MITIGATING THE MATILDA EFFECT ON STARR ROXANNE HILTZ: A SUPERLATIVE EARLY ONLINE LEARNING RESEARCHER

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ABSTRACT

The *Matilda effect* refers to the systematic under-recognition of women's accomplishments in scientific fields (Rossiter, 1993), which we propose extends into additional fields coded male within our culture, such as educational technology and distance education. In the current paper, we attempt to reverse the Matilda effect by bringing to light the accomplishments of an early female online learning researcher, Starr Roxanne Hiltz, whose work spans the fields of information and computing technology, sociology, online learning, and beyond. We briefly review Hiltz's biographical background before exploring her major achievements, which include her 1978 publication of a seminal work, *The Network Nation*. Named the best technical-scientific publication of the year by the Association of American Publishers, *The Network Nation* is based on Hiltz's extensive research with one of the world's first computer conferencing systems and its use by academic scientific communities. This exploration of virtual communities, and in particular Hiltz's focus on their social-emotional and psychological elements (rather than technological affordances), was arguably the first research of its kind. Subsequent publications further explore computer-mediated communication, online communities, and online learning; in fact, Hiltz was the creator of the world's first functional "virtual classroom"—what we would now call a learning management system. We conclude that Hiltz's omission from histories of online learning, as well as standard textbooks and other works focused on distance education, provide evidence of the Matilda effect within this field.

Keywords: Unconscious bias, Matilda effect, women researchers, distance education, educational technology, computer-mediated communication, online learning