Research on the Black English Vernacular (BEV) has so often focused on male interaction networks that scholars have tended to regard Black men as the more proficient users of dialect structure, and to consider vernacular speech events to be the exclusive province of men. In short, neither contemporary research on language and gender nor that on Black communication coherently describes Black women’s communicative experiences.

(Houston Stanback, 1985, p. 177)

Introduction

Marsha Houston is one of the most outspoken contemporary writers on African American women’s communication patterns and has been a champion of social justice. Houston's work earned her the privilege of being the first to hold the Nancy Reeves Dreux Chair in Women's Studies at Tulane University. Houston has received numerous other honors, including two Distinguished Book Awards and the 2002 Southern States Communication Association Outreach Award. In 1964, she was one of the first seven African American undergraduate women students to enroll at Emory College (the undergraduate school of liberal arts and sciences) of Emory University and she graduated with high honors. Houston's intellectual
tenacity and zeal are evident in her writings about gender, race and ethnicity, and sociolinguistic behavior. Throughout her academic career, she has taught courses on the topics of language and gender, communication of prejudice, African American womanhood, and interracial and intercultural communication, to name a few. While occupying the position of chair of Communication Studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, Houston served on countless editorial boards and as a member of numerous community outreach organizations.

Houston has made many significant contributions to the academy. She is a founding member of both the Feminist and Women's Studies and African American Communication and Culture Division of the National Communication Association (NCA), and has served as chair of each unit. She also played a vital role in the organization and development of two academic conferences that resulted in significant contributions to African American communication scholarship. In 1988, The Power of the Spoken Word: The Oratory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Conference was sponsored by Atlanta's Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change and the Educational Policies Board of the Speech Communication Association (now the National Communication Association), on which she was the first African American woman to serve. The conference resulted in the first collection of communication scholarship on King's work: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Sermonic Power of Discourse (Lucaites & Calloway Thomas, 1993). Two years later, she planned the Eighth National Conference on Research in Gender and Communication with the theme Difficult Dialogues: Gateways and Barriers to Women's Communication Across Cultures which aimed to “move studies of communication and gender in African American communities from marginal discussion to goal oriented agendas with significant social impact” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). Both conferences provided a rare space for scholarship focused on the fortification of African American community consciousness.

In addition to her work in the discipline, classroom, and community, Houston has mentored many African American woman scholars, who often feel isolated in the academy. She freely shares with young scholars, who search for their place in a predominately White and male field of study, her philosophy about the importance of looking beyond environmental obstacles. In theory and practice, Houston embodies the African American adage of “lifting as we climb.” In a personal interview with Houston, she reflected on her goal to contribute to the lives of other African American women scholars:

I think for perhaps the past five years, a part of what I have been attempting to do is to do what I can to make a space for younger scholars, especially Black women who are doing feminist work, to find a space and to have access to the field. I'm not so much interested now in producing a lot of work, what I'm interested in is making sure that whatever power I have is used to help others make a space for themselves.

(Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001)

Indeed, Houston's efforts have helped to empower an entire generation of young African American women scholars to approach the study of communication from their own subject positions. Her commitment to the profession and to the lives of women was acknowledged in 1994 with the Francine Merritt Award for Distinguished Service to Women in the Communication Discipline.

Houston has served as guest lecturer and consultant at several colleges and universities throughout the United States. She continues to serve as an example of the benefits of unyielding determination and concern for community.
Biographical Information

Marsha Houston was born on November 29, 1945 in Greensboro, North Carolina as the youngest of three daughters. Her mother, Lillian Tyson Houston from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and father, Roosevelt Houston of Greensboro, divorced early in her life. Houston's immediate family consisted of her mother, eldest sister Josephine Coward, brother-in-law Jather Coward, and niece Janice Coward. Like most of the pioneers in this volume, she grew up in the segregated south of the 1950s and 1960s. The dual influences of the developing civil rights and women’s rights movements were extremely influential in shaping Houston's social and political views. She learned early in her childhood about the intricacies of personal relationships and became intrigued by them.

Houston was particularly fascinated by African American relational strategies such as her mother and sisters negotiating what she called the “double-shift” (Houston, 2000a, p. 23) of being homemakers and workers. During most of her formative years, Houston’s mother worked as a lab technician for a microfilm company, her sister Josephine was an educator, and her sister Gloria (Ogelsby) was a recreation specialist. Early observations of these significant women in her life taught Houston how (and why) to be attentive to career, home, and family in a way that symbolized how critical each of these areas of life were to African American women’s identities. This vision provided her with a sense of how domestic responsibilities, career challenges, and relational maintenance complement each other to constitute a full life. These women also taught her the value of being assertive, which is probably no surprise to those who know Houston well. She noted, “We’re all pretty feisty,” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001), a temperament that goes back to her great-great-grandmother, an ex-slave known as “Mama Candace” and other women in her mother’s family.

Houston also learned the value of education early in her life. Her hometown had two historically Black colleges: Bennett College and North Carolina Agricultural & Technical (A&T) State University. Through proximity, she came to know several college professors and children of college professors during her formative years. In fact, Houston recalled that her best friend’s mother was a French professor. By the time she began her high school career, she was certain that life as a college professor would provide her fulfillment, freedom to express her ideas, and the ability to perform for the benefit of others. Considering herself “a ham” in her youth, the idea of performing in front of a class offered much more appeal than struggling to become an actor because African Americans then had few theatrical options other than denigrating roles as servants or social deviants (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001).

Her early role models ranged from successful Black people whose experiences were reported in popular magazines such as Jet and Ebony to people in her community who were successful in their careers. Most significantly, she reported that her mother and sisters served as key role models in her life. Her sisters, who were already college students at the time of Houston's birth, showed her that Black women could manage marriages, families, and careers. Houston's outspoken personality, fondness for performing, and commitment to expressing her values and beliefs made her a natural in the classroom (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001).

Academic Background and Experience
Marsha Houston recalled taking great interest in her education and described herself as having been a good student. She was selected for both the National Junior and Senior Honor Societies in her formative educational years. In addition to her interest in academics, she fondly remembered summer opportunities to participate in children’s theatre at Bennett College and that she became “hooked” on drama when she was 7 years old. During each of her years at James B. Dudley High School, Houston had leading roles in “Dudley Thespian” drama club plays, and won recognition in statewide drama competitions. A lover of both the written and spoken word, Houston also won recognition for her poetry from North Carolina A&T State University. She graduated from Dudley as cosalutatorian of her class in 1964 and was awarded a Rockefeller Scholarship to Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. At Emory, Houston found several opportunities to foster her love for performance.

During her time at Emory, Houston participated in Theater Emory and the university's prestigious Barkeley Forum Debaters. As an English major, she was selected for the English Department's rigorous Honors Program and was tapped for the Women's Honor Organization (WHO), the highest honor a woman could receive at Emory during the time of her enrollment. She served as WHO president during the 1967–68 academic year. Houston was also a founding member of the Emory Black Student Alliance (BSA). In the spring of Houston's senior year, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. Houston and other members of the Emory BSA responded to the depth of the tremendous national loss by mounting a readers’ theatre production of Langston Hughes's *Montage of a Dream Deferred* to raise the first funds for Martin Luther King, Jr., scholarships for minority students at Emory. She earned her bachelor’s degree in English with high honors in 1968 and received a University Fellowship from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to pursue an advanced degree in dramatic art.

At UNC, Houston's areas of concentration were theatre history and literature with a cognate in speech communication. A readers’ theatre production that she wrote and directed as an assignment for a class taught by Professor Martha Nell Hardy provided the first opportunity for UNC's first Black freshman dramatic arts majors to perform. When she began her thesis, *The Federal Theatre's Black Units: A Study of their Social Relevance*, in the spring of 1969, her intention was to complete her master's degree and then obtain a doctorate in theatre. But she met and fell in love with Howard Stanback, then a fiery student activist at Wake Forest University. She dropped out of graduate school to marry him in August 1969, and went to work while he completed a master's degree in social work at Case Western Reserve University. In 1972, after the birth of their first son, Zuri Akili, Houston returned to UNC and completed her master's degree.

Houston then began a more than 30-year career as an educator, serving as a faculty member at five colleges and universities and as the chair of two communications departments. She saw a career in education as a viable way to achieve balance between work and family in a way that other careers did not offer. So even before earning her doctorate, Houston began her academic career in 1972 as an English and speech instructor at Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University) in Atlanta, Georgia. During four years on the Clark faculty, her intellectual interests shifted from theatre to speech communication.

In 1976, when Houston's husband took a post in the School of Social Work at the University of Connecticut, the family moved to Hartford, and Houston began looking for a doctoral program in speech communication. She enrolled at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1978 as a part-time student, and eventually obtained University and Danforth Foundation Fellowships that enabled her to become a full-time student. Her initial academic interests
included foci in media studies, African American language studies, and communication styles. She was critical of communication literature that, she suggests, did not reflect her experiences. She has never assumed that Black voices should be the only voices available to interested scholars. Yet, her concern was that if Black people did not tell their own stories, in their own words, someone else might tell them “in a way that we can't support” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). After a graduate interpersonal communication seminar cotaught by esteemed scholars Vernon Cronen and W. Barnett Pearce, Houston decided to concentrate in interpersonal communication and rhetoric. When it came time to write her dissertation, she was able to assemble what she called a “dream team” of progressive women scholars as her committee. Houston's chair was Fern Johnson, a pioneer in feminist language and communication studies, and her members were Jane Blankenship, a noted rhetorician, and Charlena Seymour, a pioneering Black woman scholar in Communication Disorders who eventually became the first Black women provost at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Her dissertation, *Code-Switching in Black Women's Speech* (1983) was nominated for an NCA dissertation award.

During her doctoral studies, Houston developed valuable mentoring relationships with members of the Speech Communication Association's Black Caucus, then a newly developing academic circle. She recalled that the first Black communication scholar she ever saw presenting a paper on Black women was Dorthy Pennington. Pennington's presentation at an International Communication Association conference was included in a panel about communication and women of color. She recalled, “To hear Dorthy talk about communication, race, and gender was very liberating for me” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). Houston's exposure to the idea of studying the communication patterns of Black women spawned the directions of her career future.

Houston's experiences were not without both personal and intellectual challenges. She was divorced while pursuing her doctoral degree, and struggled to “re-negotiate the world as a single parent” to her 10-year-old son, Zuri (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). She also struggled in her efforts to bring together her interest in the “intersections of gender, race, and class in a way that was meaningful to me, and in a way that would be acceptable to the major outlets in the field” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). Finding acceptance for her work was difficult, yet through several invitations to contribute to book projects and special volumes of journals, Houston was able to locate an audience for her work. She especially credited feminist communication scholars Cheris Kramarae and Lana Rakow for their inclusion of her scholarship in their collections early in her career. Some resistance to her work came from feminist scholars themselves, who were unable to see the significance of her focus on African American women's issues. She also perceived some resistance to her ideas from African American male scholars, who sometimes rejected her arguments about gender equality in African American romantic relationships. Despite these adversities, Houston's resolve to include African American women's issues in these discussions kept her from giving up. Her steadfast determination proved to open many doors for other scholars, who realized the significance of studying communicative behavior at the intersections of race and gender.

**Contributions to Communication Research**

Much of Marsha Houston's work focuses on the ways that communicators negotiate perceptions of difference among themselves. Such perceptions guide human action and choice-making. Her academic background in English, dramatic art, and communication studies encouraged her to ask questions about how everyday linguistic uses are influenced
by gender and racial/ethnic ideologies. For Houston, these uses constitute the enactment of cultural standpoints. When her scholarship was first introduced to the field, few other writers articulated the need to analyze gender and communication in the Black community. Before Patricia Hill Collins’ *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), Houston postulated that the experiences of Black women are unique, thus challenging the perspective that all women have a common experience with oppression. She has additionally challenged White feminist and interpersonal scholars for their “slow acknowledgment of the scholarly importance of Black women's issues and experiences” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). She reflects on this challenge proudly, saying, “I think that I've opened up these conversations. I've raised some questions, stepped on a few toes, and made some arguments at a time when no one else was arguing them in print” (Marsha Houston, personal communication, June 12, 2001). Although she considers herself a feminist scholar, Houston’s body of work encompasses two major genres: intercultural/interracial communication and communication and Black feminist theory.

### Intercultural/Interracial Communication

Like many interracial and intercultural communication scholars, Houston began her scholarly career examining the structures and ideologies that create superior/subordinate social relationships between people of different racial/ethnic groups. Her first article was an essay with W. Barnett Pearce titled “Talking to ‘The Man’: Some Communication Strategies Used by Members of ‘Subordinate’ Social Groups,” which was published in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* (Houston & Pearce, 1981). In the article, Houston and Pearce analyzed four recurring communication patterns that are common between members of social groups who perceive their relationship as asymmetrical. They specifically argued that the functions and uses of passing, tomming, shucking, and dissembling communication strategies are directly related to distinct perspectives of intergroup relations. Thus, they posited the idea that communicators who perceived themselves as socially “inferior” to their counterparts carefully assess (1) expectations of the “superior” communicator, (2) their ability to avoid compliance with the expectations, and (3) the importance of the superior's expectations before acting. The authors used the coordinated management of meaning theory to argue that:

> [T]he behaviors of tomming, shucking, and dissembling are identical—that is, in all three cases, the lower-statused person behaves just as the higher statused person expects a social inferior to act. These forms of communication function differently, though: tomming and dissembling are consistent with an other-cultural perspective; and shucking with a co-cultural perspective. Further, shucking and passing are very different behaviorally, but both are consistent with a co-cultural perspective. Finally, tomming is honest, while all the others involve a kind of deception which we describe as “concatenated coherence.” (Houston & Pearce, 1981, p. 24)

The authors argued for a “transcultural theory” of communication exchange that illuminates the cultural context of communicative action and provides theoretical and discursive space for understanding human communication in its various (and coexisting) forms. Prior to this essay, other Black writers such as Asante [Smith] (1973), Baugh (1983), Daniel and Smitherman-Donaldson (1976), and Garner (1983) investigated the functions of Black linguistic performance for Black communities. Yet, this article extended the extant disciplinary vocabulary for discussing top-down interpersonal relations.

Moreover, Houston’s first review essay, “White talk Black talk: Inter-racial friendship and communication amongst adolescents,” published in *Southern Journal of Communication*
(Houston Stanback, 1988a), offered significant commentary about the need for communication scholars to acknowledge the heterogeneity of interracial communication encounters in their work. After the communication discipline took notice of the works of Asante, Cummings, Daniel, Pennington, Smitherman-Donaldson, Taylor, and others, Houston thought it was important for writers to be cautious about characterizing the attitudes and behaviors of Blacks in essentialist terms. She argues that analyses of interracial communication must recognize the multiple perspectives that exist within Black and White communities. She wrote:

An examination of interracial communication ought to reveal the perspectives of both racial groups in order to clarify the nature of communication between them ... While it is essential to contrast Black and White perspectives, it is equally important not to misrepresent each group as homogeneous in attitudes and behaviors. (Houston Stanback, 1988a, p. 209)

Houston's cultural consciousness and cautious approach to interracial studies were heavily influenced by her desire for all marginalized people to be given a voice. Even with these extant multiple voices, if only a single voice on interracial communication was heard, it would undoubtedly illuminate some perspectives while leaving other ways of knowing and performing culture silent. One of her goals within her research published in the 1980s was to create spaces where multiple cultural perspectives could be heard and thereby validated in the communication literature.

Houston considers her greatest achievement in this area of research to be the “widely used and much imitated” anthology, Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication which she coedited with Alberto Gonzalez and Victoria Chen (Gonzalez, Houston, & Chen, 2004). First published in 1994, this work received the 1995 outstanding book award from the NCA International and Intercultural Communication Division. Our Voices broke new ground in intercultural scholarship as the first anthology to include work written exclusively by scholars of color and as a work that foregrounded dynamic, lived cultural experiences rather than static, universalized theories of lived reality.

Communication and Black Feminist Theory

Realizing the power of language in shaping Black Americans’ social and political relationships early in her life, Houston was interested in exploring the stories told about Black women's communication. She saw the need to add to the body of work produced by notable feminist communication scholars such as Cheris Kramarae, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Fern Johnson, Anita Taylor, Sonja & Karyn Foss, and Julia Wood by identifying the ways in which traditional feminist theories tended to exclude the perspectives of Black women. Although her experience in the analysis of sociolinguistic behavior helped her to articulate how uses of language function to shape women's lives, her work stands firm in the idea that women's lives are not shaped in the same ways. She recognized that additional dialogues were needed in the literature about how Black women's everyday communication behaviors are influenced by the “double jeopardy” of racial and gendered oppression (Beale, 1970, p. 93). Having personally observed the numerous social roles that many Black women take on simultaneously, it was clear to Houston that such independence and resolve were directly related to the communicative patterns of Black women in their everyday lives. In the book chapter titled: Language and Black Women's Place: Evidence from the Black Middle Class, she wrote:
Adequate explanations of Black women’s speech demand the realization that Black women are both Black and female speakers. In other words, adequate explanations of Black women’s speech must be grounded in clear conceptions of Black cultural definitions of women’s roles and women’s speech. (Houston Stanback, 1985, p. 179)

Thus, extension of popular feminist paradigms required clear articulation of the experiences of Black women as different from those of White women.

In 1988, Houston published the article: What Makes Scholarship About Black Women and Communication Feminist Communication Scholarship? in Women’s Studies in Communication (Houston Stanback, 1988b). She argued that feminist theory places sexism at the helm of female oppression without acknowledging the numerous ways in which women find themselves oppressed in the world. To use a “linear” term such as sexism to describe the extended history of women’s silenced voices in social, political, and scholarly circles erases how systems of oppression intersect in the lives of women. One consequence of viewing feminist theory in this way is the continued marginalization of non-White women’s voices in explanations of how social ideologies limit women's expressiveness and social mobility:

Feminist theory is essential to feminist scholarship because it provides the explanatory frame that accounts for women's place in the social order and the central experiences of women. To consider either racism or sexism as the more powerful oppressive force in African-American women's lives is to misperceive their experience. Thus feminist scholarship should use an inclusive and systematic form of feminist theory to account for all the oppressive forces that define African-American women's place in the social order. (Houston Stanback, 1988b, p. 28)

Houston contended that to understand Black women's communication it is important to understand Black women's roles in both domestic and public spheres. This duality of experience marks the core distinction between the language behavior of Black women and White women, who have been historically relegated to the domestic sphere.

Since her initial efforts to expand the scope of Black feminist theory, Houston has introduced key dialogues on African American women's communicative behavior to the field of communication. Her works included her chapter in Our Voices titled “When Black Women Talk with White Women: Why Dialogues Are Difficult” (Gonzalez, Houston, & Chen, 2004); “Writing for My Life: Intercultural Methodology and the Study of African American Women” (Houston, 2000b); “Multiple Perspectives: African American Women Conceive Their Talk” (Houston, 2000a); the award-winning anthology, coedited with Olga Davis, Centering Ourselves: African American Feminist and Womanist Studies of Discourse (Houston & Davis, 2002); and a chapter, coauthored with Karla Scott, of the Sage Handbook of Gender & Communication, titled Negotiating Boundaries: The Language of Black Women’s Intercultural Encounters (Houston & Scott, in press).

Houston’s goal to help create a space for other Black feminist scholars is realized in numerous works. She is frequently cited by scholars within and outside of the field of communication, including Patricia Hill Collins’ Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000) and Jones and Shorter-Gooden’s Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Houston has been a mentor and friend to numerous leading Black womanist and feminist communication scholars, including Brenda J. Allen, Olga Davis, Janice Hamlet, Tina Harris, Katherine Hendrix, Joni Jones, and Karla Scott. Their works convey similar ideas about the intersections of race, gender, and sexual oppression and their
influences in the lives of women. Finally, Houston’s current book series with Hampton Press on African American communication and culture is a testament to her continued efforts to mentor young scholars and a provide a scholarly space for articulating the experiences of African Americans.

Conclusion

Marsha Houston, a pioneer in communication research, has endured the adversities of post-segregationist racial attitudes, a dissolved marriage, single motherhood, and resistance to her scholarship and ideas. Nonetheless, as a leader, she exemplifies the strength of character and determination that is needed to drive any academic discipline forward. As a scholar, she has helped to open the doors for scholarly discussions about African American women’s experiences. As a teacher and mentor, she continues to lend a hand (and ear) to young scholars looking for advice and direction. Her contributions to the field of communication and the lives of others will stand as a testament to all others who truly aspire to effect change.

References


Further Reading

Marsha Houston
Born in Greensborough, North Carolina.

Received bachelor’s degree in English from Emory College of Emory University.

Taught at Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia (1972–1976).

Received a master’s degree in dramatic art with a concentration in theatre history and literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Became assistant professor at the University of Southern Mississippi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982–1984</td>
<td>Served as newsletter editor and secretary for the Black Caucus of the National Communication Association.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Became associate professor of English and Sociology and director of the Communication Studies Program at Spelman College.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Published &quot;Language and Black Women's Place: Evidence from the Black Middle Class&quot; in <em>For Alma Mater: Theory and Practice in Feminist Scholarship</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986–1989</td>
<td>Served as member of the Educational Policies Board of the National Communication Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Became chair of the Department of Communication at Georgia State University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987–1988</td>
<td>Served as member of the Search Committee for Executive Director (NCA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988–1991</td>
<td>Served as reader for Bostrom Young Scholars award (Southern States Communication Association).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988–1991</td>
<td>Served as member/chair of the Resolutions Committee (Southern States Communication Association).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988–1991</td>
<td>Planned and organized The Power of the Spoken Word: The Oratory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a national scholarly conference cosponsored by the SCA Educational Policies Board and the Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Became associate professor of Communication and Women's Studies at Tulane University.


Planned and organized Difficult Dialogues: Gateways and Barriers to Women's Communication Across Cultures, Eighth National Conference on Research in Gender and Communication; jointly sponsored by Georgia State University, Spelman College, Emory University, Dekalb College, and Agnes Scott College, Atlanta, Georgia.


Published “The ‘Dog Theory’ and Beyond: African American Women’s Communication About Male-Female Relationships” in *African American Communications: A Reader in Traditional and Contemporary Studies*.

Served as member/chair of Time and Place Committee (SSCA) (1993–1995).

Published *Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication* with Alberto Gonzalez and Victoria Chen.

Became first holder of the Nancy Reeves Dreux Chair in Women's Studies, Tulane University.

Won Francine Merritt award for Distinguished Service to Women in the Speech Communication Association and the Discipline.

Won Distinguished Book award, SCA International & Intercultural Communication Division for *Our Voices: Essays in Culture, Ethnicity, and Communication*.

Served as chair, Francine Merritt Award Committee for the Women's Caucus (NCA).

Served on the Awards Committee (NCA).

Served as program planner, NCA Seminar Series.
Served as vice-chair and convention program planner/chair, African American Communication and Culture Division (AACC) (NCA).

Served as immediate past chair and representative to Legislative Council AACC Division (NCA).

Became professor and chair of Communication Studies at the University of Alabama.

Published “Multiple Perspectives: African American Women Conceive Their Talk” in *Women and Language*.

Served as chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Black Caucus/AACC Division Endowment (NCA).

Edited *Centering Ourselves: African American Feminist and Womanist Studies of Discourse* with Olga Idriss Davis.


Received Distinguished Book Award from the NCA African American Communication and Culture Division.

Received the Outreach Award from the Southern States Communication Association.

Received Delta Sigma Rho/Tau Kappa Alpha National Honorary Society’s Outstanding Alumna award.

- women in black
- interracial communication
- African Americans
- feminism
- feminist theory
- speech communication
- women

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