

Blogs

- Women & Communication
- The Ins & Outs of Self-Publishing

Women & Communication

Women in Communication have had their voices stifled for long enough. With an upsurge in the fight for women's rights, the time is NOW to bring awareness to the women who have developed theories that help to articulate women's experiences.

Countless Communication textbooks have been published; some with no women theorists and most with no more than three. In this publication, we will shed light on women theorists who have done great work in the field of communication. This month's feature is theorist Marsha Houston.

Marsha Houston was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina. A background in English, dramatic art, and Communication Studies prompted her to question the ways in which gender and racial ideologies influence linguistics.

Houston's most noted study involved code switching or alternating two language varieties in the place of phrases, words, or sentence level. When communicators are in different social groups, they use code switching—changing your speech based on your social group—to adjust to the communication demands.

Houston performed a study on code switching and how it related to black women. The study focused on college-educated, middle class Black women and how they alternated between Black English Vernacular (BEV) and Mainstream American English (MAE) (Houston 1983). In the study, Houston selected two groups of friends, one pair was Black, and the other pair was White. They had a conversation of their choosing with their friend; then switched to a woman of a different race and finally a man of their same race. From the study, Houston found that black participants switched between BEV and MAE, black participants varied their use of BEV depending on their partner's race or gender, and that all individuals exhibited code-switching (Houston, 1983). This research is valuable because it introduces the conversation of code switching on the behalf of Black women. There are many instances where a Black woman would code switch; one of the most noted is in the workplace. According to research done by Whitfield-Harris & Lockhart (2016) on African Americans working in predominantly white institutions, African Americans consistently felt the need to change their natural behaviors: speech, interests, mannerism, in an effort to be accepted by their white counterparts. Houston's study provided data to show that code switching on behalf of Black women doesn't just occur with non-black people but also with Black men.

Women & Communication



Marsha Houston

Women in Communication have had their voices stifled for long enough. With an upsurge in the fight for women's rights, the time is NOW to bring awareness to the women who have developed theories that help to articulate women's experiences.

Countless Communication textbooks have been published; some with no women theorists and most with no more than three. In this publication, we will shed light on women theorists who have done great work in the field of communication. This month's feature is theorist Marsha Houston. Marsha Houston was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina. A background in English, dramatic art, and Communication Studies prompted her to question the ways in which gender and racial ideologies influence linguistics.

Houston's most noted study involved code switching or alternating two language varieties in the place of phrases, words, or sentence level. When communicators are in different social groups, they use code switching—changing your speech based on your social group—to adjust to the communication demands.

Houston performed a study on code switching and how it related to black women. The study focused on college-educated, middle class Black women and how they alternated between Black English Vernacular (BEV) and Mainstream American English (MAE) (Houston 1983). In the study, Houston selected two groups of friends, one pair was Black, and the other pair was White. They had a conversation of their choosing with their friend; then switched to a woman of a different race and finally a man of their same race. From the study, Houston found that black participants switched between BEV and MAE, black participants varied their use of BEV depending on their partner's race or gender, and that all individuals exhibited code-switching (Houston, 1983).

This research is valuable because it introduces the conversation of code switching on the behalf of Black women. There are many instances where a Black woman would code switch; one of the most noted is in the workplace. According to research done by Whitfield-Harris & Lockhart (2016) on African Americans working in predominantly white institutions, African Americans consistently felt the need to change their natural behaviors: speech, interests, mannerism, in an effort to be accepted by their white counterparts. Houston's study provided data to show that code switching on behalf of Black women doesn't just occur with non-black people but also with Black men.

References:

Houston, M. (1983). Code-switching in black women's speech. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/303274550>

Jackson II, R & Givens, S. (2006). Black pioneers in communication research. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Whitfield-Harris, L., & Lockhart, Joan. (2016). The workplace environment for African-American faculty employed in predominantly white institutions. *ABNF Journal*, 27(2), 28-38.

The Ins and Outs of Self-Publishing

Self-publishing has become big business because of platforms that make turning a manuscript into a novel much easier. There were over one million self-published authors as of 2017 (Statista 2019). With easy-to-use set ups, authors are able to publish their novels and get assistance with the steps that come before publication. An author can create a book cover, design the interior of the book, and edit their book on their own.

Self-publishing is important to the book industry because it gives authors control over their project and allows them to learn the ins and outs of the business. If a self-published author wishes to sign to a large publishing company, high sales from a self-published novel can get the attention of literary agents and benefit the author during negotiations.

This report will break down the definition of self-publishing, how self-publishing differs from other options, and important things to consider before making the decision to self-publish.

Self-Publishing vs Traditional Publishing

Self-publishing is an alternate option to traditional publishing. To self-publish means the author does all the ground work themselves. This includes paying to have the manuscript edited, purchasing a book cover, having the manuscript formatted for E-book and paperback distribution, and a list of other expenses. With this option, the author can release the book directly to consumers. Self-publishing also empowers authors to retain all the rights to their book and to receive a bigger percent of royalties. Royalties are a portion of the money earned from book sells. While self-publishing is an alternative, it is a fast-growing business; in fact, “self-published authors are dominating traditionally published authors” (Sargent 2014).

Traditional publishing typically starts with a literary agent because most companies do not accept unsolicited material. Literary agents have relationships with publishing companies, and therefore can get the author a book deal. With traditional publishing, the publishing house pays for the book to be published, but they also have most of the creative control as well as the rights to the book. In most cases, the author is given a book advance. Once the book sells the amount of the advance, the author begins to receive royalties.

Semi Self-Publishing Options

There are semi self-publishing options for releasing a novel. Using a vanity publisher is one. Having one company to do all the ground work sounds enticing, but new authors are warned to stay away from these companies. Vanity publishers charge the author upfront to publish their book, most times at higher rates, and they seldom offer anything else.

E-book publishers have a big fanbase typically through Facebook. E-books (electronic books downloaded to phones or other devices) are their main focus. Authors submit their work, the publisher pays for it to be published, and then the author is paid royalties. However, authors don't get their books in stores—unless the author does the ground work for it on their own. Most times they don't even get paperback books or book advances. The benefit, however, is that most times the publisher is a successful author who has a built-in clientele and is sharing their audience with the new author.

Distribution Platforms

Amazon is the biggest platform for self-publishing authors. Setting up books for distribution is free and Amazon has a big audience of readers. They have easy to use templates to assist with creating a book cover and they can even assist authors with formatting their paperback book. Within 24 to 48 hours the novel will be available to the public for purchase (Amazon 2019). Authors can also have their novel automatically available through Barnes and Noble by selecting that option on the Amazon distribution page.

Ingram Lightning Source offers IngramSpark for self-published authors. The author has to pay to have their paperback book set up. The price isn't expensive (\$50), but anytime changes are made, i.e., if editing mistakes are corrected, the author has to pay the fee again. The benefit is that if authors desire to have their books in stores most retailers purchase books through Ingram.

Things to Consider

Self-publishing is hard work and making all the decisions can be overwhelming; especially in the learning stages. Research is the most important tool an author can possess. Vendors make promises that they can't fulfill, and it is up to the author to know enough about the business to weave through those ploys.

Also, there is a large possibility that the author won't make their money back. Self-publishing is a slow, consistent process that involves building a fanbase and learning how to switch from a creative to a business person. While an author may want to set the price of their book at \$20, they have to be realistic and set prices that allow them to compete with the trends of the business.

Self-publishing can be very fulfilling and rewarding but it is a strenuous job. Authors are able to release their work on their own, receive more profits, and have creative control. However, these things can be a daunting task and discourage authors. Some authors only want to write, because the idea of having to handle the business side can be intimidating and it interferes with the creative process.

References

Amazon. (2019). "Paperback Cover Templates." https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/cover-templates.

Stagent, Betty. (2014). "Surprising Self-Publishing Statistics." Publishers Weekly. <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/pw-select/article/63455-surprising-self-publishing-statistics.html>.

Statista. (2019). "Number of self-published books in the United States from 2008 to 2017." <https://www.statista.com/statistics/249036/number-of-self-published-books-in-the-us-by-format/>