

LI CHEN: INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN THE MATILDA EFFECT AND ANGLO-DOMINATED KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the work of Li Chen and emphasize—for English-speaking audiences—the depth and breadth of Chen’s contributions to the distance education narrative. Li Chen is a visionary in distance education research and an influential advocate for the modernization of China’s higher education system. However, it is understandable that readers of English-based distance education publications might be unaware of her contributions. We find Li Chen at the crossroads of the Matilda effect (the absence of women’s voices from artistic, literary, and scientific narratives; Rossiter, 1993) and Anglo-dominated knowledge production. The Matilda effect and the absence of non-English speaking researchers from global discussions (Swale, 2004) are unfortunately well-established trends in distance education research. Finding oneself a casualty of either one of these phenomena might resign even the most prolific researcher to obscurity; even worse, finding oneself at the intersectionality of these would all but assure one’s absence from the research narrative. Chen’s research contributions have touched almost all areas of distance education including its epistemological and ontological underpinnings, the type and necessity of supporting ecosystems, and the importance of quality assurance. Chen’s work in connectivism and interaction have also served to further our philosophical and pragmatic understanding of distance education in practice. While Chen’s pioneering contributions are integral in Chinese distance education academia, her work has much to offer to other parts of the world as well. Diminishing the language barrier can assist in mitigating the Matilda effect on this outstanding academic.

Keywords: Matilda effect, women researchers, distance education, connectivism, anglophone knowledge production, intersectionality