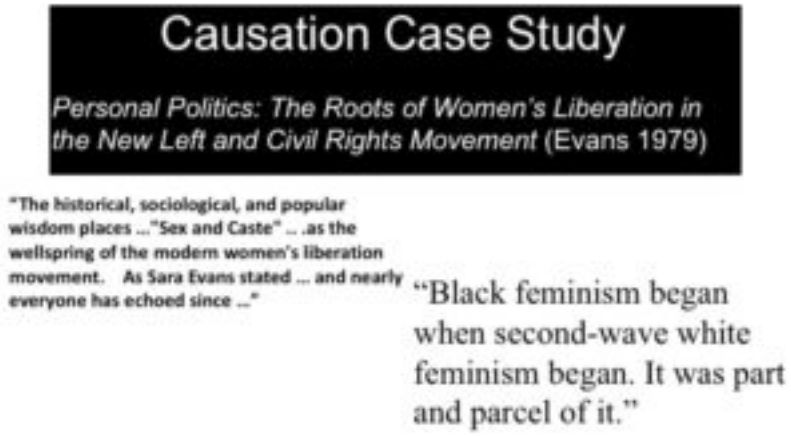
"Feminism is at stake in how we generate knowledge; in how we write, in who we cite." Sara Ahmed

I would like to thank the organizers, co-sponsors, and hosts of this conference for the invitation to speak today about something I call historical altmetrics -- a method to find different ways of understanding influence in the past to incorporate individuals that scholars have too often relegated to the margins of history.[1] Historical Altmetrics aims to upend the historiographical hierarchies. Even if you are not particularly interested in the case study at the center of my book, the women's liberation movement of the Anglophone world, this talk has something for you. Doing gender history using tools borrowed from the digital humanities gives everyone something to think about.

[1] The text that appears here is the script used for my keynote address, not an essay based on that keynote.



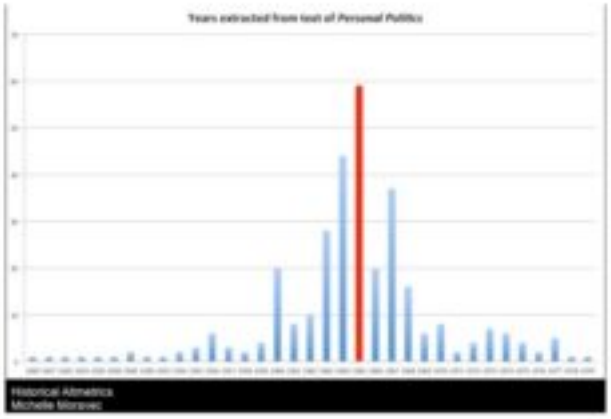
At each step in historical altmetrics, there is a challenge both for the researcher and the field of DH. We have been taught since the earliest ages what matters in history and more importantly, whose history matters. How does the use of digital approaches re-inscribe those priorities? How can I compile custom corpora when what gets digitized reflects scholarly priorities that do not value the historical actors who most interest me? How can I attend to the biases inherent in digital tools as I write histories of race and gender? Even as I produce readings of the texts, how do I decenter dominant voices that threaten to drown out others? Where do I fit as the researcher, telling stories of other people, stories that are not necessarily mine to tell?



My first case study looks at causation. This historiography starts with Sara Evans' argument about the origins of the women's liberation movement in the United States. Since its publication in 1979, *Personal Politics* has become the accepted account of a causal history that places the circulation of a single document in December of 1965 as "the real embryo of the new feminist revolt." *Sex and Caste* Drafted by Casey Hayden, a charismatic white southern civil rights worker and, and co-

signed by her friend and colleague Mary King, *Sex and Caste* was sent privately to thirty-two women. The document focused on women's problems in the cr movement--in their work, personal relationships, and institutionally--that resulted from what they called a "sex and caste" system.

Narratives of historical causation hinge on not only when and why something happened in the past but also who and where. These questions led me to a specific type of computer software application. Entity recognition, which finds variables like names, dates, and places in texts, has the potential to shift attention away from the already-acknowledged central figures in a history by finding less-familiar names. However, entity recognition is complicated by many gendered factors in the historical records, the most significant of which is simply the erasure or omission of women from those sources. Additionally, even when women are named, conventions such as adopting married surnames and or referring to women by first names rather than last names make disambiguating their presence in the entity results more challenging. In this case, Casey Hayden's birth name is Sandra Cason. Her nickname is Casey, and she married a man named Tom Hayden, who appears as a historical actor in many of the same texts.



However, entity recognition confirms the dominant historiographical interpretation of Evans' work is consistent with her text itself – Casey Hayden is the single most mentioned individual in Evans' text, and 1965, the date of *Sex and Caste*, highlighted in red, is the most invoked date.

NER also offers a way to verify Evans' interpretation. While Evans' conducted extensive interviews with prominent movement participants in the 1970s, she did not rely on the very early periodicals to emerge from women's liberation. These sources provide historical documents to evaluate her emphasis on *Sex and Caste* as an origin point. What computational evidence exists for early participations writing about or even distributing *Sex and Caste*?

This question leads to a second set of problems that doing a history of gender highlights for the digital humanities. Texts suitable for machine readings are not widely available for historical actors marginalized by the structures that preserve historical sources and decide which are deserving of digitization. My movement periodical corpus contains roughly 10% of the known US feminist periodicals from 1970-1990.

Results derived from entity recognition of fifteen periodicals c 1968 and 1969 indicate that *Sex and Caste* may not be deserving of such a central place in the origin story of women's liberation.

Influence may be viewed two ways through these NER results. Names extracted from a particular title give insights into the most influential individuals for a specific periodical. These results suggest that we should attend more carefully to the local contexts as there is little overlap among the results.

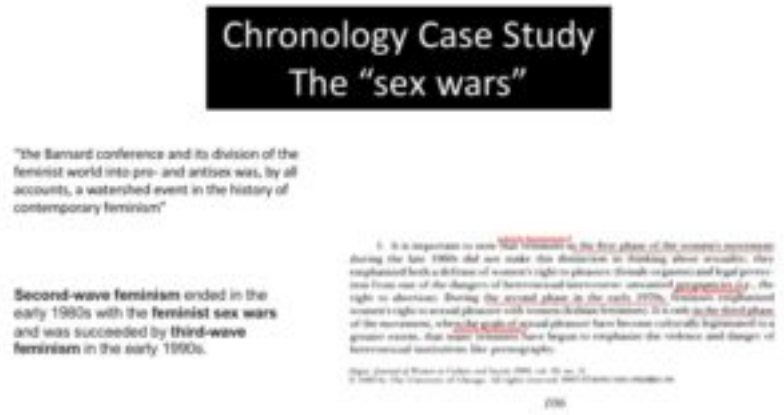
However, if we look at names aggregated across titles, the number of titles out of the total in which an individual appears, some historical influencers become apparent. Most significantly for my purposes, this process highlights the importance of one group of Black women in Mt. Vernon New York that formed around Patricia Robinson who, while not unknown, have yet to be incorporated in significant enough ways to challenge the accepted wisdom of Evans' account which starts the women's liberation movement with a document written by two white women leaving the Civil rights movement

Why does this matter? The tenacity of Evans' interpretation of the status it has as the received wisdom or standard account has significant implications for feminism today. This current narrative anchors the birth of women's liberation in white women's negative emotional responses within the black freedom moment. Hayden and King's memo is often mistakenly described as eliciting Stokely Carmichael's infamous quip that the only position for women in the civil rights movement was on their backs. This attribution is factually incorrect -- that remark occurred in 1964 regarding a different document that Hayden and King co-authored with two other women -- and grossly misrepresents the moment, which has been thoroughly contextualized by women present at the time. This conflation is more than a mistake. It is part and parcel of a larger narrative that white women experienced painful oppression by Black men within the civil rights movement, which simultaneously raised their consciousness and propelled them into their own movement.

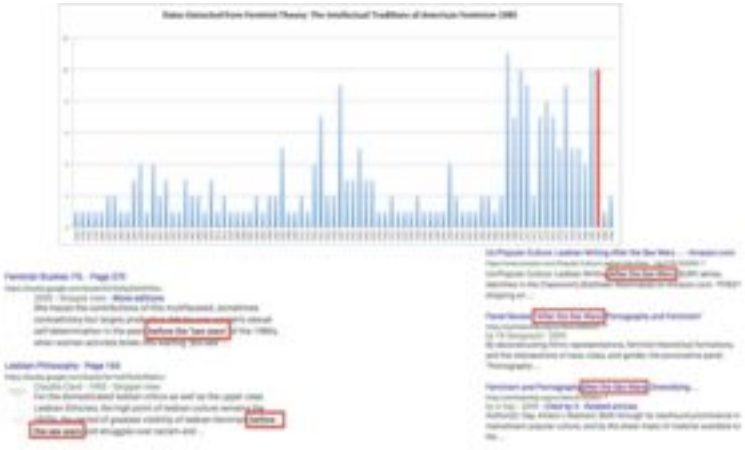
This standard narrative is too concerned with white women's feelings and unduly prioritizes the split from civil rights over the continuing interplay of women's liberation and black power. At its most damaging, this causal narrative leaves no space for groups like the Mt. Vernon one or for black women who continued to participate in groups like SNCC and formed women's committees within those organizations, leading to some of the very early black feminist groups. These contributions have been perpetually sidelined in histories of feminism because of the tenacity of the narrative rooted in the 1965 memo. As a result, scholars too often place Black feminism as emerging chronologically later in the mid to late 1970s rather than crediting Black women in the women's liberation movement for their significant early contributions.

How did this happen? Evans' book appeared in 1979 when the master narrative of women's history was being formed. In this account, the significance of women's liberation rests mainly on its relation to the civil rights movement emphasized through the tidy historical parallels drawn between civil rights and women's liberation in the twentieth century and abolition and the nineteenth-century woman's rights movement.

The results of historical altimetric suggest the need for more complex causation that attends to the dynamics of power relations in the past. It requires scholars to wean themselves from over-reliance on "firsts" to dig deeper. Finally, it involves creating a causal narrative that resists establishing the historical significance of feminist activism by anchoring it to a larger "master narrative."

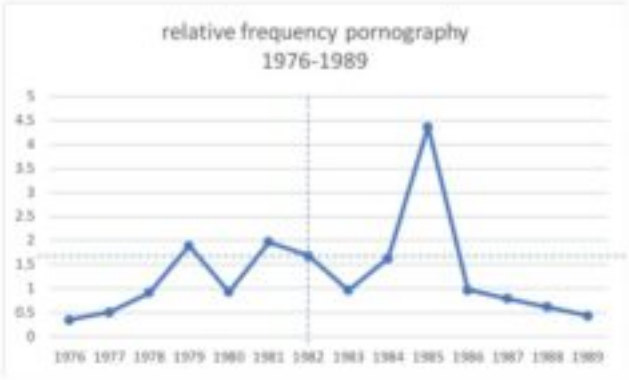


My second case study comes from an example of periodization -- how historians date significance changes. Here the crucial date is 1982 when Barnard College held a conference on sexuality which is positioned as the central event of something scholars have labeled the "sex wars" Depending on who you ask, the battles in the sex wars involved many different topics, but the most central were pornography and sadomasochism. Sometimes 1982 and the sex wars are positioned as the transition from the second to third waves of feminism, while in other cases, this event is blamed for fragmenting or ending the second wave. No matter what interpretive weight it carries, however, 1982 is a central temporal marker. But were the sex wars really such a watershed event?



To know something has changed over time, we need a before and after. Because periodization rests on an implicit comparison, a specific statistic within computational linguistics keyness provides an excellent way to measure this change. Keyness indicates the extent to which particular words or word patterns in one set of texts differ from another. This method is used here to determine how content changed in feminist periodicals before and after 1982. Again corpus problems plagued me. The paucity of digitized feminist periodicals becomes a greater problem in the 1980s, the very era I wanted to focus on. In my sample study of about 50 periodicals, thirty-two titles in my corpus ended before 1982. Eight more periodicals lasted until 1984, and an additional eight continued until the late 1980s or into the 1990s.

To verify whether 1982 was the central date in the debates said to constitute the sex wars, I first determined relative frequencies of pornography and sadomasochism in periodicals by year



Looking at relative word frequencies over time indicates that at least in the sample titles I have access to, the year 1982 takes on less significance in terms of debates over pornography. As in the analysis of causation, results varied widely by periodical title. The earlier peaks of 1979 and 1981 are consistent with nuanced histories of feminist activism on this issue and suggest that some feminist communities had their "sex war" in the 1970s, not in the 1980s It also indicates that while the 1982 conference might have been a moment, 1985 may be the more important date. This year coincides with a great deal of discussion around anti-pornography laws introduced in several US cities.

The case is less clear for sadomasochism, which has a definite spike around the conference but had already been debated in some publications before 1982. However, as in pornography, the earlier spikes are dwarfed by subsequent peaks reflecting the never-ending discussions in various periodicals at different times.

If then 1982 is more a "bump In the road" than a definitive dividing line, what is lost when creating our "before and after" narrative around that date? We know the early 1980s were a significant period of change for feminism. The decline in my corpus is indicative of that, if nothing else. However, feminists themselves noted the change at the time. They worried endlessly about it. The influential poet, essayist, and activist Audre Lorde asked in 1980 what 'issues facing us as women" are not being focused on?

"When sadomasochism gets presented on center stage as a conflict in the feminist movement...what conflicts are not being presented? ... Is this whole question of S/M sex in the lesbian community perhaps being used to draw attention and energies away from other more pressing and immediate life-threatening issues facing us as women in this racist, conservative, and repressive period?"

Audre Lorde, interview June 1980

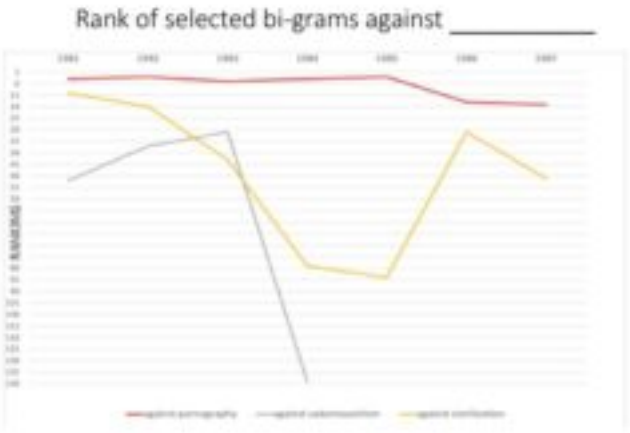
"How can that many women of color be invisible ? Why this rewriting of history ? [authors] erase people of color from the center of debate in order to reintroduce them later at the margins"

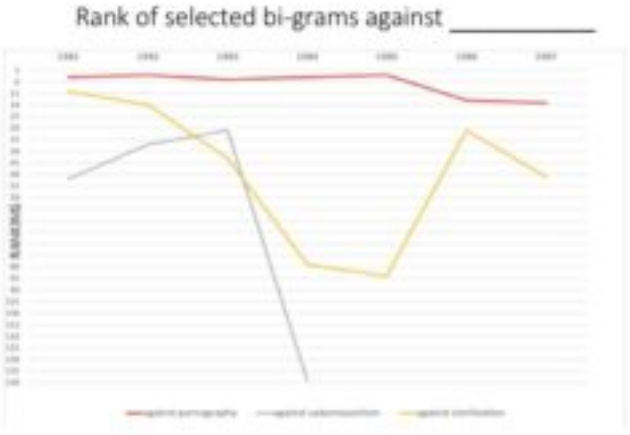
Returning to my initial method of keyness, I attempted to answer Lorde's query about which conflicts have scholars not attended to in their focus on the sex wars? I used corpus analysis software to generate lists of words that increased or decreased yearly.

Keyness 1983 compared to 1982

Increase in 1983 compared to 1982	Decrease in 1983 compared to 1982
encampment	abortion
seneca	samois
aids	leidholdt
peace	pornography
missiles	califia
greenham	sexuality
cruise	
nicaragua	
zami	
indian	
porn	

For the sake of time, I'll highlight just the year after the 1982 conference. A decline occurs with terms and people associated with the sex wars debate because less reporting happened as the event receded into the past. What content emerges this year? Two significant influences surface from feminists outside the US in these US feminist periodicals. The largest comes from the anti-nuclear movement evidence is present of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp that inspired US feminists to create a similar encampment in Seneca Falls. There is also evidence of US feminists becoming active in protests of US foreign policy in Nicaragua. So one key shift is greater attention to international contexts and influences.





Other measures from corpus

analytics can help clarify these shifts in content over time Cluster analysis locates word patterns formed in texts. Looking at frequency rankings for clusters formed with *against* illustrates that while in 1981 *against racism* edged out *against pornography,* that ranked is reversed until 1986. The situation is even worse for *against sterilization,* a reference to the abuse of women, almost all poor women of color, by the medico-legal establishment, which never rebounds to its highest pre-1982 rankings.

Lorde mentioned sterilization abuse in a significant speech she delivered in 1981 that I'll end with. Periodization matters. It is one of the signal signposts historians use when creating meaning from the past. But what are we dividing when we periodize feminism in 1982? Who is the "we" of the history that is said to break at that moment? Much as I noted about the causal narrative of Sex and Caste, periodization based on the sex wars offers an affective history. Scholars often describe the sex wars as emotionally fraught. They are a "painful" moment, but whose pain is being prioritized? The 1982 sexuality conference at Barnard was only one in a string of feminist conferences beginning in the 1970s that involved intense debates and acrimony. In 1981, the year before the Barnard Conference, a meeting occurred that carries more significance for another story of changes in feminism. At the National Women's Studies Conference in Storrs, Connecticut, focused on the theme "Women respond to Racism," Lorde delivered these remarks I just shared. The speech, published as The Uses of Anger, has its own painful history. The theme of this conference resulted from many years of effort by Black, Latina, indigenous, and other feminists of color to push, cajole, and challenge white feminists, particularly those who had found a home within academia and thus secured a certain sort of status, to address racism. But this conference is not generally positioned in relation to that long arc of second wave feminism which would include conferences going well back to the mid-1970s and writings published even earlier.

Following Clare Hemmings, I ask what work is done by a chronological narrative that privileges 1982 as *the* pivotal date. Dividing the line in 1982 creates a tidy barrier between bad anti-porn (read racist white) feminists and a better (read racially inclusive pro-sex) feminism. THAT narrative temporally trans-locates prominent voices like Lorde's out of the 1970s where they were activists and participants and moves them into the 1980s where they function as an inspiration for the future. This atemporal approach places Black feminists as out of time, ignoring that Lorde's work cited by third wave feminists emerged from her activism in the 1970s. Historical altmetrics highlights the need to reject single event chronologies to embrace more complex accounts. It challenges us to resist recuperative periodization that moves black feminists out of time. Most significantly, it requires asking whose histories are centered in chronological accounts?

As these two brief examples indicate, historical altmetrics highlights some of the benefits of doing gender history with tools borrowed via the digital humanities and the challenges. Even if one does not care about the particular scholarly debates I discuss, HA of GH provides DH in general. The politics of digitization complicated my project enormously. Until we attend to that, DH risks remaining of use to only a limited number of fields. Gender complicates the use of some digital tools, which provides yet another reminder that no technology is neutral. For the scholar of gender history, I hope historical altmetrics shows why digital history matters.

This approach has led to origin stories that do not exclude black women or center on white women's feelings. It has also highlighted how an event privileged in the scholarly narratives may not have had the same significance for feminists throughout the United States and may cover up more significant debates, which have an enduring legacy for feminism today.