

Walking the Path of Women's Empowerment



**WOMEN'S
HISTORY
MONTH**

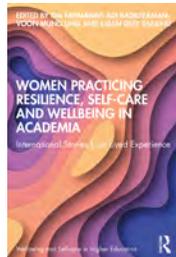
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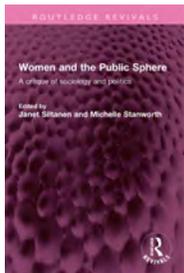
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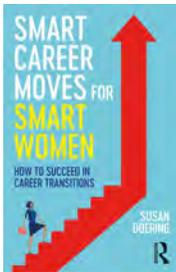
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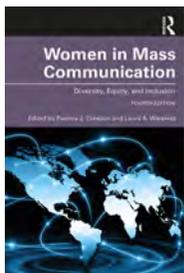
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1

“CITIZENSHIP DIVAS” OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

Black Female Intellectuals and the Complexities of Performance

In September 1858, formerly enslaved Black female intellectual Sojourner Truth held a series of anti-slavery meetings in Indiana. Her audience at one of these gatherings was made up of several pro-slavery Democrats. As the meeting came to a close and people began to leave one of the audience members, Dr. T.W. Strain requested that

the large congregation “hold on” [as] a doubt existed in the minds of many persons present respecting the sex of the speaker, and that it was his impression that a majority of them believed the speaker to be a man.¹

This conclusion had been reached on account of her voice, which, many had surmised was too deep to be that of a woman. Strain insisted that in order to prove her sex, Truth should “submit her breast for the inspection of some of the ladies present, that the doubt might be removed by their testimony.”² Truth’s agency at this moment was pivotal as she refused the “delicacy” of discreetly providing proof of her female-ness to a small number of women. Instead, she demanded that she proved her credibility as a Black woman to the whole congregation, for as she reminded them, “it was not her shame that she uncovered her breast before them, but to their shame.”³

Like Sojourner Truth, the Black female intellectuals discussed in this chapter all presented a performance of Black womanhood in the 1850s and 1860s America that was counter to that of the accepted racial and gendered representations bound up their intersectional identity as both Black and female during these times. This chapter will consider how some Black female intellectuals confronted and disavowed such racial and gendered tropes, challenging their audience to confront their own gender prejudices and racial bigotries around Black women

and their intellect. Using Berlant's "diva citizenship" as a framing concept, the chapter's central focus will be on women who were active in the public sphere as activists and campaigners and therefore demonstrated their performance as so-called "divas" in these spaces. It will begin by exploring the racial stereotypes of Black womanhood in the era and how this had been part of the White racial consciousness from the colonial era onward. It will then think through Berlant's idea of diva citizenship, reflecting on how women like Truth embodied such sentiments, as illustrated in the opening pages of this chapter and other instances detailed, especially in her use of the American legal system. It will then move to consider other Black female intellectuals Frances E.W. Harper, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and Harriet Tubman. Although very different from Truth's acts of "diva citizenship," all of these women enacted, in particular instances, performances of Black womanhood that challenged the misogynistic and racist culture of the nineteenth-century United States. Through the dissonant performances of the Black female body, then, these women began to develop a collective oppositional argument to the dominance of elite White ruling men, aiming to challenge the ignominies of the ideologically shaped hegemonies of nineteenth-century American culture.

In addition to employing Berlant's conceptual ideas, Brittney C. Cooper's arguments regarding embodied discourse are also central to the chapter. Cooper argues that Black female intellectuals of the late nineteenth and through the twentieth century employed "embodied discourse . . . a form of Black female textual activism wherein race women assertively demand the inclusion of their bodies . . . by placing them in the texts they write and speak."⁴ While Cooper focuses her argument on Black women post-1896, it is significant that Black female intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century and before were also employing such strategies. Women such as Truth and Harper were also clearly "seeing the Black female body as a form of possibility," utilizing it to claim rights of citizenship that were consistently denied to them.⁵ Truth used her breasts as a means to not only prove her womanhood but also in a more figurative sense to demonstrate the rights that she was due given the extent to which her Black female body had helped in the building of the nation. While such abstract arguments were likely lost on her conservative White audience in a mid-western state in 1858, it was vital to Truth, and her contemporaries, that stereotypical tropes of the Black female body were disrupted and challenged.

Stereotypes of Black womanhood during the nineteenth century were grounded in pernicious racial ideas that had been developed in the colonial years of enslavement of Africans on the North American mainland. As Jennifer Morgan has argued, accounts of European male travelers to Africa in the seventeenth century engaged in establishing discursive narratives that would define both the Continent and its people as vastly inferior to those in Europe.⁶ This was a transatlantic discourse that developed over the later colonial and early national period in the Americas to ensure that Black female sexuality was accorded value only in terms of the financial gains that the White propertied elite would gain from it.

Measures passed by various assemblies in colonial British North America during the late seventeenth century regulated Black people’s and women’s (enslaved or free; White or Black) sexuality and determined the reproductive uses to which enslaved women would put their bodies.⁷

Defined by White society through the functions that their bodies served for their enslavers and the economic foundations of a newly developed Republic, racial slavery in North America was, by the post-Revolutionary period, justified through stereotypes of Black people (enslaved and free) predicated on arguments pertaining to their savagery, immorality, and a childlike status of dependency. These racial ideologies gained legitimacy through Enlightenment and pseudo-scientific theory on African inferiority and savagery, offered by the likes of Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787).⁸ Racial tropes associated with Black women in such work marked them off from White society and developing ideals among the propertied White elite around ideals of womanhood.⁹ By the early nineteenth century, notions of White womanhood served to bolster the system of slavery as White female purity was contrasted to the alleged sexual depravity of the Black enslaved woman.

As status was legally inherited through the mother’s line of descent, being born to a free Black woman provided a modicum of security to her immediate descendants and subsequent generations. Numbers of free Blacks increased in the northern states following the American Revolution with its central ideals of liberty and fraternity seemingly contradicted by the existence of racial slavery on the North American continent. As Wilma King argues, “the Revolutionary War ideology was responsible for the largest increase in the free population when states north of Delaware either ended slavery or made provisions for gradual emancipation.” Indeed, by the start of the Civil War, women constituted over 50% of the free Black population, ensuring their own and their family’s well-being through working outside of their homes in a variety of mostly service-industries roles including sewing, laundering clothes, and midwifery. Many others went into domestic service, including Black female intellectuals such as Maria W. Stewart and Frances E. W. Harper, thus competing for employment with immigrant Irish women, particularly in the urban centers of antebellum New York and other major cities.¹⁰

Yet, the privileges of freedom and subsequent entry into the free labor market on the part of Black women did not mean that the northern states were absent discourses of anti-Black racism and racial discrimination. In order to impress notions of “otherness” in relation to the Black populations of the United States, the popular press of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century published derogatory cartoons and illustrations of them, produced as part of a series or published in newspapers such as *Harpers Weekly*. These emphasized particular facial features, such as the nose or the hair, and further racialized them. Such images worked as an affront to ideals of morality, respectability, and propriety – key to White America’s aspirations of self, regardless of class. As Patricia Hill Collins has argued, these representations “shape[d] consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies.”¹¹

Thus, when the Senate passed the second Fugitive Slave law as part of Henry Clay’s compromise of 1850, making the north complicit in slavery despite its illegality in most of the northern states, such depictions played a part in maintaining support – albeit tentatively – for such an act. Similarly, when Chief Justice Taney delivered the majority opinion in the Supreme Court’s decision in *Scott v. Sandford* in 1857, declaring all those of African descent in the United States “non-citizens,” notions of otherness were central to this legal ruling.¹² While increased sectionalism between the northern and southern states over the issue of state rights and the expansion of slavery was clearly visible by this point, it bears stating that one of the three branches of government in the United States (laying within the structural domain of power) had legally codified Black people as non-citizens and without rights.

While hegemonic discourses of race and racial difference were central to shaping beliefs and attitudes regarding Black people in the United States during this era, ideas around gender conventions and models of “appropriate behaviour” regulated by sex and class privileges were also central to shaping the patriarchal and racial structures of nineteenth-century America. The Revolutionary period’s embodiment of “Republican womanhood,” exemplifying White womanly civic virtue in their role as both wife and mother, shifted to an explicit focus on the domestic setting as the emerging industrial order of the early national period saw an increasingly separate function between the workplace and home. Gender ideologies were used to demarcate the spheres of home and work life, with women alone acquiring, at least ideologically, the role of the angel of the household. Ministering to the physical, moral, and spiritual needs of both husband and children in the carefully crafted spaces of the nineteenth century, home was now understood as the civic and moral duty of the wife and mother. Embodied in the ideal of the “true woman,” who had matured from her republican sister in the Revolutionary era, the “true woman” became the moral guardian of the nation through her duties in the domestic spaces of the antebellum home.¹³ This ideal of womanhood was held aloft as the epitome of what women should and could be, regardless of whether class or race (or both) excluded one from aspiring to this.

While this model of womanhood was raised above all others in the ideological apparatus of the new Republic, it also ensured that women had no formal political or legal power. As Linda Kerber points out: “Women were to contain their political judgments within their homes and families; they were not to bridge the world outside and the world within . . . She was a citizen but not really a constituent.”¹⁴ Yet, when Kerber references “women” in the aforementioned quote, she is discussing White women of a certain class and race, which entitled them to the privileges of citizenship but not the rights of speaking publicly or privately, so it seemed at least, on political matters. Yet, White, educated women such as Angelina Grimké, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton did enter the political arena as much as their “rights” would allow. While unable to vote, they went one step beyond serving as the nation’s moral conscience, speaking out on public platforms of temperance, anti-slavery, and women’s rights. Joelle

Million argues that because public speaking was “a political tool reserved for public leaders,” the women who assumed the right to speak on a public platform to try and “influence public thought through public address . . . challenge[d] a long tradition of masculine exclusivity.”¹⁵ The consternation caused by Sarah and Angelina Grimké’s antislavery speeches in the early 1830s delivered to biracial audiences of both women and men on the public platform of antislavery activism was less because of *what* they said, and much more to do with their contravention of accepted gender norms that discounted women from speaking in public. Congregational ministers, in particular, condemned the actions of the Grimké sisters given the God-given order of society, whereby they “assumed the place of man as public reformer,” and supposedly violated her feminine nature.¹⁶

While White female reformers such as the Grimké sisters were met with ridicule and hostility in their public engagements, Black women who spoke on the platform of antislavery, women’s rights, and Black civic justice were doubly discredited as both a woman and a Black person. The challenges of maintaining participation in the reform movements of the period for women such as Maria W. Stewart and Frances E. W. Harper were therefore different from those of their White reforming sisters such as the Grimkés. These women experienced a racially hostile environment not just in the venues of the cities and towns where they spoke but also in the public spaces of these places and in their life experiences more widely.

Maria W. Stewart’s intellectual fires were sparked following the death of her beloved husband James W. Stewart in December 1829 after only three years of marriage. Maria was 25 years old when her husband died at the age of 50.¹⁷ Maria’s senior by quite a lot, James had served in the War of 1812 as a seaman and thereafter established himself in Boston as a shipping agent “engaged in outfitting whaling and fishing vessels.”¹⁸ Although James’s first marriage, he entered into the union with Maria having had at least one, but possibly two daughters, born outside marriage to another woman.¹⁹ Thus, on his death, Maria, as the central beneficiary in his will, would have expected to live comfortably, providing for herself and James’s daughters. However, this was not to be and a protracted court battle would run until 1832, the outcome of which left her with virtually nothing as his widow.²⁰ Aside from the deep grief she must have experienced at her husband’s sudden and untimely death, it also prompted her to consider the discriminatory legal practices that saw her bereft of her deceased husband’s substantial property holdings and the income that would have accrued from this. Angry at this injustice and virtually penniless, Maria must have recalled the words of fellow Black Bostonian’s David Walker’s incendiary *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of World* (1828) with no small degree of incredulity given her current predicament:

In this very city when a man of color dies, if he owned any real estate it most generally fell into the hands of some white person. The wife and children of the deceased may weep and lament if they please but will be kept smug enough by its white possessor.²¹

Stewart and David Walker were firm friends and intellectual associates, living and working in Boston at the same time, attending events at the African Meeting House, and frequenting the same social and intellectual circles. Yet despite this, it is Walker, as a Black man, who is most renowned for his radical activities, lectures, and pamphlets excoriating anti-Black racism, the system of slavery, and White racial supremacy. Although Stewart was undoubtedly influenced by Walker and his fiery rhetoric grounded in Biblical injunctions, her intellectual labors around racial rights and the equality of women within 1830s Boston and beyond need to be considered much more seriously on its own merits.

When Stewart made her rousing speech at Franklin Hall in 1832, outlined in the Introduction, and Sojourner Truth shamed her Indiana audience in 1858, as detailed earlier, these women were engaged in what literary scholar Lauren Berlant has named "diva acts of citizenship."²² Berlant argues that such acts suspend the dominant narrative, allowing for subaltern political activism through a reinterpretation of the accepted version of history. In the process, as she points out:

[S]he re-narrates the dominant history as one that abjected people have once lived *sotto voce*, but no more; and she challenges her audience to identify with the enormity of suffering she has narrated and the courage she has had to produce, calling on people to change the social and institutional practices of citizenship to which they consent.²³

Sojourner Truth's act of speech coupled with her disrobing in front of an all-White audience was not only courageous and dignified but also presented a form of truth-telling in relation to the bodily exploitation that Black women endured, free or enslaved. Her White audience attempted to shame her Black female body through an act completely at odds with the ideals of (White) feminine decorum and respectability. Yet, it was her audience's shame that Truth capitalized on, not only through the demand that a woman bare her breasts but also by reminding them of the importance of the Black female breast in the (re)productive labor of the nation:

Sojourner told them that her breasts had suckled many a white babe, to the exclusion of her own offspring; that some of those white babies had grown to man's estate; that, although they had sucked her colored breasts, they were, in her estimation, far more manly than they (her persecutors) appeared to be; and she quietly asked them, as she disrobed her bosom, if they, too, wished to suck!²⁴

Truth's stark reminder to her assumedly stunned White audience concerning her own role in the (re)productive life of the nation, spoke for countless numbers of enslaved women who had served as wet-nurses for their enslaver's infants. As Emily West and Rosie J. Knight have argued, "[w]et-nursing is a uniquely gendered kind of exploitation, and under slavery it represented the point at which

the exploitation of enslaved women as workers and as reproducers literally intersected.”²⁵ Women like Mary Robinson, enslaved in Alabama, acted as wet-nurse to her enslaver’s 15 children, because, as her son Jeff Calhoun explained, the master’s wife “was no good to give milk.”²⁶ Veiled references to using enslaved women as “nurses” or “nursemaids” in slaveholding women’s correspondence may have indicated that these women also served as a wet-nurse. In one such example, enslaver Sarah Hicks Williams’s sister-in-law provided her with a replacement *nurse* for her six-month-old baby daughter, Lilly, while she was staying with them for a few weeks. Hicks Williams’s slaveholding niece, Harriet, also did the same. As Sarah recounted in a letter to her parents in February 1855, “Harriet immediately provided me with a nurse while visiting her, and the Dr’s sister with another while I am here, and as I go backwards & forwards you may imagine me.”²⁷ Sarah’s remarks reveal the callousness with which she used and abused enslaved women’s bodies to provide nourishment for her infant daughter. Truth’s stark rebuke to her Indiana audience challenged them to consider Black women’s role in the ongoing history of the American republic.

Historian Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers calls attention to the market for enslaved wet-nurses in the slaveholding south, with sale notices for these women published in slave-trading cities such as New Orleans, Louisiana, and Charleston, South Carolina.²⁸ As Jones-Rogers points out, enslaved mothers’ breast milk was, in the context of the slaveholding south, something that could be bought and sold as a commodity in an increasingly niche market. In addition, it demanded that sellers (and, subsequently, enslavers too) “recognized these women’s ability to suckle as a form of largely invisible yet skilled labor.”²⁹ Jones-Rogers deftly links enslaved women’s breast milk to the cotton plant, in the context of the slaveholding south, both “a product of nature that enslaved people cultivated and produced and white southerners sold.”³⁰ In their nurturance of White southern children, enslaved women ensured that many would “grow up to serve critical roles in the expansion of slavery into the West and Deep South, as well as the exponential growth of southern cotton cultivation in these regions.”³¹ It is this invisible and taken-for-granted skilled (re)productive labor that enslaved women were forced to undertake that Sojourner Truth audaciously called attention to in Indiana and defiantly demanded that her audience take note.

Sojourner (Figure 1.1) was born into slavery in Ulster County, New York State as Isabella Baumfree in about 1797 although the exact date of her birth and location are a little hazy. As Nell Irvin Painter has so pointedly remarked, “No one wrote down and kept information of where or when she was born, because no one who could write could have anticipated that an enslaved baby would become an American legend.”³² Her parents James and Elizabeth were enslaved to the Dutch-descended slaveholder Colonel Johannes Hardenburgh, a field officer under George Washington in the Continental army during the Revolutionary war. Hardenburgh was evidently keen to make a profit from slavery, and Elizabeth was “the mother of some ten or twelve children, though Sojourner is far from knowing the exact



FIGURE 1.1 Sojourner Truth, carte-de-visite, Detroit, 1864, three-quarter length portrait, standing, wearing spectacles, shawl, and peaked cap, right hand resting on a cane, Detroit, 1864. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

number of her brothers and sisters . . . She was privileged to behold six of them while she remained a slave.” The two infants that immediately preceded her in age – Nancy who was 3 and Michael who was 5 – were kidnapped by traders working for the Hardenburgh family and sold.³³ When Hardenburgh died sometime in the early 1800s, her parents and their children, including her, were bequeathed to his

son Charles. On Charles’s own death in 1808, however, Sojourner was put up for auction and sold for \$100 to John Nealy, of Kingston, Ulster County, New York, thus separating her from both her remaining siblings and parents.

Her time with the Nealys was one of intense suffering not helped by the language barriers between herself, as a conversant in Dutch, and the Nealys who only spoke English. It was the first time she had been removed from her family which grieved her immensely; it was also the first time she had experienced the mistress as a voice of authority and their complicity in the system of slavery, with Mistress Nealy’s anger and frustrations over their language barrier being evident from the start. It was also the first time that she had ever been whipped.³⁴ The complexities of ownership, power, and sheer brutality integral to the slave system across North America that Black bodies were subject to were painfully evident to Sojourner at this very moment. That from this point in 1808 she articulated her life with war-like metaphors is suggestive of not only the hardship and suffering she experienced but also her tenacity in the face of these struggles. Remaining with the Nealys for about a year she was sold twice thereafter, finally in 1810, at the age of 12, she was sold to John Dumont of Kingston. There she remained for 16 years, with John and his wife Sally. Subject to the barbarities of enslavement from the moment of sale to the Dumonts, including abuses of power and exploitation, both physically and sexually, at the hands of her enslavers, Sojourner passed through her adolescent years and puberty. She subsequently married one of Dumont’s enslaved men, Thomas, and bore five children between 1815 and 1826, including Diana (c. 1815), Peter (1821), Elizabeth (1825), Sophia (1826), and the fifth “perhaps named Thomas, [who] may have died in infancy, or childhood and may have been born in between Diana and Peter.”³⁵

Arguably, Sojourner’s first act of challenging systems of racial inequality, and therefore embodying an act of diva citizenship, was in setting her own terms of freedom. Slavery was abolished in New York State on 4 July 1827: all those born before 1799 received unconditional freedom. However, any enslaved people born after this date, Sojourner’s children included, were subject to a further period of indenture until they reached the age of 28 for men and 25 for women. By this ruling, Sojourner was legally free in July 1827. John Dumont had previously promised that he would free her the year before in 1826; however, he reneged on this agreement, citing lost labor on account of her injuring her right hand after the arrangement had been made.

Using New York’s legal ruling around slavery’s abolition and Dumont’s previous assurances, however, Sojourner set the terms of her own freedom. She determined that “she would remain quietly with him [Dumont] only until she had spun his wool.”³⁶ She subsequently left her enslavers in the winter of 1826. This was seven months before State abolishment but five months after Dumont had promised her freedom. Calling on the deep religious conviction she had, greatly influenced by the second Great Awakening and the more caring and compassionate Methodist God to that of the Calvinist Deity of her

parent's generation, she left her husband, Thomas, and three children, taking only the baby, Sophia, with her. In Painter's assessment of Sojourner's act of self-liberation, she argues that

She left slavery with the Dumonts when *she* thought the time was right; she freed herself from fear through a discovery of Jesus' love and, empowered by her new religious faith, she broke out of the passivity of slavery by using the law toward her own ends.³⁷

This was not the only time that Truth would use the legal system to challenge systems of racial injustice. Truth's second act of diva citizenship would involve the reclaiming of her son, Peter, who had been sold out of New York, after Dumont had sold him to one of his relatives, Dr Gedney. Peter was subsequently sold again to Gedney's brother-in-law, at the age of 5 or 6, and taken to Alabama, contrary to New York State law. Sojourner's resolution on hearing this was to "find the man who had thus dared, in the face of all law, human and divine, to sell her child out of the State [and to] bring him to account for the deed."³⁸ This was a bold and daring declaration for a formerly enslaved woman, who was excluded from the privileges of citizenship on the basis of her race, gender, and former status as an enslaved laborer. Yet, with an unshakeable faith in the judicious power of God, coupled with the emotional, practical, and financial support of the Quaker community in Ulster County, including two prominent Dutch lawyers, Truth filed a complaint with the Grand Jury of Ulster County in 1827.

It took time to reclaim Peter, who wasn't recovered until the spring of 1828, over a year after Truth filed her complaint. Peter's Alabama enslaver, Fowler, was hardly likely to relinquish his enslaved property without a fight. Peter was returned to his mother, yet the physical traumas of the past year were evident, as she recounted the memory of her horror when she realized that "from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, the callosities and indurations on his entire body were most frightful to behold." The emotional and psychological impact on her son would have been profound.³⁹ Indeed, Peter's "soul murder" experiences of slavery were akin to his mother's as a child, with "sexual abuse, emotional deprivation, and physical and mental torture."⁴⁰ Indeed, Truth's recovery of Peter by age 7 ensured that she could at least now shield him from the worst abuses of the system. He was relieved of serving further years of his indenture and at least now could claim his status as free alongside his mother. To reclaim her son, Truth chose to employ the legal structures of the country that had for so long worked to codify the structures of racial slavery on the North American mainland. In doing so, she demonstrated formidable mental courage and tenacity. Yet, she also skillfully communicated her understanding of the laws around the trafficking of enslaved people and when those laws were broken. Sojourner Truth's "diva act of citizenship" in her act of legal reclamation of her child challenged the

Dumont–Gedney–Fowler family, the county of Ulster, and the state of New York to act in accordance with the laws of New York State.

Sojourner was active at several antislavery and women’s rights conventions across the Northeast and Western states during the 1850s, probably her most famed at the Women Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851. Yet, she tirelessly participated in countless other meetings for such causes. For example, she was listed as a participant at the Ninth Annual Meeting at the Western Antislavery Society Convention, Mount Union, Ohio, in early Fall, 1851. Here, she was described as participating in an “eloquent discussion” of the Resolution passed, which swore to

press on in our moral warfare against Slavery as now existing in this country, until the last slave shall sing his song of deliverance, amid the broken and shivered ruins of this nation’s government, and religion, or in the temples and groves of a repentant people who have learned to do justice, love mercy, and joyfully obey the laws of Nature and the dictates of humanity.⁴¹

Her forthright and impassioned speeches came from the heart of her experiences as one who had experienced the brutalities of slavery as an enslaved woman. She drew large crowds who came to not only hear what she had to say but also have sight of this formerly enslaved woman who, at nearly six feet tall, with her “deep, guttural, powerful voice” must have been a commanding figure in the room.⁴² In a letter to *The Liberator* in September 1854, White abolitionist Joseph Merrill recounted the series of meetings that Truth had held in Danver’s Port, Massachusetts. He reported that “Her meetings were well attended, especially the Sunday evening meeting, when the house was crowded to its utmost capacity.” The numbers of people drawn to hear her speak were explained by Merrill in terms of the command she had over the room: “It is truly wonderful with what power this *unlettered slave mother* . . . appeals to . . . hearts and consciences.”⁴³ Merrill’s patronizing tone toward Truth’s illiteracy aside, his account here illustrates a woman who knew how to hold the attention of a room, with both what she was saying and her accomplished performance that evidently belied her “unlettered” status as a former slave and woman.

In her interview with Truth for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1863, White abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe, famed author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), provided an image of Truth which, while evoking awe and admiration, simultaneously relied on ideals of savagery and heathenism. As Truth entered the room, Stowe recounted that

a tall, spare form arose to meet me. She was evidently a full-blooded African, and though now aged and worn with many hardships, still gave the

impression of a physical development which in early youth must have been as fine a specimen of the torrid zone.⁴⁴

Well-grounded in the racialist tones of White abolition, Stowe continued with a description of Truth containing racial signifiers that confirmed to her mostly White readers that Truth was the "exoticized other":

I do not recollect ever to have been conversant with anyone who had more of that silent and subtle power which we call personal presence . . . In the modern Spiritualistic phraseology, she would be described as having a strong sphere. Her tall form, as she rose up before me, is still vivid to my mind . . . On her head, she wore a bright Madras handkerchief, arranged as a turban, after the manner of her race. She seemed perfectly self-possessed and at her ease, – in fact, there was almost an unconscious superiority, not unmingled with a solemn twinkle of humor, in the odd, composed manner in which she looked down on me.⁴⁵

Stowe's vivid description of Truth as a "full-blooded African" is enhanced by her evocation of images of voodooism and conjuration – religious beliefs and magical practices rooted in Africa. Truth's *self-possession . . . silent and subtle power . . . tall form* were all used by Stowe to define Truth as almost otherworldly, or at the very least not suited to a model of womanhood that nineteenth-century White America would understand.

In later conversations, Truth would refute, gently but firmly, some of what Stowe had written in this piece. In September 1864, White abolitionist and educator Sallie Holley related in a letter to *The Liberator* that when Truth was reminded of Stowe's piece on her, she responded that "Mrs Stowe got it all mixed up – making me born in Africa. I suppose she forgot; but I told her my grandmother came from Guinea, and my grandmother from Africa, and she thought it was me."⁴⁶ Far from some form of confusion on Stowe's part, however, it is evident that she stressed Truth's "African-ness" to impress on her readers ideas of savagery and heathenism relating to the "dark continent." Holley, participating in such racial tropes too, excused Stowe's supposed confusion confessing that "I do not at all wonder Mrs Stowe should have so identified her with the land of shadow and mystery, she is so unlike anything American." Distinct and un-American according to Holley and many other White abolitionists, however, it was through depictions such as these that Truth articulated a presence of self on the lecture circuit from the 1850s through to her death in November 1883. What White contemporaries of Truth, such as Stowe, neglected to consider were the ways in which Black female intellectuals of the era and since have created an oppositional politics countering racialized hegemonic discourses through laying claims to power, particularly over self-representation and bodily performance.⁴⁷



FIGURE 1.2 Frances E.W. Harper, 1898, three-quarter length portrait, standing, facing front. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Similarly to Truth, Black female intellectual Frances E.W. Harper (Figure 1.2) also employed diva acts of citizenship through her bodily performances at the podium, but in very different ways. Part of the Black intellectual movement of the nineteenth century, Harper was perhaps the most prolific Black female writer of the period. Born in 1825 to a free Black family in Baltimore, Maryland, she was raised by her maternal aunt and uncle, Henrietta and Reverend William

Watkins, from the age of 3 following her parents' death. She was educated at the Watkins Academy for Negro Youth, which her uncle had founded, and his abolitionist activity was a major influence on Harper's formative years. During young adulthood, she wrote pieces for Black newspapers, including the *Christian Recorder*, in addition to poems, short stories, and novels. Her novels included *Minnie's Sacrifice* (1869), serialized in the *Recorder*, and *Iola Leroy* (1892). Harper also entered the lecture circuit, touring the northern and western states of the United States before the abolition of slavery in 1865, and then embarking on nationwide tours during Reconstruction and beyond. Speaking and writing on the platforms of abolition, women's rights, and Black equality, Harper engaged in what Barbara Harlow defines as a "literature of resistance [which] sees itself . . . as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production."⁴⁸ Harper challenged, and in the process redefined, what had become a "common sense" understanding of how African American women were expected to live their lives during this period. Intellectuals such as Harper were therefore central to challenging the dominant hegemony of the period and creating new opportunities for resistance against what was expected of Black women of the time.

Harper's lectures during the 1850s and 1860s, performed in front of interracial audiences, were received with a mixed response. Several among her White audiences demonstrated a tone of incredulity that the woman on the platform was Black. Recounting her experiences in a letter to a friend, she wrote with a sense of sardonic exhaustion as regards the remarks of the appearance of a Black woman at the podium. Several among her White audience believed that "she must be painted" given her eloquence, at odds, they believed, with her *inferior* race. Similarly, they could not believe such intelligence and articulacy could be possessed by a woman, and similarly to accusations that Sojourner Truth was subject to, audiences questioned her gender: "you would laugh if you were to hear some of the remarks which my lectures call forth: 'She is a man,' again."⁴⁹ Yet, other aspects of her lectures received high praise. Speaking before an audience in Randolph County, Indiana, in June 1859, for example, news of Harper's impending talk had prompted much interest: "The courthouse was filled to overflowing, and the largest house that could be obtained in Farmland was too small to hold the large number that flocked to hear her." For, as the correspondent for the *Randolph County Journal* continued, "She is one of the best female speakers we ever listened to and her lectures are well received."⁵⁰ A newspaper report drawn from the war years in mid-1864, reiterated this praise for Harper, remarking that her "Lecture on the Mission of the War," "was so replete with logical reasoning and rhetorical diction, that those who heard her said it was the most masterly production they have ever listened to on the subject." Indeed, when she repeated the same lecture a few nights later, the local newspaper remarked that "seldom have we heard a more cogent, forcible, and eloquent lecture, especially by a woman."⁵¹

Harper thus confounded expectations of Black womanhood in the mid-nineteenth century by proving herself eloquent, articulate, and intelligent. Positioning

herself as an exception to the model modesty and reservedness that the ruling hegemony had employed as regards womanhood, Harper used this "exception" to demonstrate her "exceptional" capacity to have herself heard and listened to attentively and with noted praise by White audiences. White abolitionist and women's rights campaigner Grace Greenwood had attended a lecture that Harper gave in Philadelphia as part of a series, undoubtedly some time before the abolition of slavery. Greenwood's account is worth quoting at length given the apparent power not only in Harper's words but also in her "performance" on the podium:

She has a noble head, this bronze muse; a strong face, with a shadowed glow upon it, indicative of thoughtful fervor, and of a nature most femininely sensitive, but not in the least morbid. Her form is delicate, her hands daintily small. She stands quietly beside her desk, and speaks without notes, with gestures few and fitting. Her manner is marked by dignity and composure. She is never assuming, never theatrical. In the first part of her lecture she was most impressive in her pleading for the race with whom her lot is cast. There was something touching in her attitude as their representative. The woe of two hundred years sighed through her tones. Every glance of her sad eyes was a mournful remonstrance against injustice and wrong.⁵²

Greenwood's report of Harper's bodily performance conforms to ideals of nineteenth-century feminine sentimentalization, with her dignified "pleading" and delicate frame and gait.⁵³ It is accounts such as Greenwood's that have led Carla Peterson to consider Harper as occupying a "quiet" body in the White American imaginary in relation to the Black woman in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ Her professed "quietness" in terms of bodily performance would have been read as non-threatening by White America and thus non-powerful and not capable of meaningful resistance. Yet the very composed and reserved "quietness" of her composure contrasted with the powerful "loudness" of her voice, proving herself able, as she was, to throw it out over a crowd of 600, despite a full lecture tour in 1864 that saw Harper lecture nightly over the one-week course. As she noted, "Never, perhaps, was a speaker, old or young, favored with a more attentive audience. . . . My voice is not wanting in strength, as I am aware of, to reach pretty well over the house."⁵⁵ From her lecturing debut to biracial audiences in New England, she went on to counter first impressions of her "quiet body" through the Civil War and Reconstruction via her lectures and more private meetings with formerly enslaved people throughout the south, especially freed women who she encouraged to have self-respect and dignity in their working lives in the post-emancipation age:

Part of my lectures are given privately to women . . . I am going to talk with them about their daughters, and about things connected with the welfare of the race. Now is the time for our women to begin to try to lift up their heads and plant the roots of progress under the hearthstone.⁵⁶

While compassionate toward others of her race, Harper was not averse to pointing out to White Americans their crimes against her people and a reminder of their common humanity. In her speech delivered at the Eleventh National Women’s Rights Convention in New York in May 1866, “We are all Bound up Together,” to an audience of mainly White women, Harper directly criticized the histories of brutality and pain the Black race had suffered at the hands of White America and its impact on the White as well as Black populations of the United States:

We are all bound up together in one great bundle of humanity, and society cannot trample on the weakest and feeblest of its members without receiving the curse in its own soul. You tried that in the case of the Negro. You pressed him [sic] down for two centuries; and in so doing you crippled the moral strength and paralyzed the spiritual energies of the white men [sic] of the country. . . . Society cannot afford to neglect the enlightenment of any class of its members.⁵⁷

The content and performance of Harper’s speeches belied her “quiet” Black body. Countering White male hegemonic arguments about Black people, women in general, and Black women in particular, Harper challenged models of feminine passivity and intellectual inferiority through her wonderfully direct and articulate addresses to biracial audiences across the nation. In the process, she challenged white America’s exclusionary concept of citizenship through her “quiet” but persistent acts of diva-ness on a public platform.

While less known than either Truth or Harper, Black female intellectual Mary Ann Shadd Cary (Figure 1.3), journalist, editor, abolitionist, and women’s rights campaigner, was also engaged in acts of defiant diva-esque activity from her entry into Black intellectual circles in the early 1850s. Mary Ann was born the eldest of 13 children to a free Black couple, Harriet and Abraham Shadd, in Delaware on 9 October 1823. Of biracial ancestry, Mary Ann and her family “escaped the worst of slavery while living in a slave state, and benefitted from a color-conscious social system in which light skinned blacks had more status, wealth and power than their dark-skinned relatives.”⁵⁸ As Jane Rhodes, her biographer, notes though, Mary Ann’s family consciously decided to claim their identity as members of the free Black community and were active in the abolitionist movement, especially her father. Abraham D. Shadd was a prominent opponent of the American Colonization Society (ACS), founded with the aim of repatriating the formerly enslaved back to places such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. The family’s move to West Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1833 most likely saw an acceleration of their engagement with Underground Railroad activities while also providing increased levels of pseudo-freedom for the free Black communities that Delaware, as a slaveholding state, was increasingly resistant to.⁵⁹

Shadd Cary was then raised in a politically active household that understood the importance of fighting on an anti-slavery platform and challenging



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FIGURE 1.3 Mary Ann Shadd Cary, 1855–60, photographer unknown, Library and Archives Canada, accession 1960–092 NPC, Item 3622971.

the injustices faced by Black people in the United States. Self-enterprise and education were key to the Shadd family’s principles and the move to Pennsylvania allowed Abraham to have Mary educated, either privately or at a Quaker school in West Chester headed by Phoebe Darlington.⁶⁰ She subsequently went on to teach in various locales and established the first biracial school in Windsor, Canada West, shortly after her relocation there in 1852.⁶¹ Politically astute and

determined to make her voice heard, Shadd Cary made her entry into the Black public sphere through a letter to Frederick Douglass's *North Star* in March 1849. Her letter was a response to a piece by Black minister Henry Highland Garnet, focused on the "Wants of Western New York" for free Black people. Garnet insisted above all that the greatest need was to increase their religious principles, which, in his view, were severely lacking:

There are in the State of New York some sixty or seventy thousand people of color. Of this number, there are perhaps thirty thousand west of Albany. What are their religious principles? There are not more than six thousand that meet together to worship God.

Garnet concluded that a Christian Convention of "colored people and their friends" be held, arguing that "agents and missionaries be employed to go forth into the hedges and highways, and entreat these neglected ones to turn into the paths of rectitude and virtue."⁶² Shadd Cary's response vociferously critiqued Garnet's insistence that turning to God was the answer. Instead, she suggested that farming and *production* of goods should be the focus, for she argued, "The estimation in which we would be held by those in power, would be quite different, were we producers, and not merely, as now, consumers." Remarking on the numerous conventions held over the years, "whining over our difficulties and afflictions, passing resolutions on resolutions . . . yet with little progress." What was now needed, Shadd Cary declared, were "practical efforts . . . do more, and talk less."⁶³

She also delivered a scathing opinion on a "corrupt clergy" in the same piece, who, she argued, were "sapping our every means, and, as a compensation, inculcating ignorance as a duty, superstition as true religion – in short, hanging like millstones about our necks, should be faithfully proclaimed."⁶⁴ As Jane Rhodes has argued, "There were strong audacious words for an unknown black woman," and these characteristics of being bold and fearless – speaking her mind in an articulate and opinionated tone – would be a familiar feature of Shadd Cary's subsequent intellectual labors.⁶⁵ This critique of the immorality of certain ministers – those in support of the ACS, for example – would be returned to in her pamphlet of 1852 stressing the benefits of Canadian emigration, as would the themes of economic self-sufficiency, dignity in their working lives, and the value of education.⁶⁶

In the same year she was published in the *North Star*, Shadd Cary wrote a small pamphlet, "Hints to the Colored People of the North" (1849), which was highly critical of the decadence and showy displays she believed were demonstrated among free Blacks in the North. While no extant copy of the pamphlet exists, Frederick Douglass's *The North Star* contained excerpts of the work in a letter written by a friend of Mary Ann's in April 1849. The author of the letter bemoaned the lack of interest the pamphlet had aroused in Philadelphia, despite its wide circulation, surmising that this might be because "its (sic) telling too

much truth.”⁶⁷ In her 12-page pamphlet, she promised to “speak plainly and without fear,” before delivering a blistering assessment of the follies and imprudence of the free Black people of the north, who, in their attempts to emulate White people, thought

we should, as they do, make a grand display of ourselves; we should have processions, expensive entertainments, excursions, public dinners and suppers, with beneficial institutions, a display of costly apparel, and churches on churches, to minister to our vanity.

Yet, as she questioned, “How does that better our condition as a people?” Instead, as she warned readers: “There is continual criticism on our actions being indulged in contempt of us, and abuse showered lavishly upon us, by our avowed enemies and pretended friends; while our true friends are sad at heart because of our weakness.”⁶⁸ For the second time in a year, Shadd Cary had presented what she would see as several uncomfortable truths about the attitude and priorities of northern free Blacks that merited urgent attention.

Her forthright and direct manner, which never waned in her speeches and writing over the years, often brought her to the attention of Black male intellectuals of the era, not least for seemingly overstepping the boundaries of nineteenth-century ideals of womanhood. Famed Black intellectual of the nineteenth century and one of the first proponents of Black Nationalism Martin R. Delaney named Shadd Cary as a “very intelligent young lady, [yet] peculiarly eccentric,” in his 1852 work, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*. While Delaney does not provide further reasoning for his assessment of her alleged oddities, it is reasonable to assume that part of this must have stemmed from her formidable and forthright manner. She was often blunt and deemed outspoken by many of the men in the Black public sphere she associated with.

Indeed, her growing conflict with fellow abolitionist and settler in Canada West, Henry Bibb, was illustrative of her refusal to be intimidated by men who were celebrated figures in the antislavery movement. Shadd Cary and Bibb’s hostilities had developed over a few short years, beginning in 1852 and her relocation to Canada West, where Bibb had settled the year before with his wife Mary, a teacher, in Sandwich (latter day Ontario). The Shadd family had considered the question of migration to Canada as early as the 1830s, with her father Abraham debating the issues as Delaware’s representative at various conventions and meetings. He initially was not keen on the idea, opposing all colonization programs; however, when Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, it caused alarm among members of free Black communities across the United States and a flow of migrants of free Blacks and fugitives from slavery had arrived in Canada. By September 1851, following a convention in Toronto of free Black delegates who met to agree on plans for emigration to Canada, which both Abraham and Mary Ann attended, she made the decision to relocate there too.

Henry Bibb had been one of the principal organizers of the Convention. Knowing how poor educational provision was in British Canada West for Blacks migrating there and realizing Mary Ann's professional status as a teacher, he encouraged her relocation. She subsequently started teaching school in Windsor, a short distance from Sandwich. Initially, relations with the Bibbs had been warm, with Bibb writing in the November 1851 issue of his newspaper the *Voice of the Fugitive* that she was a "lady of high literary attainments." During her talk, he also delightedly noted that she had praised his newspaper "as one of the most important publications now in circulation for the elevation of our people in North America."⁶⁹ Hopes were evidently high of a congenial relationship between the Bibbs and Shadd Cary.

Yet, within the space of little over six months, the cordial relationship between them had irrecoverably broken down with personal hostilities between Mary Ann and Mary Bibb, becoming increasingly evident. Professional rivalry may have been part of the cause as both were teachers, with differing conceptions of the right environment to teach Black children. On arrival, Shadd Cary had quickly established a school for both Black and White children in Windsor, a short distance from Sandwich and the exclusive "colored school" Mary Bibb had established. In June 1852, Mary Ann wrote to Rev. George Whipple, blaming Mary Bibb for the failings of her husband, Henry, surmising that, in her view, "he might have been a great man, but it is too late now. His lady [Mary Bibb] is an incorrigible woman and rules over him and all within her influence."⁷⁰

This stinging attack, meant for nobody's eyes but Whipple, was doubtless in response to Bibb's assessment of Shadd Cary's recent publication of her pamphlet, *Plea for Emigration; or Notes of Canada West, in Its Moral, Social and Political Aspect: with Suggestions respecting Mexico, West Indies and Vancouver's Island for the Information of Colored Emigrants*, in June 1852. Initially, it was promoted in Bibb's paper, *The Voice of the Fugitive*, with a congratulatory if condescending tone. The paper had little doubt of the success of the pamphlet given "Miss Shadd[s] . . . attention to the subject, together with her ability and experience as an authoress."⁷¹ In a later June edition of the paper, Bibb again praised her efforts, having had the opportunity to read the pamphlet, although he was critical of "typographical errors" present in the piece and the "and *unusual acquaintance* with the affairs and state of society" in Mexico, the West Indies, and Vancouver's Island, questioning her evidential base. Overall, Bibb concluded that Mary Ann's *Plea* was "direct and to the point – above all it is practical."⁷²

Bibb's lukewarm endorsement of her pamphlet was unsurprising given her thoughts, expressed in the *Plea*, on the Home Refugee Society (HRS), a group that the Bibbs were key figures in. Through the pamphlet, Shadd Cary established herself as one of the central authorities on migration to British Canada West and the debates over emigration for Black America. This must have frustrated Henry Bibb given his reigning influence in the emigrationist debates on discussions pertaining to Canada West. Yet, it was her veiled attacks on the HRS that

caused these simmering tensions to reach boiling point. Established in 1852, the HRS was founded to create another Black settlement in Canada West. Bibb was the local administrator in the region, and his newspaper, the *Voice of the Fugitive*, became the Society’s official organ, promoting its cause and relating the views of its supporters. The central premise of her *Plea* was that the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in the United States had made living there untenable. Settlement in British Canada (current day Ontario), the northern neighbor of the United States, was, she argued in her pamphlet, the only safe and realistic alternative. Yet, she took direct aim at the RHS’s policy of favoring fugitives from slavery to sell their plots to, rather than free Black people, who had resettled in the region. Her *Plea* made the point that due to the Fugitive Slave Act, “those free are alike at the risk of being sent south. . . . They arrive in Canada destitute . . . but may not settle on the land of the Refugees’ Home for the accident of nominal freedom.”⁷³

Bibb responded to the criticism of the RHS through the pages of the *Voice* in July 1852, indirectly and with particular poison for Shadd Cary’s ambitions with her Windsor school. The piece implicitly suggested that she had been lying to the parents of the children who attended her school in Windsor as regards the funding she received from the American Missionary Association (AMA). He cleverly couched the item as an apology for publicizing the funds in his paper, disingenuously suggesting that advertising this was a mistake, “not knowing that she wished this information kept from the parents of the children,” themselves paying monthly fees too. Yet, now, he found himself *aggrieved* by the offence it had caused, warning that her reactions were not suited to feminine decorum: “Miss Shadd has said and written many things which we think will add nothing to her credit as a lady.”⁷⁴ Later on in the summer of 1852, Shadd Cary publicly accused the Bibbs of fraudulent behavior through the pages of the *Western Evangelist*, accusing the couple of pilfering the donated funds meant for the Refugee Home Society. Bibb and his supporters’ reaction was venomous, promising that “this noble society will march on with giant strides to its glorious objects, crushing to the dust such pygmy opposition.”⁷⁵ Acknowledging the power of the Press, Shadd Cary lamented to George Whipple in the midst of these personal printed accusations by the Bibbs, “what a vast amount of mischief a man like Mr Bibb can do with an organ of his own to insinuate and fling away the reputation of others . . . I have not a paper of my own and [must] leave the result with God.”⁷⁶

Her response was brave and brilliant. Instead of submitting to the patriarchal forces of the AMA and the Black male elite in Philadelphia, Boston, and Canada West, Shadd Cary decided she needed a mouthpiece, or organ, of her own. By March 1853, she had founded her weekly newspaper, *The Provincial Freeman*. The first issue was published on 24 March 1853 with Rev. Samuel Ringgold Ward listed as editor, Rev. Alex McArthur as commissioning editor, and a seven-member all-male “Committee of Publication.” Ringgold Ward wrote in his “Introductory” to the *Freeman* he had consented to edit the paper for one year “without fee or reward”; thereafter, it was hoped “the committee of publication

will be able to find some person much more competent than myself to discharge the duties I now reluctantly resume."⁷⁷ Yet, Ringgold Ward was serving as editor in name only. The only mention of Shadd Cary in this first edition was a seemingly insignificant line, requesting that "Letters must be addressed, post-paid, to Mary Ann Shadd, Windsor, Canada West."⁷⁸ Yet, this ostensibly simple request was indicative of the real chain of command at the *Provincial Freeman* and that all submissions would go to her as a matter of course.

Placing Ward as the figure head of the *Provincial Freeman* ensured that, at last in its formative years, the success of the paper would not be jeopardized by it being known that a woman, and a Black woman at that, was at the helm of the newspaper's operations. As Jane Rhodes has noted, "this was a familiar pattern for nineteenth-century women writers, many of whom used pseudonyms to mask their gender and shield themselves from public scrutiny." Indeed, the editorials written by Mary Ann in early issues of the *Provincial Freeman* were simply marked by an asterisk as a covert means of indicating that she was the author.⁷⁹ As Carol B. Conaway has noted, as the first Black female editor of a newspaper, Shadd Cary "entered the almost exclusive male profession of antebellum journalism and exhibited boldness that was uncharacteristic of most women at the time."⁸⁰ Tiring of anonymity and motivated by a desire to receive the recognition due, she revealed her identity as the editor of the *Provincial Freeman* in early September 1854 through the newspaper. Mary Ann was responding to a published letter from C.S. Depp addressed to "Mr M. A. Shadd" praising the newspaper's publication by "a colored man," on 26 August 1854. Her rather curt reply, placed underneath the published letter, confirmed her position as editor, surmising that the confusion must have arisen from the paper's use of initials in place of names and advising in case of future correspondence to address the editor as a woman: "the name in full, (Mary A. Shadd) as we do not like the Mr. and Esq., by which we are so often addressed."⁸¹

Such boldness was typical of Shadd Cary throughout her years of knowledge production and she was relentless, as Carla Peterson points out, in her insistence "on her right to participate in the masculine public spheres of debate."⁸² Her acts of divaship, through calling attention to – and actively criticizing – the racist thinking inherent in governance and supporting patriarchal and racial structures of North America were evident through her authorship of *Plea*, her editorship and journalistic pieces for the *Provincial Freeman*, and her ongoing and often hostile dialogue with Henry Bibb, played out in the pages of the Black press. She held her own, even in the context of the Black public sphere at conventions where she took to the floor to address fellow delegates, mostly Black men. For example, despite consternation at her presence there, her contribution to the National Convention of Colored People in Philadelphia in the fall of 1855 was met with praise by the correspondent writing for *Frederick Douglass's Paper*. Reflecting on her speech, given extended time due to the interest it produced, the correspondent admitted that:

She is a superior woman; and it is useless to deny it; and, however much we may differ with her on the subject of emigration. She obtained the floor and proceeded and succeeded in making one of the most convincing and telling speeches in favour of Canadian emigration that I have ever heard.⁸³

Her desire to claim autonomy and independence were even evident in her eventual marriage to free Black barber Thomas F. Cary in the new year of 1856. While she lived in Chatham, having relocated there from Windsor in 1853, he remained in Toronto, with his three children from a previous marriage. Although frequent visits were made back and forth, and they had two more children during the life of their marriage, as Jane Rhodes observes, “marriage did not hinder Mary Ann’s public activities.” Indeed, Rhodes continues, “it took six months before Mary Ann began to use her married name in print.”⁸⁴ Like many other women featured in this chapter, however, Mary Ann was left widowed when Thomas died unexpectedly, at the age of 35 in November 1860. They had been married just under five years.⁸⁵ From this point, her work as a teacher took on more significance as a single mother of five children with mouths to feed and rent to pay.

Yet, during the 1850s, Mary Ann’s lecturing style was remembered as engaging and she impressed her audience with the essential principles behind Canadian emigration. As William Still wrote in the *Pennsylvania Freeman* in a review of one of her lectures on the Philadelphia circuit in May 1853, “Miss Shad is well known and highly respected here, and her lectures were listened to with great interest by all whom I heard speak of them.”⁸⁶ Other reviews were less kind about her, however. An account of a meeting in September 1853, held in West Chester, Pennsylvania, of those opposed to African colonization, where both Mary Ann and her father, Abraham, were the main speakers, contained references to her undisciplined lecturing style that the author believed was explained by her age: “she appears quite young . . . Her ideas crowd upon her too fast for expression, and as a consequence she is too rapid in her elocution.” Despite this critique, however, it was still conceded that she was “a young lady of very superior talent . . . I venture the assertion that not one, white, or any other complexion, could have equalled her.”⁸⁷ Yet she was not, as Jane Rhodes reminds us, “a novice speaker – she was an experienced teacher who had addressed numerous gatherings in Canada West.” Yet, the presence of a Black female speaker at interracial gatherings alarmed many among the male elite, Black and White. Thus, Rhodes concludes, “her presence was an oddity to be explained by diminishing her age and her abilities, and by ascribing to her various feminine frailties.”⁸⁸

Over her years on the lecture circuit during the 1850s and early 1860s, Mary Ann Shadd Cary shared a platform with other Black female intellectuals of the era, including opera singer Elizabeth Greenfield, also known as the “Black Swan,” and Frances E.W. Harper, lecturing on the causes of abolition, women’s rights, and racial equality.⁸⁹ While seemingly fearless in her interactions with the Black male elite of the Intellectual circles she lectured in, she showed humility when

other Black female intellectuals were on the same ticket. For example, writing to her husband, Thomas F. Cary, probably in the mid to late 1850s, she related that Frances E.W. Harper had arrived in Detroit with Black male abolitionist William Cooper Nell. Mary Ann was gracious in her decision to let Harper take center stage in Detroit, declaring her popularity and the greater influence she would have on the cause:

the whites and colored people here are just crazy about her. She is the greatest female speaker ever was her so wisdom obliges me to keep out the way as with her prepared lectures there would be no chance of a favourable comparison.

While, as Mary Ann admitted, her reluctance to speak might have looked like jealousy, particularly given her reputation in the Press, she assured her husband that this was the reason she “puff[ed] her as anybody,” for fear of it being interpreted as resentment.⁹⁰ This respect and admiration among Black women working for the cause was mutual. At a benefit meeting in honor of Mary Ann and her “faithful services in the name of reform” in November 1855, funds were to be raised for her traveling costs and expenses over the numerous years she had lectured in the city of Philadelphia without recompense. The singer Elizabeth Greenfield’s performance at the event delighted the audience, especially since “On no previous occasion since her extraordinary acquirements and triumphs, as a Vocalist, have the citizens of Philadelphia ever had the opportunity of hearing her sing for less than 50 cts.” Yet, as abolitionist William Still, the author of the piece for the *Provincial Freeman*, recounted:

instead of singing only “too (sic) ballads,” for which a handsome sum was offered, when first invited, she very magnanimously *sung more than she is accustomed to do at her ordinary Concerts*, evidently desiring to do her full share, not only in making the occasion interesting, but likewise, in making it as beneficial to Miss S. as possible, refusing to receive any thing for her services.⁹¹

A final example of a Black female intellectual who engaged in acts of diva citizenship was Harriet Tubman (Figure 1.4). Born into slavery circa 1820 to Harriet (“Rit” or “Ritta”) Green and Ben Ross near Bucktown in Dorchester County, Maryland, most probably on the Brodess family plantation where her mother was enslaved, her parents named her Araminta. As historian Catherine Clinton observes, “‘Circa’ affixed before a birth year is one of the most common legacies of slavery,” and as was the case with Araminta’s exact birth year, unknown and unrecorded.⁹² She lived with her mother, Rit, who had been gifted to Mary Pattison, the granddaughter of Rit’s original enslaver, Athow Pattison, on his death. Mary had married Joseph Brodess in 1800, and thus Rit and her children, although technically still belonging to Mary, became part of



FIGURE 1.4 Harriet Tubman, c. 1871–76. photographer Harvey B. Lindsley, Auburn New York, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

the enslaved community at the Brodess plantation in Bucktown. Joseph Brodess died in 1803, however, leaving Mary widowed with a 2-year-old son, Edward. She subsequently married widower Anthony Thompson, whom Harriet’s father, Ben, was enslaved to. At the time of their marriage, Anthony Thompson also had a 10-year-old son, Anthony C. Thompson, whom Harriet would later be hired to as an enslaved laborer for the last two years before her self-liberation. As Jean

Humez has noted, “[v]ery likely it was at this time that when the Brodess and Thompson households were united by marriage, that Benjamin Ross and Harriet [Rit] Green Ross began to establish a family together.”⁹³ Mary Pattison died in around 1809, and subsequently her “property,” including Rit and all of her children, living, and future, was left to her son, Edward. Harriet was one of possibly 11 children that Rit and Ben counted as their own, although as Catherine Clinton points out, “no family Bible with names inscribed survived, and family records present conflicting accounts about the names and number of Tubman’s brothers and sisters.”⁹⁴ Harriet was hired out from a very early age to various enslavers as a nursemaid and at one point to a weaver and her husband, who made her watch his musk-rat traps, resulting in severe illness after wading through the coldest of waters. Her head injury, which left her with the chronic condition of what is known to be either narcolepsy or temporal lobe epilepsy, was sustained in her early teens, as a result of an overseer throwing a heavy weight at another enslaved laborer and hitting Harriet instead.⁹⁵ The young Harriet’s life therefore was one in which she was subject to the capricious whims and oftentimes gratuitous punishments of her albeit temporary enslavers.

Harriet’s family, however, were also increasingly exposed to the vagaries of the market in enslaved labor, and during her childhood, she saw two sisters sold away, explaining that they “were carried away in a chain gang – one of them left two children.”⁹⁶ The closing of the transatlantic slave trade in 1808 combined with the inexorable push westward from the early 1800 onward and the expansion of antebellum slavery gave rise to the horrors of the domestic slave trade – enslaved men, women, and children sold from the upper south to the slave markets of places such as New Orleans. Mike Tadman argues that between 1820 and 1860 the trade averaged, each decade, some 200,000 slaves, 10% of the slave population from the upper south.⁹⁷ While with local sales, family and kinship groups might remain together, or at least, as Emily West has documented, negotiate the barriers of living on separate plantations, with the interregional trade it was quite a different story.⁹⁸ With different criteria of trading categories, including children from around 8 years old to their mid-teens, mothers with offspring, young females in early womanhood, and prime adult males, the trade quickly translated itself, as Tadman asserts, “into a traffic in fragmented families.”⁹⁹ And this was so with Harriet and her family from the days of her childhood to the time she became a fugitive from slavery in 1849.

Before this, in around 1845, she married a free Black laborer named John Tubman, although little more is known about him in the historical record. Shortly after their marriage and in the belief that her mother had been kept in slavery illegally, Harriet made the bold move to hire a lawyer to look up the will of Athow Pattison, her mother’s original enslaver. As Harriet had suspected, Pattison’s will had “giv[en] the girl Ritty to his grand-daughter (Mary Patterson) to serve her and her offspring till she was forty-five years of age.”¹⁰⁰ Although the wording of this provision was open to interpretation, as the will never specified emancipation

for Rit, it could certainly be inferred that this was Athow Pattison’s desire. Her mother therefore should have been emancipated in 1834. She and her children, some of whom should have been free given that their mother would have been legally free after their birth, remained enslaved until well after Ben, Harriet’s father, had gained his freedom in 1840. The Brodess family were content to willfully neglect this provision in Pattison’s will, even when it came to light, and both Rit and her children were part of Edward Brodess’s inheritance on his mother Mary’s death in 1810. Like Sojourner Truth’s use of the legal system to reclaim freedom for her son, Harriet also employed the law to have her mother’s legal right to freedom recognized. Although Rit and her children remained enslaved, despite the legal archive testifying to her right to freedom, the impact this had on Harriet was profound and arguably drove her motivations to liberate herself and her family. Importantly, as Jean Humez argues, this example “indicates Tubman’s own interest, as a relatively young woman, in securing her family’s liberation . . . [and] the willingness of some enslaved people in the immediate prewar era to seek justice under the law.”¹⁰¹

As a fugitive from slavery, Harriet’s former enslavers, the Brodess family, regularly placed advertisements in local Maryland papers promising a financial reward for her capture and return.¹⁰² She made at least 13 illicit trips back to Maryland to help liberate other members of her family and friends. Harriet thus put her own safety at severe risk, each time facing a return to slavery and almost definite sale and separation from her beloved family, or death at the hands of the white mob intent on recapture. In a quest to remain as anonymous as possible to avoid detection in the Free states, especially after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Harriet concealed her identity behind pseudonyms, known in particular circles and in the abolitionist press as “Harriet Garrison” or “Moses.” Yet, her status as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, an elaborate network of safe houses for fugitive enslaved people, aiding their liberation from southern slavery, was legendary. Harriet was undoubtedly aware of this mythic status she had acquired among certain circles and performed her role to perfection, primarily as means to accrue funds to help finance her next rescue mission or the care of her elderly parents, whom she had brought from Maryland in 1857, and who she settled for a short while in Ontario, Canada, and then in Auburn, New York.

Much was published about Harriet’s acts of diva citizenship. Indeed, a piece in *The Liberator* recounting a meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society on 4 July 1859, named her “Moses, the deliverer.” The author’s report of Harriet’s appearance at the meeting spoke volumes as regards the admiration and awe with which she and her actions were held:

the audience . . . greeted her with enthusiastic cheers. She spoke briefly, telling the story of her sufferings as a slave, her escape, and her achievements on the Underground Railroad, *in a style of quaint simplicity*, which excited the most profound interest in her hearers.¹⁰³

Racialist tones on the part of her largely white audience were evident in the appraisal of her recollections as "quaint" and "simple." Yet, no doubt the diva-esque deeds she recounted were all the more impressive given the seemingly humble and unassuming woman that commanded their attention.

Akin to many other Black female intellectuals of the era, such as Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Harriet challenged the ACS when given the platform to do so. In one such case, documented in an August 1859 edition of *The Liberator*, she used a story to make her point. Introduced as "Miss Harriet Garrison . . . one of the most successful conductors on the Underground Rail-road," the article recounted the didactic tale she told of

a man who sowed onions and garlic on his land to increase his dairy production too he soon found the butter was strong, and would not sell and so he concluded to sow clover instead. But he soon found the wind had blown the onions and garlic all over his field.

Making the analogy to the Colonization scheme, she railed against this, declaring that although the White people had been content to let the enslaved do their hard labor, now those advocating colonization were "trying to root 'em out and send 'em to Africa. But, they can't do it; we're reoted (sic) here, and they can't pull us up."¹⁰⁴ Harriet's use of stories and proverbs in order to convey challenges to such schemes and advocate her ideas promoting social and civic justice for Black people, evidences, in Jean Humez's words, that she was "a skilled oral storyteller." And although she did not self-author her life story, Harriet was "clearly an active participant in the creation of the public Harriet Tubman," through such performances on the public platform of abolition and Black civil rights.¹⁰⁵

Friends and close associates of Harriet likewise held a deep respect and abiding reverence for her. Thomas Garrett, a White agent on the Underground Railroad, described her in such terms in a letter to Eliza Whigham of the Edinburgh Ladies Emancipation Society, which raised funds through their activities to send to American abolitionists like Garrett to aid them in their support of enslaved people who became fugitives. In a letter to Eliza sent in mid-December 1855, Garrett introduced Harriet as a "noble woman," but added, perhaps to surprise or impress her, "a black one, in whose veins is not a drop of Caucasian blood." After recounting several of her daring rescues, Garrett surmised that "Were a *white person*, man or woman, to peril life and health, & spend everything he or she earned in such noble and disinterested cause, the name would be trumpeted over the land . . . I can assure you I am proud of her acquaintance."¹⁰⁶ Garret's pride in Harriet was shared by others within the anti-slavery movement, Black and White. Politician and leading anti-slavery proponent, Gerrit Smith, wrote to Sarah Bradford on the announcement of her plans to pen Harriet's life story, recollecting her visits to his family home with warmth and a confidence that all she related about her experiences were true: "she has a rare discernment, and a deep and sublime

philanthropy.”¹⁰⁷ Wendell Phillips, a leading abolitionist campaigner, recounted in 1868 that before the War “few men who did . . . for the colored race, than our fearless and most sagacious friend, Harriet.” Indeed, before his untimely death following his capture at Harpers Ferry, White anti-slavery crusader John Brown declared Harriet as the “best and bravest persons on this continent – General Tubman as we call her.”¹⁰⁸

Yet, it was the respect attributed to Harriet by other Black social reformers and activists of this period that perhaps had the most influence on her reputation in Black intellectual circles. Black anti-slavery campaigner and educator Charlotte Forten Grimké recounted her meeting with Harriet while teaching in the Freedmen’s School at Beaufort in the South Carolinian Sea Islands during the Civil War, declaring her to be “a wonderful woman – a real heroine.” Charlotte described how Harriet told several tales of fugitives that she had helped on the Underground Railroad. Remarking on the feelings of excitement she had on meeting and listening to Harriet, Charlotte concluded that she was “glad I saw her – very glad.”¹⁰⁹ Famed Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass perhaps best illustrated the esteem in which she was held by all who knew her. Harriet had written to Douglass in the hope he might provide a note of support in Bradford’s *Scenes*, authenticating it in the circles that were most important to Harriet in relation to the prospects of sale. Douglass wrote back, reminding Harriet that no such word from him was necessary: “I need such words from you far more than you need them from me, especially where your superior labors and devotion to the cause of the lately enslaved of our land are known as I know them.” Comparing their service to the public cause of anti-slavery, he remarked:

The difference between us is very marked. Most that I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in *public*, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You on the other hand have labored in a private way. I have labored in the day – you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd . . . the midnight sky and the silent stars have been the [only] witness of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism.¹¹⁰

Douglass then recognized the very marked and different ways in which his intellectual labors and service had been received, in comparison to Harriet’s. His remark underlines in very concrete ways the intersections of gender and race that effectively excluded Harriet – and the other Black female intellectuals discussed in this chapter – from being visible in the public sphere.

As this chapter makes clear, Black female intellectuals like Truth, Harper, Shadd Cary, and Tubman took risks and in the process posed disruptive challenges to the accepted racial and gendered mores of mid-nineteenth century America. By doing so, they engaged in performances of active citizenry and vociferously resisted stereotypical tropes about both Blackness and womanhood. As part of

their intellectual identity, they occupied a space of diva citizenship as an absolute necessity. Other Black women perhaps unknowingly occupied similar spaces in the intellectual cultures of nineteenth-century America. It is to some of these women that the next chapter turns.

Notes

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14 **Uncensored? Writing our resistance as an act of self-care**

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We write as three permanently employed women academics working in a UK business school, at a university established in 1992, where teaching excellence is a primary focus. Research time is applied for and awarded based on publication records and grant capture. In the UK, research outputs in business schools are typically measured against the CABS (Chartered Association of Business Schools) list, which ranks journals from 1 to 4* with 4* journals recognised as world leading. This classification informs where you can publish and which publications will be considered valuable and legitimate, leading to pressure to go “above and beyond” to secure the time needed to conduct research.

Often UK universities demonstrate commitment to combating gender inequality via the Athena Swan Award, a framework that awards institutions based on how they manage gender equality. Initiatives like the Athena Swan Award have been critiqued for failing to address intersectionality and attempting to “fix the woman” (Acker, 1990; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Liff & Cameron, 1997), as well as a “lack of engagement with the structural issues within which gender inequality is rooted” (Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019, 1194). Such initiatives rely on women’s work, adversely impacting careers and mental health (Bird et al., 2004; Heijstra et al., 2017; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019). Academics suffer exclusion and hindered career progression through biased recruitment practices (Husu, 2004; Van den Brink et al., 2010). Although academia is advertised as a neutral space, it produces a “smoke-screen of equality” (Bourabain 2021; Dar, Liu, Matinez Dy & Brewis 2021).

In this chapter, firstly, we consider our position within a neoliberal Academy that discourages the writing of emotion into work, outlining how we follow our colleagues in “writing differently” and how this supports a pattern of self-care that we have held since childhood of writing to resist, to be heard, and to emote. Secondly, in writing our frustration and anger in the space of collective support and safety using a “faction” vignette, we hope to create spaces for others to do similar work by contributing to the gradual acceptance of such work in academic spaces. In doing this, we try to engage in a feminist care ethics that seeks to support others in their search for self-care through discussing our strategies as routes forward. In the discussion, we draw on images created as acts of self-care that seek to resist the censorship to which we frequently feel subjected. Finally, we close the chapter with recommendations for self-care, reflecting on our experiences.

Literature

Systemic inequalities are embedded in standards of excellence (van den Brink & Benschop, 2012) and other common bureaucracies of academia (Krishen et al., 2020; Madera et al., 2019), whilst discursive practices of masculinity normalise a single vision of meritocratic achievement (Knights & Richards, 2003). The category of “interloper” in university spaces (Johansson & Jones, 2019) then comes to be occupied by women of diverse backgrounds. This problem is potent in UK management/business schools, where the white, cis-male, single, childless, care-free middle-class patriarch dominates. As Aiston and Kent Fo (2021, 138) highlighted, “The academy is positioned as a ‘care-free workplace’ that assumes that academics have no other commitments than the devotion of their time to the profession” (Morley, 2007; Morley, 2013). The concept of “fairness” and a belief in the meritocratic academy fails to acknowledge the gendered nature of family life (Nikunen, 2012) and the gender stereotyping that occurs at work (Nikunen, 2012; Aiston & Fo, 2021; Aiston & Jung, 2015; Barrett & Barrett, 2011; Leberman et al., 2016; Kjeldal et al., 2005; Schein, 2007; Morley 2007; Ropers-Huilman 2000; Turner, 2002). Gatekeeping in selection processes and resource allocation hinders women’s advancement (Husu, 2004; Van den Brink et al., 2010) and confinement to the “ivory basement” (Fitzgerald, 2012) results in women being allocated underappreciated work in copious quantities.

Pullen and Rhodes (2018) note that control strategies of neoliberal organisations have increased anxiety, leaving employees feeling responsible for issues that they cannot control. Petriglieri et al. (2019) also highlight the exploitation of employees’ existential dread. We know that organisations often constrain personal identities whilst providing idealised identities for employees to strive towards (Ashforth et al., 2008). Compounding these difficulties, subtle and everyday micro- and macro-structures of discriminatory practice result in the disempowerment of early career scholars and contribute to a regime of inequality (Acker, 2009) in academia. Often careers that employ a historic apprenticeship model link advancement with the exercise of power or privilege. In academia, gatekeeping typically occurs early on, affecting the development of PhD candidates and post-doctoral scholars. Trevino et al. (2018) have also highlighted challenges at every stage of management scholars’ career development (Treviño et al., 2018; van Miegroet et al., 2019). Boncori and Smith (2019) have further lamented the frequent rejection of papers felt to be too personal, and Bourabain’s (2021) work illuminated many exclusionary practices. Racism and sexism are often subtle and ambiguous (Bourabain, 2021), they are difficult to speak confidently of, and speaking up is often dangerous (Milliken et al., 2015).

Writing as resistance

Here, we draw from scholarly work on activism in academia (including Suzuki & Mayorga, 2014; Boncori & Smith, 2019; Johansson & Jones, 2019; Dar et al., 2021; Pullen et al., 2020; Liu, 2021; Mackay, 2021). Our ongoing uncensored writing builds on existing knowledge working towards the liberation of those who

are marginalised. Recognising injustice and writing together offers a means to sustain our academic sisterhood. This responds to Liu's (2021) framework for scholar-activism, which calls for resistance and the creation of liberatory knowledge and rest, where self-care is an act of warfare. We try to open up spaces in which writing differently can become accepted. In doing this, we nurture our connections and seek to assist in developing opportunities for others to further address the intersections between racism and sexism through self-care practices. Although we do not write about racism here as it does not pertain to our specific experiences, we nevertheless seek to open up spaces for others to decolonise the mind and the land (Liu; 2021).

Collectively and historically, our writing has taken different forms. For example, in the Academy, we engage in scholarship, which challenges and recognises injustices. Still, we continue to write in diverse ways beyond academia, engaging in self-care whilst acknowledging our love of writing. This self-care includes, for example, creative writing and calligraphy.

Whilst we seek to write to create liberatory knowledge (Liu, 2021), we also acknowledge our privilege in being given a voice, where so many have not, and recognise that publications such as this also act as an opportunity to "progress" within a neoliberal academy. Furthermore, although we identify as women, we occupy multiple positionalities and "each carr[ies] various racial, class, and cultural privileges, as well as institutional power" (Tilley & Taylor, 2014:59).

How we enact self-care

Increasingly, academics "write differently," pushing the boundaries of academic writing, infusing it with emotion, embodiment, and affect (Boncori & Smith, 2019; Johansson & Jones, 2019; Pullen et al., 2020). Anger is often a feature, alongside sadness, frustration, and even joy and hope. "Writing differently" allows for expressing feelings in a forum not usually accepting of such emoting, alongside challenging and resisting academic writing conventions. Here we follow a path laid by our brave colleagues who dared to go first. We highlight how we may write into existence new norms and academic conventions (Bayfield et al., 2020) that allow more significant space for other academics to tell their truths in appropriate ways and, importantly, for our careers and others to receive credit for this.

Critiquing the neoliberal promotion of individual responsibility, Gaudet et al. (2022:10) make an essential distinction between self-care and self-help. They note that "self-care identifies the relationship to oneself in the context of a conception of what it means to be human based on interdependence rather than individual independence." Bayfield et al. (2020:421) discuss efforts in "slow scholarship" such as collaborative "innovative scholarship and writing, or unconventional approaches to self-care," helping craft new norms in academia. Indeed, many academics writing in this vein are increasingly drawing on feminist care ethics to enact political practice (Bayfield et al., 2020; Johansson & Edwards, 2021). This relies on "persons as relational and interdependent, morally and epistemologically," rather than independent, self-sufficient actors (Held, 2006:13). Noddings (2003:3) believed caring relations to be "ethically basic." Feminist authors have described care as "a

species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Fisher & Tronto, 1990:40).

Feminist care ethics has been considered to contribute to the literature on identity work within organisations (Islam 2013) and to the role of holding/facilitative environments (Petriglieri et al., 2019). Askins and Blazek (2017) critique the individualised and managerialised nature of the Academy “(and beyond).” Their commitment to more caring academia encourages us to explore how we support each other to enact caring practices in our writing and, in doing so, open spaces into which others can write and resist. We wish to diverge from visions of self-care that place the burden of responsibility on individuals, seeking instead to weaponise our individual self-care practices through collective resistance. As Bayfield et al. (2020:421) note, “instead of each individual caring for their wellbeing, we might extend care to others, so it becomes a political act of resistance.”

Methodology

Rather than using traditional research questions, we challenge the dichotomy of academic freedom and conformity by drawing upon a reflexive dialogue between the authors. We identify several questions or prompts. For example: Why do I write? How do I conform? How do I resist? How is writing self-care? encouraging each author to prepare an uncensored piece of reflexive free writing. In this way, writing became a discovery method and a creative and analytical process (Richardson, 2000; Castle, 2017).

We were guided by a collaborative feminist reflexive approach (Linabary, Corple & Cooky, 2021). We reviewed each other’s writing, discussed, and took notes to extend our accounts, surfacing our similarities and differences. In doing so, we interrogated our challenges and frustrations as women academics. The collaborative approach allowed us to discuss issues and build on each other’s ideas while viewing our own experiences in diverse ways (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). Additionally, this approach to reflexivity provided the opportunity for emotion to surface and otherwise hidden intersubjectivities and injustices to become visible.

Extending our accounts, we developed a single vignette into which our three stories and perspectives are interwoven into a single narrative. We accept and acknowledge that detail is lost in this interweaving, but what remains is what unites us and matters most to us. This single narrative is a “faction”; it is both fact and fiction (Bruce, 2019). The fact element is resonant of the vignette emerging from our lived experiences. Yet, it is fictitious in that we present a single vignette that is not the verbatim quotes of any individual author. The vignette was a valuable tool to depict complex issues realistically and engagingly (Leicher & Mulder, 2018).

The use of a faction-based vignette follows Bruce’s (2019:2) statement that “academics have not only the right but the responsibility to represent research in multiple formats.” Our vignette seeks not to censor our voices, but to protect the authors from individual scrutiny. Denison (2006:338) has also suggested that “we must feel free to write in ways that combine and synthesise a range of voices.” To be valid, a faction must emerge from research gathered in “ethical and

methodologically rigorous ways” (Bruce, 2019:5). Further, it should be satisfying to read and artistically constructed (Denison & Rinehart, 2000). Faction gives voice to women and othered groups. However, in line with O’Shea’s (2019) work, we challenge the idea that writing needs to be “artistically constructed” and instead seek to reflect our complex travels through academia and the ways we resist and employ self-care.

We adopted a two-phase approach to achieve face validity (Leicher and Mulder, 2018). Firstly, the third author compiled a single vignette based on the written accounts and notes taken during a collective discussion by all three authors. Secondly, the first and second authors reviewed the vignette and made amendments to represent each author’s experiences and perspectives.

Faction enables us to achieve a degree of anonymity while still allowing our voices to be heard and stories shared. Thus, we are uncensored in articulating ideas and experiences that may feel uncomfortable if expressed individually. This chapter embodies our argument of writing as resistance. We use the medium of writing to express our frustrations while simultaneously using faction as a methodological shield against victimisation. Hooks (1990:126) noted that when we are not permitted to speak, we each become an “absent presence without a voice.” Thus, writing can be a form of activism in creating and developing liberatory knowledge (Liu, 2021).

Additionally, we give ourselves an outlet for our understandable anger in choosing a faction. This chapter is a way of engaging in self-care practices. Hooks argued that when we are not permitted to speak, we each become an “absent presence without a voice” (1990:126). “Faction” allows us to give ourselves a voice in such circumstances.

In engaging in faction, we recognise the limitation of erasing specific narratives of marginalised identities and our differences, such as disabilities. Still, we suggest that creating a factional story allows us to “say what might be unsayable in other circumstances” (Richardson, 1994:521). We speak here of what we share, not to homogenise our differences. Instead, we strive to discuss what unites us and, in doing so, further embody our resistance.

Discussion

Our discussion is based on the single faction vignette described in the previous section. This vignette presents our lived experiences as women academics using writing as self-care and resistance. We are uncensored.

Vignette

I have always written to express myself and the injustices I see and feel, whether they affect me directly or others around me. I write to make my world real. Writing allows me to voice my opinions, frustrations and anger whilst simultaneously playing the part I am expected to play. I have been, and remain, angry. Writing is my voice.

Before I entered this world, I put academia on a pedestal, raised high above the corruptions of industry where there is never enough time to think. I saw academia as the pinnacle of ethical behaviour, progressive thought, and inclusivity. This job provides an opportunity where my knowledge is valued. When I started working in academia, focussing on researching and teaching, I felt like I had found my calling and could make a difference; I could “fix” the challenges in my life.

I want to change the system. I want equality, diversity, and inclusion within the academy. I want it to move from its current masculine hegemonic state to accepting and encouraging subjective feelings, emotions, and embodiment. I don't want to feel that I am losing out because I don't conform to a quantitative and positivistic view of the world; I want the craft of my scholarship to be recognised, valued, celebrated, and make a difference.

Writing allows me to navigate spaces where I must conform. Spaces where I must meet standards I do not set. Spaces where I must play by others' rules if I want to progress, if I want to succeed, and even survive. I conform because I must. I don't make a fuss. I do what I am told and deliver my objectives. I play the game. But I also conform by stealth. I conform by omission, by not fully revealing what I think. I play dumb. I don't always object to the system. I don't always innovate. I rarely do. I realise that I frequently do not teach what I feel matters most in my complicity. Instead, I nod and smile and play dumb. I push my anger down, go home, and let it rise in a safe space.

I find ways to resist and write about what is important to me, fitting the institutional agenda. I focus my research and writing to seek greater understanding, recognition, rights, and social justice. This act is my resistance; writing is my power. I resist through the strength of the academic sisterhood. We share these injustices, write together, and resist together.

When I write, I don't have to think about anyone else, worry about domestic chores, or care for others and the other “noise” in my life. Although it is my job, writing is also my escape where I can be alone with my thoughts and express them how I want. Writing reflects my passions and those things about which I care. In doing so, I am caring for myself. I am giving myself space to express, feel legitimate, and feel important. Writing is my therapy. It is a cathartic act. It is a reminder that I have a voice that might be heard, which deserves to be heard as much as any other voice. A voice that has the privilege of position to speak in support of creating new spaces into which a greater diversity of voices can begin to be heard.

Yet, I am angry that I am not good enough to “the institution, which I have internalised into self-perpetuating impostor syndrome. I am also angry that I am so privileged in many ways while so many are disadvantaged. Do I deserve to be angry? I want to fight for those without my privilege, but is writing a way I can do that?

Uncensored. Is it a step too far? I have many types of writing. Firstly, it is an authentic expression of exactly how I feel at times, unguarded, dangerous. It's in my journal and my creative writing; it appears on my pumpkins. Secondly, I submit writing for the consideration of friends and close colleagues, tamed, respectable, but firm in its argumentation. Thirdly, there is the writing the academic community sees published, often censored, deformed, and bearing witness to the loss of my spirit.

In writing this piece, we make a rare move in submitting our collective pain and anger for review. I want to experience academic freedom to do, say, and write what I wish to, to illuminate the disadvantages women face in the Academy, yet I am taking risks, and putting my head above the parapet. To be genuinely uncensored feels dangerous. I fear contempt and retribution. But to be brave, to make a difference, we must first feel afraid.

Progress feels slow, the steps are small, but I will continue to persist and, in doing so, resist. We are interdependent. In writing, I draw on experiences with colleagues and friends, frustrations borne of their experiences, as well as my own. I don't think this is about what I can do but about what we do together.

Drawing on feminist care ethics, our chosen methodology enables us to support each other in our reflexive, resistant practice. Firstly, we consider how our vignette seeks to maintain individual silence and raise our collective voice. Secondly, we consider the practice of literally “writing our resistance” and how we hope this type of practice can open up spaces for other voices to be heard and acknowledged.

Maintaining individual silence about work problems feels safer than voicing them to many employees, particularly where discussing these issues is viewed as criticising management (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). As our vignette highlights, we have experienced a feeling of being censored despite our continued commitment to the act of writing itself and our feelings of freedom in writing. The act of being uncensored is indeed dangerous, as many scholars have noted (Liu, 2021; Rodriguez, 2011), but of equal importance is the negative effect that not speaking up may have on us. Writing allows us to navigate spaces in which we must conform. Morrison and Milliken (2000) discussed the distressing experience of cognitive dissonance when those who feel that they have something vital to communicate think that they must not speak up. Our piece of fiction notes the absences in our voice and our moments of silence in public that speak not to acquiescence but resistance. In our silences and through our voices in continuing to write our truths in other spaces, we maintain our places in the Academy and decline to help or provide our labour to solve problems we have not made.

Our vignette reveals informal writing practices occurring within safe critical spaces (Duckworth et al., 2016) shared by colleagues with similar experiences. By sharing our frustrations and anger, we also share coping strategies. We identify commonalities and practices that allow us to navigate and challenge gender inequalities within the Academy to enjoy “some” academic freedom while simultaneously conforming to management expectations and “playing the game.” Thus, while our act of academic writing can be used as a cathartic practice for the productive expression of anger and the claiming of career-based rewards, it also seeks to disrupt the managerial and neoliberal Academy. In so doing, while we recognise our privilege and are rewarded for our non-conformist writing, we also use this chapter to extend liberatory knowledge. We seek to advance a feminist care ethic to colleagues through highlighting our experiences and practices to encourage the academic sisterhood to engage with different forms of writing. We offer our ways of navigating academia, a system that prioritises objective career success and



Figure 14.1 From top to bottom, left to right: (a) Output from autumnal lettering workshop October 2021. (b) Child's handprint on a notebook. (c) Picture accompanying creative writing of children's story (which also addresses diversity at an age-appropriate level). (d) Extract from a family newspaper written aged 12.

conforming career trajectories, as a “political act of resistance” (Bayfield et al., 2020:421).

Figure 14.1(a–d) shows how our creative work helps us vent our private frustrations, bearing witness to the difficulties we face and acting as another outlet to highlight and address social justice issues. During a clear-out, one of our mothers came across a collection of “Family Times,” the newspaper we at age 12 had written and distributed among our family. This is one of our first outlets in written form to highlight the marginalisation faced as a girl at school when wanting to play football. The butterfly accompanies a children's story, which we are putting into written form that, whilst entertaining and a creative form of self-care, also seeks to educate children on difference and inclusion. Indeed, our writing also provides a therapeutic space away from our responsibilities. We offer output from an online lettering weekend class in October 2021, written on a pumpkin. Calligraphy is both writing and art. Organising a weekend course as a self-care act removed us from teaching, preparing material, and academic writing.

Although this chapter is not an ABS ranked journal, we are passionate about the topic and have written it around other responsibilities. This reality has been uniquely highlighted in a child's handprint on our notes as we worked on a draft at home. It represents the difficulties many women academics face in negotiating work whilst managing unacknowledged familial responsibilities.

Strategies

In writing this chapter, we have introduced three strategies that we employ. We offer these in the hope that others will benefit.

Firstly, the importance that writing holds – writing is a requirement of our vocation and something that we do for fun and have done for many years. Creative work and writing for fun provide an outlet for our frustrations. Writing, in this sense, is a therapeutic act; it provides a safe space away from our daily responsibilities to express our creativity freely. Writing need not be formalised; the artistic presentation of one word, that is, calligraphy, or storytelling for different audiences, that is, children's books are valuable ways of enacting self-care.

Secondly, in our role as researchers, we call on the sisterhood to embrace methodologies that allow us to support each other in our reflexive and resistant practices in scholarly activism. The call for chapters is an example of one such opportunity to have our voices heard in diverse ways. Collaboration enables us to choose whom we work with, and unique contributions allow us to engage with exciting methodologies that encourage different forms of expression.

Thirdly, we pass on the torch by challenging writing conventions within our field. We use forms of writing and visual expression that we usually keep outside of the academy to write differently and seek institutional credit. We will continue to seek opportunities to write differently and encourage others to do the same. In doing so, we present our lived experiences as women academics as a form of self-care and resistance, contributing to our scholarly activism and, in writing, contributing slowly to a much-needed shift in what constitutes good academic writing.

These strategies amalgamate our friendship in the sending of a greeting card from one to another, with the message “a beautiful thing is never perfect” in calligraphy. This symbolises our collective sisterhood in encouraging each other in the wake of the neoliberal academy and its objective way of measuring success, driving impostor syndrome among us.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we sought to achieve two things. Firstly, we explored our positions within the neoliberal Academy to challenge the discouragement of emotional writing. In doing so, we embraced the notion of “writing differently” as a self-care strategy. Second, while writing as a form of expression is not new, it challenges conventions in the context of academic writing. Thus, we build on our experiences since childhood to mobilise our informal and formal writing as a means of resistance, express our collective voice, and introduce emotion into an otherwise sterile environment.

Secondly, we continue the creation of safe spaces in which the articulation of frustration and anger is encouraged. We employ one such space as a “faction” vignette. This collaborative effort simultaneously enabled our collective voices to be heard whilst protecting our anonymity. It also allowed us to engage in a feminist care ethic in which we sought to support each other and encourage others in their search for self-care.

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8 Unity is strength? feminism and the labour movement*

Michèle Barrett

For some time now the labour movement has faced a feminist assault on its strategies and organization. Feminists have shown there to be conflicts of interest between working men and working women and have forcefully pointed out that the labour movement has – actively and not just by default – fought for the interests of men at the expense of those of women.

To a certain extent this challenge has been accepted. Some trade unions, and some political organizations on the left, have taken the issue seriously and have not only encouraged much more participation from women but have also tried to rethink their demands and internal power structures in the light of feminist issues.

We have now to assess how far this process has gone and whether these developments are simply lip-service paid to a militant feminist presence or whether they indicate more far-reaching changes. The present political situation makes this extremely difficult, creating real tensions and divided loyalties for those who support both the struggle for socialism and for women's liberation.

Many socialist feminists feel that the weight of feminist arguments has been mainly critical in pointing to the overbearing preponderance of men on decision-making bodies, blatant sexism in men's attitude towards women at work, policies that are aimed at improving men's conditions of work and exclusionary practices through which men have sought to defend their superior bargaining power. After a while, these criticisms, however justified they may be, can often be seen as undermining ones.

These charges of undermining working-class struggle are particularly forceful and emotive at the present time. A barrage of criticism directed at the labour movement at a time when it is reeling from the Tory onslaught and attempting to patch up intractable internal rifts, can only seem quite gratuitously destructive. Just as the movement

* This chapter is from M. Barrett, 'Unity is strength?', *New Socialist*, no. 1 (September–October 1981), pp. 35–8.

struggles manfully to its feet, it gets a further blow – this time a righteous knee in the groin – from the very feminists who might be helping it up. Those who think feminism has always been diversionary and divisive see this as proof that they are right.

This reaction is understandable, but ultimately misplaced: it construes the whole problem of the relationship between feminism and the movement as one of political goodwill and trust. The issues at stake, however, have a more solidly material basis. One way to look at this is by considering the alternative political and economic strategies currently being put forward as a possible programme for a future Labour government.

It is obviously true that the left needs a set of coherent policies on which we can mobilize to reverse the appalling impact of current Tory policies; it is obviously also true that this right-wing offensive has had a particularly retrogressive effect on women's lives and opportunities. Does this mean that the alternative strategy now put forward by the left is one that will benefit women? Or will socialist feminists have to develop an alternative strategy of their own?

The Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) has as its primary objective the reflation of the economy through public spending, with a view to planned expansion and the restoration of full employment. A series of controls on foreign trade, prices and wages are usually envisaged to combat the twin dangers of flight of capital and an inflationary spiral. These would be complemented by judicious nationalization, particularly of key financial institutions, with production in general carefully planned in conjunction with a high level of industrial democracy.

I do not want to go into the question – important though it is – of whether such a strategy could succeed against the degree of capitalist resistance it would inevitably encounter.

For feminists, prior questions must be considered, and I mention only two examples. First, what is meant by full employment? In a situation where women have not in our recent history ever had full employment it is somewhat ominous to speak of the 'restoration' of something women never had. Is the full employment of which we speak therefore full male employment?

To tackle the problem of women's right to work in a situation where over 40 per cent of women workers are part-time, we need a fundamental reconsideration of why women have traditionally not participated fully in wage work – the responsibilities of childcare and running a home. If by full employment we refer to women as

well as men, we need some specific proposals as to how the organization of family responsibilities is to be changed and the labour of childcare divided more equally.

The demand for a shorter working week, 35 hours, often accompanying the AES is a step in the right direction; if men's jobs allowed more time and flexibility for them to take a responsible part in childrearing, things could be easier. But we should be watchful that this takes place in the form of a shorter working day rather than a shorter working week.

A second example is the concept of industrial democracy. Like full employment, all feminists would in principle support the objective – but in practice what is this notion of industrial democracy? Essentially it is the idea that the workers involved in production should play an active role in decision-making and take a share in the responsibilities of planning. This is fine, but it necessarily restricts democratic participation to the workplace and those able to be involved.

The example often cited of creative workers' planning geared to community needs is that of Lucas Aerospace. It is no criticism of this valuable work to point out that such a project is hardly likely to emerge from the situation of non-unionized women outworkers in the East End rag trade. The concept of industrial democracy presupposes not only full employment but an organized workforce: where workers are not equal in this respect, the system will be more democratic for some than for others.

It is not that there is anything wrong, from a feminist point of view, with these alternative strategies – they contain no explicit anti-feminism and no explicit appeal to workers as men. Feminist doubts would not be answered by clauses asking combine committees to bear in mind the ideological incorrectness of having pin-ups on the walls. The real difficulty lies in what is *not* said – in the silence on how women are to participate fully when they are still unequal as workers, unequal as trade unionists and unequal in the political parties and organizations of the left.

The underlying question is the family. Although there can be no doubt that women are discriminated against at work and in the labour movement, we cannot get to the root of this without looking at the institution of the family, the means by which this discrimination is usually justified. Many trade unions, particularly those in the skilled sectors with a certain amount of bargaining power have in the past defended the ideal of the 'family wage' – that a man's wage

should be set at a level which enables him to support a dependent wife and children. This principle is now less secure, as it is widely recognized as being incompatible with equal pay for women and increasingly irrelevant to the majority of families who simply cannot live on the man's wage.¹

Yet there is still considerable support for an idealized and romanticized notion of the working-class family. Many socialists, for example, routinely argue that Tory policies are crushing working class families, exacerbating the poverty of poor families, depriving children in poor families. Of course this is correct, but we need to question whether the interests of children really are best served by preferential wages and welfare policies that are geared to the family.

The numbers of children now being brought up outside the confines of the nuclear family, let alone arguments in favour of women's independence, suggest that we cannot just sink into the rhetoric of defending 'the family' against the inroads of unemployment and spending cuts. We need instead, as some feminist groups have argued, to push for precisely the reverse – 'disaggregation' of the family unit – so that we can tell what *individual* needs are not being met.²

The labour movement has as yet remained deaf to this call for disaggregation of the family as a waged and taxed unit. Indeed it seems likely that the implications of the demand have simply not yet registered. In order to rid ourselves of the myths about men as breadwinners and women as by nature suited to housework and childcare, we need to make sweeping changes. These would affect conditions of work, pay structures and differentials, income tax, the social wage and welfare policies.

Many socialist feminists believe that the labour movement can play an important role in making such changes, but the abolition of even the grossest inequalities between men and women as workers (let alone the longer-term and broader aim of women's liberation) is still not a concrete part of socialist strategy. Feminists may have a certain support from socialist men of goodwill, but what are the changes this goodwill should be directed toward? There are three major areas where feminist demands directly affect the labour movement.

First, there is the question of major inequalities between women and men at work. As is well known, equal pay legislation by no means brought equal pay. In 1979 women's average gross weekly

earnings amounted to only 63.6 per cent of those of men. The main reason for this is that by and large the labour force is so clearly divided into 'men's jobs' and 'women's jobs' that no comparison of like work can be made as required to operate the act. To achieve equal pay, it would be necessary to break down this job segregation so that women as well as men were found across the whole range of occupations and industries, and across the whole range of grades within them.³

Some of the present inequality is undoubtedly the product of mechanisms over which the movement has little control, such as an employer's manipulation of vulnerable groups of workers, or biased systems of education and training. But some of it is the result of explicitly male interests – practices excluding women from skilled work and attempts, often successful, to define the work that men do as skilled and the work that women do as unskilled. Such practices, and the assumptions on which they are based, are blatantly anti-feminist and must be challenged.⁴

Furthermore, the labour movement has been unusually passive in its response to these inequalities. It is comforting to point to capital's tendency to divide the workforce, its need for cheap or part-time labour and its immoral exploitation of women. Yet there is more that the movement could do, though current debates on the role of positive discrimination in union strategy (as recommended by the TUC's Women's Advisory Committee) show that this is being given more thought. Trade unions could bring pressure to bear on employers' recruiting and grading policies in the light of sex discrimination, and we could work towards a system of workplace control of job opportunities for women.

Second, the movement can play a role in breaking down the actual or assumed dependence of women on men's wages – and this means a more equal sharing of childcare between men and women. Recent support from the unions and left parties for feminist demands on abortion plays an important role, since the ability to control fertility is a central prerequisite of women's independence.

But women will only be equal at work when the burden of the 'double shift' is lifted. And in order to achieve this we would need a complete restructuring of the basis on which *men* are employed. When a child is ill and off school, fathers as well as mothers must cope with the problem. The working day will obviously need rethinking. And it is not enough to campaign for workplace

nurseries where women can leave their children – they are also needed at Ford and British Leyland.⁵

Third, we can expect the labour movement and the left to take a clear position on sexual politics. It has so far shown little sign of throwing its weight behind campaigns to counter sexism in the media and advertising. It has no public voice on sexual harassment at work and issues of male violence.

Comrades who beat up their girlfriends, sabotage the political lives of their wives or refuse to do any work in the home, are passed over in silence or thrown to the feminists to be dealt with. The left press has had virtually nothing to say about the Yorkshire Ripper, and, though we might not have expected *The Yorkshire Miner* (a paper notorious among feminists for its defence of *Sun*-style nudes) to take the lead on this, it is telling that nowhere on the left have we seen any serious reflection or analysis of the political issues raised by this case.

Why should the labour movement take feminist politics seriously? As I have suggested, doing so means more than simply generous gestures – it requires a major rethinking of strategies and struggles that are held dear. It is often said that feminist issues are marginal and that struggle around them will not provide the strength we need to advance socialism.

In some ways this argument can be very forceful. The miners, for instance, demonstrated last autumn that the present government is not invincible and could be made to back down – an achievement scarcely likely to result from industrial action by secretaries or social workers. In a very real sense the traditional centres of working-class resistance offer more hope of political breakthrough than the armies of women workers whose position in the workforce makes them correspondingly weak in industrial struggle.

Yet to conclude from this that socialist support for feminism is purely a matter of choice would be wrong. No progressive movement can retain its integrity if it is riding on the back of an oppression conceived of as someone else's problem.

When the labour movement is called upon to correct both explicit racism in its practice and implicit racism in its failure to protect the specific interests of black workers, then a lack of response calls into question its overall project and undermines its credibility. So too with feminist demands. Furthermore, the fragmentation and sectionalism of the labour movement and the political organizations of the left – the chief obstacle to making progress – is profoundly

structured through divisions of race and gender.

It hardly needs repeating that a divided working class is a weakened working class. But it does need stressing, at a less rhetorical level, that these divisions between men and women will not simply disappear in the magic of solidarity. If we are serious about overcoming them, we shall need some concrete and practical changes in strategy.

NAVIGATING CHANGE AND ACQUIRING THE TOOLS TO DO THIS

A POSITIVE (GROWTH) MINDSET TOWARDS CHANGE

Now you have an idea of the kind of working model and environment you would like to find next, it's time to ensure you're in the right mindset to set about making it happen. It's often said that we are what we think and that our thoughts become our reality, so it's vitally important that we get a handle on this and harness our thoughts and inner voice to work with us rather than against us!

Understanding the origins of our own thought processes

Every time we face change, our mind (conscious and unconscious) and body remember similar situations in the past that we or the people we were with went through, either looking forward in joyful anticipation of what lay ahead or worried and fearful. We first learn a pattern for approaching and dealing with change through our family, of course. If your family was basically hopeful and optimistic when facing a change, you will carry this experience over into other groups and situations such as school and university, and into your professional life. But if your early experiences of something new were characterised mainly by doubt

and worry, you will find it harder to feel pleased and excited and will tend to re-create the anxiety you felt in the past.

When we develop our ability for self-reflection and self-awareness, however, we can re-evaluate our experience of the past and recognise that we don't have to react as we did then but can learn to take a more positive attitude to change, especially if, when we look back, things often actually turned out all right. If we take time to reflect, we can see that we do have what it takes to manage the challenge of change and can look forward with confidence to a new adventure.

A positive mindset towards change is a growth mindset, i.e. the belief that you can grow and develop your skills and talents as opposed to a belief that you were born with a fixed set of talents. This mindset has a lot to do with how excited we are to learn. With a growth mindset, we are able to see obstacles and challenges as potentially good things because they offer us opportunities to grow. As professional women, we are constantly tasked with new challenges, confronted with difficult decisions, and asked to think and act strategically for our employers. Transferring this positive mindset to these situations is crucial for your career progression and for planning your next transition strategically, as it will completely shift how you view the challenges and periods of change that you face.

Even if a positive mindset towards change doesn't come naturally to you, you can work at developing it, because one thing is certain: we will all have to go through many career transitions in life, and having the ability to see this as an opportunity to grow and move forward will really help you to shift your relationship with these changes and transitional periods in your life.

How to cultivate a growth mindset

Imagine you have to prepare answers to three questions about your area of expertise for an internal review and possible promotion. You know there will be stiff competition from two or three co-workers. You submit your answers and have a follow-up conversation with the director who highlights two areas where you did not go into enough detail, and so they inform you that the promotion will go to someone else.

What is your reaction?

The person with a fixed mindset will think: ‘Ah, yes, I don’t know enough about those areas, I couldn’t have done any better. Never mind, that’s just how it is.’

The person with a growth mindset will think: ‘Right, I’m going to find out about those subjects so that I’m better prepared next time. And, actually, they’re interesting and important areas, so I’m going to enjoy learning about those points, too.’

The desire to learn sets the growth mindset apart from the fixed mindset. Our brains have a huge capacity to learn new things if we give them the opportunity, and that means starting out with the premise that even if I can’t do it *yet*, I will be able to learn how to do it. If we use a growth mindset every time we push a little out of our comfort zone to learn something new or different, the neurons in our brain can actually form new and stronger connections – we can actually get ‘smarter’!

People with fixed mindsets run from a mistake whereas in those with a growth mindset the mistake triggers brain activity – the effort that the brain engages in actually shows up in brain scans; the brain literally lights up!

So, what does this mean if you are considering a career transition and your mindset is still in a ‘fixed’ zone? It means you are hesitant, lack self-confidence, and don’t believe you can do it. But you can move from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. Here are some simple, but powerful, things you can do.

For your journal

1. Make a note in your journal when you adopt a ‘not yet’ attitude. Reward yourself for thinking ‘not yet... but soon’. You are opening up a path to the future, which is exactly the same as a career transition.
2. Praise yourself more for effort and perseverance rather than just the result. Go back to the ‘not yet’ mindset!
3. Look at a skill you have improved at some time in your life and recognise that there are things that you have learned. This is especially important if you have a strong fixed mindset and believe you just aren’t good at new things.

4. Look back at a time when you failed at something and really identify the reasons why: what can you learn from that analysis? What could you have done differently?
5. Set out to learn something new – anything that you would really like to be able to do or want to know about, and notice your progress, however slow. Practise diligently. After some time (a few weeks or even months), look back at when you started and appreciate your progress. This can work well with a learning buddy so that you motivate and praise each other for the effort you put in.

Case study

After a series of tests and interviews, Rania was not selected for the position in another department that she had coveted. She knew the competition would be strong from internal candidates and she had spent a great deal of time learning about what the department did. After the selection process was complete, the manager told her she was the best candidate on the basis of the written test and presentations but that she had let herself down in the final interview by not paying attention to the type of questions they asked (about her communication, teamwork, and advocacy skills – those transferable strengths!).

Rania and I reviewed her experience together and looked hard at what she could do to improve her interview technique ready for when another position was going to become available in the same department in a few months' time. Adopting a growth mindset meant that Rania felt that there was no way she was not going to be the number one candidate this time! Despite her disappointment, Rania approached the future with a 'not yet... but next time' attitude.

For your journal

1. What patterns of thinking about change have influenced your career journey?
2. Thinking back to change events in your life, how did you handle them at the time? How would you handle them now with more experience?
3. How could you re-frame some of the challenges in your life to make them more exciting and motivating rather than something to be fearful of? Note down some ideas.

VISUALISING YOUR GOALS

A powerful way to prepare yourself for change is to literally see yourself in a different situation – the situation of achievement – and you can do this through visualisation.

Sportswomen prepare for an event both physically and mentally; they train their bodies in their discipline and they also train their minds. One of the mental exercises they do is to imagine themselves in the event, seeing the racing track or ski-slope and visualising every movement right up to the moment of winning. The mind has an extraordinary power to influence our behaviour, and this visualisation helps them to get in the zone and boost their confidence in their ability to win. They are able to see and feel themselves winning.

You can do the same exercise to imagine yourself making a career transition. When I coach, I sometimes say to my client: ‘If I were your fairy godmother and could grant your wish for your dream job, what would it be?’ I guide them through a visualisation where they see themselves doing the job in as much detail as possible. Visualisation is actually an ancient method not to foresee the future but to influence our approach to it, and it can be applied in all kinds of situations to put us in a positive frame of mind for the task ahead.

Your mind alone will be able to conjure up the different sensations of the experience of the dream job: sight, sound, touch, smell, even taste. When you try it, you will be amazed at the amount of detail you will notice. If you can see yourself doing the job you want, you can find it and fulfil that dream. You can also do this visualisation when you have found a job you think you would like to do, literally to see how it feels to be in the job. This allows you to ask yourself: is this what you want? You could also visualise yourself succeeding at the interview!

Visualisation exercises

Visualisation exercises are a great way of tapping into your unconscious to help you choose your next career move. They work in

addition to the practical research you do as they allow you to realise and accept how you feel. You can revisit these exercises in your toolkit.

Exercise 1

1. Find a quiet space and close your eyes. Imagine yourself in the future in a job where you feel fulfilled. Just allow a picture to float to the surface. What do you see? Where are you? What are you doing? Who are the people with you? How do you feel? Afterwards, make a few notes in your journal about what you saw and how you felt.
2. In your visualisation, watch yourself succeeding in the new job. See how you handle the people and the situation you are in.

Exercise 2

1. Create a visual mood board of your aspirations. Ideally, this is an actual board or space on your wall where you can fix sticky notes and pictures, memos, and doodles, whatever comes to hand that you find and that resonates with you while you are thinking about what kind of work you would like to do. Alternatively, you can do this on your computer using a mood board tool such as Pinterest.
2. Don't hold back with the details! The more detail you have in your visual mood board, the closer, more energised, and positive you will feel about achieving that next career move.

REFLECTION

This brings us to the end of Part 1. You have now done the groundwork around understanding yourself better and considering what it is you really want in terms of your next career move or transition. Let's now move on to Part 2 where we will build on this work by starting to explore our options, do the preparatory work towards actually making some changes or transitions, and, finally, learn some skills to underpin this new stage in your career so that you can propel yourself forward with confidence.

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7

INCONGRUITY OF GENDER ROLES

Media Impact on Women in Science and Health Communication

Julie L. Andsager and Yeon Kyeong Erin Kim-Cho

Women have become more involved in journalism coverage of science and health topics over the last 20 years. The field remains male-dominated, however, raising the question of how women in science communication are perceived. Role congruity theory posits that individuals judge others based on the degree to which those others' characteristics are consistent with the expectations ascribed to the role that the other fills. Gender role expectations—specifically, that women are linked with communal values and men with agentic values—may conflict with the role expectations of scientists who are women. Women are assumed to be helpful and concerned with others, while scientists (historically men) are presumed to be objective and competitive (Knobloch-Westerwick & Glynn, 2013). These discrepancies have real consequences for women scholars: Junior scholars—most discouragingly, in the International Communication Association—perceive research purportedly conducted by men to be higher quality than women's research (Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2013).

In this chapter, we explore how expectations for role congruity may influence women's success in science and health communication in the media. Science writing refers to journalism and other public-oriented communication about issues in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), some of which may cross into information regarding medicine or the environment. Health writing encompasses medicine (e.g., new developments in treatment or understanding of physical and mental processes) as well as health behaviors such as nutrition, exercise, or quarantining during a pandemic. Thus, in this chapter, we refer to writing and communication directed toward a lay audience and published on popular websites and in legacy media like newspapers and television.

As scientific institutions developed in the United States prior to the 19th century, men slowly but surely removed women from their ranks and relied on legal

and cultural strictures to keep women away from the relatively new but potentially prestigious field of scientific inquiry (Schiebinger, 1999). The same was true—if not more so—in the fields of medicine and health. Not only were women stymied in their attempts to gain entry to medical schools, but their (White) bodies were traditionally excluded from study in medical research. Women’s bodies were assumed to be the same as men’s, aside from reproductive organs, and those bodies needed to be protected for their primary functions—pregnancy and childbirth. Thus, for more than half of U.S. history, science, medicine, and health stood solid as bastions of (White) men. In the 1990s, women activists led the charge for inclusion in medical research by demonstrating the physical harms that women experienced based on their omission. The Clinton administration overturned the policy (Epstein, 2007). When entertainment media such as movies and television evolved, scientists and physicians were overwhelmingly depicted as White and male (e.g., *Dr. Kildare*, *Ben Casey*, *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, *M*A*S*H**), thereby reinforcing these fields as gendered male.

Science remains a male-dominated discipline. In STEM jobs men outnumber women nearly three to one (73% men, 27% women), according to 2019 U.S. Census Bureau estimates (Martinez & Christnacht, 2021). This ratio has improved since 1970, though not by much. Fifty years ago, women held 8% of STEM jobs, indicating progress at a snail’s pace. Nonetheless, a tripling of women in the scientific workforce is to be applauded as science has long been gendered male, with “women’s long legal exclusion from scientific institutions ... buttressed by an elaborate coding of behaviors and activities as appropriately masculine or feminine” (Schiebinger, 1999, p. 69). In the realm of health care, women’s employment has ballooned during the 21st century: As of 2019, roughly three-fourths of health-care jobs belonged to women (Day & Christnacht, 2019). Some prestige concerns remain, however, as women still account for less than half of physicians, surgeons, dentists, and those involved in emergency medicine.

Journalism, too, remains the product largely of men, despite some gains by women in the last few decades. Women were rarely allowed to report on those old male-dominated stalwarts—science and medicine. Today, women make up only about one-third of the news media industry (York, 2017) and they are not evenly distributed across roles and beats (the “topic” area in which a journalist specializes). Women’s early forays into newsrooms usually found them in the society pages, then venturing into entertainment, leisure, and other domestic areas.

Women have overtaken men in science writing in sheer number, however, at least within the field’s largest U.S. professional organization, the National Association of Science Writers (NASW), which boasted 2,856 professional and student members in 2021. In 2020, 63.6% of the membership of the NASW identified as female (NASW, 2022). The NASW membership data suggests this trend will continue: Nearly two-thirds of student members (65.6%) identified as female. Among NASW members with 15 years of professional experience or fewer, 70.9% were female; this compares favorably to the cohort with 16 or more

years of experience, in which 56.2% identified as female. This shift is impressive, but it is not known how many science writers do not belong to the organization. On the other hand, men's bylines still dominate science writing in online news sites, accounting for 60% of bylines in this category (Women's Media Center [WMC], 2019).

Estimating the numbers related to women working as health writers is more difficult. Women's bylines were more frequent than men's in health stories in newspaper coverage and online news sites (58% and 59%, respectively; WMC, 2019). A study of health news in major newspapers and television networks in 2012 found that women's bylines accompanied about 40% of print coverage on health, but women reported only one-third of the television news coverage (Andsager, 2013). Although a complete listing of members of the Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ)—the primary health journalists' organization—is not publicly available, a count of the freelancers listed on its Freelancer Directory suggests that women far outnumber men among its membership by a ratio of more than 4:1 (Association of Health Care Journalists [AHCJ], n.d.-b); it is also possible, of course, that women are more likely to identify as freelancers. Another positive indicator is the growing proportion of women scholars in the health communication and promotion fields. A study of the authors' gender in two major, peer-reviewed health communication journals found that from 1996 through 2004, women authors of scholarly articles outnumbered men in six of those nine years (Andsager, 2007); further, women comprised the majority of membership in national and international professional organizations' health communication divisions.

In this chapter, we examine awards presented to men and women journalists for science, health, and related communication by U.S.-based trade associations in order to determine possible differences in the recognition women and men receive. As women have infiltrated the ranks of science and health writing, their numbers have achieved parity with men (or surpassed it). An increase in the quantity of women's science and health writing is one step forward. Does recognition of quality automatically follow?

The “Matilda Matthew Effect”

The legacy of historical constrictions within the science and medical fields, and cultural mores, when combined with the structure and politics of academe, left such a mark on these disciplines that the repercussions remain today—even as the numbers of professionals within have become more balanced by gender. Merton's 1968 article documented anecdotal evidence of the over-recognition of scientists at the top of their profession, which is better known by the term “Matthew Effect.” Specifically, skewed citation patterns were found, with some authors and papers cited more often than others. Goodell (1977) argued that these patterns were common in science journalism, leading to distorted information and building reputations for a few selected people, overwhelmingly men. Most

importantly, Merton (1968) observed that favorable and established authors get “disproportionately great credit for their contributions to science while relatively unknown scientists get disproportionately little credit for comparable contributions” (p. 57). These advantages accumulate and help further the already positive reputation of those well-known and visible scientists.

In 1993, Rossiter coined the term “Matilda Effect” which emphasizes the pattern of a systemic under-recognition of women scientists. Rossiter (1993) pointed out that for women in science, “those unrecognized in their own time generally remained so, but others that were well-known in their day have since been obliterated from history” (p. 328). Since then, a number of studies have revealed that work produced by women across disciplines has been perceived as less valuable compared to that of their men counterparts (e.g., Goldin & Rouse, 2000; Heilman & Haynes, 2005; Trix & Penska, 2003; Wennerås & Wold, 1997). For example, an examination of faculty recommendation letters showed gender bias—revealing clear differences in language use when evaluating women faculty members (Trix & Penska, 2003).

This perception was also examined by Budden et al. (2008) who compared the manuscript acceptance rate of articles written by women and men first authors when a science journal switched from a single-blind manuscript review process (author name revealed, but reviewer name hidden) to double-blind process (author and reviewer names hidden). When authors were anonymous, women scholars’ manuscript acceptance rate increased close to 8% in the four years since the implementation of the double-blind review from 84 to 162 manuscripts.

Studies comparing the number of citations men and women scholars received, however, revealed inconsistencies in their findings (Feeley & Yang, 2022; Knobloch-Westerwick & Glynn, 2013). Knobloch-Westerwick and Glynn’s (2013) examination of two major communication journals found that women authors were cited on average about 13 times and men authors about 18 times. When Feeley and Yang (2022) later replicated that study with three additional journals, their findings did not support the “Matilda Effect.” Their study found that first-authored articles by women in the *Journal of Broadcast and Electronic Media* were cited more frequently than first-authored articles by men, and highly productive women scholars were more likely to be cited compared to highly productive men scholars.

Studies examining federal grant and post-doctoral fellowship recipients in the U.S. and European countries found that women researchers were less likely and less often to receive major grants or fellowships (Bormann et al., 2007; RAND, 2005; Wennerås & Wold, 1997), which can lead to men achieving more career success, such as additional grants, promotions, and obtaining leadership roles (Jagsi et al., 2011). Clearly, this cycle reinforces the phenomenon of the Matthew Effect.

Role Congruity Theory

For women in professions that are traditionally recognized as masculine professions, such as science and healthcare, women may be negatively perceived and ultimately experience an adverse impact on their success in the field. Role congruity theory can help explain why we continue to see fewer women leaders in top executive positions compared to men. According to Eagly (1987), social roles are expectations that are socially shared and people have consensual beliefs about how men and women should behave—especially when a person holds a certain social position. Eagly argued that the “beliefs are more than beliefs about the attributes of women and men. Many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex” (p. 13).

Although social role theory contributes greatly to our understanding of sex difference in behavior, role congruity theory further explains how gender roles and other roles—especially leader roles—produce two types of prejudice (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The two forms of prejudice regarding women leaders were:

- (a) less favorable evaluation of women’s potential for leadership because leadership ability is more stereotypical of men than women and
- (b) less favorable evaluation of the actual leadership behavior of women than men because such behavior is perceived as less desirable in women than men.

(Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 576)

In their analysis, women were found to be less favorable, had greater difficulty in obtaining leader roles, and were perceived to be less effective in their leader roles. Furthermore, if women leaders possessed agentic qualities, such as dominance—especially in a male-dominated field—women were perceived negatively because that behavior is considered appropriate for only men (Hall & Carter, 1999). This negative perception was also observed in women. In Ritter and Yoder’s (2004) study, women participants who scored higher in dominance appointed their less dominant male partner to be the leader. In other words, even when women had leadership opportunities, many were reluctant to emerge as leaders, especially in masculine-type tasks (Ritter & Yoder, 2004).

According to role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), prejudice against women leaders will be greater when women are in leadership positions in a male-congenial organization. Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra’s (2006) experiment with 705 participants found that men candidates were perceived as more favorable regardless of industry and predicted men candidates to be more likely to be promoted than their women counterparts. Participants showed positive prediction only when the woman candidate was in the female-congenial or unspecified industry. Most important to our study, women candidates were perceived to perform unsatisfactorily and less likely to succeed in an industry incongruent with their gender role (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006).

Receiving positive acknowledgment for work in roles that have not traditionally been open—or, at least not friendly—to women is another area affected by the dynamics of role congruity theory. A study examining awards given to women physicians in recognition for their achievements found zero to near-zero representation of women physicians (Silver et al., 2018). The authors found that, out of the 14 recognition award recipient lists from 11 medical specialty societies, which totaled 344 awards, only nine awards went to women. It is worth noting that specialty fields like dermatology (two awards out of 29), physical medicine and rehabilitation (three awards out of 51), and physiatrists (zero awards out of 6) listed more faculty women physicians than men physicians as faculty.

Similarly, Carnes et al. (2005) analyzed the award process for the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Director's Pioneer Award when none of the nine awards went to a woman. The authors argued that the recipients of the award did not represent the percentage of women graduating with doctoral degrees, working as principal investigators on grants, and women receiving non-NIH awards. Carnes et al. (2005) pointed out that the NIH's award process makes gender-based assumptions in evaluating candidates in a traditionally male-dominated field, such as science, which can put women at a disadvantage. The authors found that women scientists were disadvantaged in the following ways:

- (1) time pressure placed on evaluators,
- (2) absence of face-to-face discussion about applicants,
- (3) ambiguity of performance criteria, given the novelty of the award, combined with an emphasis on subjective assessment of leadership, potential achievements rather than actual accomplishments, and risk taking,
- (4) emphasis on self-promotion,
- (5) weight given to letters of recommendation, and
- (6) the need for finalists to make a formal, in-person presentation in which the individual and not his or her science was the focus of evaluation.

(p. 684)

In this sense, we can speculate that women in science and health communication will have been historically less likely to be recognized for their contributions in the field compared to their men colleagues. As the gender balance between individuals identifying as women and men has reduced over the last few decades, however, we would expect writing awards to reflect this progress. Little research seems to have examined science- and health-writing awards as a reflection of the status of women writers, so the data reported in this chapter provide insight into how well women and men writers have fared—at least in terms of recognition—over the last few decades. An earlier analysis of science-writing awards presented from 2009 to 2018 by eight major science journalism award competitions indicated that 47% of the awards went to women and 53% to men (Hall, 2019), but that time frame reflects a short window into the competitions overall; further, that study did not report gender differences in the prestige of the awards (e.g., the first prize versus second prize).

Analysis of Writing Awards

To determine the extent to which awards for science and health writing reflect a gender balance, we examined the records of three prominent competitions: the Kavli Awards, presented by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS); awards given by the National Association of Science Writers (NASW); and awards from the Association of Health Care Journalists (AHCJ). Although each competition is open to international nominations, the vast majority of awards have gone to U.S.-based writers. The oldest of these competitions dates back to 1946, and each offers multiple competition categories. To make data collection manageable but representative, we randomly selected odd-numbered years for analysis. Both NASW and AHCJ include student categories, but we analyzed only awards for professionals because peer judges may be more likely aware of professionals' gender and reputation in the field. Among the three competitions we analyzed, 46.5% of the total winners (including all authors listed, solo and on teams) were women and 53.5% were men; however, 52.4% went to women and 47.6% to men when only the solo-authored award winners are considered.

Each competition publishes a complete list of awardees on its website. We recorded writer gender for 629 awards.¹ When a team of writers won, we recorded the first author's gender and counted the number of women and men who comprised the team. The vast majority of winners' names were unambiguously female or male, particularly in the 20th century. Some award listings included mugshots to indicate gender. If names were ambiguous, we searched on the internet for writer gender by photos or pronouns. These techniques, of course, unfortunately do not account for transgendered or nonbinary writers. The inclusion of race and ethnicity of each award winner would be ideal to further inform the analysis, but we were unable to identify race and ethnicity for two reasons: First, mugshots were included only for some of the award winners. For those that were available, ascertaining racial/ethnic identification based on a photograph is not reasonable. Second, although surnames might provide some idea of ethnicity, they can also lead to incorrect assumptions as a surname might reflect a spouse's identity (e.g., a married name) or adoptive parents' racial/ethnic identity.

AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards. The Kavli Awards is an international competition with awards bestowed annually to recognize the top science journalism published in the previous year. The AAAS, which publishes *Science* and related journals, is the largest general scientific organization in the world. It inaugurated the Science Journalism Awards in 1945 for coverage of sciences, engineering, and mathematics (AAAS, n.d.-a). Independent committees of experts judge the entries on "scientific accuracy, initiative, originality, clarity of interpretation, and value in fostering a better public understanding of science and its impact" (AAAS, n.d.-a, para. 2). In 2009, The Kavli Foundation endowed the awards. Including the Kavli Awards in this study provides a historical timeline of gender in science writing.

In 1945, the AAAS recognized prominent members of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) with “special citations” for Career Excellence in Science Reporting; the 13 honorees comprised 11 men and two women.² The first awards for specific works were presented in 1946 to the (men) authors of three newspaper articles. The 1947 awards initiated medium-based categories—newspaper and magazine—which were then refined and supplemented as media evolved to include categories honoring audio, video, online, etc. As of 2022, each award category selects the two entries that best fulfill the criteria, with the Gold prize (\$5,000) for the top entry and the Silver (\$3,500) for second best. Gold prize winners in 2021 included journalists from *Wired*, PBS, *El País* (Spain), *FiftyTwo* (India), *The New York Times Magazine*, CBC/Radio-Canada, VOX, and NOVA.

National Association of Science Writers. NASW offers two award competitions, which currently bestow eight awards annually. The Science in Society Journalism Awards, first fielded in 1996, recognizes individuals for their “investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on society” (NASW, n.d.-a, para. 3). Within this broad category, six sub-categories include books and various forms of reporting. NASW developed a second competition, the Excellence in Institutional Writing Awards, in 2018 to distinguish writers communicating on behalf of institutions or other organizations unrelated to media. Two award categories fall under this umbrella. (Our analyses indicated that gender was not a factor in either individual or institutional categories.) Committees of “accomplished peers” judge the entries. NASW awards include cash prizes, plus all award-winning work is linked to the association’s website, instantly establishing credibility for the writers. The awards are for investigative or interpretive reporting about the sciences and their impact on society.³ Winners in 2020 included journalists from HarperCollins, *The Times-Picayune*, *The Advocate*, Audubon, *Science Magazine*, and Longreads.

Association of Health Care Journalists. The first AHCJ award competition was held in 2004. Currently, the organization includes nine categories recognizing work by medium or form (e.g., consumer/feature, business, public health). Peer association members judge entries; each category relies on a separate committee of judges. The top winners in each category receive a \$500 prize plus lodging and registration at AHCJ’s annual conference. Judges’ comments on the winning entries accompany the hyperlink to the work, again boosting the award-winning writers’ careers. Award winners are recognized for “the best health reporting in print, broadcast and online media” (AHCJ, n.d.-a, para. 1).⁴ The 2021 winners were: Reuters, *The Texas Tribune*, NBC News, *Birmingham News*, *The Indianapolis Star*, *Concord Monitor*, NEO.Life, WebMD/MedScape, Tradeoffs (Google Podcast), WPLN News, and Nashville Public Radio.

As this brief explanation of the three organizational competitions suggests, awards for science and/or health writing are not trivial. The awards include not-insignificant cash rewards and—perhaps more importantly—the recognition they convey has the potential to dramatically change a writer’s prospects. A winning

writer might attract freelance contracts from prestigious publications, job offers, or a book contract from a popular publishing house. An award from any of these three competitions is, theoretically, worth much more in the long run to the winners than the immediate cash and related prizes.

Results and Discussion

Not surprisingly, given men's dominance of science writing prior to the 1970s, Kavli Awards presented since 1947 to men for solo-authored work outnumbered those presented to women by a ratio of nearly three to one (141 awards to men, or 73.1%; 52 to women, or 26.9%). The first Kavli Award recognizing a woman's science writing was presented in 1967. When we analyzed the awards from that point forward, we found that more than twice as many awards went to men (67.1%) as to women (32.9%; 106 to 52, respectively). On the other hand, among the NASW awards, more than half the solo-authored awards were presented to women authors (55.3%, $n = 47$). This may be an artifact of eras; NASW started its competition in 1996. The AHCJ awards competition began in 2005; since its inception, women award winners for solo-authored stories comprised 59.5% ($n = 103$) of awards. (We were unable to ascertain author gender for three AHCJ solo-authored awards, which are not included in this count.)

The data from science/health-writing awards presented to individuals over time suggests several important points. First, the more recently a competition was implemented, the higher the percentage of awards won by individual women writers (see Figure 7.1). Whether by coincidence or the momentum associated with greater numbers of women involved in the three organizations, since 2004—when AHCJ's competition began—the percentage of awards to women and men for individual works has hovered much more tightly around the 50 percent mark, as shown in Figure 7.1. Second, the greater the ratio of women to men members in an organization, the more likely women's work is to be recognized. Could this finding reflect gender balance among judges? More awareness of the gender climate in the field? Unfortunately, there is not enough information on the associations' websites to address this point.

Examining the distribution of the top prizes (e.g., first, second, third) by the gender of award winners is also informative. When we analyzed each competition on its own, we found that women writers won 29.8% of the top (first place) Kavli Awards among solo-authored pieces. (See Table 7.1.) Women won 37.1% of the second-highest prizes and only 8.1% of the third-ranked prizes. One could argue that, as the longest-running award competition, these Kavli statistics largely reflect the male-dominated field prior to the second wave of the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Therefore, we analyzed the 160 Kavli Awards presented for solo-authored work from 1967 forward (when the first award was presented to a woman). This analysis indicated slight improvements in the gender imbalance, as women won 34.3% of first prizes; 44.8% of

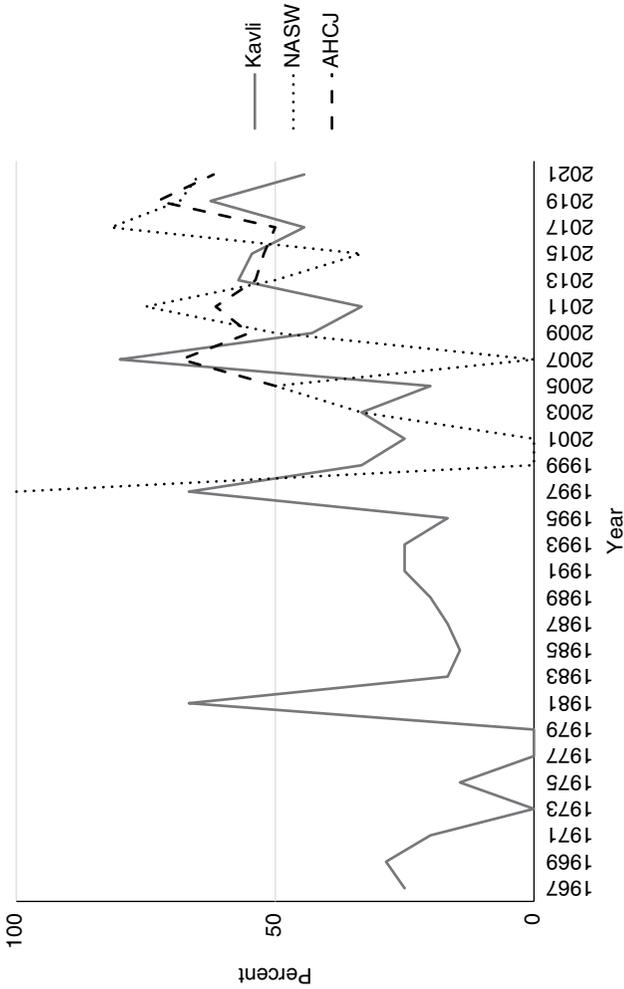


FIGURE 7.1. Percentage of awards presented to women writers in three competitions by year.
Note: The Kavli Award competition began in 1946, but no women writers received awards until 1967.

TABLE 7.1 AAAS Kavli Award winners by gender, 1947–2021.

Solo-authored Articles Author Gender	First	Second	Third	Total
Women	36	13	3	52
Men	85	22	34	141
Total	121	35	37	193

Note: Odd-numbered years only.
 $\chi^2 (2, N = 193) = 9.00, p = .011$

Multi-authored First Author Gender	First	Second	Third	Total
Women	23	7	1	31
Men	22	5	5	32
Total	45	12	6	63

Note: Odd-numbered years only.
 $\chi^2 (2, N = 63) = 3.01, p = .340$

second prizes; and 12.5% of third prizes ($\chi^2 (2, N = 158) = 6.48, p = .039$). While this is slight progress over the Kavli Awards' first two decades, the largest area of growth for women was in the second-prize category.

In comparison to the AAAS Kavli Awards, prizes by gender were equally distributed in the two “younger” competitions. Among solo authors in the NASW, 53.1% of first prizes went to women and 58.3% of honorable mentions went to women. (See Table 7.2.) Women were slightly more likely to receive both the top prize and honorable mentions (more the latter than the former), but these trends were not statistically significant.

The gender distribution of award winners in AHCJ competitions followed that of NASW. (See Table 7.3.) Similarly, though women won more awards than men across the range of prizes (first through third, plus honorable mentions), the top prize was the most equally distributed by gender: Women won 53.6% of the first prizes, and 60% or more of the lower prizes. Again, these patterns were not statistically significant.

Awards for Multiple-Authored Work

As media technologies changed, along with award categories, multi-author teams in each association's competition became more common. Kavli teams that won awards for their multi-authored projects included 77 women (40.2%) and 115 men (59.9%; percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding), with women-led teams comprising 49.2% of the multi-authored award-winning teams. The top Kavli prize was close to

TABLE 7.2 National Association of Science Writers award winners by gender, 1997–2021.

Solo-authored Articles Author Gender	First	Honorable Mention	Total
Women	26	21	47
Men	23	15	38
Total	49	36	85

Note: Odd-numbered years only.

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 85) = .23, p = .629$$

Multi-authored First Author Gender	First	Honorable Mention	Total
Women	4	0	4
Men	9	5	14
Total	13	5	18

Note: Odd-numbered years only.

$$\chi^2 (1, N = 18) = 1.98, p = .160.$$

TABLE 7.3 Association of Health Care Journalists awards, 2005–2021.

Solo-authored Articles Author Gender	First	Second	Third	Honorable mention	Total
Women	30	34	35	3	102
Men	26	20	22	2	70
Total	56	54	57	5	172

Note: Odd-numbered years only.

$$\chi^2 (3, N = 172) = 1.17, p = .761.$$

Multi-authored Articles Author Gender	First	Second	Third	Honorable mention	Total
Women	12	22	17	2	53
Men	13	9	21	2	45
Total	25	31	38	4	98

Note: Odd-numbered years only.

$$\chi^2 (3, N = 98) = 5.30, p = .151.$$

equally distributed among women-led (51.1%) and men-led teams. Following the trend we have seen thus far, women-led teams were more likely to receive the second prize (58.3%) but the third prize was dominated by men-led teams (83.3%; women-led teams won 16.7%). Among NASW's multi-authored award winners, men were far more likely to be the first author (77.8%, $n = 14$) than women (22.2%, $n = 4$). A total of 34 men (56.7%) and 26 women (43.3%) comprised the award-winning teams. If we look at the gender of first authors in NASW, 30.8% of first prizes went to women-led teams, and no women-led teams received honorable mentions; indeed, only 22.2% of the NASW awards won by multi-authored pieces went to teams led by women. In AHCJ, 18 awards went to teams with no individualized information. Writing teams for AHCJ awards comprised 128 women (52.5%) and 115 men (47.1%). Women were the first author on 54.1% ($n = 53$) of multi-authored teams. Teams led by women were almost equally likely to receive the top prize as those led by men (48.0% of top prizes went to women-led teams). In the AHCJ award competition, women-led teams were far more likely to receive the second-place prize (71.0% of these awards) and slightly less likely to win third prize (44.7% of third prizes).

In both science-based competitions (Kavli and NASW), then, the total number of men authors far outnumbered women on team projects, but within the health-writing competition (AHCJ) somewhat more women than men comprised the teams. Teams led by women authors were nearly equally likely to win the top prize in the Kavli and AHCJ, but they were most likely to win the second prizes. Conversely, men-led teams won almost three-quarters of all awards won by teams. This finding is intriguing. To understand why the writing competitions would differ in this regard, it would be necessary to analyze who comprised judges and judging teams, as well as the topics of the award-winning products. It is possible, though, that as women-led teams were rarer in the sciences and men-led teams were less frequent in health, judges may have given more consideration to the minority in service of fairness. Many reasons may exist for gender balance (or lack thereof) in multi-author teams; many factors likely determine who is listed as the first author/leader on a reporting team. Therefore, the data reported here concerning solo-authored award winners is much more valuable in understanding the role gender plays in recognizing the best science and health writing each year.

Conclusions

In conceptualizing this chapter, we used awards bestowed for science and health writing in the popular media and trade publications as a proxy for the citations and grants that are the currency of prominence in academe. Numerous studies have documented the cycle of men in academe receiving more recognition for their work than do women scholars; this attention spirals upward and raises the prospects and recognition for men scholars. Women's comparative lack of recognition in academe—the “Matilda Effect”—is common across disciplines. Role congruity theory explains that these kinds of patterns occur when an individual violates traditional gender role expectations. Women professors and

scholars, and women scientists and physicians, still seem to transgress expectations in traditional or conservative views. We sought in this chapter to explore whether such dated patterns seem to exist in the realm of science and health writing for (mostly) lay audiences (beyond the realm of specialized peer-reviewed journals written by and for experts).

One limitation of this study reported here is the omission of the topics of award-winning work. Some awards may reflect, to some extent, the urgency or uniqueness of a topic; the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme drought, for example, may dominate future competitions, regardless of author gender. To include topics of award-winning writing, though, requires a thorough exploration of how writers choose their topics—and how editors select the writers who will cover those topics. Gender likely figures into both of those decisions.

Awards for one's work have the potential to draw attention to that work and to enhance a writer's prospects. They can tip the balance in favor of a contract with a publisher, for example, or help lead to more prestigious employment. In total, our analysis of prominent science- and health-writing award competitions included 450 awards presented to individuals who were the sole writer on award-winning work. Women received 201, or 44.7%, of these awards. On the surface, this statistic is encouraging, particularly considering the fact that one competition dates back to 1947. Much of the advancement in awards recognizing women's writing occurred since 2005, to a point that women in the three award competitions have mostly been *more* likely to receive awards than men. While that is encouraging, it reflects the fact that women have simply become present in greater numbers in science and health writing.

Our analysis suggests two caveats to the otherwise largely positive developments in gender balance in science- and health-writing competitions, however. First, the finding that more than four out of ten writing awards went to women overall obscures the fact that the vast majority of those awards recognized women in health writing: Women received 59.3% of the awards in the health-writing competition, but only 35.6% of awards in the science-writing competitions. One explanation for this disparity is that AHCJ (the health-writing competition) distributes the most awards annually, in many categories, and usually awards three awards per category along with some honorable mentions. It is also the newest competition, so it does not have to overcome the historical background that the AAAS Kavli Awards do. A second explanation is that women fare better in health writing than in science-writing competitions based on their traditional role as caregivers for their families. Women are also more likely than men to seek health information for themselves and their families. In other words, health remains more congruent with women's roles than does science.

A second caveat is that women-authored pieces won the top or first prize less frequently than the lower-ranked prizes across competitions. It may be an honor to be nominated, but the top prize is the *big* prize. The NASW competition bestows one award annually and often lists a second work as an honorable

mention or runner-up. In that competition, then, anything less than first prize will not deliver nearly the same benefits to authors. Among awards for multi-authored work, the findings are not as consistent; men outnumbered women in the totals of team members overall, and many teams were led by women (except for in NASW), but within the award competitions their success varied. This closer examination of the specific prizes suggests that women are putting substantial cracks in the glass ceiling of these writing competitions, but until they achieve equity in the top prize arena, they cannot shatter it.

Finally, the awards analyzed herein nearly all reflect work published prior to the COVID-19 epidemic and the United States' strong measures to limit its spread. Given the greater negative impacts on women professionals than on their men counterparts, it remains to be seen whether the positive trends in recognizing women's contributions to science and health writing will continue or be interrupted. If the latter, how long might it take for parity to be regained?

Notes

- 1 This analysis is based on the awards bestowed in each competition in *odd*-numbered years. To ensure intercoder reliability before coding odd-numbered years, however, we used a random number generator to determine three *even*-numbered years (2008, 1992, and 1962), and both authors coded author gender for all awards listed for those years ($n = 26$). Coder agreement was 100%.
- 2 Categories include science reporting—large outlet, small outlet, in-depth; magazine; spot news, magazine, video-spot news, video in-depth, audio, and children's science (AAAS, n.d.-b).
- 3 Categories include books, reporting, features, longform, and a series (NASW, n.d.-b).
- 4 Categories include investigative, beat, and audio reporting, public health and health policy, trade publications, consumer, business, and student reporting (AHCJ, n.d.-c).

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