

MITIGATING THE MATILDA EFFECT ON CHARLOTTE (LANI) NIRMALANI GUNAWARDENA: BRIDGING THE DISTANCE IN LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to bring voice to the work of Charlotte (Lani) Nirmalani Gunawardena, an underrepresented female trailblazer who has greatly contributed to the field of distance education (DE) and online distance learning (ODL) throughout her career. This paper explores her educational experiences, research interests—particularly in the areas of increased access to higher education, culture, social presence, and instructional design in connection to DE and ODL. It highlights her many contributions to this field and, this paper shares proud moments of her career to date—in her own words. This paper aims to pronounce Gunawardena’s contributions by illuminating her dominant work in the sociocultural context of online learning, social presence theory, and culturally inclusive instructional design.

Keywords: Increased access, social presence, instructional design, sociocultural, online distance learning, Matilda effect, Charlotte Nirmalani Gunawardena