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# The women of the past who paved the path for our future

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The Women of the Past Who Paved the Path for Our Future

by

Desalyn Graybeal

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in partial fulfillment of

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Desalyn Graybeal, Author

Abstract: In November of 2014, we celebrated the 100th year anniversary of the establishment of the National Communication Association (NCA). It is important to examine the history of the NCA from as many angles and as perspectives as possible to fully appreciate where the NCA is today and how it got here. This thesis is intended to add yet another historical perspective to the NCA, reflecting the importance of the female presidents of the association. The purpose of this thesis is two-fold: to conduct a numeric analysis on the genders of the NCA presidents and to note the contributions and importance of the NCA female presidents. This is done via a quantitative analysis of the female presidents throughout the history of the NCA and a review of interviews with select NCA female presidents.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

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SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION

Dr. Galina Sinekopova acted as Thesis Advisor and assisted in editing and content formatting. Dr. Sue Stearns provided special insight on qualitative analysis, editing, and content analysis. Dr. Jeff Stafford provided information pertaining to quantitative analysis and Dr. Gary Krug provided additional insight into feminism and theory. National Communication Association Past Presidents Dr. Judy Pearson, Dr. Anita Taylor, and Dr. Judith Trent contributed special content thoughts. Dr. Betsy Bach and Dr. Judith Trent provided specific communication introductions to various other National Communication Past Presidents to allow for significant interview data to be obtained. Finally, all National Communication Association Past Presidents provided content approval in reference to data of pertinence to their contribution to the field of Communication, the National Communication Association, and the paths laid for future female Communication scholars and leaders.



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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Personal Interest In the Subject**

For centuries the careers of women have been limited. With the first wave of feminism, women were given the opportunity to expand their careers in education, but still experienced extreme limitations (Freedman, 2004). Within the field of Communication, women were absent in the creation of the the National Communication Association. Women may have been party to the votes taken to separate from the National Council of Teachers of English, but were not included as founding members of the National Communication Association (Cohen, 1994) In the first years, women like Mary Yost attempted to have a say in the new field, but were muted (Cohen, 1994).

However, some women were able to break through the glass ceiling of the time and create new opportunities for future women in the field. If it were not for these women breaking ground in Communication to obtain a position usually held by a man, other women in the field today would not be as respected, heard, or have the opportunities available today. H. Prentiss broke the glass ceiling as the first female president, but each female president after her broke it more and more, and together we can work to make sure it is fully shattered and remains so. Therefore, as women in the field of Communication and scholars, we owe the female presidents of the National Communication Association a great deal of thanks for fighting to allow women in the field the opportunities to be leaders and be heard.

### **Purpose**

Gender, in terms of biological sex of the presidents of the National Communication Association has not experienced an equal ratio of female to male presidents. In the past 100 years, only 18% of presidents have been female. Only three female presidents have held the position consecutively. This consecutive pattern is set to occur for only the second time in the years of 2014, 2015, and 2016, but is not to be broken in the near future. Only with the past decade, has the NCA seen an equal ratio of female to male presidents in a ten year period.

However, according to *The “Glass Ceiling” is Misleading* (Big Think, 2011) more women are graduating from college than men. Additionally, the *Women's Leadership Project* (natcom.org, 2013) works to bring forth information on female leadership and the women behind it. Available information which pertains to these influential women is somewhat limited. Thus, a need is present for additional literature on the women presidents of the NCA to fill this gap, but to also provide information and inspiration for young women in the field who may hope to obtain leadership positions in Communication.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the quantity of female presidents over the time of the NCA's history. This is compared to equal information of other associations to determine if the NCA has a history to be more or less affirmative in electing female presidents than other associations. The information will be evaluated via identity theory with sub-components of social interactionsim, feminism, and muted group theory. The

question asked for the study is: How have female NCA past presidents paved paths to allow for additional female leadership in the future?

### **People Affected**

The number of people who may be affected by this study is immeasurable as the number of female scholars in the field has yet to be officially counted. However, eleven former female presidents are living and in good health with one female president currently in the position and one to hold the position in 2016. All NCA Past Presidents I have spoken with about this study, have expressed excitement for this study and look forward to additional literature written about this important topic. The female NCA Past Presidents, the current and 2016 NCA Presidents will be directly impacted by this study, as they are interview participants and the focus of this study directly pertains to their legacy. As for additional people impacted by this study, other administrative members of the NCA as well as a countless number of current and future scholars wishing to study this topic may be affected as well. Finally, this study will only have an impact on information provided in pertinence to the subject, with no impacts pertaining to finances or health.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Imagery**

Imagery may be seen as an anomaly due to the cultural norms of the past.

Correlating time in the U.S. to that of the first female president of the NCA; women had only received the right to vote several years prior and feminism was still in its first wave (Walters, 2005). In fact, according to Freedman (2004), at this time women were still fighting for the right to have the option to work in positions such as a teacher or seamstress, rather than strictly work in the home. The advent of two women leading the NCA in one decade would not occur again until the 1980s. The 1940s was the time of women working in manufacturing, but women were still limited in opportunity for education and career (Walters, 2005). The texts of Walters (2005) and Freedman (2004) discuss how it was allotted for women to work in lower end positions, such as labor and lower office administrative positions, but not academic leadership positions. The media of the time depicts two women: one working in labor ([http://www.mediabistro.com/agencyspy/youre-out-of-work-so-what-do-you-do-with-your-time\\_b2861](http://www.mediabistro.com/agencyspy/youre-out-of-work-so-what-do-you-do-with-your-time_b2861), 2013), and the other working in the home (<http://www.retro-housewife.com/1940-cooking-and-recipes.html>, n.d.).

In addition to sexually biased advertising efforts bombarding potential female communication scholars, the imagery of a professor was also depicted at this time in a sexually biased form. Dawn Braithwait, a former female president of the NCA discussed

the idea of a professor, which was held in the 1950s and how this impacted her opinion of what a professor is. She explains in the speech she gave to the Western States Association during her time as president of that association that growing up the image of a professor she was taught and knew was that of a male. This male had elbow patches, a large office filled with books, and a good work schedule. She then goes on to explain how the image of what she was taught a professor is as a child and what one is now, in reality are two different things. (Braithwaite, 2001) However, from the view of identity theory, this description, paired with the teachings of women's roles at the time, causes me to conclude that many women were not allowed to picture themselves as academics. This is a cause for further research of the bibliographies of female NCA Past Presidents. Such data is discussed later in this paper and includes what similar factors may have been common amongst these women to allow them to look beyond the identities provided to them by society.

### **Feminist Theory**

Within the field of Communications, women were absent in the creation of the the National Communication Association. Women may have been an aspect of the voting to separate from the National Council of Teachers of English, but were not a part of the founding members of the National Communication Association (Cohen, 1994) In the first years, women like Mary Yost attempted to have a say in the new field (Cohen, 1994), but were muted (Ardener, 1975). However, some women were able to break through the

glass ceiling of the time and create new opportunities for future women in the field. If it were not for these women in Communications breaking ground in obtaining a position usually held by a man, other women in the field today would not be as respected, heard, or have the opportunities they have today. Therefore, as women in the field of Communications, we owe the female presidents of the National Communication Association a great deal of thanks for fighting to allow women in the field the opportunities to be leaders and be heard. H. Prentiss broke the glass ceiling as being the first female president, but each female president after her broke it more and more, and together we can work to make sure it is fully shattered and remains so.

It is obvious that events occurred in the lives of the women who were able to break through the glass ceiling, or “the sticky floor” as stated in, *It's Not a Glass Ceiling, It's a Sticky Floor: Rebecca Shambaugh* (TedTalk, 2013) were different than those who were unable to break through. Unfortunately, little is documented on the life of Prentiss, however we do know she took an alternative route to developing a career in Communications or what was at the time, Speech (Trent, 2004 and Gillespie, 2010). Therefore, one may predict this alternative route to be the reasoning for her success.

### **First Wave of Feminism**

In hindsight, this may be perceived as odd as one may have predicted that feminist theory and the feminist movement would have allowed for greater affirmative action to be taken as the second wave of feminism came to fruition. However, the second wave



was overshadowed by the anti-war movements and the civil rights movements (Walters, 2005). Therefore, this may be seen as a reason for women not taking hold of leadership positions during this time. In fact, a number of reasons may have contributed to less women working to obtain the position of president of the NCA, or be allowed to have the opportunity to be president of the NCA.

Of course, at the time women working in the home rather than outside the home was encouraged by society, women were paid significantly less than men, and were many times passed over in employment in favor of a man (de Beauvoir, 1953). The origination of sexism against women far precedes the creation of the NCA and can be seen in literature by ancient well known philosophers and scholars (de Beauvoir, 1953). One may easily predict the scholars associated with the NCA read such scholars as Freud (1938) and Marx (1975) as these men are still crucially studied to this day and deemed to be classics. As one reads a text, one is affected by such text, therefore, perhaps the studying of these and other texts were a component of the male bias of the time within the association.

Additionally, due to the social constructs of the time, women were paid significantly less than that of their male counterparts. However, women were not raised at the time to be independent, scholarly, and career driven. They were taught what it meant at the time to be feminine and were raised with the ideals of becoming housewives and mothers. (de Beauvoir, 1953). It was only the few who went against the grain of what they were taught and were allowed the opportunity to pursue a fight to live an alternative lifestyle than that of a housewife and mother.

### **Muted Group Theory**

As the elderly participants in a study conducted by Pearson and Vanhorn (2004) also discussed, the gender based limitations of their lives were established at a young age. These participants were male and female, while the male participants did not experience a great gender shift as a child, the female participants did. These participants experienced a slightly different childhood than that of what is depicted of the childhood of women by de Beauvoir (1953). These women were raised as equals to their male counterparts in work, play, and education, but only until a certain age. At this certain, undisclosed age, the women were then taught to be housewives and were informed that attending a university was not a practical option for them. Therefore, as a result of the patriarchal influence (Wood, 2005) of societal constructs and the social interaction of women and society via teachings, media, and social norms, women became a muted group (Ardener, 1975).

A muted group is a group which has been overshadowed by the Other, especially in reference to women being overshadowed by men (Ardener, 1975). Muted group theory was discovered by E. Ardener (1975) and S. Ardener (1978) as a result of a study of the interaction of women and men in various countries and cultures (Wall and Gannon-Leary, 1999). The theory suggests that language mutes women in that it is masculine in nature and women and men do not share the same linguistic characteristics (Ardener, 1975). The linguistic characteristics which are masculine in nature are not exclusive to the phonemes that are put together to form words. This also includes the way in which

the words are compiled to create a sentence, and all forms of nonverbal communication, such as vocal tone, inflection, and body language. In the case of American history, the female group was overshadowed and thus, muted by the male group.

### **Feminism and Muted Group Theory**

From the time of the middle of the 1800s it is documented that women have been writing about the social constructs imposed by a society and the associated social norms dominated by the patriarchal standpoint (Walters, 2005 and Wood, 2005). At the time these texts pertained primarily to the view that women should not be overpowered by men and should have the right to work in more fields than just a limited few and have power over their own bodies (Walters, 2005 and Freedman, 2004). These arguments are directly correlated with the first wave of feminism (Walters, 2005), but these are still rights women are fighting for today. The women of the first wave stood up against far greater hurdles to overcome than women today, though. Feminists of the first wave were discontent with being associated with the term feminist, as the term had an incredibly negative definition associated with it (Walters, 2005). Also, multiple women wrote about an issue coined at the time as, “the problem” as stated by, J. Wood (2005), which is now known as Ardener's (1975) muted group theory. Therefore, the first wave of feminism obviously had an issue with nominalism in that the ability to properly name and address being a muted group was not fully possible at the time.

### **Language of Female Leadership**

In addition to women choosing to not attempt to obtain a leadership position due to the social stigmas and constraints associated with a working woman, the communication practices of women may have also been a factor in women not fulfilling masculine career goals. This has been a common topic of study of a portion of the former female presidents. Lynn Turner (2004), the most recent former female president of the NCA wrote a paper with R. Shuter (2004) discussing the communication differences of Caucasian women and African-American women pertaining to conflict (Turner and Shuter, 2004). It was found that Caucasian women have a tendency to avoid conflict in an attempt to keep peace around the office and fail to take responsibility for the creation of conflict (Turner and Shuter, 2004). The study by Turner and Shuter (2004) did not take into account how women's communication practices are different than that of a man's.

However, in 1995 L. Turner did conduct a study pertaining to the differences in communication practices of men and women. It was found by Turner (1995) that men tend to create a greater amount of uncertainty in conversations than their female counterparts. These two studies could be correlated in the act that uncertainty can create conflict and if Caucasian women have a tendency to avoid conflict, this could be an additional reason for women not moving up the chain of command within the NCA. Of course, racial relations and segregation did not allow for African-American women to be

a factor at the time of the first female presidents of the NCA. Therefore, the focus on Caucasian women of this study may be obvious in all factors.

Judy Pearson also wrote two articles pertaining to the communication practice differences of men and women. In her 1980 article, *Sex Roles and Self Disclosure*, she found that men and women disclose an equal amount of information. However in Pearson's 2011 article with J. Child, B. DeGreeff, and J. Semlak, titled *The Influence of Biological Sex, Self-Exteem, and Communication Apprehension on Unwillingness to Communicate*, it was found that women are more likely as of 2011 to approach communication situations, but less confident in doing so than men.

### **Women's Communication Practices and the Muted Group Theory**

In correlating the aforementioned studies with Ardener's (1975) muted group theory, one may postulate that many women were unable to obtain the position of president of the NCA as they were essentially speaking a different language than that of the men running the organization. Of course, at the time this would not have been obvious to many females as the traditional sayings pertaining to hindsight and the forest for the trees definitely pertains. In fact, an aspect of the muted group theory pertains directly to this issue in that it is theorized that women are unable to see they are muted due to the overwhelming masculine nature of the language and culture (Ardener, 1975). Therefore, one may postulate that many women wishing to break from the traditional roles imposed on them by society were unable to not only because of the incredible

restrictions placed upon them by the patriarchy. They may have also been unable to break away, into a nontraditional career, because such was traditionally run by a man and in addition to gender bias, a difference in language characteristics also worked against them.

### **Feminist Adaption and Muted Group Theory**

Some, such as Wood (2005) and de Beauvoir (1953) suggest that over time women have moved away from femininity in an effort to gain success and equality in a society dominated by masculinity. The second wave of feminism was based on this perspective in that femininity was a construct imposed on women by the male counterpart in an effort to suppress women, and therefore forsaking such would allow for independence from such suppression (Freedman, 2004 and Walters, 2005). Currently, it is obvious that women have adapted masculine characteristics as a form of adaption to the business world and society today. Women now, wear pants, look male business partners straight in the eye as they shake hands and make an important business deal. However, at the time of the first presidents of the NCA, women were not able to be as forthright as women today and thus, were forced to adapt and take on masculine characteristics in a far more subtle manner.

In reading the presidential address by H. Prentiss (1932), one can hear a strength in her voice which one may deem to mirror that of the voice of President Barack Obama, but on a softer level than that which the Commander and Chief speaks on today. Prentiss

(1932) empathizes with members in discussing how she understands financial hardship, but still strongly encourages members to attend the yearly conference and provides ideas for obtaining funding in an effort to do so. Her voice is masculine with dominance, but feminine with empathy. This combination is obviously what was needed at the time for a woman to be able to interact on an equal plane with male counterparts and obtain a position not yet obtained by a female, thus becoming unmuted.

### **Identity Theory**

In addition to muted group theory and the linguistic characteristic aspects of such, what one is told about oneself and one's perception of oneself may also provide key reasoning for the low number of female presidents of the NCA. D. Armstrong's (1968) identity theory postulates that one's consciousness is a product of one's perception of oneself. Of course, one's perception of oneself is a result of interpersonal communication and intrapersonal communication based on the messages sent to one (Armstrong, 1968). Therefore, if one is constantly told by societal media, all familial interpersonal communication, and all other forms of societal communication that one is to only live a limited life and not question such, what would cause one to think otherwise? After all, during the time period of the first female presidents many women were expected by society to not peruse a career.

**Identity Theory of NCA Women Presidents: Present Relating to Past**

Judy Pearson (2004), a former female president of the NCA also discusses the role of women and identity during the time of the lack of female presidents. She and Vanhorn (2004) interviewed elderly members who were also raised in the farming culture. It was found that women were allowed the opportunity to work just as equally as men, but a “sticky floor” (TedTalk, 2013) did not allow most to work later in life or be educated. Gender roles have also held back women who have had the ability and opportunity to work, but have chosen not to.

This is addressed by Lynn Turner (2003), former female president of the NCA in *Emotion Work Revealed By Job Loss Discourse: Backgrounding-Foregrounding Of Feelings, Construction Of Normalcy, And (Re)instituting Of Traditional Masculinities* (Turner and Buzzanell, 2003). In this 2003 study, modern women explained how in a time of familial financial crisis they have chosen to not contribute to the solution by entering the workforce. It was found that a portion of women, much larger than one may hypothesize, believe their position is in the home despite their ability to join the workforce to help the financial circumstances of the family. In all the cases of those who were interviewed for this study were facing financial issues within the family due to the patriarch of the family being terminated from employment and the matriarch choosing to stay at home during the time of her husband's unemployment. Wives choosing not to work overwhelmingly expressed that they were able to work, but did not in an effort to



reinforce their husband's sense of masculinity by not replacing his role as the traditional bread winner. (Turner and Buzzanell, 2003)

In reference to identity theory, it is possible that the women who were taught a different identity than that of strictly a housewife were able to picture their futures in a different capacity than that of other women primarily taught to be housewives. The teaching of this would not have had to have been direct and implicit, but could have merely been implied or even unintentional. This would allow for them to have a different future than those primarily taught to be a housewife and were perfectly happy with such an identity. Many women who chose to work at this time also experienced the need to make a decision between career and work, similar to, but to a greater extent than that of women today (Freedman, 2004 and Turner and Buzzanell, 2003). At the time of the first female presidents of the NCA, if a woman wanted to work, she usually did not have a husband as this would cause her to face a societal decision of work or marriage (Freedman, 2004). This is because due to social constructs, a woman could usually not have both a business or scholarly career and a husband (Freedman, 2004). Thus, one may conclude many women who would have made remarkable Communications scholars and leaders at the time never even considered obtaining an education, let alone working for a career and obtaining the position of president of the NCA.

In an evaluation of the bibliographies of a portion of the former female presidents from the time of the beginning of the association to the present; *Our stories: twentieth-century women presidents of NCA*, edited by P. Gillespie (2010), a few patterns emerge

amongst some of those discussed. One of these patterns is the fact that many of the female presidents were raised in a working and educational environment. The working environment consisted of either being raised on a farm or in a region of farmers or beginning work at a young age. The educational environment consisted of the ability to read at a young age and the importance of education having been taught in the home or by a special instructor who touched the heart of one of these women. (Gillespie, 2010) As A. Taylor addresses in her speech *Tales of the Grandmothers* (2005), for many generations women in the farming culture were expected to work equally as hard as men, perhaps if not harder. They were expected to work the fields and harvest with the men, while also raising a family and taking care of the home.

### **Second Wave and One Female President Per Decade**

Magdalene Kramer was the first of a long line of female presidents who would be able to hold the title of the only female president of the NCA for that decade. She held office in 1947 and was extremely passionate about her career. It is noted she had a love for teaching and taught while obtaining her Master's degree and her Ph.D. She was also a member of many councils and associations relating to the field and published articles often. Publishing often is a characteristic she shares with all other female presidents of the NCA. While another commonality she shares with her predecessors is that she was also from the northeastern section of the U.S. and in her biography, there is no mention of a strong family life. (Gillespie, 2010 and Long, 2006)

These four decades saw a great deal of change in the roles and expectations of women, however each of these decades only experienced one female president per decade! The 1940s was a time in which women were expected to work in labor positions to replace men deployed for the war, but the encouraging of women to work during this time was limited to the labor class (Freedman, 2004 and Walters, 2005). Therefore, because leading the NCA was not considered to be a labor position, there was not a call at the time for women to take the position. In fact, the percentage of women holding the position may have decreased by 50% from the 1930s to the 1940s due to the focus of a strengthening of patriarchy in the upper, educated classes (Freedman, 2004). This was then followed by a strong campaign by all forms of American media to show women as happy, dress wearing housewives, serving their husbands.

The feminist movement at this time was ignored by the masses in favor of the war and as the second wave developed, bickering within the movement became the movement's worst enemy (Freedman, 2004). With the 1950s de Beauvoir (1953) declared marriage and conformity to the patriarchal nature of society was a form of enslavement. Perhaps she chose this argument due to the fact that during the 1950s the feminist movement was still being overshadowed, but this time by the civil rights movement (Walters, 2005). This time period may be perceived as one of, if not the decade with the greatest amount of muting of women. However, the voices of women would soon begin to be heard with increasing volume.

In the 1960s, the voices of women began to be heard to a greater extent than that of the 1950s, but the feminist movement was still put to the back-burner in favor of movement against the Vietnam war (Walters, 2005). Within the association talk of the NCA being discriminatory towards women became loud and was address by M. H. Nichols (Washington, DC, 2013). To this day her statement pertaining to gender bias within the association is still discussed at the NCA conference as she famously denounced any accusations of the NCA being gender biased, because she, herself had never experienced such (Washington, DC, 2013). This is a statement Nichols is still ridiculed for to this day (Washington, DC, 2013). By this time, the normalcy of women obtaining a post-secondary degree had increased and the 1970s brought forth the muted group theory (Ardener, 1975). With the advent of Ardener's (1975) work, the problem of nominalism within the feminist movement was depreciated in that now women were able to name what was once only coined as "the problem" (J. Wood, 2005). The identification of female voices being dominated by patriarchy may have had a great impact on the NCA via the scholarly community, as the following decade saw a significant break in the pattern of only one female president holding the position per decade.

***Second to Third Wave Transition in Feminism, More Female Presidents, and Less Muting.***

The 1980s had three female presidents, starting with Anita Taylor (www.natcom.org/pastpresidents, 2013). Taylor is a strong woman who has written many

works pertaining to the equality of women and women overcoming being a muted group. In the forward she wrote in *Our stories: twentieth-century women presidents of NCA*, edited by P. Gillespie (2010) she implies a question of where the women are in the leadership of the NCA. She tells the story of how the Cherokee leaders thought the British were not serious negotiators, because they had not brought the women of the families with them to negotiate (Gillespie, 2010). She discusses how the Western culture has negated the importance of women and how this is not to the benefit of our society or organizations (Gillespie, 2010). Taylor broke ground for women in the field of Communications, not only by her work, but also how she became president of the NCA. Having met Taylor, it is easy to see she has a strong personality. In 1981, she had finally tired of men dominating the position of NCA President and chose to run a campaign to put her name on the ballot, despite not being nominated by the committee (Gillespie, 2010). This allowed for discussions to begin pertaining to the female presidents of the NCA and led to two more female presidents holding the position in the 1980s. The next decade only saw two female presidents, but one was part of another significant breakthrough for women in the field. One can see by the election records on the NCA website that women ran against men and primarily men won, until J. Trent ran against M. Watson ([www.natcom.org/histoy](http://www.natcom.org/histoy), 2013). When Trent and Watson ran against one another, one can see a trend of women to run against women and men to run against men so that women would not lose the position simply because they were running against a

man (Trent, Washington DC, 2013). However this shows that women were still primarily muted in the election process when running against a male counterpart.

By this time the third wave of feminism had come about, where women decided they could have it all, femininity and career success (Freedman, 2005). Women were running against women in the elections for president of the NCA and the first decade of the new millennium saw the most amount of female presidents per decade with four female presidents between 2000 and 2009. The next decade finally saw an equal number of female and male presidents, but has still only seen three women hold the position consecutively twice. This is a sign that the patriarchal worry of depreciating domination may still be alive to some extent.

### ***Theory and Images.***

In reference to identity theory, it is possible that the women who were taught a different identity than that of only a housewife were able to picture their futures in a different capacity than that of other women primarily taught to be housewives. This would allow for these women to have a different future than those primarily taught to be a housewife and were perfectly happy with such an identity. Many women who chose to work at this time also experienced the need to make a decision between career and work, similar to, but to a greater extent than that of women today (Freedman, 2004). At the time of the first female presidents of the NCA, if a woman wanted to work, she usually did not have a husband as this would cause her to face a societal decision of work or

marriage (Freedman, 2004). This is because due to social constructs, a woman could usually not have both a business or scholarly career and a husband (Freedman, 2004). Therefore, many women were muted as pertaining to the muted group theory (Kim, 2011).

### ***Factors Relating to Theory.***

Various factors are included with why women may not obtain leadership positions within various fields. Sandberg (2013) discusses how leaders of organizations tend to be male as humans are most attracted to those whom share similarities, such as gender and background. Also, gender-based communication styles may be a factor as well. This has been a common topic of study of a portion of the former female presidents. Lynn Turner (2004), the most recent former female president of the NCA authored a paper with R. Shuter (2004) which discusses the communication differences of Caucasian women and African-American women pertaining to conflict (Turner and Shuter, 2004). It is found that Caucasian women have a tendency to avoid conflict in an attempt to keep peace around the office and fail to take responsibility for the creation of conflict (Turner and Shuter, 2004). The study by Turner and Shuter (2004) does not take into account how women's communication practices are different than that of a man's. However, in 1995 L. Turner did conduct a study pertaining to the differences in communication practices of men and women. It is found by Turner (1995) that men tend to create a greater amount of uncertainty in conversations than their female counterparts. These two studies may be

correlated in the act that uncertainty can create conflict and if Caucasian women have a tendency to avoid conflict, this may be an additional reason for women not moving up the chain. Of course, racial relations and segregation does not allow for African-American women to be a factor at the time of the first female presidents of the NCA. Therefore, the focus on Caucasian women may not need to be compared in reference to this study, unfortunately.

Judy Pearson also authored two articles which pertain to the communication practice differences of men and women. In her 1980 article, *Sex Roles and Self Disclosure*, she finds men and women disclose an equal amount of information. However in her 2011 article with J. Child, B. DeGreeff, and J. Semlak, *The Influence of Biological Sex, Self-Esteem, and Communication Apprehension on Unwillingness to Communicate*, it is found that as of 2011, women are more likely to approach communication situations, but with less confidence than men. One may propose the insecurity of the female sex in communicating may have been a factor during the time of the first female presidents. This paired with the fact that the opportunity to become successful was limited to women during this time; a factor which may have negatively influenced some women from gaining an education and entering the field.



### All NCA Female Presidents

In an evaluation of the bibliographies of a portion of the former female presidents of the NCA in *Our stories: twentieth-century women presidents of NCA*, edited by P. Gillespie (2010), particular themes amongst some of those discussed are discovered. One of these patterns was the fact that many of the female presidents were raised in a working and educational environment. The working environment consisted of either being raised on a farm or in a region of farmers or beginning work at a young age. The educational environment consisted of the ability to read at a young age and the importance of education having been taught in the home or by a special instructor who touched the heart of one of these women. (Gillespie, 2010) As A. Taylor addresses in her speech *Tales of the Grandmothers* (2005), for many generations women in the farming culture were expected to work equally as hard as men, perhaps if not harder. They were expected to work the fields and harvest with the men, while also raising a family and taking care of the home.

Judy Pearson (2004), a former female president of the NCA also discusses the role of women and identity during the time of the lack of female presidents. She and Vanhorn (2004) interviewed elderly members who were also raised in the farming culture. It was found that women were allowed the opportunity to work just as equally as men, but a glass ceiling did not allow most to work later in life or be educated. Gender roles have also held back women who have had the ability and opportunity to work, but have chosen not to. This is addressed by Lynn Turner (2003), former female president of the NCA in

*Emotion Work Revealed By Job Loss Discourse: Backgrounding-Foregrounding Of Feelings, Construction Of Normalcy, And (Re)instituting Of Traditional Masculinities*  
(Turner and Buzzanell, 2003).

### **Chapter Three:**

#### **History of the NCA**

Now, let us have a brief look at the history of the NCA. According to the National Communication Associations' website (<http://www.natcom.org>, 2011) the National Communication Association is a not-for profit organization with the mission to support and encourage Communication in a scholarly and ethical fashion. The association was founded in 1914 by, "...a group of seventeen Middle Western predominately Anglo-Saxon males..." (Cohen, 1994, p. 35), but women were involved in the association from its beginning. As Anita Taylor pointed out in *Our Stories: Twentieth Century Women Presidents of NCA*, "Jane Blankenship notes that the first convention identifies four women among the sixteen presenters." (Taylor, 2010a, p. 4). Beginning as the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking in 1914, the origin of its creation is based upon a feud between seventeen teachers and the National Council of teachers of English. Displeased with the ever diminishing focus on public speaking within the organization as a result, these seventeen teachers chose to depart from the National Council of Teachers of English and create the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking with James M. O'Neill of the University of Wisconsin as the first president in 1915.

Founded in 1914, the NCA began as the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS). O'Neill worked quickly to establish a

convention in Chicago and *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking* with the other original members of the new organization. Two years later, in 1917, the title of this journal changed to *Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* under J. L. Lardner and a committee was created for research pertaining to the field. This research interest would in turn have a profound impact on communications as we know today as universities began to acknowledge and enhance the study of speech. Additionally, during the time of the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS), a committee was created for research pertaining to the field of Communications. The committee's research was in opposition to public speaking. This alternative research interest would in turn have a profound impact on Communications as we know today. Universities began to acknowledge and enhance the study of speech. In 1917, of the 84 attendees of that year's conference, 40.5% were female, as stated in the forum section of the following year's journal (J. S. G., 1918, p. 238). Soon NAATPS membership grew to over 700 by 1920, under C.H. Woolbert of the University of Illinois. (www.natcom.org. 2014)

In 1921, A.M. Drummond was president, and the University of Wisconsin and the University of Iowa created the first two Ph.D. programs in the field. In 1922, Glenn N. Merry was the last president of NAATPS when it became the National Association of Teachers of Speech (NATS) in 1923, with Harry B. Gough as the first president of the newly-named organization. Then with over 900 members, benefits such as career services were introduced. In 1928, the *Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* became the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* under John P. Ryan. A second publication, *Speech*

*Monographs*, was added in 1934 under H.L. Ewbank; at this time membership grew to over 2000. (www.natcom.org, 2014)

After World War Two, changes continued, as Joseph F. Smith was the last president of NATS in 1945 and in 1946, W. Norwood Brigance was the unofficial first president of Speech Association of America (SAA). Despite the name change occurring in 1946, it only became official in 1951 under Wilber Gilman. One year later, under Lionel Crocker, a third journal was created and dispersed, *Speech Teacher*, which became rapidly popular. As the popularity of the association and its publications grew, it was decided in 1963, under Ernest J. Wrage, to relocate the headquarters of the association to New York City. The 1960's also brought membership unrest and the need for changes. Thus, after a long review, a new constitution was created, and a new association name chosen, which resulted in Marie Hochmuth Nichols being the last president of the SAA in 1969. (www.natcom.org. 2014)

In 1970, a new constitution was enacted and Donald C. Bryant became the first president of the Speech Communication Association (SCA). Over the next two decades, popularity of the newly-named association would explode with newly-advanced technology, the confronting of newly-arising issues within the field, and the creation of new journals. This included the *Journal of Applied Communication*, released in 1973 under Robert C. Jeffrey, *Critical Studies in Media Communications*, released in 1984 under John Waite Bowers, and *Text and Performance Quarterly*, released in 1989 under Gustav W. Friedrich. Finally in 1996, James W. Chesebro was the last president of the

SCA. He strongly believed in adding an internationalization component and is credited with creating and "...hosting the first international conference in Mexico City in 1997..." (<http://www.natcom.org/historyofNCA/>, 2013). ([www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org), 2014)

Judith S. Trent was the first president of the NCA in 1997, an important year, because at this time "...the association was accepted into the American Council of Learned Societies, a federation of scholarly organizations that advances the humanities and related social science..." (<http://www.natcom.org/historyofNCA/>, 2013). Additionally, the headquarters of the NCA relocated from New York City to Annandale, Virginia, and then in 1999 to Washington, DC under Orlando L. Taylor. In 2001, under James L. Applegate, a new publication titled, *Review of Communication*, was released. In 2008, under Arthur P. Bochner, the *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* released. Currently, the NCA has over 8,000 members in over 20 countries, and across the U.S. ([www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org), 2014) Today the NCA is still located in Washington, DC and elects presidents via general elections after nominees are sponsored by the divisions for which they are most active and to whom they usually provide leadership ([www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org), 2015).

### **The First Women**

Two women were NCA presidents in the 1930s, but a great number of female members at the time did not hold leadership positions. This section will review the first two NCA female presidents and the female who Cohen (1994) argues is the first Ph.D. of

our field and will briefly discuss the differences between these three women. Despite a great presence of females in the early years of the NCA, seventeen years passed from the time of its creation to when the first female president of the NCA held office in 1932 (<http://www.natcom.org/pastpresidents/>, 2014; Trent, 2010a and 2004).

One of the first members of the association, Henrietta Prentiss waited nearly two decades to be NCA president, while dedicating strong work to the Quarterly Journal of Speech for many years (Trent, 2010a and 2004). With a background in the hard sciences, she dared to approach the field from a rare biological perspective. Prentiss did not fear confronting issues within the field from a straightforward approach, especially in her article, *Our Speech Problems at Hunter College* (1930), where she discussed major issues within her own department (Trent, 2010a and 2004; Prentiss, 1930). She spoke with a strong and guiding voice in her presidential address and encouraged all members to continue to gather or at the very least combine resources to send an institutional representative to attend that year's convention, despite the era's grave financial hardships (Trent, 2010a and 2004; Prentiss, 1932).

A few years after Prentiss' presidency, Maud May Babcock was the second female NCA president in 1936 (<http://www.natcom.org/pastpresidents/>, 2014, Ratliffe, 2010a and 2005a) and the first female president to have a strong interest in the performing arts (Ratliffe, 2010a and 2005a). Despite being nominated for second vice president in 1917 for the year of 1918, it took Babcock nearly two more decades to become president of the association. (J. S. G, 1918, p. 233). Babcock was very active in publishing her works in

the journal, as evidenced by reviewing many of the early journals of what was the NCA at the time. Her continuous presence within the journal may have allowed for the opportunity she took when she became an associate editor for the *Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* (Ratliffe, 2010a and 2005a). Babcock's research had strength, (Ratliffe, 2010a and 2005a) a crucial component of the NCA, as quality research emphasized the credibility of the field (Cohen, 1994). This led to more leadership positions and work in social justice capacities to assist the advancement of women (Ratliffe, 2010a and 2005a).

### **Mary Yost and the Impact of Research**

Mary Yost is credited by Cohen (1994) for being the recipient of the first Ph.D. of all males and females in our field and served on the executive committee for the NAATPS. Yost was never given the opportunity to become president of the NCA, despite her strong credits to the field and her noted and cited research published in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech Education*. Cohen (1994) noted her work may not have been considered popular at the time as one of her articles, *Argument From the Point of View of Sociology* (1917), did not contain a great emphasis on the importance of research, but instead theory. This set her apart from the first two female presidents who did emphasize such, but it is possible this was an intentional personal choice and she did not intend to be president. Cohen (1994) also lists the gender based discrimination of the time as a possible reason for her not obtaining further credit for her value. (Cohen, 1994)



The emphasis on research in the field of speech may have limited some women in the field and thus contributed to nearly two decades between the time of the creation of the association and the time of the first female president. The first time gap may also have been due to a lack of respect for women as equal scholars, and the act of muting women via the traditional patriarchal nature of society of the time as Cohen (1994) briefly discusses in referencing Yost. A combination of these factors, or other factors, may have also been a component.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **Methodologies**

A new perspective of NCA history is provided via a review of the growing percentage of female presidents of the NCA via a quantitative study conducted using data obtained from the association's website ([www.natcom.org/pastpresidents](http://www.natcom.org/pastpresidents), 2014 and [www.natcom.org/historyofnca](http://www.natcom.org/historyofnca), 2014). The data are broken down by association name and decade, then compared to the rate of female presidents for two other communication associations, the NCA's parent association, and a non-related organization. The data of the other four organizations were obtained via two association's websites ([www.icahdq.org/about\\_ica/pastpresidents.asp](http://www.icahdq.org/about_ica/pastpresidents.asp), 2012 and <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/by-year#2010s>, 2013) and one association's 2013 conference program (NWCA, Coeur d'Alene, ID, 2013). (Data on the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) were obtained via a request.) NCA data is also compared with similar data of current public university presidents for each on a national scale. The university presidents' data were obtained via each university's official web page and only one major public university per state was selected for this study. Determination of the sex of each individual was concluded via: a) the observations of pronouns used in works discussing such individual; b) visual recognition via photographs obtained of such individual; c) a deduction based on additional information, such as one's first name; or d)

a combination of the first three aforementioned methods. All approval for this study was provided by the Internal Review Board of a University in the Western U.S.

In an attempt to better comprehend the reasoning for the patterns found in this study, interviews of former, the current, and future female presidents of the NCA were conducted in person, over the phone, and via e-mail. Thirteen female NCA presidents were approached two to three times each via e-mail or in person at the NWCA or NCA conventions to voluntarily participate in this study and were selected based on officially holding the position in the past, present, or future. Each of these individuals provided permission to quote them by name for the purpose of this study and the information provided was member-checked via sending interview transcripts, and this paper for voluntary approval to encompass all views. The results are reviewed primarily in a thematic manner, while select quotes are provided to allow for greater explanation and insight.

### **Study Components**

The research of this study is made of three components, data compilation, interviews, and textual analysis.

#### ***Data Compilation.***

The first component, data compilation is quantitative. In an effort to determine the number of female presidents of the NCA, an evaluation of the information provided

by the *Women's Leadership Project* (Natcom.org, 2013) is evaluated. Additional information with pertinence to the: a) 2014; b) 2015; c) 2016; and d) 2017 presidents were confirmed at the 2013 National Communication Association convention (Washington, DC, 2013). This information is compared to like information of similar associations. Said information is obtained via the Northwest Communication Association convention program (Roberts and Porrovecchio, 2012) and the NWCA Luncheon (Coeur d A'lene, ID, 2013). An additional comparison will be conducted with use of the list of former presidents of the International Communication Association, which is available on the organization's website ([http://www.icahdq.org/about\\_ica/pastpresidents.asp](http://www.icahdq.org/about_ica/pastpresidents.asp), 2012) and the American History Association (<https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/by-year#2010s>, 2013). An exemption from the Internal Review Board of Eastern Washington University is granted to ask to obtain the information on the former presidents of the National Council of Teachers of English. Demographic information reflecting NCA membership is not available.

### ***Data Compilation Reasoning.***

A comparison of the NCA to the NWCA is chosen due to the size and locational differences of the two associations. With the NCA at a substantially large size and the NWCA in the place of the smaller side of associations, a decent contrast of the two is allowable. The NCA is compared to the ICA, because the ICA is international and

therefore, there may be differences due to the contrasting nature of an American association (NCA) to that of an international one (ICA). Finally, the comparison of the findings of the NCA to that of the NCTE is chosen, due to the NCA's origins stemming from group of NCTE members whom chose to break NCTE ties to form the NCA.

### ***Interviews.***

The interviews obtained for this research were obtained in person, over the phone, and via e-mail. Contacts for these interviews were made in person at the National Communication Association conference (Washington, DC, 2013) and via e-mail, with results of in person, e-mail, and phone interviews. Answers to the interview questions are compared and contrasted with one another via thematic analysis.

### ***Interview reasoning.***

Some of the women whom have held the position of female president of the National Communication Association have had the honor of hearing first hand about the experiences of the first female presidents. Two interview questions are chosen due to this and is framed in a manner to take advantage of this knowledge. These women have also, obviously lived through their own experiences of being a female president and know the trials and tribulations associated with such. Therefore, the remaining questions were selected to obtain information based on this first hand knowledge. This first hand information is invaluable and is something which one is unable to find in texts.

***Textual Analysis.***

Additional research is conducted via textual analysis. A review of various written sources are discussed in this paper. The literature chosen pertaining to this subject is chosen due to a number of reasons, the most important of which is NCA approval. If the literature is available on the NCA web site ([www.natcom.org](http://www.natcom.org), 2013), it is assumed to be approved by the organization and be credible. Secondly, a portion of sources are written by former female presidents of the NCA and pertain to this topic. Works pertaining to the subject or the theories relating to the subject are reviewed as well.

***Textual analysis reasoning.***

As in all research, a textual analysis will be conducted. This is a traditional form of methodology utilized in studies as it allows for the work of others from the past to be combined in an effort to make greater sense of a topic. The key terms used to search for these sources were: a) “National Communication Association”; b) “Gender and Communication Leadership”; c) “Glass Ceiling and Communication”; d) “Feminism”; e) “Feminist History”; and f) Each of the former female presidents' names were searched as authors and all the previous names of the association were searched as well. “NCA” and the list of previous names of the association were searched due to the fact that the article would obviously pertain to the association, but few sources were found which pertained to the topic. “Gender and Communication Leadership” was chosen with the hope that work directly relating to the topic would be found, but no articles were determined to be

of potential use or use, when using this term. “Feminism” pertains to the movement which may be perceived to have a great impact on the increase in female presidents over the past century. While “Feminist History” was searched with the goal of obtaining information on the history of feminism with the goal of being able to correlate historical feminist events with events of the NCA. The work by Freedman, (2004) was found via a search for feminism on Audible.com (audible.com, 2013) and the work by (Walters, 2005) was found via a library database search of “Feminist History”. In searching every former female president in the authors section of every database available via the Eastern Washington University Library's advanced search option (Advanced Search, 2013), many sources were discovered. Additional sources were found via the NCA web site (Historical Publications, 2013).

### ***Information Not Used.***

As for information which was disregarded in addition to many articles which were overlooked due to the title, abstract, or review of the contents, information on non-NCA female presidents was disregarded. Information pertaining to female editors and additional female leaders, including the first female Executive Director of the NCA is available and may be of use for additional future research. Additionally, the incorporation of a racial and LGBTQ aspect to this study may be added in the future. Also disregarded is information on the Eastern States Communication Association (ESCA). This association preceded the NCA by one year (Cohen, 1994), but extremely

similar to the NCA in comparison to other regional associations. ESCA and NCA are now headquartered in the same region of the U.S. and share founding members (Cohen, 1994). Additional regional communication associations for comparison to the NCA were not chosen as the NWCA appears to be of the greatest value to this study. This is similar to the reasoning for additional international communication associations chosen for comparison.

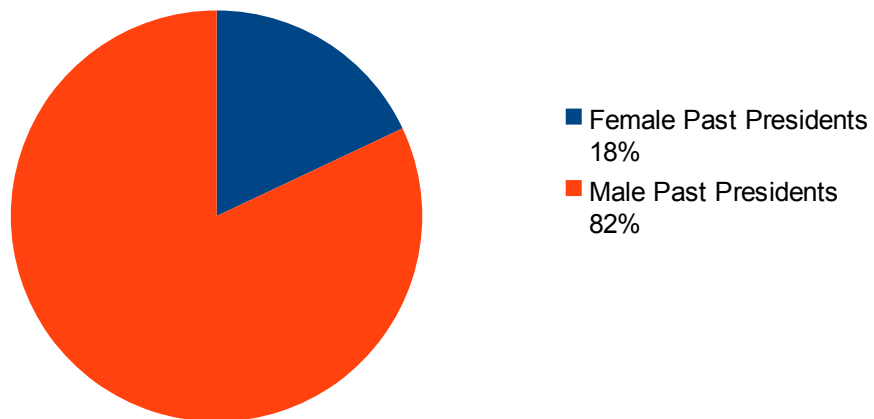


**Chapter Five:**

**Quantitative Patterns**

The sex of the female presidents was determined via data gathered on the NCA's website under the 'Women's Leadership Project' page. The sex of the male presidents was determined via a process of elimination. Between 1915 and 2014, the association that is now the NCA has held 100 presidents with all but two presidents holding office for one year. The two exceptions are H.S. Woodward of Western Reserve University, whom held office from 1918 to 1919 and Patti Gillespie of the University of Maryland whom held office from 1986 to 1987. Over this time only 18 presidents were female, as seen in Figure 1.

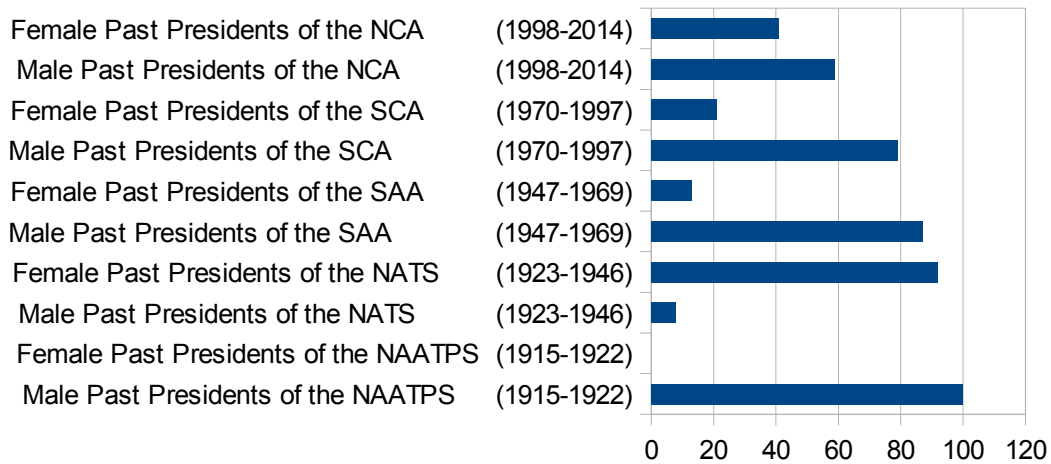
Figure 1



**Numbers per Name and Decade**

In the history of the NCA, the association has changed names five times. The ratio of female to male presidents has increased greatly throughout the history of the NCA, as seen in Figure 2.

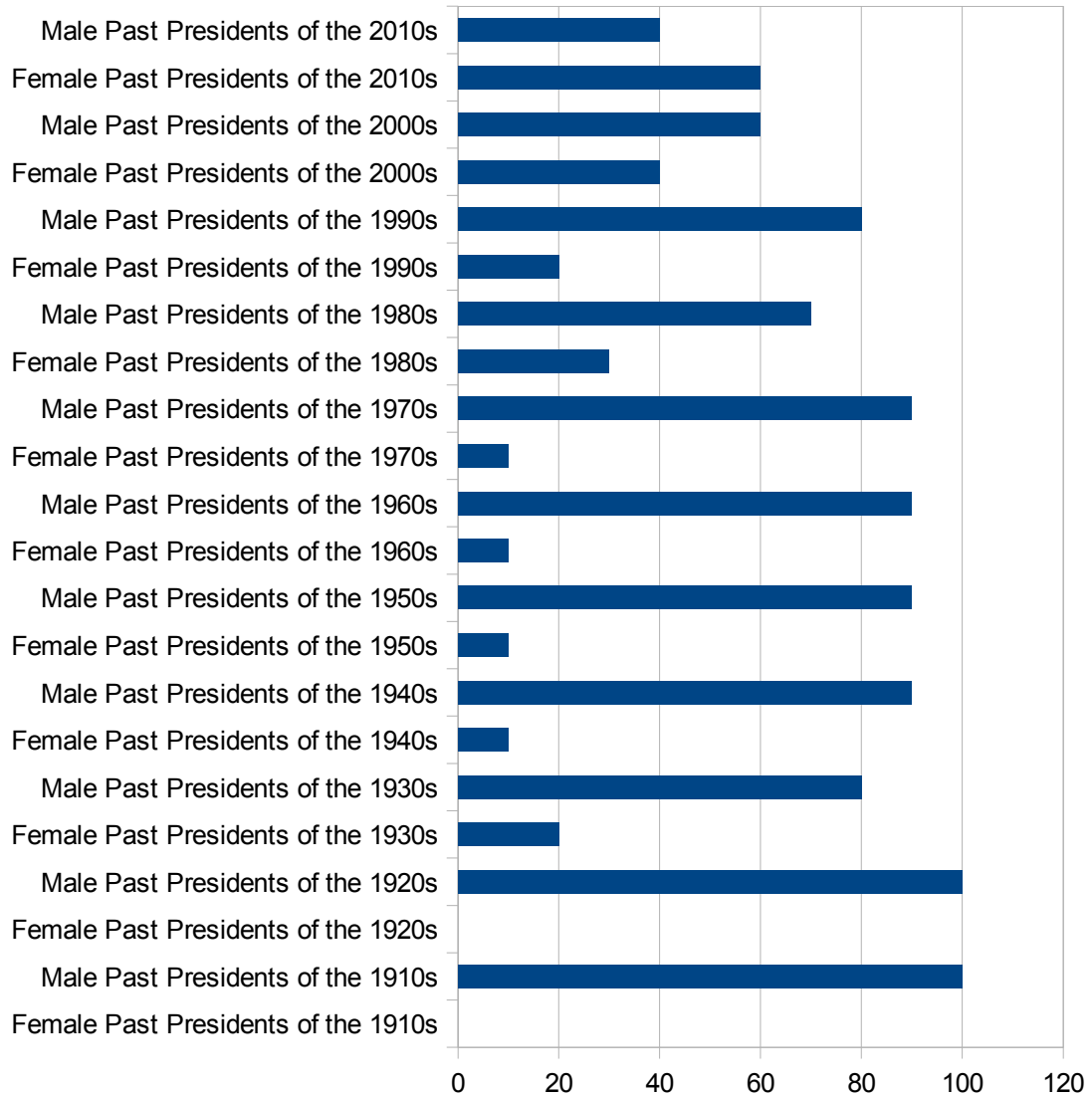
Figure 2



In 100 years, the NCA greatly grew in equality and when one takes into account the current and three future NCA Presidents, the strides in equality per association name are even greater. 45 percent of presidents under the association name of NCA are female, but this view still does not allow for full equality of a 50:50 ratio. An even more exciting pattern emerges when one breaks down the data by decade as seen in Figure 3. A 50:50 ratio is still not seen when one views the rate of female to male presidents per decade. However, as the majority of presidents in the 2010s are female, one may predict this

decade to be the first to see an equal ratio or a ratio which leans in favor of the female gender.

Figure 3



100 percent of the presidents were male in the 1910s and 1920s. This ratio then spiked to a high, which would not be seen again for decades, as 20 percent of 1930s presidents were female. For the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, only 10 percent of presidents were female in each decade. The common attributes of the females of this one-female president-per-decade pattern stood out during times of gender bias across the country in nearly every field of work, were strength and individualism. Elise Hahn of the University of California, whom held office in 1958, was the only female president of the 1950s. Marie Hochmuth Nichols, who was president in 1969, was the only president of the 1960s. Jane Blankenship, president in 1978 was the only female president of the 1970s. The first presidents of each of these decades were male; Horace G. Rahskopf of the University of Washington in 1950, Kenneth G. Hance of Michigan State University in 1960, and Donald C. Bryant in 1970. This case is not the same for the last presidents of each of these decades though. John E. Dietrich of Ohio State University held office in 1959 and Ronald R. Allen of the University of Wisconsin were male, having held office in 1979. Marie Hochmuth Nichols, however, was female and held presidential office in 1969.

The 1980s experienced an increase of 20 percent of female presidents with 30 percent of the presidents being female. The female presidents of this decade were Anita Taylor of George Mason University in 1981, Beverly Whitaker Long of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in 1985, and Patti P. Gillespie in 1987. Sadly, this increase did not continue into the 1990s with 80 percent of presidents being male and only 20

percent female; Sharon A. Ratliffe in 1995 and Judith S. Trent in 1997. The first and last presidents of these decades were all males: a) Malcolm O. Sillars of the University of Utah in 1980; b) Gustav W. Friedrich of the University of Oklahoma in 1989; c) Mark L. Knapp of the University of Texas in 1990; and d) Orlando L. Taylor in 1999.

With the new millennium came another increase of 20 percent of female presidents with 40 percent of the presidents of the NCA being female between 2000 and 2009. The first president of the 21st century was a man named Raymie E. McKerrow of Ohio University. The first female president of the new millennium was Judy C. Pearson of North Dakota State University in 2003, and the final president of the 2000s was also female, Betsy Wackernagel Bach of the University of Montana, Missoula in 2009. The percentage of female presidents outweighed males in the role of president of the NCA between the years 2010 and 2014 with 60 percent. These presidents are, Dawn O. Braithwaite of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln in 2010, Lynn Turner in 2011, and Kathleen Turner of Davidson College in 2014.

In all, it took 18 years from the time the NCA was created until H. Prentiss obtained the position of president. This was only the second longest period of time in which the NCA went without a female president. The second longest period of time was 11 years between E. Hahn's presidency, and Marie Hochmuth Nichols in 1969. This time period is more than three times the length of time females have consecutively been president, which was only three years. Judy C. Pearson, Isa A. Engleberg of Prince George's Community College, and Martha Watson of the University of Nevada, Las

Vegas held office consecutively between 2003 and 2005. Additionally, Betsy Wackernagel Bach of the University of Montana, Dawn O. Braithwaite of the University of Nebraska, and Lynn Turner of Marquette University consecutively held office between 2009 and 2011. We are also in the process of yet another set of three consecutive female presidents between 2014 and 2016: Kathleen Turner of Davidson College, Carole Blair of the University of North Carolina, and Christina Beck of Ohio University.

### ***The Rule.***

Blankenship noted this pattern, which became an unofficial rule by stating that Marie H. Nichols, "...fit in the association's one-every-ten-years practice of electing a woman." (Blankenship, 2010a, p. 56 and 2004, p. 77). Magdalene Kramer and Elise Hahn owned the presidency for females of the 1940s and 1950s. These decades could not be more different from one another in the U.S., but each still only experienced one female president. Nichols held presidency in 1969 and finally the pattern of one female president per decade ended with Jane Blankenship in 1978. Then the number of female presidents in the next decade tripled to 30 percent, as the 1980s worked to remedy this.

The third female president of the association was M. Kramer, and she possessed some characteristics of the women who preceded her, as well as a select few who came after. Like Babcock, she was thought to have been theatrical in nature per Long who wrote of her character and accomplishments for the NCA's Women's Leadership Project (Long, 2010a and 2006a). However theatrical she may have been, she also demonstrated

a great emphasis on the value she held in analysis of speech and how science of the subject was of great importance. Unfortunately, her value at the time may have been diminished by gender bias. Not only did she never use a feminine pronoun while discussing those in the field and those affected by the work done by the association in her presidential address (Kramer, 1947), there was also a stigma of timing. Long (2010a and 2006a) found, when writing about Kramer, that the importance of her presidency practically came down to the association needing a female president. It was in a male member's opinion that a matter of timing and her background was important, as it had been over a decade from the time the last female had served (Long, 2010a and 2006a).

Elise Hahn held the position of president in 1958 (Taylor, 2010b and 2006a) and was a woman of great emotional strength and balance. In her first marriage she was a Navy wife (Taylor, 2010b and 2006a), and speaking from experience this is a role which requires a great deal of emotional stability and stamina, paired with a strong sense of discipline to remain in the background. This discipline may have contributed to her possibly having had published works under the name of her first husband with the knowledge they would not be made public if it was known that the works were written by a female. Also, as the women before her, she appears to have taken solace in her presidency of the association, and therefore accepted this as a great step for the gender, rather than leading affirmative action movements.

There was a bias favoring men for positions of leadership, and discourse pertaining to the bias began to increase during the time period of these 43 years. As a

result, Marie Hochmuth Nichols addressed the narrative surrounding this bias in 1977. Her view of the subject may easily be perceived as shocking, as this narrative by Nichols continued to be discussed at the 2013 NCA convention in at least one panel. In her statement, Nichols denied any forms of gender or sex bias on the behalf of the association. She then went on to defend this statement with the reasoning that she had never been the recipient of bias or discrimination. (Taylor, Washington, D.C., 2013)

Nichols was known as being somewhat controversial due to the statement she made defending the NCA against allegations of discrimination, but still did not fail at advocating on behalf of women. Her presidential address is known for being very forthright and did not allow for a great deal of gray area. There were several members, including a male president who preceded her, who made it a point to walk out of her speech in protest of her message. This proved she did not fear confronting issues head on in a way she deemed fit for the betterment of the field, despite popularity. Nichols addressed many issues of the field in her presidential address, but she also wrote to at least one editor to encourage the use of women's works, rather than exclusively publish works created by men. Nichols valued the past and therefore reinstated the tradition of the presidential address and introduced the field to scholars who would be well known in the future, such as Burke and of course, herself. (Blankenship, 2010a and 2004)

Jane Blankenship, a student of Nichols, was the last female to be a 'member' of the unofficial 'one-female-president-every-decade' club and was different than Nichols in many ways. Blankenship held office in 1978 and was a vocal member of the Equal Rights



Amendment. Under her presidency, talk of relocating the NCA headquarters became wildly popular. She was vocal in large campaigns for the equal rights of women.

Blankenship is noted to have respectfully and subtly stood up to an employer who preferred to address groups as though only men were present, in an effort to alter this behavior so a feminine presence would be acknowledged as well. (Blankenship, 2010b and 2006)

### ***Breaking the rule.***

In the same panel in which the story of Nichols was told, Taylor also reminisced about how it felt to be a female member of the NCA when she first joined. She explained how there was a definite form of othering, which was biased in nature, that she and other females were the recipients of. According to Taylor, there was a sense that if you were a female, it was noted and it was negative. In speaking with Anita Taylor, it is easy to see what a strong and no-nonsense woman she is. Therefore, it is no surprise that she chose to become a write-in candidate for the 1981 presidency. She noted the great inequality of the ratio of female to male presidents while being a member in the 1970s and chose to do something about it. To this day, she is the only write-in president. (Taylor, Washington, D.C., 2013) Nevertheless, she started a domino effect, which is still in effect and growing in momentum.

During and after her presidency, Taylor made it a point to have her voice heard as a voice for those who were rarely heard during the first several decades of the NCA. She

is still an activist for these people. This all began with her presidency, as she wanted to create opportunities for those not listened to, not exclusive to the voice of women, within the association. She admonished the tradition of the voices of the Caucasian males from the best of the universities being heard first and those who did not fit this category coming in at a far second. Therefore, she worked to bring the women, community college members, and non-Caucasians to receive the respect and time to be heard by opening up a large number of presentation slots. (Taylor, 2010c and 2006b)

The tradition is still present to this day and was fulfilled to the greatest extent for the 2014 centennial conference, as there were a large number of openings of spaces for members to present. This is something she still continues to fight for as well. While serving on a panel pertaining to retirement at the 2013 convention, she stood up and called out the panel chair for failing to consider the creation of a more diverse panel, as she was the only panelist who was not an older white male. She specifically made it a point to refer to all of the other panels of the association and the diversity they had, and compared them to the panel she was sitting on. She requested that the panel pertaining to that generation follow in the steps of the rest of the association. (Taylor, Washington, D.C., 2013)

Following Taylor's presidency, two more female scholars took on the position in the 1980s; Beverly Whitaker Long in 1985 and Patti Gillespie in 1987. Long came from a background of theater and speech and was influenced by a great number of strong women in the field. Like Taylor, she worked for women to be noticed for the work they have

done (Long, 2010b and 2006b). Patti Gillespie was the last female to hold the position of NCA president for the 1980s and has several commonalities with select past female presidents. Like Taylor, Blankenship, and others, she was a supporter of the ERA and worked to relocate NCA headquarters to a location which was fully supportive of equal rights. Also, like Kramer, Babcock and others, she has a background in theater, but to her this is her field of scholarship and like Kramer and Prentiss, a portion of her background was in the sciences.

The female presidents of the 1990s were Sharon Ratliffe and Judith Trent. These two presidents first met while in college (Ratliffe, 2010b and 2005b). Ratliffe, like those before her, used her presidency to create opportunities of stepping stones for those without and to shine light on those overshadowed by others (Ratliffe, 2010b and 2005b). Trent was the first female president to have run against another female, a fact which was of great importance to her and still is. When she was asked to run for the position, the party to whom she would run against was a crucial factor as she had seen a pattern of females running against males and more times than not losing to the male gender. After winning the position over Martha Watson, she served on a committee with Watson and assisted Watson in her own win of the position. (Trent, Washington, D.C., 2013)

### *A New Century.*

The pattern of the percentage of female and male presidents rising and falling and repeating itself ended with the turn of the century. With the new millennium came a

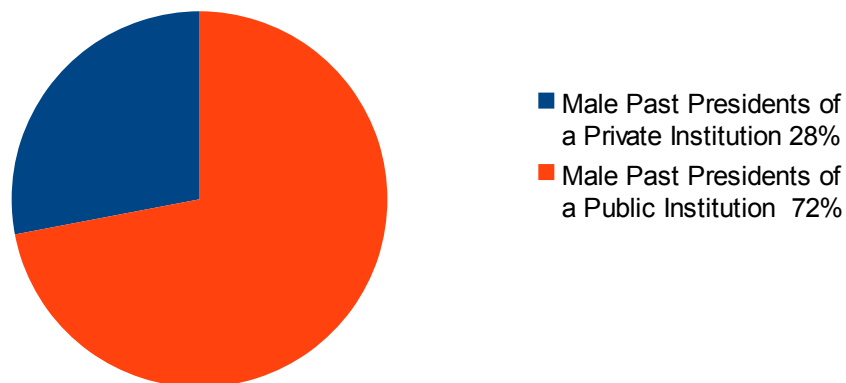
steady rise in the number of female presidents, a great contradiction to the complete absence of female presidents in the beginning of the previous century. This may have been a result of women beginning to run against women for a period of time, as noted in the interviews section of this study. The first decade of the 2000s had twice the number of female presidents as the 1990s did. The presidents of this decade were: a) Judy Pearson; b) Isa Engleberg; c) Martha Watson; and d) Betsy Wackernagel Bach.

Between 2010 and 2017 with: a) Dawn Braithwaite; b) Lynn Turner; c) Kathlene Turner; d) Carole Blair; and e) Christina Beck holding the position of NCA president, with 37.5 percent of presidents being males over these eight years. In addition to this increase, this time period will also see another set of three female presidents holding office in consecutive years. However, no greater number of women have held the position consecutively, despite a great deal of instances in which a great number of men have held the position consecutively. Though with the general growth of equality and decrease in gender bias in the recent decades, it may be a matter of time being necessary to remedy this, or perhaps it is a matter of a thought of true balance of sexes in power. A great deal of progress in equality of the sexes within the association is shown via the general increase in female leadership. Thus, one may reasonably believe in conjunction with current societal events that this trend of equality is likely to continue. A depiction of the decrease in male bias as measured by decade throughout the history of the NCA.

### University and College Representation

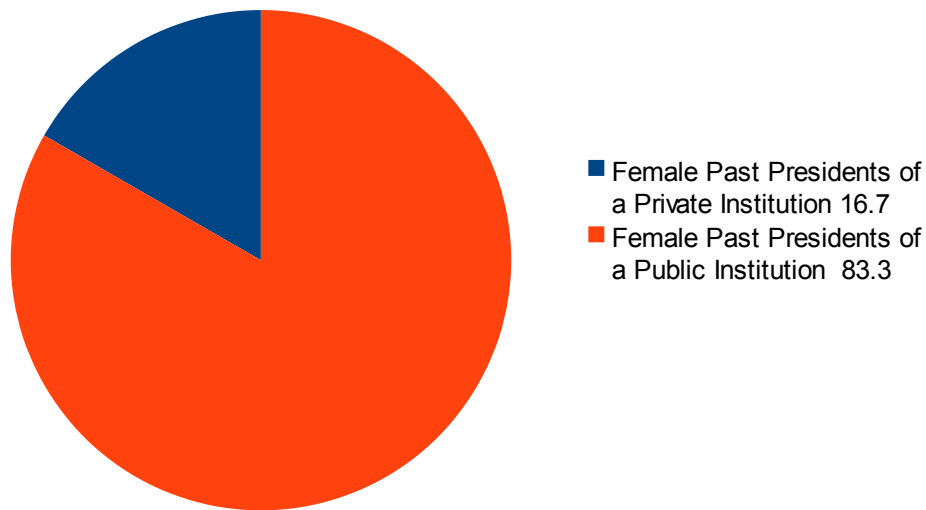
Of all the female presidents, no two were of the same university or college, but three were of universities which a male counterpart was also of. Maud May Babcock was of the University of Utah as well as Joseph F. Smith, whom held office in 1945 and Malcolm O. Sillars in 1980. Also sharing institutions, Beverly Whitaker Long whom held office in 1985 and V. William Balthrop, whom held office in 2002 were both of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Finally, Marie Hochmuth Nichols, whom held office in 1969, was of the same institution as C.H. Woolbert of 1920, Karl R. Wallace of 1954, and Kenneth E. Andersen of 1983, which was the University of Illinois. The individuality related to the institutions of past female presidents can not be said for past male presidents with 48.9 percent of the presidents being of a repeat institution. The most popular of universities among male presidents is the University of Iowa, which contributed eight male NCA Past Presidents. The first was Glenn N. Merry in 1922 and the latest was Bruce E. Gronbeck in 1994.

Figure 4



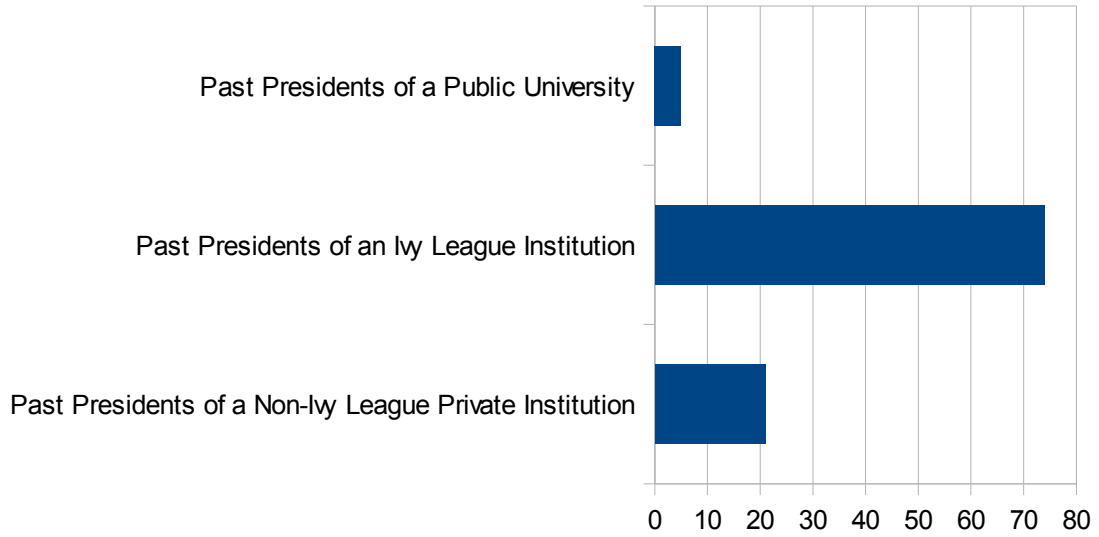
Of all male presidents, 28 percent were of a private university or college, with 72 percent from a public institution, as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 5



Of all female presidents, 16.7 percent came from a private institution, leaving 83.3 percent from a public institution, as seen in Figure 5. Only three female Past Presidents, Lynn Turner of Marquette University, Magdalene Kramer of Columbia University, and the most recent Past President, Kathleen Turner of Davidson College came from a private institution. This equates to twelve percent of presidents of a private institution being female. Whereas, twenty percent of presidents of a public institution were female with the first being H. Prentiss in 1932, and the latest being Dawn O. Braithwaite in 2010. As seen in Figure 6, the majority of NCA Past Presidents were of a public university.

Figure 6



The first president representing an Ivy League university was J.A. Winans of Cornell University in 1916, and the latest was Dennis Gouran of Penn State University in 1991. Of all the presidents of an Ivy League institution, none were female. The majority of past presidents of the NCA have been of the male gender with the greatest influx in female participation occurring after the association officially became the NCA in 1997. Additionally, the majority of past presidents were of a public institution of higher education with the University of Iowa contributing the most: eight past presidents.

### **A Comparison with Other Associations**

When one compares the pattern of female presidents per decade to that of other associations, the results are quite fascinating. In this section the first comparison will be to that of the NCA's parent association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and this will be followed with that of the International Communication Association and the Northwest Communication Association. The NCTE was chosen as the first organization to compare the NCA to as it is the association which our cherished one emerged from. While the International Communication Association was selected due to its great popularity and for being known to be international in nature, despite its great deal of American roots. The NWCA was chosen as it is a small regional association, which is opposite of the size and reach of the NCA and is headquartered in a location which is geographically of great distance from NCA headquarters.

Outside of the field of communications, a comparison will be conducted against a scholarly association not directly associated with communications and the ratio of presidents of state universities. The non-communication association chosen is the American Historical Association for a number of reasons. Firstly, the history of this association dates back to the time of the NCA and beyond to account for the data needed to create an equal comparison. Secondly, the field of history is known to be masculine in nature and unlike other fields which are also dominated by males such as the hard sciences, does not have a well-known initiative to bring females and other muted groups



to the forefront of the field. A comparison with the leaders of universities across the country is selected as it will reflect academia on a well-rounded, national level. The idea to compare the results of this study to such an association as the AHA was provided by Anita Taylor (personal conversation, 2013) and with university presidents was provided by Judy Pearson (personal conversation, 2013).

### **NCA and NCTE**

Just like the NCA, the NCTE did not have any female presidents in the 1910s, but the NCTE did have one female president in the 1920s, with their first female president having held the position in 1929. During the 1930s, the NCTE also saw a rise in the number of female presidents, however it was greater than the NCA by twenty percent, with 40 percent of the presidents of the NCTE for that decade being female. The following decade did see a drop in female leadership, as the NCA did; however, it was not to the great extent to which the NCA saw, with the drop being ten percent to a total of 30 percent for the 1940s. Unlike the NCA, the few decades following the 1940s did not remain stagnant; the 1950s dropped another ten percent, resulting in only twenty percent of NCTE presidents being female. However, this ten percent loss was regained in the 1960s and equality was found in the 1970s with an equal distribution of male and female presidents. This equality was gained in the same decade in which the NCA was experiencing the fourth instance of only one female holding the position every decade.

In the same decade in which the NCA saw a spike in female leadership after the long drought, the NCTE once again had a greater number of females in the highest position than the NCA with 40 percent of female presidents in the 1980s. In the last decade of the century, females dominated NCTE presidency with 80 percent of those holding the position being female, a number the NCA has yet to reach. This overlapped into the new millennium with 70 percent of NCTE presidents being female between 2000 and 2009, a number 30 percent higher than that of the NCA. Finally, in the years between 2010 and 2014, the NCA and NCTE had the same number of female presidents. Despite the two organizations beginning on the same note and equality presently being the case, overall the NCTE has had over twenty percent more female presidents than the NCA. This may be due to the NCTE having a greater emphasis on teaching, rather than research as the NCA does, or perhaps there are additional circumstances which will remain unknown as they have been left in history undocumented.

### **NCA and ICA**

As for the younger ICA, the creation of this association did not occur until the late 1940s and no female held the position of president until the 1980s, when the same number of female presidents held the position for that decade in the ICA as did the NCA. This was followed by yet another great increase in the number of female presidents of the ICA with an equal number of males and females holding the position in the 1990s. However, this would not last into the new millennium with the ICA seeing less female

presidents between 2000 and 2010 than the NCA with only 30 percent, versus the 40 percent of the NCA. Finally, from 2010 to 2014 the ICA saw far less female leadership of the highest office than the NCA with yet another decrease, to 25 percent of presidents being female. In total, the percentage of female presidents throughout the history of the ICA is close to that of the total history of the NCA, at approximately twenty percent in all. However, if one only compares the years in which only the ICA has been in existence, the results are far different with the NCA exceeding the ICA by three percent.

### **NCA and NWCA**

When one looks at the even younger and far smaller NWCA, the results are very different than that of the comparison with the ICA. The NWCA was created in 1977 and did not see a female president until 1984, when twenty percent of presidential leadership was held by women during this decade. The 1990s, saw this number double to 40 percent and with the new millennium, it doubled yet again to 80 percent. After 2010, this number has decreased slightly to create a greater amount of balance at 60 percent for 2000-2014, when the NCA and the NWCA matched in the ratio of female leadership for the first time. Overall, the NWCA has had the greatest total equality of males and females in office, with nearly 45 percent of all presidents being female. This is over twice the percentage of that of the NCA. However, when one only looks at the years in which both associations were in existence, the gap between the two associations lessens, with 31 percent of presidents of the NCA being women between 1977 and 2014.

**NCA and AHA**

While the parent association of the NCA and one of the NCA's regional offspring both outweigh the NCA in female leadership of the highest office, if one compares the NCA with the AHA, similar to that of the ICA, it is a very different story. Over the entire span of the AHA's existence, which is 130 years, the AHA has had nearly ten percent less female presidents than the NCA. If one only compares the years in which both associations have been in existence, the number rises only a mere three percent, which is still nearly seven percent lower than that of the NCA. The NCA also surpasses the AHA by nearly a decade when referring to the time of the first female president as the AHA's first female president held office in 1943. However, like the NCA, the AHA only saw one woman hold presidential office that decade, but this would not continue to be the case for some time as the next female president the AHA elected held office in 1987. This resulted in a gap of over 40 years in which the NCA was electing women to office, at least sporadically, whereas the AHA was not.

The 1990s were a different time for the AHA, as they elected more female presidents in this decade than they had in over a century, and this number surpassed the number of female presidents of the NCA by ten percent. The first decade of the new millennium saw yet another increase of female leadership of the AHA which surpassed the NCA by ten percent, yet again, totaling equality of the sexes for the AHA between 2000 and 2010. However, for the first years of the 2010s, the NCA triumphed over the AHA in equality once more with twice as many female presidents leading the NCA

between 2010 and 2013 as the AHA. Thus, despite the limited number of decades in which the AHA had a slightly greater amount of female presidents, the NCA far surpasses the AHA in equality of the highest office.

### **NCA and State Universities**

Finally, a comparison of the current times shows a reflection of how the NCA stands in equality of the sexes for the 2010s and the current presidents of a primary state university for each state in the US. The NCA is, as its name states, a national association and is therefore meant to stand as a guiding force of the nation of the U.S. in the field of communication and scholarship. It is obvious the NCA is a great leader pertaining to communication works and guidelines of instructing courses within the field, but the NCA is also setting a strong example of equality of leadership when compared to state universities. Of the nation wide public universities studied, only twenty percent of university presidents are female. This is similar to the total percentage of female presidents of the NCA throughout history, but for the NCA this would include times of women's suffrage and various times of gender inequality as a societal norm. These are factors which are not nearly as prevalent as they once were, hence the advent of post-feminism. Therefore, with the NCA exceeding the percentage of female presidents of state universities nationwide three times over, the NCA has now become an organization which the scholarly field needs to look to as an example of progression of equality in leadership.

### **Presidential Interviews**

Of the living female presidents, ten were able and willing to participate in this study as well as the two future female presidents for the years of 2015 and 2016. The interview questions were: 1) In the first 100 years of the Association, the NCA only had 18% of its presidents be female and only one female president held office per decade for the: a) 1940s; b) 1950s; c) 1960s; and d) 1970s, despite two female presidents holding the position in the 1930s; what is your opinion on this?; 2) In your opinion, has a major social movement affected the ratio of female to male presidents of the NCA? If so, which social movement and how so?; 3) Do you feel a bias towards the male gender is still present in selecting the position of president of the NCA?; 4) How does it feel to be a member of this elite group of female Communications scholars?; and 5) What aspects of your life do you believe especially contributed to you having the opportunity to become president of the NCA, particularly pertaining to Identity Theory? The reasoning for the first and second question pertains to an attempt to gain insight into the past and the pattern of female presidents which unfolded throughout the decades. The third question was written as an attempt to gain personal insight into the action of being a female president of the NCA, as holding this position is very rare opportunity, which few in our field have had. Finally, the last question was asked in an attempt to find a pattern of how self-identification of oneself and their environment may have impacted one's ability to become a member of this elite group of women.

**18% in Total and the 'One-Female-President-Per-Decade' Pattern**

A general consensus was provided in reference to the first question. This consensus was that the pattern of few female presidents holding office during the first 60 years of the association is a result of the social mentality of gender bias of the times. As Braithwaite describes in her Western States Presidential Address, the imagery associated with a professor at the time was that of a male (Braithwaite, 2001). These were also decades in which women were expected to work, but not in the way which is recognized today, as women worked in the home, on the farm, and in various other positions as reviewed by Taylor (2005) in her speech, Tale of the Grandmothers.

Lynn Turner stated, “It seems pretty consistent with women's position in the larger society during those time periods. In the wider world beyond NCA, women didn't hold too many positions of power outside the home with the exception of the '30s and '40s during World War II when men weren't available.” (L. Turner, personal communication, 2014). This is also a strong relation to the first two waves of feminism (Freedman, 2008 and Walters, 2005). Also, as Pearson pointed out, a large factor could have also been familial obligations:

Most of the women that have been presidents have no children and there is a reason for that, and that is, it is so busy, you are kept so active that you don't really have time to do it, but we have six children. ... So, I think family obligations, the acceptance of women in leadership roles, the ERA, ... all kinds of external factors that made a difference in women running and serving. (Pearson, personal conversation, 2013)

Family and the weight it carried was a great concern of women of the first wave of feminism and therefore, this was a time in which women were not fighting for the right to be heard, but were playing the cards they were dealt in order to gain the rights they deserved. Such rights were as basic as the right to vote, use contraceptives, and work in a greater number of fields than what were currently deemed acceptable to women.

(Freedman, 2008) As time progressed, women were expected to return to the home after the war and be a housewife. As Taylor (Taylor, personal communication, 2013) pointed out, people were content immediately after the second World War due to the sheer pleasure of the war being over. However, this contentment soon ended as groups of people such as African Americans were displeased with being provided with equality in the forces and having it taken away. (Taylor, personal communication, 2013) This unhappiness led to the civil rights movement which overshadowed the women's rights movement, or what is better known as the second wave of feminism (Walters, 2005). Therefore, the fight for the rights of women to be perceived as equals in our society as a whole was muted until the later half of the last century, which would explain the stagnation of growth of female leadership within the NCA during this time period.

As Cohen (1994) pointed out, Mary Yost was well qualified and was not considered for the position. However, there is something to say that select women were offered the opportunity to lead at all, or that this was something people within the association were even remotely thinking of at the time. As discussed by Taylor, Hahn was selected for the position partially due to the fact that she was female (Taylor, 2010b and



2006a). Also, Kathie Turner stated, “Honestly, in some ways I’m amazed that the percentage is that high given the ways in which women have been regarded, including within the academy. I say, “Kudos” to the women who made it.” (K. Turner, personal conversation, 2014)

After all, females leading other scholarly associations such as the AHA were non-existent at the time. Blair referred to this in her answer:

Obviously we all want for there to be more sex and gender equality in any of our organizations, but given what the general culture was like and what the culture of higher education was like even through the '70s, I think its remarkable that we had any women be president, frankly. Because, women were mostly (with the exception of WWII) relegated to the household and after WWII, they were re- relegated to the household. And so, I'm frankly astonished that we have had as many as we have. I know eighteen percent (your calculation) seems low to us now, but personally it's quite remarkable in my view. (Blair, personal conversation, 2014)

This common thread of responses reflects the uniqueness of the women who did contribute to the NCA through the first 70 years of its existence. Social movements of this time such as the feminist movement, ERA, and civil rights movement were a response to the social stigma of women being limited to the home in many ways. With all the messages sent to women in an effort to have the home be the primary priority, it truly

is a positive attribute of the NCA to have had female members from the beginning. This presence of women in the association at the time acted as a representation that women could hold the position, even with limited frequency.

### **The Effect of Major Social Movements**

The discussion of feminism in reference to the first question obviously relates to the second question as well. Of the ten responses, seven or 70 percent mentioned the feminist or women's rights movement. Twenty percent referenced the civil rights movement as it paved the way for other muted groups to be heard. 30 percent, which overlapped by one person with those who discussed civil rights, referenced the women's caucus of the NCA as an effort which strongly encouraged women's leadership. A separate 30 percent of participants (overlapping by one again) referenced the time in which two women ran against one another for the first time, in the case of Trent's win over Watson. Another twenty percent of presidents discussed the time Taylor chose to enlist herself in the election for president as a write-in candidate. This wide variety of answers shows it was not simply one occurrence which allowed for a greater number of females to make their way into the leadership of the NCA, but a combination of many factors.

### **Does Discrimination Still Exist?**

It is worthwhile to mention Pearson's response to the third question as it related to the previous section. She stated:

...Most of us have had more acceptance and more ability to move into positions of leadership in organizations than we have in our own campuses. So, of all the women, very few people have positions as presidents of universities, provosts, deans, and so on. A few of us have been associate deans, or associate provosts, but not the leading lady role. I think that itself is something to think about and to query about. Why would that occur? Why would that be acceptable here, but not acceptable at home? (Pearson, personal conversation, 2013)

The NCA has acted to end gender bias in selecting presidents, but this is not true elsewhere. This is further reflected in more answers to the third question. To this, no female president stated that she felt there is still a bias towards the male sex over the female sex. However, Taylor provided an answer which is unique and demonstrates how the masculine is perhaps still preferred when it comes to matters of leadership. She stated:

As a society, we still prefer what I would call masculine kinds of traits, whether they appear in men or women; and so far as masculine being male identified; so far as the fact that we are looking for masculinity in leadership, leadership of all kinds. We act as if leadership

is those masculine traits. We ignore what have traditionally been women's skills ... Those things have all been associated with femininity and while they're important for any organization's work, they're not thought of as leadership traits or leadership characteristics. What we think of as leadership is organization, rationality, action, agency, drive, getting things done. So, we honor those things. ... There's a kind of underground attitude that when we imagine a leader, we imagine a men, a male character, but in terms of what we think of consciously in this organization, I don't think that is identified with males anymore. In this organization, (I think there are others professional locations where it is does, but not in this organization.) I think the women are visible enough and are seen enough and seen doing leadership enough that they stand out the same way men do. (Taylor, personal communication, 2013)

Also, Blair sees no bias in the NCA presidential nomination. She stated:

No, I don't. I don't see how I could. Given the numbers in recent years of the women who have been elected, it's pretty stunning. There was a little bit of time when men said that they were willing to run, but not against a woman, because women were winning. ... that too has changed for the most part, I don't think anybody really cares [if they run against the same sex anymore]. Both my predecessor and I ran against

men, I don't think it made any difference. (Blair, personal communication, 2014)

Additionally, Beck and others expressed a great deal of gratitude for having the opportunities they have had and for the fact that the NCA no longer looks at sex or gender as a factor when selecting a president, but solely at qualifications. (Beck, personal conversation, 2014) The current president, Kathie Turner also referred to current upward trend in female leadership within the NCA in stating, “You know, looking at the fact that of the immediate past president, president, first vice president, and second vice president, of those four offices three are held by females, I'd say we are making a difference.” (K. Turner, personal conversation, 2014)

### **The Honor to Serve**

Gratitude and honor were also a common theme for the responses to the fourth question. Of course, all ten respondents were incredibly positive about the opportunity to serve their field, and in the case of P. Gillespie, a relating field. Of these ten, seven specifically stated they were honored to have served the NCA via their presidencies, while 40 percent specifically mentioned the friendships and camaraderie they enjoy as a result of being a member of this elite group. This group of women may not have had the opportunity to stay in touch as often if it were not for the work of Trent, who originated the concept of an exclusive annual breakfast for female leaders of the NCA, including the first female executive director, Nancy Kidd. The breakfast is a time for female presidents

of each generation of the NCA to meet and continue growing the friendships they have with one another.

A special note of gratitude for the women who are of the previous generation was provided by Christina Beck in answering this question:

I know that there are women in just the generation before me that fought tooth and nail for equality and I am very grateful for that. I've never felt like I had to fight that battle and it is because of their hard work and their hard efforts that I am able to not really consider my gender to be a factor in this at all. So, when I consider myself being elected to this position, I'm just incredibly humbled by it, I'm honored by it, and the fact that I joined an elite group of women, I'm very honored by that, too, of course. But overall, I'm very very grateful to be selected to serve the Association. (Beck, personal communication, 2014)

Beck also shared a great amount of gratitude to the members of the association for electing her to the position. As with most of all the female presidents of the NCA, most would not have had the opportunity to serve without the votes of the members of the association. In reviewing her statement during the member-checking process at the time of the interview, Beck was very adamant about clearly stating her gratitude to NCA members for electing her to the position. (Beck, personal communication, 2014)

Discussion of the honor to serve the members and the association is a common thread amongst the responses. This shows the graciousness of all these extraordinary women.

### **The Identities of the Female NCA Presidents**

Burke was introduced into the field of communications by one of our former female presidents (Blankenship, 2010a and 2004), and therefore, it is only fitting that his Identity Theory (Burke and Stets, 2009) be included in this study. These women have been given the title of NCA president and thus is at least a small portion of each of their identities. However, this was not always the role they played and is not the only identity they currently hold. Therefore, the fifth question was posed. Three former female presidents, the current NCA president, and the two future female presidents of the NCA were able and willing to answer this question and all did so in a unique manner.

Taylor discussed her identity as being that of a masculine female. As she stated in answering the interview question pertaining to male bias, masculinity is a quality which people look for when selecting a leader. This identity dates back to her childhood as she was raised during the time of the second World War, a time in which the gender roles set by society were blurred as most forms of work were needed to be done by all able hands. Thus, she developed an anti-identity of being a 100 percent domestically feminine woman. As an adult she is proud to identify herself as being: a) “a quick and logical thinker” (Taylor, personal communication, 2014); b) a strong willed person who will speak her mind in an effort to right a wrong, especially pertaining to scholarship and justice; c) a group leader; and d) a confident speaker who holds strength in debate. All these aspects, paired with the other aspects of her life, such as her race and gender, allowed others to identify her as a leader. (Taylor, personal communication, 2014)

Bach responded by referencing how from the time she was a child, she identified herself as a self-reliant person. This self-reliance is believed to have stemmed from being an only child and only strengthened with her first career as a police officer. As a child, she did not have siblings to lead her and she was forced to be very independent. While as a law enforcement officer, she was forced to be a strong person to whom people could rely on to lead in dangerous situations. (Bach, personal communication, 2014) The emotional strength, leadership qualities, and independence which stemmed from the identity of being a self-reliant person has positively impacted the work she has done for the NCA, as she has led and spearheaded great projects for the association (Coeur d'Alene, ID, 2013). Kathie Turner also referred to her entire life in her response, "I think the fact that my family has always stressed education and they particularly loved language. The fact that my family has believed in me and made it seem possible for me to do most anything I have wanted to has made a key difference in my life. (My family generally serves as a strong support system, but in particular both my mother and my husband are superb. I am very grateful to them.)" Additionally, Lynn Turner referenced her ability to take advantage of the opportunities which have come her way (L. Turner, personal communication, 2014), one may identify her as ambitious and brave as to take the leaps needed to obtain such opportunities.

Blair also discussed a great number of personal aspects of herself and the women who came before her that make up a leader and allow one to identify themselves as such. Like Bach, she referenced her childhood and organizations such as 4H, which she was a



member of, that taught her leadership qualities so she may identify herself as a leader and allow others the opportunity to do so as well. (Blair, personal communication, 2014)

While, “Beck speculated about qualities that might have contributed to her election, including her roles as past president of the Central States Communication Association and past editor of Communication Yearbook and, perhaps, visibility from an active program of research. She also describes herself...” as a tenacious person and believes this portion of her identity has greatly impacted her ability to be able to take advantage of the many opportunities which have come her way and allowed her to be where she is today. (Beck, personal communication, 2014)

A common thread of all responses is a combination of leadership abilities and the willingness to take advantage of opportunities provided. This shows a great deal of bravery as taking a chance with an opportunity may be perceived as frightening to certain people. This bravery to take the steps to become NCA president is a commonality amongst all female presidents of the NCA. Those in the beginning had to be brave to be an outlier of the leadership of the NCA. Those in the middle to late century had to work for rights of women. Also, the female presidents of today must be brave to create a legacy of their own while taking on the unknown as those before them did.

**Relation of Feminism to NCA Female Presidents**

The women who have held the position of president of the NCA have created new opportunities for respect and success within the field of Communications. If it were not for these women and the feminist movement, I and all other women in the field would not have the opportunities we have available to us today. However, little is known about these women or the historical and life events which led them to be the leaders they were, versus those who were not allowed such an opportunity. H. Prentiss was the first female president of the association (Gillespie, 2010 and Trent, 2004) and possessed a strong voice in her address to members. This strength was a pattern amongst the first female presidents of the association and the characteristics of these women did not fully reflect the imagery of a women of their time as depicted in media. They held leadership positions and professorships, which years after their success began was still depicted in a masculine and patriarchal manner (Braithwaite, 2001).

The first female presidents held the position during the time of the first wave of feminism, which was a time in which women were fighting for the right to work, primarily had to choose between a non-labor career and being married (Freedman, 2004 and Walters, 2005). They were able to give a voice to themselves and to other women in the field at a time in which women were primarily muted by the patriarchal nature of society and adapt their voices to contain characteristics which would allow them to do so. This allowed these women to crack the glass ceiling and move past the “sticky floor” (TedTalk, 2013) to create a road map for future women to do so as well. This path was

only able to be fully followed by one woman per decade for four decades during the transition from the first to the second wave and during the second wave of feminism. The identity of women was shaped by their perceptions of themselves based on the messages they received from society and family (Armstrong, 1968) and many women saw their identity as that of a housewife, per the societal norms of the time. The feminist movement worked to unmute the voices of women and allow them to create their own identities without the parenthetical constructs of the time, but the voice of this movement was overshadowed and muted by the anti-war and civil rights movements (Walters, 2005 and Freedman, 2004).

The second wave of feminism closed with Taylor raising her voice against men constantly holding the position of president and worked to hold the position herself, with her efforts rewarded (Taylor, 2006 and Gillespie, 2010). The third wave of feminism brought forth a new format to the election process for the position of NCA president as women began running against men, forcing a woman to be president ([www.natcom.org/history](http://www.natcom.org/history), 2013). This new election formatting prevented a woman's voice to be muted by losing to a male counterpart and allowed women to begin to hold the position of president of the NCA more frequently. Today, the 2010s are seeing a balance of male and female presidents, but female presidents have only been allowed to hold the position consecutively for three years. This suggests that patriarchal dominance is still an aspect of the association and while the voices of women are far less muted than they once were, aspects of the politics of the patriarchal dominance of the 1950s may still exist.

## **Chapter Six:**

### **Discussion**

The NCA came to fruition in 1914 ([www.natcom.org/historyofNCA](http://www.natcom.org/historyofNCA), 2014) and though women such as Babcock held subordinate leadership positions, and nearly half the attendees of the 1918 convention were female (J. S. G., 1918, p. 238), a female did not become president of the NCA until almost two decades later. Female leadership of the highest position of the NCA spiked in the 1930s to a rate which would not be seen for another four decades. This may have been due to a number of factors within and outside the association. Within the association, research was a key component which was considered essential for the NCA to be taken seriously as a scholarly association, while the research being conducted had to have been widely accepted within the field (Cohen, 1994). In review of the early issues of the QJS, many articles pertain to a scientific review of speech, or an analysis of how the field may be improved on a number of levels. Also, as noted in several articles within *Our Stories: Twentieth-century Women Presidents of NCA* (Gillespie, 2010) a bias towards the male gender was prevalent at the time.

However, this is also noted as being a strong issue of the society of the times. When the NCA was created, the first wave of feminism was growing and women were fighting for the right to vote, obtain contraceptives, and work in roles not thought of as being meant for women (Freedman, 2008). At the time of the first female president of the

NCA, the average household income in the U.S. had dropped 40 percent and half of home mortgages were in default (Collins, 2007). The NCA at this time chose the first female president, who would be a strong, yet empathetic leader with a background in the hard sciences and chose to have another female lead a few years later. Yet this did not continue into the 1940s, which was a time of mixed messages for women. Female empowerment via the need for females to fill positions which were made empty by men fighting overseas was prevalent in the beginning of the decade. However, with the second half, the pattern of one female holding the position became set as media based propaganda flooded society in an effort to cause women to forget the work they had done in the 1940s and be happy as housewives (Walters, 2004 and more).

This pattern led the NCA through the civil rights movement, ERA, and the next wave of feminism. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the country had finished with the civil rights and anti-war movement and was now beginning to primarily focus on the rights of women (Walters, 2004 and Collins, 2007). Another outside influence which aided in the second spike in female leadership of the NCA pertained to the economy. The 1980s saw a recession and had become the era of the two income household, which required women to take on more positions in a variety of fields as technology created a new wave of the workforce (Collins, 2007). This was paired with the force of Taylor nominating herself as a write-in candidate (Taylor, Washington, D.C., 2013 and more), which then led to more and more women being nominated and elected.

The turn of the millennium saw the third wave of feminism and the NCA started to reach a time of sex equality within the highest office. Internally, the nomination of Trent and Watson to run against one another is deemed to have been a strong factor (Trent, Washington, D.C., 2013 and more) in this growth as well. Externally, women in our society had become used to the idea of working and obtaining aspirations that were once primarily held for men. This furthered the change in the thought process of society as people were expecting gender equality, despite some aspects of society failing to keep up with the trend of growing equality.

Some aspects of society of current times which are struggling, are the number of females representing universities across the country, government leadership, and the images of women projected by the media. As Pearson questioned, why is it that women no longer need to worry about being subjected to a sexual bias at the NCA, but need to at the universities for which these members work (Pearson personal communication, 2013). These questions are worthy of being answered not as part of a study, but in a complete study in and of itself. The data provided in this study do not provide an answer to the questions of why this occurs, but does somewhat provide from another angle. Perhaps universities across the country should look to the NCA as an example of gender equality in leadership. After all, the association is a strong voice which is listened to pertaining to what is taught in the communication classrooms of these universities. Why then should it not be an example for this matter as well?

On a larger scale, the U.S. government has a lower percentage rate of female members of congress than the total percentage of females presidents of the NCA and only 1.5 percent of governors over the entire history of the U.S. have been female. This number is extremely lower than that of the percentage rate of the presidents of the NCA. Also, “The U.S. is 90th in the world in terms of women in national legislatures.” (Newsom, 2011) These are powerful positions, which are dominated by men along with the presidencies of public universities. Therefore, young scholars need a source to look to as a leader in the equality of leadership positions.

The NCA is currently seeing three female presidents hold the position consecutively and these women are able to serve due to their hard work and scholarship and the hard work and scholarship of the women who came before them. Also, these women come from a variety of backgrounds, not simply from the most prestigious of universities, but from the universities and community colleges which are or are similar to those in which one may predict most members attend. This is not only true for the women presidents of the NCA, but these female scholars do have quite a diverse range of backgrounds, which may allow them to be more relatable to a wide variety of members. Of all the female presidents through 2013, no two were of the same university or college as another female president. The individuality related to the institutions of past female presidents can not be said for past male presidents with 48.9 percent of them being of a repeat institution.

This diversity paired with the other unique qualities of the NCA female presidents and their variety of backgrounds allows for these women to be ideal people for new scholars to look to as examples in leadership. This is something public universities and other associations such as the AHA can not offer.



## **Chapter Seven:**

### **Conclusion**

The women who have held the position of president of the NCA from one generation to the next have worked to allow a greater number of opportunities to be readily available to their fellow scholars and those of the next generation. Therefore, it is of great importance for those within the association to be mindful of their work and thus, have reason for thanks for the opportunities provided. This is especially true in a time in which universities in a broad sense, the government, and the media have yet to catch up to the equality the NCA is currently experiencing pertaining to this matter. With state universities across the country only seeing twenty percent of their presidents being female, this is a time in which gender equality is of great necessity. This also pertains to the number of women in government positions. Thus, though the NCA is not perfect, it provides a positive place for females and males to escape the sexism which is still prevalent in our society.

The need to look to the NCA as an example is proven to an even greater extent by comparison of the AHA and the extremely low quantity of female leadership which that field has likely seen. This is also proven on an international level, as the ICA, who shares members and a past president, appears to have begun to follow in the footsteps of the NCA on this matter, but may not be doing so to such a great extent in this decade (though it is early to tell). However, this is not to say the NCA is perfect in matters of gender

equality as is noted by the ratios provided over history. However, the work of the members, former presidents, and all who have held a position within the NCA and have worked to accomplish gender equality within the association should be proud of what they have accomplished. This is proven even more via the steady increase of female leadership of the highest position from the time of Taylor's presidency.

New communication scholars, would benefit from constantly being mindful of what these female communications scholars have done for us and the lessons we may learn from them. As Blankenship stated about Nichols, "She could honor the past while looking forward." (Blankenship, 2010a, p. 56 and 2004, p. 77). In honoring the past of female scholars of what is arguably the most important communication association, we as female and male scholars are able to take advantage of the doors they have opened for us for our future. We as members of the NCA should all know what the leaders of the association have done for us to allow us the opportunities we have available to us today. We should also be grateful for all the stones which have been laid by those before us as a means to create paths to scholarly success and work to lay more stones for scholars to come, as the women at the center of this study have done.

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Appendix A

**Figure 1:**

Figure 1

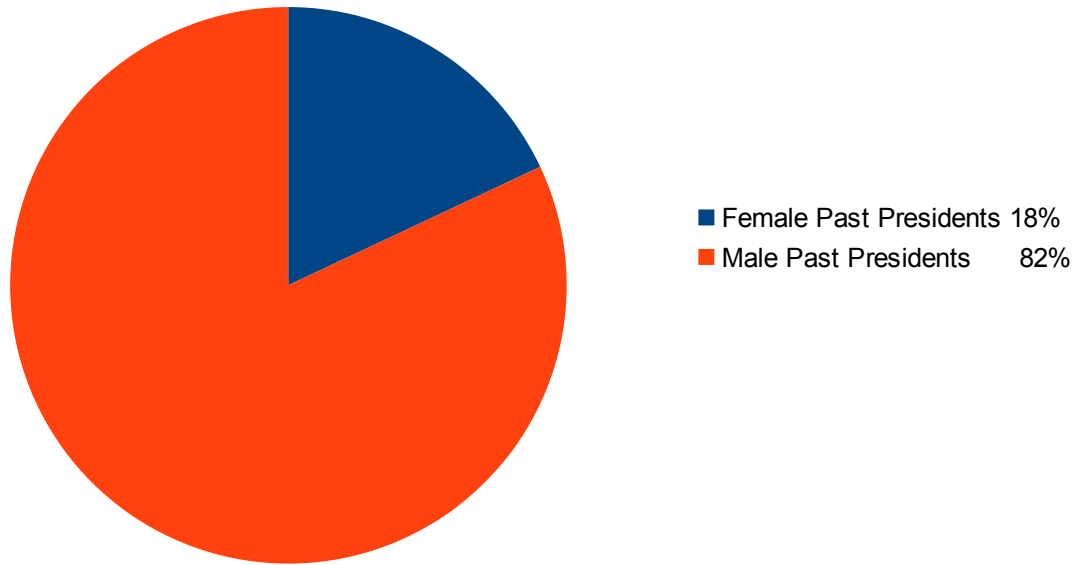
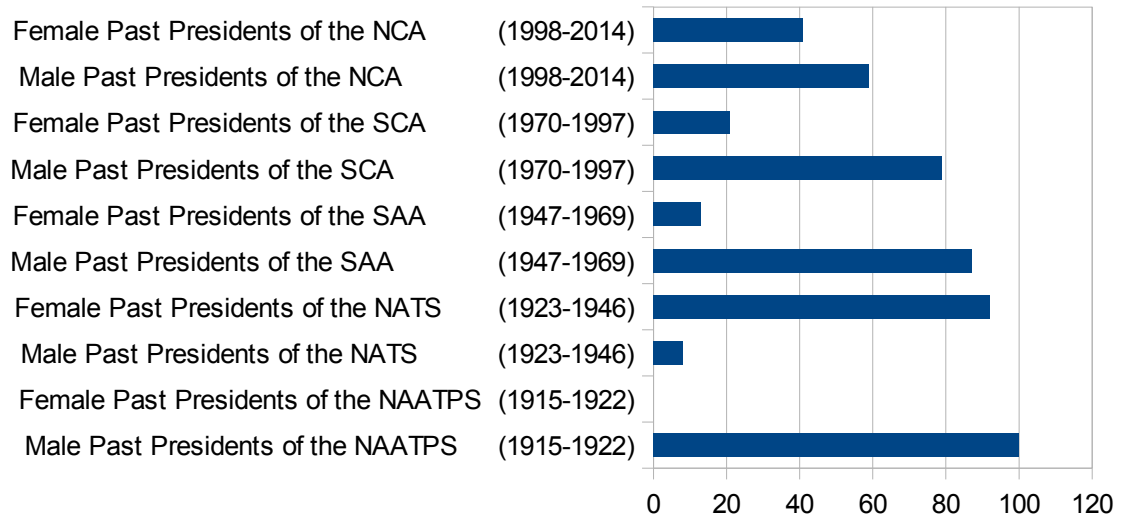


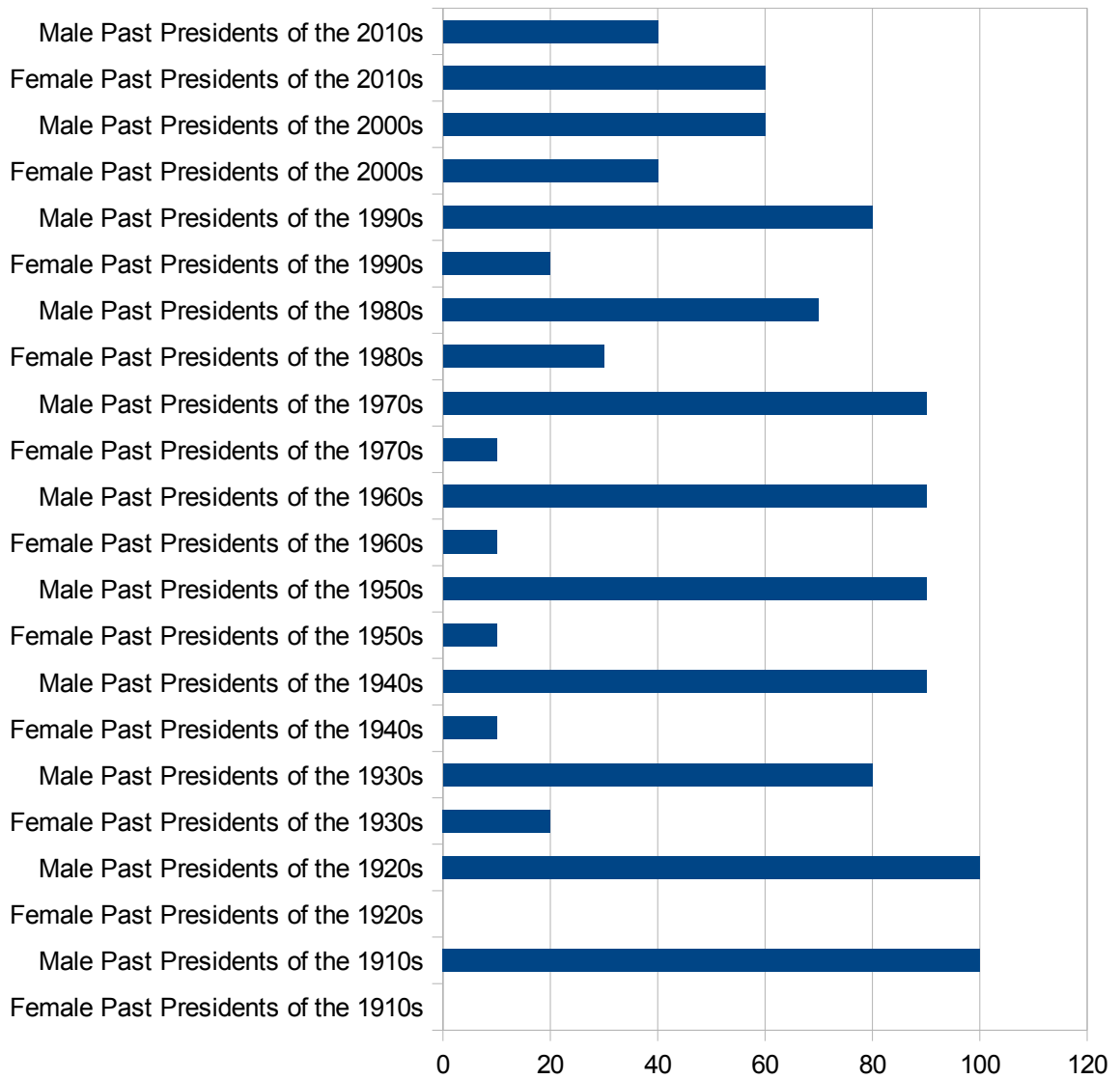
Figure 2:

Figure 2



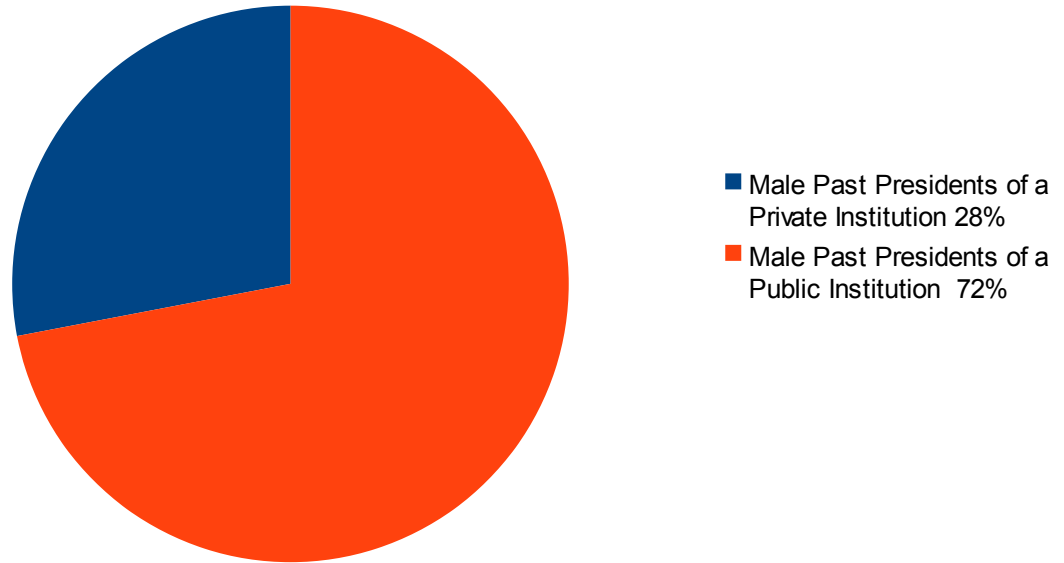
**Figure 3:**

Figure 3



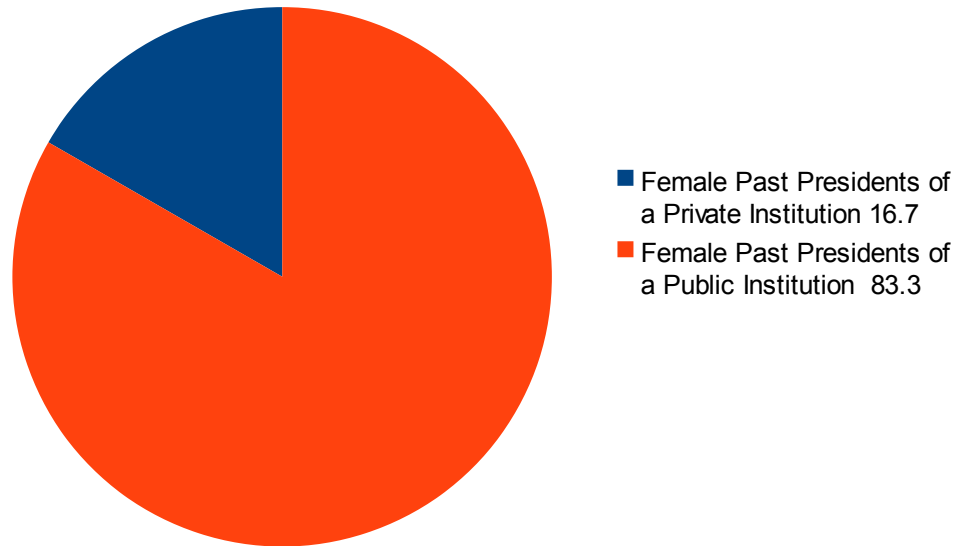
**Figure 4:**

Figure 4



**Figure 5:**

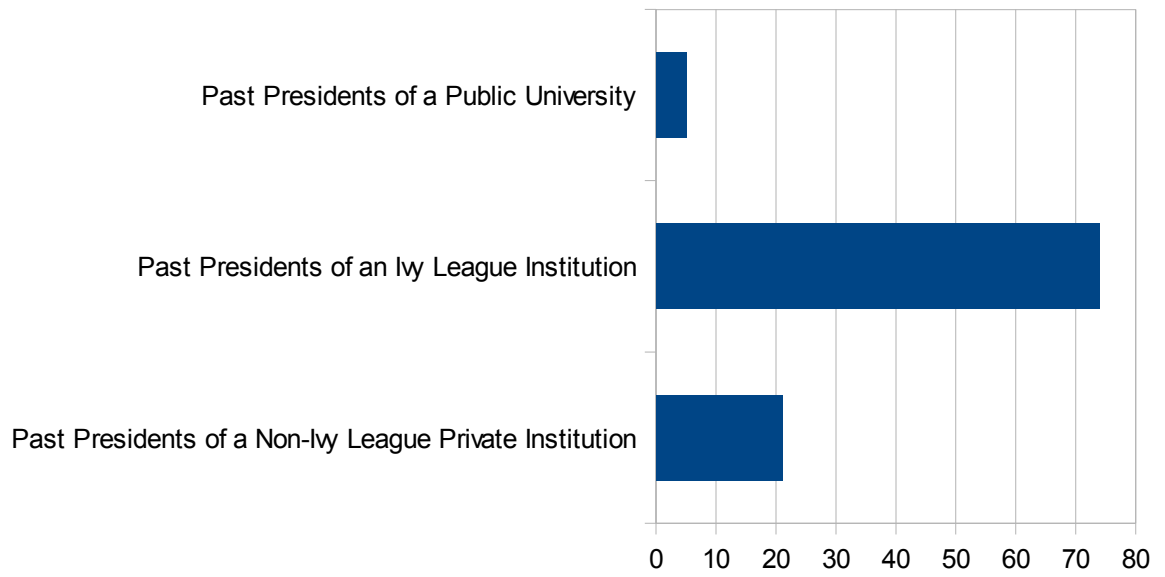
Figure 5





**Figure 6:**

Figure 6



## Appendix B

### Northwest Communication Association 2013 Program Clip:

(<http://www.northwestcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Revised.NWCAConferenceProgram-2013.pdf>, 2013)

**Session 1: 9:00-10:20**

**Bay 6**

#### **Organizational Communication: Culture, Theory & History**

Chair and Respondent: Terry Schleisman, Western State College

*Organizational Communication as Collegiate Soccer*  
Carson Mckole, Central Washington University

*Ex-Mormon Identity*  
Elise Fanney, University of Montana

*Gender and The Presidents of The National Communication Association: A quantitative study*  
Desalyn Graybeal, Eastern Washington University

*A Feminist (Re)Conceptualization of Nonprofit Organizing*  
Carissa K. Wilcox, Boise State University  
John G. McClellan, Boise State University

**National Communication Association 2014 Conference Clip:**

([http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Convention\\_and\\_Events/Annual\\_Convention/100th\\_Annual\\_Convention\\_2014/Friday.pdf](http://www.natcom.org/uploadedFiles/Convention_and_Events/Annual_Convention/100th_Annual_Convention_2014/Friday.pdf), 2014)

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202011	8:00 AM to 9:15 AM	Hilton Chicago	Int'l Ballroom North - 2nd Floor
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**Roundtable on Research in Progress 11: Studies in Organizations**

Sponsor: Roundtables on Research in Progress

Chair: J. Kevin Barge, Texas A&M University

"Coping with Stress through Friends: A Case Study of Nurses' Close Work Friendship and Supportive Communication" Jennifer Ptacek, Western Michigan University; Julie Apker, Western Michigan University

"Developing Research and Theory to Train Virtual Teams in Effective Communication" John Sherblom, University of Maine; Lynnette G. Leonard, American University in Bulgaria; Lesley A. Withers, Central Michigan University; Jeffrey S. Smith, Central Michigan University

"Stealing Time: Temporality Boundaries & Conflict of Entrepreneurs of Family Businesses" Krista Belanger, Loras College

"The organizational apology: An exploratory study of apologies and asking for forgiveness after a transgression" Elina Tachkova, Aarhus University

"The Women of the Past Who Paved the Path to Our Future" Desalyn Graybeal, Eastern Washington University

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

**Communications Instructor and Admissions Specialist** with 5 years of proven experience in Higher Education. Possess a comprehensive background in Admissions and Instructing. Possess extensive knowledge in Student Development and Curriculum Development. Member of numerous Professional Associations. Career supported by a **Master of Science Degree in Communications.**

### EDUCATION

- Masters of Science, Communications, 3.96 GPA, Eastern Washington University – 2015
- Bachelor of Arts, Communication Studies, Eastern Washington University – 2008

### WORK EXPERIENCE

- **CMST 200 Instructor**  
Fall 2013 – Spring 2015: Communication Studies - Eastern Washington University
- **Interim Program Coordinator**  
Summer 2014: Graduate Studies Department - Eastern Washington University
- **Admissions Specialist**  
Fall 2010 – Fall 2013: Admissions Department - ITT Technical Institute

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- **CMST 200 (Introduction to Communication Studies), Instructor, 4 credits**  
Fall 2013; Winter 2014; Spring 2014; Fall 2014; Winter 2015; Spring 2015 – Eastern Washington University
- **CMST 502 (Contemporary Trends in Communication Studies), Guest Lecturer, 5 credits**  
Winter 2014 – Eastern Washington University
- **CMST 208 (Mass Media and the Information Society), Assistant Instructor, 5 credits**  
Fall 2014, Winter 2015, Spring 2015 – Eastern Washington University
- **UNST 198 (TRIO Focus on College Success Strategies), Guest Lecturer, 1 credit**  
Fall 2014 – Eastern Washington University
- **CMST 330 (Integrated Methods for Communication Research), Assistant Instructor, 5 credits**  
Spring 2015 – Eastern Washington University

- **CMST 550 (Problems in Contemporary Public Communication), Intern Instructor, 5 Credits**  
Spring 2015 – Eastern Washington University

### ACCEPTED PUBLICATIONS

- Graybeal, D. (In Press). Communicating with Your Pet Chicken: Know What Your Pet Chickens Are Telling You. *Cluck, 1(1)*.
- (This is a quantitative study, conducted with IRB approval to explore interspecies communication.)
- Graybeal, D. (In Press). The Lifestyle of the Pet Chicken Owner. *Cluck, 1(1)*.
- (This is a qualitative study on the characteristics of the sub-culture of pet chicken owners.)

### CONFERENCE PUBLICATIONS

- Graybeal, D. (2015). Chair. *Saudi Arabian – American Communication: Integrating Cultures Via Education*. Northwest Communication Association 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Coeur d' Alene, ID.
- Graybeal, D. (2015). Chair and Respondent. *The Continuing Circle of Culture and Organizational Communication: The Impacts of One on the Other*. Northwest Communication Association 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Coeur d' Alene, ID.
- Graybeal, D. (2014). *The Women of the Past Who Opened the Doors to Our Future*. The National Communication Association 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention. Chicago, IL.
- Graybeal, D. (2014). Chair. *An Undergraduate's Guide to Graduate School: The Good, the Bad, and the Scary*. Northwest Communication Association 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Coeur d' Alene, ID.
- Graybeal, D. (2014). Chair. *Graduate School: Jumping Into the Deep*. EWU Creative Works Symposium. Cheney, WA.
- Graybeal, D. (2014). *The Interspecies Communication Practices of Pet Chicken Owners*. EWU Creative Works Symposium. Cheney, WA.
- Graybeal, D. (2013). *Gender and The Presidents of the National Communication Association: A Quantitative Study*. Northwest Communication Association 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference. Coeur d' Alene, ID.

### **ADDITIONAL EDITING, EVENT, AND PROPOSAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Edit of over 40 articles for the *Russian Journal of Communication* with Editor, Dr. Klyukanov (2013-3014).
- Spearhead the creation of the first annual Graduate Fair for the Northwest Communication Association (NWCA) with Dr. Chantrill, NWCA President (2014).
- Market the ICI Colloquium held at Eastern Washington University with Dr. Klyukanov (2014).
- Aid in the creation of the 'National Communication Association Internationalization Proposal' presented to President Steve Beebe with Philosophy of Communication Division Chair, Dr. Klyukanov (2013).
- Spearhead the marketing for Eastern Washington University's Masters of Science in Communication program at Northwest Communication Association Conferences and the National Conference on Undergraduate Research with Dr. Sinekopova and Dr. Chantrill (2014-2015).
- Act as Administrative Intern for Teaching and Conference Planning for CMST 550, Problems in Contemporary Public Communication and the 2015 Northwest Communication Association Conference (NWCA) with Dr. Cantrill, NWCA President (2015).

### **CERTIFICATIONS**

- iSate: Sensitive Information Certification – 2015
- Center for Women and Democracy Leadership Certification – 2014
- Flipped Classroom Certification – 2013

### **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS**

National Communication Association  
 Northwest Communication Association  
 Spokane Regional MarCom Association  
 Western States Communication Association  
 Center for Women and Democracy