

## **What We Talk About When We Talk About Women: Descriptions of Women Journalists in Historical Studies 1974-2023**

### **ABSTRACT:**

This paper examines histories of women journalists published in our field's two leading journals, *American Journalism* and *Journalism History* to understand how these women and their work have been described by historians like us throughout the course of their publication. This paper argues that much like the women journalists they study, many historians of women journalists have infused their work with "benevolent sexism," a term that describes seemingly positive, yet covertly diminishing language reflective of the neoliberal, individualist, merit-based feminism many female academics have adopted to fit in with a male-dominated academy. Through a sociolinguistic analysis of 95 journal articles published about historical women journalists, this paper identifies systemic problems in how we write about women, and offers practical solutions to improve our work going forward.

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