

What's (Not) in a Name: Considerations and Consequences of the Field's Nomenclature

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Abstract: *This article shows how the labels commonly associated with the field—women's rhetorics and feminist rhetorics—can be as problematic as they are productive, revealing tensions that undermine our goals of capaciousness. An analysis of naming discussions in scholarship and a survey of our naming practices via titles of journal articles, conference papers, and courses show how our nomenclature can sometimes occlude certain values and assumptions the field seeks to convey. The author suggests that the moniker “women's and gendered rhetorics” and better situating our work to each other and various publics can work to alleviate these issues.*

Keywords: *feminist rhetorics, women's rhetorics, women's and gendered rhetorics, nomenclature*

By naming something, one actively carves out a space for it to occupy, a space defined by what one values in the phenomenon and by how it appears to be like or unlike other parts of one's world view.

--Cherryl Armstrong and Sherry Fontaine

When I was in graduate school in the late 1990s, the field of women's rhetorics/feminist rhetorics was burgeoning, and I had the opportunity to take Joy Ritchie's graduate course in 1998 as she and Kate Ronald were collaborating on *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*, their enduring collection of women's rhetorical primary sources from Aspasia to Steinem. The course was entitled *The Rhetoric of Women Writers*; years later, as an assistant professor, I named a new graduate seminar *Women's Rhetorics* without, truth be told, giving the title much thought. But since first teaching the course in 2004, I've mulled over the title much more, thanks to smart graduate students who inevitably question why some texts we read call the field “feminist rhetorics” and others call it “women's rhetorics” and what difference it makes. Of course, as rhetoricians, we know it makes a difference because rhetorical studies is about analyzing the freight language can hold, and yet, surprisingly,

despite grappling mightily as we frame terms we use in our theories and methodologies, there is a notable absence of discussion as to the consequences of transferring these terms into monikers for the field.¹

As the field takes stock after coming into its own in the past quarter century, understanding the consequences for inadequately addressing our nomenclature allows us to more consciously signal to various audiences—including ourselves—our purpose(s) as we move ahead.² Reflexivity and clarification as to what and whom we represent, even if that clarification expresses multiplicity, feels particularly pressing given the conversations within composition and rhetoric about how we represent rhetoric and writing to various publics—ourselves, our institutions, our students, our communities, and (social) media. Coupled with a vigorous feminist ethic to speak not only to insular discourse communities but to foster and enact activist practices, it's important that our moniker should account for—and further invite—engagement with multiple audiences. In this piece, I demonstrate how the labels most commonly associated with the field—women's rhetorics and feminist rhetorics—can be as problematic as they are productive and reveal tensions that can undermine our goals of capaciousness. I then survey our naming practices by what terms we use through book mentions in Google's Ngram Viewer as well as titles for journal articles, conference papers, and courses to view the signals sent to various audiences. Finally, I suggest possibilities for more consciously and accurately representing the field in offering an alternate moniker of "women's and gendered rhetorics."

1 I consider women's rhetorics or feminist rhetorical studies a field rather than a sub-field as 1) most scholarship within this area references it as a field (see Buchanan and Ryan, Enoch and Fishman, Myers, Ronald, Royster and Kirsch, and more), and 2) publications in the past five years that focus on looking backward and forward to "take stock" of women's/feminist rhetorical studies suggest and reference a field coming into its own. Of course, right away we get into a thorny issue of naming again: does this mean women's/feminist rhetoric would have its own category in a JIL? Does that mean it is not a part of the larger umbrella of rhetoric and composition? No to both, but it does have its own body of scholarship, journals, conference, etc., and other defining markers of an area of study. That said, I would contend that even if others argue that it is a subfield of rhetorical studies, whether a field or sub-field, there is broad consensus that it is an area with its own defining features, and thus my arguments about naming still fully apply.

2 The field's move to take stock can be seen in the publication and response to recent texts such as *Walking and Talking: Feminist Rhetorics; Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies; Feminist Challenges or Feminist Rhetorics?: Locations, Scholarship, Discourse; and Landmark Essays on Rhetoric and Feminism (1973-2000)* and anticipation of what is ahead (i.e.: *Peitho's* Special 25th Anniversary Issue).

The Significance of Naming

There is little consistency in what we call the field. In Lisa Ede's keynote address at the 2012 Texas Federation Symposium, "Women and Rhetoric: Looking Backward/Looking Forward," she used descriptors such as "feminist rhetoric," "research on women and rhetoric," or "women's rhetorical practices" throughout. Elizabeth Fleitz, in the 25th anniversary issue of *Peitho*, refers to both "feminist rhetorical scholarship" and "scholars of women's rhetorics" within one page. Ede's and Fleitz's moves are typical across the field's scholarship, but *acknowledgement* of such varied descriptors is quite rare. Perhaps the most overt reference to what we actually call ourselves is literally a footnote by Kate Ronald in "Feminist Perspectives on the History of Rhetoric," a situating piece glossing intersections of feminisms and rhetorics:

But before I've even gotten to my third page, I realize I already have some new rhetorical problems. Do I call this new field "women's rhetoric?" Or "feminist rhetoric?" Do I use the plural rhetorics—to indicate the expansive diversity of women writers and to avoid the elitist homogenizing tendencies of defining any field?...I've made each of these choices at various times, sometimes using all six options in the course of a 20-minute talk. (149)

While multiple names could signal a gesture to embrace malleability, such qualifiers aren't given when invoking a *field* name, and there has been surprisingly little discussion about the basic act of labels as a marker of our field until quite recently. Such an absence is striking. Star Medzerian Vanguri points out in *Rhetorics of Names and Naming* that the oversight of rhetorical studies engaging with naming is surprising given that names are, as we know, more than labels but "symbolic inscriptions of meaning" (1).³ After all, as Cheryl Armstrong and Sherry Fontaine elucidate in their article about naming: "Just as an individual carves out a piece of reality for herself through the act of naming, shaving off those parts which she does not deem valuable, a group (or the individual who represents it) takes on the ability to exclude or include, burden or empower other individuals by the act of naming them" (9). Further, the act of naming, these authors suggest, brings with it a phenomenon of permanence:

The characteristics inherent in naming—its variability and its false promise of permanence, its way of narrowing down our perceptions become for us, as social beings, the problems of marking our social and political territory....And so, in the academy, the names we choose, which selectively highlight what is valuable to our social or political

³ Recent discussions on the WPA-Listserv in addition to *Rhetorics of Names and Naming* signal increasing attention rhetoricians are paying to the import of nomenclature.

group, are understood to represent the true nature of what we have named. (8)

The politics of naming is both relevant and rhetorical and only further vexed as the field is known and refers to itself by various labels.

It could be argued that because of the way the field expanded quickly alongside/within/apart from rhetorical studies, a sense of itself as a *field* or sub-field is quite recent and that a focus on nomenclature hasn't kept up with the growth of the field. We aren't alone in experiencing such growing pains. At the 2015 Computers & Writing Conference, Scott Warnock addressed the issue of nomenclature and the ways the label "computers and writing" may no longer best represent the work of a (sub-)field continually undergoing dynamic digital changes. He asks: "What is and what should be happening with the terms we use to describe what we do? Do we need to find new ways—and new terms and thus new concepts—to describe and think about (and communicate to others) what we do?" ("The Problem of Nomenclature"). Neither are issues of naming and nomenclature bound to younger fields undergoing growth and change; Composition and Rhetoric itself has been known by various incarnations within scholarship and publisher categories and institutional programs, curricula, and other markers. Particularly with the emergence of Writing Studies as a term and the rising number of newly-named departments and programs no longer housed under English, scholars have discussed the political and institutional consequences of our chosen monikers (see Armstrong and Fontaine; Hesse; Horner and Lu; Singer, and more).

Within women's and feminist rhetorics, however, the labels we use appear to be the accumulation of theories and methodologies that have created the architecture of our field. As Armstrong and Fontaine argue: "*Once chosen*, a name suggests permanence And when names we use are passed on, or when we integrate existing names into our own language, we assimilate with them what they imply about the nature of the phenomena named" (8, emphasis added). In reviewing scholarship to investigate how we have discussed naming, I returned to texts the field has considered foundational via frequent citation or reference; I also sought texts that acknowledge our nomenclature in any overt way. While there has been hearty critical deliberation of the terms "women," "feminist," and "gender" both theoretically and methodologically, such intellectual grounding was not coupled explicitly with our nomenclature. In short: there was scarcely mention of *choosing* a label for the field that connected to or reverberated from situating those same terms in scholarly conversations. While recent scholarship and moves, as I'll describe, suggest such deliberation occurred in some spaces, these conversations have previously not been shared widely or marked in scholarship.

The “false promise of permanence” created by labels we use does more than simply represent or describe the field: it shapes and guides its trajectory (Armstrong and Fontaine 8). What, then, have been the consequences when terms become default designations as the field’s stature becomes more solidified? What has been assimilated, and what has been ignored by taking on monikers without interrogating them along the way? And more practically: what might our nomenclature signal to scholars wanting to enter the field? What might it mean for how we frame our subjects and ourselves or how we are framed at our institutions and surrounding communities? Strands of scholarship unpacking “women’s” and “feminist” rhetorics have unspooled in ways that, despite the intentions and goals of the field, have left us with terms that can exclude even as they seek to include.

Tracing the Paths of Converging and Diverging Terms

As I examined scholarship focusing on the theories and methodologies grounding and shaping our field’s trajectory today, two overarching paths emerged showing how we have come to the monikers “women’s rhetorics” and “feminist rhetorics.” Tensions have surfaced with these two paths, described recently by Patricia Bizzell and K.J. Rawson in a video conversation in the 25th anniversary issue of *Peitho* that demonstrates the fallout from nomenclature choices that were not transparent. Their dialogue is introduced as one that points to intergenerational tensions about gender identification, and their discussion also reveals that missing history and context with regard to labels and naming have contributed to these tensions (7). Their topic is feminist and transgender rhetorics in the future of the then-named Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition (CWSHRC), the umbrella organization overseeing *Peitho* and the Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) conference.⁴ While my focus is on the field’s scholarship more broadly, the role of the CWSHRC in the making and sustaining of the field is mighty, and Bizzell draws upon this important historical context for their conversation.

⁴ Near the completion of revisions for this article, the Coalition in May 2016 changed their name from Coalition of *Women* Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition to the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition. This was announced to members via email; the social media announcement on the Facebook group was accompanied by a link to the Bizzell and Rawson conversation in the 25th Anniversary issue of *Peitho*. Coincidentally, my nomination to the Coalition Advisory Board was accepted at about the same time as the name change, and while I then became privy to more context about the name change, given the timing with my revisions, as well as the scope of the piece, which is about the field more broadly than the Coalition, what is relevant to this piece is the name change itself and how it was disseminated publicly to the Coalition.

Rawson asks provocative questions about inclusion and the current state of CWSHRC that display our nomenclature's opacity. He asks for clarification on "[t]he distinction between whether the Coalition was for women scholars working on any topic versus being a Coalition for scholars who were working on women rhetors or feminist rhetorics more broadly" (2). Bizzell's response reveals important historical context:

I mean, the full title of the organization is Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition, so it was field specific except the field is interdisciplinary so included historians, philosophers, classicists, etc. I think explicitly the word feminist wasn't used with the sense that there were women who were doing work that we were interested in who might not want to call themselves feminists for one reason or another. For example, you may remember, this doesn't seem to be done much anymore, but once upon a time black feminists preferred to call themselves womanists....So, I think there was a sense that the Coalition avoided the word feminist in its founding sort of self-presentation because it was felt that that would be exclusionary of some women. But whether they ever really envisioned men being members, I don't think so. (2-3)

The mission of the CWSHRC, as Bizzell explains (echoed in the documentary with founders and past presidents of the CWSHRC in the same *Peitho* issue), was to create a deliberate space for scholarship about women and by women along with a network of support to do such work and have it recognized, "to kind of convince ourselves and help each other convince them that this work was valuable, it was publishable, it was tenurable, it was promotable."

Rawson explains that by the time he entered the field, "feminist rhetoric" was fully formed and felt "as legitimate and mature as any other part of the field." He follows with, "So, it's just interesting to hear this backstory, which doesn't predate [the field of feminist rhetoric] by that much." Rawson represents the next generation of scholars for whom the history that led to the forming and naming of the Coalition was unknown, leaving questions about the usage of terms. And as transgender studies shifts the framework such that categories of male and female are further destabilized, "What happens, then, to a coalition of women scholars?" Bizzell's response captures the ways that both "women's" and "feminist" rhetorics have likely sought but not been able to fully account for the intended multiplicity and inclusiveness:

Partly what's at issue here is the extent to which the organization wants to define itself as *for women or for feminists....The organization has to decide which way it wants to go at this point, maybe.* And if we

think of feminist work...[] in the sense that Royster and Kirsch [shows book cover] are now talking about it, which is very broadly conceived, then that certainly opens the door to anyone, to any body who wants to be included. But, as I said, if there's a place for, as you put it, a protected space for women, that's something different. So *that's the kind of identity crisis, maybe, that the organization has right now.* [emphasis added]

Bizzell and Rawson's conversation captures the ways our labels do and don't stand for the work of the field and its participants when "women" and "feminist" are approached as two distinct options. I argue that such reduction (women *or* feminists) is the result of not making overt how the extensive, nuanced scholarly conversations about the concepts steering our work drive the basic monikers both within and beyond our scholarly circle. Even when terms like "feminist" and "women" are carefully considered in individual pieces of scholarship, there is a lack of collective, public memory informing audiences to the contexts and motivations for the ways these terms serve as touchstones and monikers for the field. Their conversation points to two paths that can *appear* distinctive, even as they cross or converge and, as many likely feel, are conjoined. "Women's rhetorics" emerged from scholarship committed to securing and sustaining a space particular to women's issues that had been so long neglected, and "feminist rhetorics" developed as an approach and commitment to gendered, rhetorical analysis. Both paths together essentially describe the field, but as I show, the discussions about how these terms as theories and methodologies emerged as the two most well-known labels were not visible, further evidenced by Bizzell sharing in an anniversary issue historical context that wasn't common knowledge in the field's scholarship.

These two paths were predicted a quarter century ago by Susan Jarratt. She wrestles with how to engage conceptually in navigating feminist work in the history of rhetoric in both her 1990 *Pre/Text* piece (anthologized in *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies*) and in the 1992 *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* special issue on "Feminist Rereadings in the History of Rhetoric." She forecasts what became primary approaches to the field: "If the Western intellectual tradition is not only a product of men, but constituted by masculinity, then transformation comes not only from women finding women authors but also from a gendered rereading of that masculine rhetoric" ("Performing" 2). In describing early scholarship within the context of feminist historiographic methodologies, she articulates that the goal is not only studying women through recovery work but conducting a gendered analysis alongside, against, and with the rhetorical canon, approaches now central

to the field.⁵ While these approaches have worked symbiotically, Jarratt's predictions have tracked along the "women's rhetoric" and "feminist rhetoric" paths in ways that can also inhibit research and inclusivity and, as the Rawson and Bizzell conversation indicates, even seem to compete in ways that don't align with the capaciousness we profess as central to our field.

Women's Rhetorics: Whom We Study

Use of the term "women" seems to be, at first glance, a default descriptor originating in the reclamation of contributions by women into the masculinized rhetorical tradition. In short: it reflects who is studied. Yet early on, some openly troubled the term. Jarratt relays the pitfalls of the category of "woman," anticipating the very tensions Bizzell and Rawson share a quarter century later. Citing feminist historians, Jarratt expresses concern with a "separate women's canon," suggesting that this would severely limit feminist engagement with the history of rhetoric and that "we needed not only women's history but gendered readings of male-authored texts," as "gendered analysis, unlike 'women's history,' applies feminist perspectives in periods of history when women's issues or gender had not been taken up in texts authored by women" (21). For her, gender as a category resists women as an *addition* and "shakes up dominant disciplinary concepts" (22). Yet she immediately nuances her point by expressing reservations about divisions and hierarchies between "women's history" and "gender issues" (23). She argues for the "preservation of gender-specific terms to describe historical texts," drawing upon Mary Jacobus to explain an idea familiar to feminist scholars, that "'we need the term 'women's writing' if only to remind us...that the conditions of their (re)production are the economic and educational disadvantages, the sexual and marital organizations of society, which, rather than biology, form the crucial determinants of women's writing'" (Jacobus qtd in Jarratt 23). Jarratt's pieces articulate the

5 What Jarratt delineated has borne out, as articulated well by other scholars. According to Jessica Enoch: "Recent surveys of feminist scholarship have correctly assessed that the majority of historiographic work falls into two dynamic categories: (1) histories that recover the work of female rhetors and rhetoricians and (2) histories that reread and revise the rhetorical tradition through the lens of gender theory" (48), as does Rawson: "The feminist rhetorical canon has been guided by two primary methodologies. One is feminist rhetorical recovery of previously ignored or unknown women rhetors. The other is theorizing of women's rhetorics, or what some have called "gendered analysis" which involves developing a rhetorical concept or approach that accounts for rhetors who are excluded from traditional rhetoric" (40). Also see Michaela D.E. Meyer's, "Women Speak(ing): Forty Years of Feminist Contributions to Rhetoric and an Agenda for Feminist Rhetorical Studies," where she argues that, "feminist contributions to rhetoric tend to align with two major methodological approaches—the "writing women in" to rhetorical canons approach and the "challenging rhetorical standards" approach (2).

propulsion of “women’s rhetoric,” bolstered by Bizzell’s look back: while the term “woman” would be narrow and problematic, to lose it risks making invisible the particular challenges women have faced.

In their 2005 introduction to *Rhetorical Women: Roles and Representations*, Hildy Miller and Lillian Bridwell-Bowles settle on the term “woman” but first relay the problematic nature in doing so. In reinforcing issues of intersectionality, they contend that the “single marker” of a term like “woman” can be rendered meaningless (8), as bell hooks explains clearly in an online critique of Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean In*: “This construction of simple categories (women and men) was long ago challenged by visionary feminist thinkers, particularly individual black women/women of color.” Combined with Butler’s well-known theories of the fluidity of gender, Miller and Bridwell-Bowles also argue that “woman” can range from “meaningless” to “an outdated conceptual relic of second-generation feminism (8). Rawson’s response in his conversation with Bizzell underscores this point, noting that “women’s only spaces have a very odd relationship with transgender folks.”

Nevertheless, despite such serious challenges, Miller and Bridwell-Bowles finally argue for the usage of “woman”; thorny as it might be, it is important as a feminist undertaking to maintain a safe(r) space that was invisible until women and feminists staked a claim (9). Further, in their unpacking of the representational and rhetorical consequences of “woman” is the insistence that a label does and should give form. With the “provisional constant” of woman, they contend, “we can give the [postmodern] ‘view from nowhere’ some perspective and shape” (Bordo qtd. in Miller and Bridwell-Bowles 8). Retaining some grounding is important to connecting with others, particularly given the brevity often demanded by social media.

Thus “women’s rhetorics” as a descriptor accounts for many, but certainly not all of those studied, and can reduce women to a simple identity category that does not account for context, nuance, and intersectionality, particularly when understanding of the term is just implied and assumed. It can also occlude a gendered approach; in my undergraduate women’s rhetorics course, one student had the terrific idea of studying an older, white, Southern, male sports commentator who subverted all assumptions of what a “good ol’ boy” should be. I encouraged the project, but she assumed she couldn’t in a course called Women’s Rhetorics. But, of course, she could. With its noun descriptor, “women’s rhetoric” is lodged in ways that exclude, and does not account for how work is done in the field.

Feminist Rhetorics: How We Study

If “women’s rhetorics” is a broad descriptor of whom we study, albeit not without challenges and exclusions, “feminist rhetorics” appears to be about

how we approach the field. In "Performing Feminisms" Jarratt suggests, "If we all agree to appear under the banners of 'feminism' and 'rhetoric,' our words will attest to the pluralities of those nouns, resulting in not women's history but feminisms' histories" (3). But the assumptions about expansiveness and accessibility lead to questions that, paradoxically, can be limiting, in part because the term "feminist" sends signals both narrow and imprecise with regard to "who/m" rather than the approach. Does the name, for example, necessitate that the researcher or the subject identify as feminist? Further, given the cultural and historical freight that comes with the term "feminist," there are limits, as with "women," as to who is encompassed by the term. So while "feminist rhetorics" attempts to invite malleability and multiplicity, without situating the term, such openness can be obscured.

Communication Studies scholar Bonnie J. Dow tackled such issues in "Feminism, Difference(s), and Rhetorical Studies," addressing the problems that can arise from a lack of clarity within scholarship when pairing feminism and rhetorical criticism. She cites Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's essay on Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Solitude of Self" as an example:

The feminist resonance of this piece of scholarship comes not from its approach but from its topic and from the author's reputation. Some may label this essay a piece of feminist criticism because it is easily linked to Campbell's feminist motive to call attention to the important rhetorical contributions of women. However, she does not assert this motive in the essay and so the reader must infer it. (106)

She describes what the consequences are when we employ the term feminist without being overtly reflective about our assumptions:

Rhetorical theory and criticism are inherently pluralistic. The same is true for feminism, *although we too seldom acknowledge this in our usage of the term*. There is room for myriad feminist practices in this field, and the purpose of being more specific about our assumptions is not to establish which feminist practice or theory is most legitimate. Rather, when we acknowledge the rich variety of its bases, the feminist knowledge that we create will be more informed, more complete, and more powerful, both within this discipline and outside it. (114, emphasis added)

Dow explicitly points to the lack of transparency about how feminism is utilized by scholars and how this impacts not only our scholarship but conceptions of feminism. Lack of attention to our naming has only exacerbated the issues she raises.

The label “feminist rhetorics” was taken on without explicit definitions until recently.⁶ Influential texts hailed for taking stock of the field after a quarter century—*Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics* (2010) and *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* (2012)—each unpack the term.⁷ The robust and lengthy definition of “feminist rhetorics” in the first paragraph of *Walking and Talking* is deliberately expansive and far-reaching to encompass the many ways the term can be used and applied, from a body of scholarship to a political agenda to what drives the term theoretically and methodologically, so that, ultimately, “the rhetorical work of this community of feminist teacher/scholars—in the classroom, at conferences, in publications, through outreach—encourages others to think, believe, and act in ways that promote equal treatment and opportunities for women” (xiii).⁸ But even with an exhaustive definition, “feminist” is used without acknowledgment of any freight, and how the last two decades of scholarship funneled to this definition is not clear.

Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa Kirsch in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* don’t lay out a precise definition for the label feminist rhetorics, though they cite “a field we now name feminist rhetorical studies,” suggestive of the cumulative way it’s been taken on as a moniker (12). The book assesses how the field has developed over nearly three decades of research, delineating four

6 The first definition of the term “feminist rhetorics” I could locate appeared in communication studies in 2007. Meyer’s 2007 piece in *Communication Quarterly* defines the term feminist rhetoric: “a commitment to reflexive analysis and critique of any kind of symbol use that orients people in relation to other people, places, and practices on the basis of gendered realities or gendered cultural assumptions” (3, original emphasis). The purpose of her article is just as its title offers, but I’ve yet to see it referenced much by composition and rhetoric scholars.

7 See reviews in *CCC*, *Composition Studies*, *Enculturation*, *Ethos*, *Peitho*, and more that generally agree that these texts are of great import to the field.

8 Because an explicit definition is so rare, I include Buchanan and Ryan’s in full: “First, feminist rhetorics describes an intellectual project dedicated to *recognizing and revising systems and structures broadly linked to the oppression of women*. Second, it includes a theoretical mandate, namely, exploring the shaping powers of language, gender ideology, and society; the location of subjects within these formations; and the ways these constructs inform the production, circulation, and interpretation of rhetorical texts. Third, it constitutes a practice, a scholarly endeavor capable of transforming the discipline of rhetoric through gender analysis, critique, and reformulation. The feminist practice *entails identifying and examining women rhetors and women’s rhetorics, making claims for their importance and contribution to the discipline and, in so doing, regendering rhetorical histories and traditions*. Fourth, it consists of a body of scholarship recording the field’s intellectual, theoretical, and practical pursuits. Fifth, the term encompasses a community of teacher/scholars with shared interests in the intersections of gender and rhetoric. Sixth, it describes a political agenda directed toward promoting gender equity within the academy and society. In other words, the rhetorical work of this community of feminist teacher/scholars—in the classroom, at conferences, in publications, through outreach—encourages others to think, believe, and act in ways that promote equal treatment and opportunities for women.” (xiii, emphasis added)

methodological strategies and practices demonstrating how “feminist rhetorical practices have shifted the landscape [of rhetorical inquiry in the history of rhetoric]” (13). In describing feminist rhetorical practices, the use of “feminism” is less a narrow descriptor of subject or method than it is an epistemology flexible enough to allow for—and even invite—a range of methodologies, pedagogies, and analyses on a range of subjects that can be a part of the feminist project. Their book serves to generate, rather than limit, inclusive possibilities for research subjects, practices, and methodologies, but the possibilities offered that repeatedly invite expansion and complexity can exceed what is connoted in the term “feminist rhetorics.” Taken as intended, these definitions describe the field well and can shape it going forward but still don’t account for assumptions and baggage that come with feminism. Further, it’s not yet clear how much these definitions are finding their way into scholarship to situate authors’ frameworks, contributing to the lack of context scholars like Rawson describe. A disjuncture can occur between the openness put forth by Royster and Kirsch and a term that could invoke a monolithic notion of feminism.

Thus, our reliance on shorthand with the term feminist breeds insularity of a kind that feminist research seeks to resist, and Dow reminds us to be vigilant about making our assumptions clear. Otherwise, as with the term “women’s rhetorics,” the term “feminist rhetorics” has shortcomings, one of the largest being the implications of what, exactly, the adjective “feminist” in “feminist rhetoric” refers. Who does—and can—undertake this work? Relatedly, does the researcher identify as feminist? Are the methodologies feminist? Do those studied fit into feminist parameters? And if they don’t, might we be inclined to nudge them there? I argue elsewhere that holding too fast to our own feminist proclivities might lead us to consider research subjects as “more feminist” than they would deem themselves and that even conservative women are approached with an eye toward how their acts enact a subtle or surprising feminism.⁹ As Ritchie and Ronald remind us with *Available Means: an Anthology of Women’s Rhetorics*, historically, the impetus for writing was often to secure rights, often leaving feminism and women’s rhetorical practices inextricable, which “might seem to essentialize women’s rhetoric or conflate women’s rhetoric with feminism” (xxii). Given the preponderance of historical research in our field, there can be a propensity for such conflation, but this limits possibilities for contributions to the field and exacerbates assumptions about how the field is comprised.

Of course, naming practices that can be viewed as too narrow may impact who contributes and how we contribute to the field. There is baggage with the term feminism, viewed as exclusive in its middle-class, white trappings

9 See Charlotte Hogg, “Including Conservative Women’s Rhetorics in an ‘Ethics of Hope and Care.’”

against the openness that feminist methodologies presume. Bizzell reminds us that when the Coalition was founded, “feminist” was not a label considered inclusive for some scholars of color. Even among those who embrace “feminism,” there is continual debate on the value of the term in online spaces among “third wave” or “new wave” writers; while there is currently much debate on this front, there are some who find the term tethered to second-wave enterprises. In popular culture there is often talk of whether the term is still productive, influencing or influenced by younger scholars drawn to the field.¹⁰

The insularity from class, race, and age that can be mired in the term also prohibits the ways we can reach multiple audiences such as those who react negatively to the term feminist. Those who identify as feminist differ on how—or even *if*—we should try to reach resistant audiences, but it is a term that has much less traction institutionally, not just in terms of campus spaces but other fields and programs with a strong commitment to feminist endeavors, such as various women’s studies programs (more on this below). There is important discussion to be had within and outside academia as to whether and how to “reclaim” “feminism” amid its challenges, and a part of that conversation should be about how we are read rhetorically outside the covers of journals as we seek to relay our scholarship to multiple publics. While some may bristle at the thought of conversations about branding, given its connotations with the corporatization of higher education, such resistance may mean missing opportunities to connect with students and those outside our field as ambassadors of the work we do. All told, tracing the paths of the labels we most employ, women’s rhetorics and feminist rhetorics, shows significant blind spots about whom and how we research, a point all the more salient when describing—and accounting for—what we do when we must encapsulate our field with brevity among varied audiences.

Nomenclature in Circulation

There are spaces where we don’t have the luxury to nuance terms, when a label provides the concise version of who we are both within and outside the field. As I endeavored into this project, I wondered how scholars signal the field’s work in brief and whether title selections would reveal patterns less apparent in scholarship. Here, then, I examine titles to learn what terms are most prevalent in *brief* rendering of our work and whether our shorthand offers patterns that show a clear trend in our naming as well as what it might

10 There has been much discussion on how the term “feminist” has become so problematic in that so few women and men use the term as an identifier. For more on this, see Abigail Rine’s “The Pros and Cons of Abandoning the Word Feminist” and Dave Sheinin, Krissah Thompson, and Soraya Nadia McDonald’s “Betty Friedan to Beyoncé: Today’s Generation Embraces Feminism on Its Own Terms.”

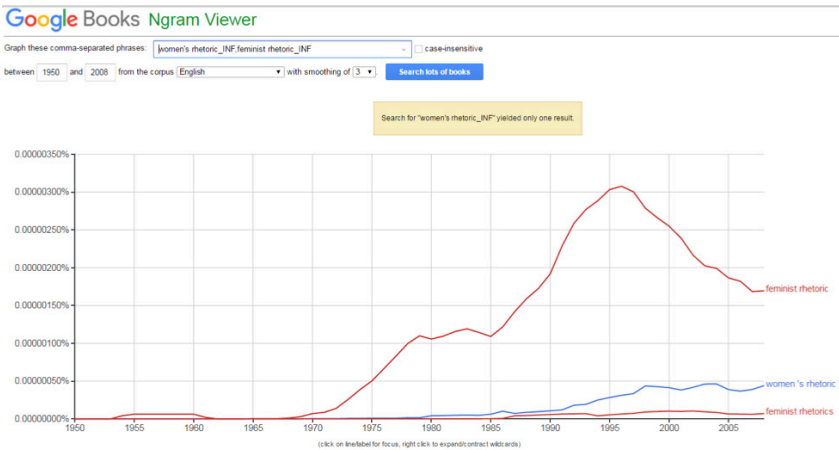
elucidate about how we are read by each other and additional audiences. To do so, I look at four sets of data: 1) uses of the terms in Google Books Ngram Viewer; 2) journal article titles and 3) conference paper titles that indicate how we mark what we do in brief for audiences who may or may not read or attend to better know the content within, as well as 4) course titles that have the potential to reach multiple audiences—students, parents, administrators and staff, and colleagues both within and outside our discipline. My goal here is to be suggestive rather than exhaustive in conducting a scan that includes “distant reading,” what Jessica Enoch and Jean Bessette cite as the “digitally enabled practice of reading thousands (even millions) of books in an instant for the purpose of searching for a term and recognizing discursive patterns and trends in the culled texts” via Google Books Ngram Viewer (642). I seek to replicate—with a much smaller data set—the kind of gleaning found in distant reading by gathering titles within three respected journals in rhetoric and composition—*Rhetoric Review*, *College English*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*—and three national conferences—specifically the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s), and Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) to survey what patterns may emerge with labeling, and finally, I ran a cursory search on course syllabi.¹¹ As the sense of audience shifts for each rhetorical situation, tracing a discernable trend with regard to our nomenclature proves somewhat elusive, though faint patterns do appear.

11 I want to emphasize again that this was admittedly a suggestive examination to look generally for trends with regard to naming. I did not include CCC because, while it certainly publishes rhetorical pieces, its emphasis is more expressly the teaching of writing, whereas *College English* states that it is more generally a professional journal for the college scholar/teacher. I did look at *Peitho* titles but did not include them here since the journal moved to a peer-reviewed journal in 2012 and would be less useful in comparison to the other three journals titles were covered from 1998-2014. Conference programs were studied for the three conferences for a decade: 2004-2014, though both Fem/Rhet and RSA happen biennially, so Fem/Rhet was examined from 2003-2013. I am most grateful to Angela Moore and Angela Sowa who each compiled part of this data set from these journals and conference titles during separate appointments as research assistants. Selection of titles was also admittedly slippery: I asked them to collect titles that appeared to reflect a piece that covered “rhetorical studies of women,” including but not limited to titles that expressly had the words “women,” “feminist,” and “rhetoric.” So if something was about a rhetorical act, it was tallied on the list even without the word “rhetoric,” as with studies of women’s names. There was some subjectivity assessing by titles with regard to conference papers whether a piece was a rhetorical study about a woman or women or with a focus on gender, but I wanted the search to be broader than titles that explicitly stated “women’s rhetoric” or “feminist rhetoric” to reflect the breadth of pieces within the field of women’s/feminist rhetoric (as opposed to, say, literacy studies, pedagogical studies that weren’t expressly rhetorical, etc.). The Fem/Rhet conference was only coded for instances of feminist and women’s terms, not for names or other references to confine the data set.

Google Books Ngram Viewer

I searched on the Google Books Ngram Viewer chart (allowing one to search within the vast Google Books digitized database for terms across a span of time) for usage of “women’s rhetoric” and “feminist rhetoric” (see table 1).¹² I began the search in 1950 since before that date there was no indication of any use of either term. I also added “INF” (inflection search) to the terms to display various grammatical categories of the core terms (rhetorics). Because the data set was much larger for the Ngram Viewer, I did not first start with a broad search of key terms as I did with journal article and conference paper titles. To discern any patterns for particular monikers that may have emerged, I limited to “women’s rhetoric” and “feminist rhetoric” to see what emerged with these particular monikers.

Table 1: Google Books Ngram Viewer Indicating Usage of “Feminist Rhetoric,” “Women’s Rhetoric” and “Feminist Rhetorics”



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer. Google, 2013. Web. 22 Mar. 2016

This chart indicates more usage of “feminist rhetoric(s)” than “women’s rhetorics,” with the burst in feminist rhetorics occurring in the mid- to late 1990s just as the field was burgeoning. The Viewer shows that while the “feminist rhetoric(s)” line is more dynamic and the women’s rhetorics line more

¹² It is not a perfect resource, of course, with Sarah Zhang noting some of its challenges with accuracy in *Wired* magazine.

stable, instances of feminist rhetoric are greater, though the lines move closer to one another in the 2000s.¹³ At its height in 1995, “feminist rhetorics” was used ten times more than “women’s rhetorics,” but in 2008 that disproportion had closed to four times more. Thus, within the pages of our books, usage of “feminist rhetoric” is more prevalent than “women’s rhetoric,” though the gap has narrowed.

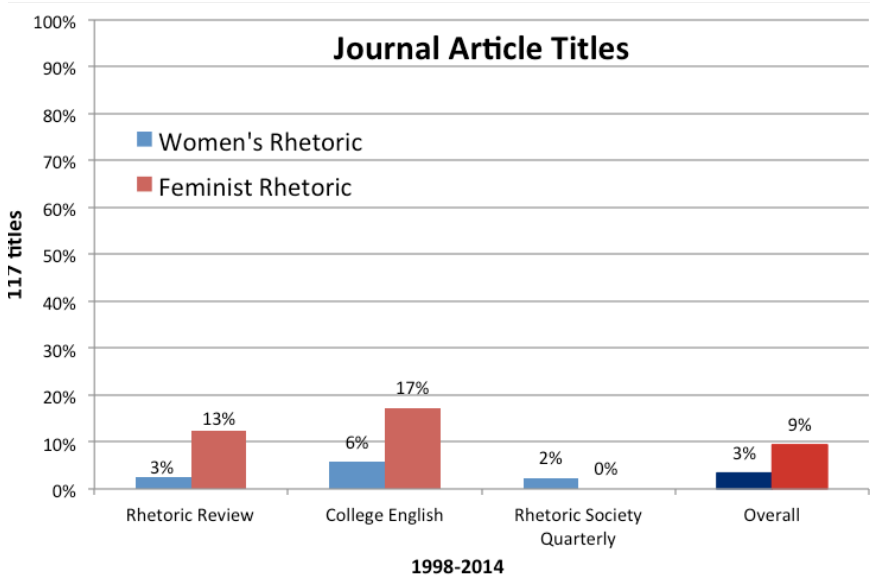
Journal Article Titles

Given that journal article titles signal the scholarly content within its pages for a particular discourse community, these titles reflect the greatest insularity in terms of audience. For this set of data, I first ran the search more broadly before narrowing to the terms “women’s rhetorics” and “feminist rhetorics.” Titles from *Rhetoric Review*, *College English*, and *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* from 1998-2014 were selected that appeared to be on the topic of women’s rhetoric or a gendered, rhetorical analysis—thus, the initial search included terms “women,” “feminist,” “rhetoric” or a woman’s name or gendered identifier indicating that the work contributed to the field in some way whether or not the exact monikers “women’s rhetoric” and “feminist rhetoric” were used.¹⁴ This broader search over the 16-year span revealed 117 titles. Within those 117 titles, I then did a narrower search to compare the number of uses of “feminist rhetoric” and “women’s rhetoric.” “Feminist rhetoric” appeared in just under 10% of the titles, and “women’s rhetoric” just over three percent (see table 2). Thus, out of 117 titles within the initial, broader search, only about 13% used one of those specific labels, suggesting that not one or two monikers are commonplace or standard.

13 As of this writing, the Viewer ends in 2008.

14 I selected the start date of 1998 because this follows the timeline of the Google Ngram Viewer and the watershed moment after *Reclaiming Rhetorica* (1995) and *Rhetoric Retold* (1997) emerged.

Table 2: Journal Article Titles



Coupled with a simple search on CompPile that indicates over twice as many hits (41) for the term “feminist rhetoric” than for “women’s rhetoric,” (16), “feminist rhetoric” as a term was used twice as much as “women’s rhetoric.”¹⁵

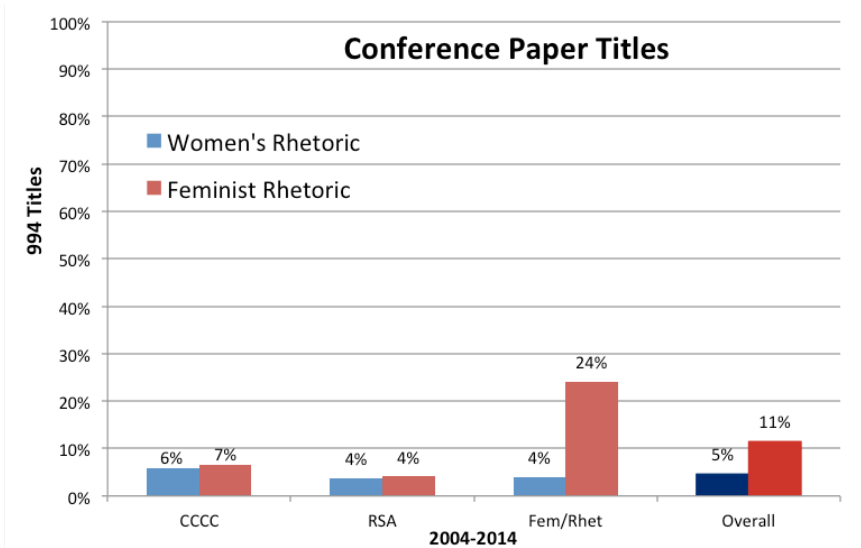
Conference Paper Titles

A tally of conference paper titles—still for a scholarly discourse community but for a potentially broader or more interdisciplinary audience—yields similar results. As with the journal article titles, the initial, broader search flagged conference paper titles indicating “women,” “feminist,” or a woman’s name or gendered issue in the title. The search spanned the decade 2004-2014 with the conferences CCCC, Feminisms and Rhetorics, and Rhetoric Society of America (the latter two being biennial) and revealed just under 1,000 conference paper titles connected to women or feminism and rhetoric in some way. Then, as with the journal article titles, to discern if any patterns emerged with particular field names, I narrowed the search from this broader set, searching for the specific terms “feminist rhetoric” or “women’s rhetoric. The ratio of titles is nearly that of the journal article titles, with “feminist rhetoric” and “women’s

¹⁵ CompPile is, according to their website, “an inventory of publications in writing studies, including post-secondary composition, rhetoric, technical writing, ESL, and discourse analysis.”

rhetoric" remaining at about 10% and 4%, respectively, showing twice the usage for "feminist" than "women." Notably, however, this statistic looks to be due to Feminisms and Rhetorics as an outlier, as the other two conferences had nearly equal usage of "feminist rhetoric" or "women's rhetoric." Fem/Rhet's use of "feminist" over "women" was nearly five to one, which is not surprising given the conference title (see table 3). Here again, the number for "women's rhetoric" and "feminist rhetoric" is less than 15% of the total number of titles that relate to women, feminism, and rhetoric in a traceable way.

Table 3: Conference Paper Titles



The search of titles from journal articles and conference papers indicates that the work being done on issues of women, feminism, gender, and rhetoric is not represented by one or even two consistent labels. The monikers "women's rhetoric" and "feminist rhetoric" together only comprise 13-15% of the total number of titles that relate to women and feminism and rhetoric in some way. The results on the one hand show a capaciousness that resists categorization, but they also indicate a dispersal that belies the collective work of a field.

Course titles

Outside of scholarly conversations and discourse communities, the work we do can be seen on our campuses via our teaching, which reaches an audience of students as well as colleagues, administrators, and parents. Course

titles are perhaps the most visible signal of our teaching, yet aside from context in *Reclaiming Rhetorica* that many contributors to the volume were enrolled in Annette Kolodny's 1987-88 graduate seminar entitled "Women Rhetoricians," I have yet to find sources that describe why course titles are named as they are (Lunsford 4).¹⁶ Like an article or presentation title, course titles ask us to distill our work to its most concise in order to signal its purpose. I wondered whether naming trends were altered by this shift in audience from scholarly to collegiate.

Such syllabus information is not easy to come by, as I quickly found when running a basic search for syllabus titles, in part because I couldn't guarantee I was seeing course titles and not descriptors within syllabi.¹⁷ Searches over a short span of time also greatly varied: a March 2016 simple Google search for ["women's rhetoric" syllabus] yielded 2,250 results, and a search for ["feminist rhetoric" syllabus] listed 2,390 results, but doing the same search in June 2015 yielded much different results, with over 5,000 to women's rhetorics and just over 1,000 to feminist rhetorics. These results, disparate as the two searches are, indicate that "women's rhetoric" is more on par with "feminist rhetoric" than with the Ngram Viewer and title searches. It seems likely that courses titled Women's Rhetoric would align with other Women's Studies or Gender Studies courses within institutions and in our current cultural climate may entice a broader range of students than a course title employing the word "feminist."

As rhetoricians we understand that it matters what we call ourselves: a label prompts assumptions of who we are as well as how others—students, scholars, the larger public—perceive the field. What's less clear is what motivates title choices in spaces that become less insular; are we still speaking to a narrower discourse community or considering broader reverberations? As social media catalogs which celebrities call themselves feminist, online conversations erupt about whether to embrace or ditch the name. Such conversations are—or should be—connected to the work we do in our classrooms and in our scholarship, as they reveal how the gendered issues to which we devote our rhetorical work get played out in mainstream culture, giving a glimpse of what may be brought to the table when students (and sometimes their parents) browse through a campus course catalog, or when an acquaintance asks us what we teach. Our on-the-ground practices may be informed richly by our theories but practically are less nuanced, and whether or how to account for

¹⁶ In general, not just in this field, such pedagogical choices aren't often visible. There are great resources on teaching in this area: see *Teaching Rhetorica*, Enoch and Jack, and others.

¹⁷ Gathering such data was ultimately beyond my scope. While there are some syllabi databases online, such as Open Syllabus Project, they allowed for a search of texts but not titles (and showed almost no results in a search).

that is important to our mission. Have we considered fully how our labels in different contexts reverberate back to our theories or at least how we relay our work to multiple publics?

All told, these “distant readings” across the Ngram Viewer and various titles don’t yield crystallizing results about naming proclivities. A field name, or even the two names I’ve focused on here, do not appear to drive title choices in any widespread way. But the gloss does suggest, not surprisingly, that terms shift slightly depending on the narrowness of the discourse community: the Ngram Viewer and journal article titles were most tilted toward “feminist rhetorics”; save the Fem/Rhet Conference, conference paper titles were more evenly split, as were course titles, suggesting that the broader the audience, “feminist” becomes less assumed to be a given. And even then, the numbers were low, with “women’s rhetorics” and “feminist rhetorics” representing only 13-15% of titles that reference women or feminism in any visible way. More generally, it appears that moniker selections appear individualistic and don’t signal a cohesive attribution to a field name. From mining these various sites where we provide titles as well as scholarship tending to these concepts, it’s unclear whether the absence of a clear trend in naming is due to our insistence on plurality or a fragmentation that comes with a lack of visibility about or reflection on our nomenclature amid the field’s fast growth or a combination of both. An alternative to “women’s” or “feminist” rhetorics that I offer next offers more capaciousness and inclusiveness and may provide greater opportunities to coalesce under an umbrella field name.

Women’s and Gendered Rhetorics as an Overarching Term

Weaving pervasively throughout theoretical and methodological discussions on women and feminism, the concept of gender can bridge the limitations of other terms. As an approach, it may have the most pliability for the reasons Jarratt unfurled back in 1989 discussed above. Bonnie Dow and Julia T. Wood in their introduction to *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Communication* in fact argue that “attention to the performative character of gender is possibly the best heuristic and most important direction(s) for research and theorizing” (xvii). As an approach, it allows for malleability, disruption, and breadth.

While many in the field have theorized the term itself, little exists about “gendered rhetorics” as a moniker, save K.J. Rawson’s “Queering Feminist Rhetorical Canonization.” He argues that the field of feminist rhetoric has, in an attempt to challenge the masculinist tradition, produced “new canons of feminist rhetorics that become exclusive of people who are not biologically born or identified women,” reinscribing normativity (45). To serve as a

corrective, he offers that in queering the field, “feminist rhetoric might also shift from studying women’s rhetorics to the rhetorics of genders,” due to its capaciousness in “work[ing] from an understanding of gender that insists on the cultural constructions and productions of gender,” comparing the move to women’s studies programs that have renamed themselves “Gender Studies” (49, 46).

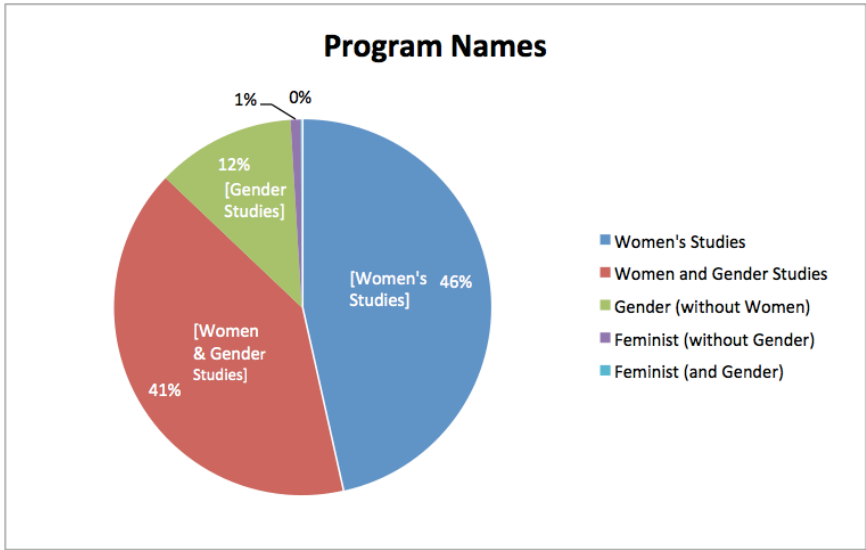
The field of women’s religious history has also taken up similar issues with regard to naming, though they argue for embracing gender while also leaving “women” intact. In the introduction to *The Religious History of American Women*, Catherine Brekus contends that women’s religious historians haven’t paid much mind to “some of the most innovative theoretical work on gender” and have also neglected challenges to the category “woman” (10, 11). While the scholars represented find the categories inextricable, they argue that “a focus on women remains essential”; in essence, Brekus echoes and reinforces the concerns of scholars I’ve cited here that while “women” is problematic, it should remain so the social and economic realities for women aren’t rendered invisible.

The strands of this argument can be seen in the changes in program names for women’s studies programs (see table 4). In doing a tally of 690 programs in the U.S., the program names break down accordingly (rounded to nearest percent):¹⁸

- 46% Women’s Studies (315 programs)
- 40% Women’s and Gender Studies (in some combination) (275 programs)
- 12% Gender Studies (without Women) (81 programs)
- 1% Feminist Studies (without Gender) (6 programs)
- .5 Feminist (and Gender) Studies

18 Program names are displayed on a website clearinghouse listing hyperlinks to U.S. and international women’s studies programs, departments, and research centers assembled by English and Women’s Studies professor Joan Korenman. During the deliberations about the name change for the Women’s Studies program on our campus, I learned about Korenman’s website. For this tally, done in 2015, a spreadsheet was used taking all names and dividing them into the following categories: “Both women and gender”; “Contains women but not gender”; “Contains gender but not women”; “Contains feminist but not gender”; “Contains gender and feminist”; “Other”; and “None.” Because my focus for this article is on the terms “women,” “gender,” and “feminist,” as it relates to the history and trajectory of our field, other terms weren’t designated in the categories (such as “sexuality,” “race,” etc.).

Table 4: Program Names



The data indicates that programs solely named Women’s Studies total under half of all programs in the U.S., with some combination of Women and Gender just behind at forty percent. Gender as a program name comes in third at nearly 12 percent. Notably, only one percent of programs have “feminist” in the title alone or with another descriptor. What I could not know from the information on the website is when program names were decided and, when applicable, changed, but the numbers support Rawson’s point that the term “gender” is significantly represented: over half of all programs, 52%, include “gender” in their title. Yet over 85% of programs still have “women” in their title in some capacity.¹⁹

It may seem an abrupt shift to remove the term “feminist,” given that “feminist rhetorics” has been one of the mainstays as a moniker, though again, it accounts for only about 10% of titles in journal articles and conference papers.

¹⁹ Recently on my own campus, using its twentieth anniversary as a *kairotic* moment, the Women’s Studies program underwent extensive discussion about re-naming. In a conversation with the Provost, Women’s Studies faculty members from a range of disciplines made a convincing case with arguments like Brekus’ that “Women” must be kept in the title alongside the new addition of “Gender.” Ultimately, we voted for the new name change “Women and Gender Studies.” There was hearty discussion about inclusion of the term “Sexuality” in the program title; while the issue is certainly connected to this article, the details are beyond the scope of this piece.

Gender, by comparison, appears in 5% of the journal article titles and 3% of conference paper titles. Further, few titles in the tally of programs just above employ the word “feminist,” a move likely related to the issues of institutional contexts. Because a commitment to activism is vital to feminism, as we are reminded in Buchanan and Ryan’s sixth descriptor of feminist rhetorics, it is crucial to be attentive to our nomenclature beyond our limited academic circles.

I see a turn to “women’s and gendered rhetorics” less as a *replacement* for “feminist rhetorics” than a larger umbrella with which to sponsor the integral and vast contributions of feminism as a lens for the field, but which can also encompass other approaches to gender analysis and women’s rhetorical practices. I agree with Dow and Celeste M. Condit’s argument about “feminist” being a suitable label for projects expressly concerned with gender justice (449). In surveying feminist scholarship, they examine how descriptors in rhetorical scholarship may both convey and cloak broad theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the enterprise. For them, “feminist” is to be used not by default but deliberately:

In our minds, the field of communication has come too far to categorize all research on women, or even gender, as feminist in its orientation. Rather, the moniker of “feminist” is reserved for research that studies communication theories and practices from a perspective that ultimately is oriented toward the achievement of “gender justice,” a goal that takes into account the ways that gender always already intersects with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. (449)

In glossing rhetorical research in communication studies, they argue that the “import of feminist rhetorical study goes beyond the evaluation of the efficacy of rhetorical strategies in particular situations and provides insight into how gender and symbol use constitute, challenge, and constrain our identities and possibilities as political actors” (451). For them, the label “feminist” is warranted through certain ideological approaches to and the rendering of research, and it would be inaccurate to conflate research about women with feminist scholarship, a tendency I noted earlier particularly in regard to historical scholarship. The implication appears to be that feminist rhetorics are a part of the larger enterprise that considers women and gender but contain certain features not applicable to or synonymous with other rhetorical endeavors by (and about) women. And with the robust definitions of feminist rhetorics provided by Buchanan and Ryan and Royster and Kirsch, scholars are now better positioned to situate the *how* of feminist rhetorics. Clearly feminist rhetorics are foundational and omnipresent to both approaches to the field stated by Jarratt and echoed many times over: recovery of women’s rhetorical practices invisible in traditional understandings of the rhetorical tradition, and analyzing

rhetorical histories, theories, and practices via gendered analyses. But “women’s and gendered rhetorics” most directly and clearly describes those paths, even as “feminist rhetorics” is the primary vehicle traversing the paths.

The recent name change to the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition also retains the name feminist while avoiding the conflation of “women’s rhetorics” and “feminist rhetorics” or confusion between the two. While feminism is certainly a descriptor of an approach, or the “how,” as I’ve shown, clearly at times it has also referenced the “who” in muddled ways. Its clear use as an adjective for scholars in the Coalition precisely signals that members identify as feminist, and scholars choose to become members, thus having agency in taking on the descriptor compared to a field name that may or may not fully and accurately represent the work. Again, while the Coalition is just one part of the field, such clarity on the “who” invites greater transparency for researchers to situate themselves as well as their projects within women’s and gendered rhetorics.

Women’s and gendered rhetorics allows for the “what” or “who” *and* the “how.” There are further advantages as well in terms of inclusivity, both within our scholarly community and beyond, efforts central to those in the field. In the 25th Anniversary issue of *Peitho*, Alexandra Hidalgo interviewed six founding members of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition and created a documentary reviewing the Coalition’s beginnings, history, and plans for the future. When asked about the Coalition’s greatest challenges, founding members featured in the film all spoke of two areas to focus attention. The first was greater inclusivity in membership, such as “men who are feminists” (Lunsford qtd. in Hidalgo). Joyce Middleton spoke of the lack of diversity as more of an issue today than during the Coalition’s inception, Kathleen Welch of racism, and Jacqueline Jones-Royster invokes working to convince all that gender, just as race, sexuality, geography, and more are elements of intersectionality that comprise the “human enterprise” (Hidalgo). While issues of diversity must be tackled on a range of fronts, a more elastic moniker with less historical freight may be fruitful. Further inviting an intersectional lens is also key—and should be more greatly encouraged—to women’s and gendered rhetorical work (see Sara Hayden and D. Lynn O’Brien Hallstein for further discussion on how a focus on gender does not negate an intersectional approach). Further, a label such as “women and gendered rhetorics” that includes feminists/feminism but also more obviously signals spaces for studies of, say, masculinity rhetorics or queer rhetorics, provides opportunities for more voices to become involved.

The second challenge named by Coalition founders was more diligence in reaching wider audiences and publics outside academia. These very audiences, I’ve sought to show, may not feel included by our current labels, particularly

when readers are left to make assumptions about what those terms signal. Aligning our field name with related fields and programs can foster interdisciplinary and programmatic connections and possibilities that may be obvious to us but less so to others.

In Closing: (How) to Coalesce?

I began researching what came to be this article out of a search for clarification: how do I answer graduate students who ask why they see two—or more—names for the scholarship and field we study throughout our course? Truth be told, however, I somewhat resist ending this piece by providing one alternative for our moniker, a resistance that comes straight from my training in this field; the scholarship's strong messages for multiplicity and collaboration are always present. Further, and significantly, the field may simply have too many tentacles to be covered by an umbrella term or even the suggestion of a singular identity, let alone the risks for reducing inclusivity or plurality in doing so. Embracing the moniker "women's and gendered rhetorics" does not fix all issues and likely raises new ones that will be brought to bear. Even so, my research into the monikers we use and why has left me more convinced that a lack of clarity and visibility about how the labels that represent our field became established undermines the goals our field has for gender justice.

"Women's and gendered rhetorics" as a term is a possibility meant to reflect our plurality while still allowing us to coalesce, which, of course is not the same as converging or always agreeing. As Cheryl Glenn and Andrea A. Lunsford remind us in "Coalition: A Meditation" (also in the 25th Anniversary issue): "'Coalition' denotes a group of distinct individuals who come together to cooperate in joint action toward a mutual goal (or set of goals)—not forever, but for however long it takes" (11). The recent name change of the Coalition of Women Scholars to the Coalition of Feminist scholars is a key example of such a move. I believe the *act* of the Coalition name change as well as the name itself work well with a move to "women and gendered rhetorics" as a moniker. To coalesce around a more malleable overarching term can help achieve our goals of greater inclusivity in terms of who participates and whom we reach outside academia.

Regardless of what further conversation occurs on the issue of naming—and a hope with this piece is to fuel such discussion—one goal that can be met is for future scholarship to be more overt and explicit in articulating its nomenclature for the field. With recent definitions available and circulating, scholars can clarify how they are positioning their work and the work of the field in the ways Dow and Condit call for. After all, as Armstrong and Fontaine argue, "By naming something, one actively carves out a space for it to occupy, a space defined by what one values...and by how it appears to be like or unlike

other parts of one's world view" (7-8). As our assumptions are shared more overtly, our commitment to multiplicity and expansiveness is more strongly revealed and reinforced.²⁰

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²⁰ I'm grateful to Betsy Flowers, Theresa Gaul, Ann George, and two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback on drafts of this piece, as well as Jen Wingard for her editorial care.

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About the Author

Charlotte Hogg is Associate Professor of English at Texas Christian University, where she recently completed a decade of writing program administration and teaches courses in women's rhetorics, composition theory and pedagogy, creative nonfiction, and first-year composition. She wrote From the Garden Club: Rural Women Writing Community (U of Nebraska P, 2006), co-authored Rural Literacies, with Kim Donehower and Eileen E. Schell (SIUP 2007), and co-edited Reclaiming the Rural: Essays on Literacy, Rhetoric, and Pedagogy, also with Donehower and Schell (SIUP 2012), with work also appearing in Rhetoric Review, Puerto del Sol, and elsewhere. Her current book project, "Sorority Rhetorics: Constructing Values, Creating Sisterhood," investigates rhetorics of belonging, and she and Shari Stenberg are working on a co-edited follow-up volume to Available Means.