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Stories of Love and Betrayal Dreams and Losses: the Patterns of Women's Lives in the Twentieth Century

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STORIES OF LOVE AND BETRAYAL, DREAMS AND LOSSES:  
THE PATTERNS OF WOMEN'S LIVES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF METAPHORS AND COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING AS ELEMENTS OF WOMEN'S COMMUNICATION IN THE FILM  
HOW TO MAKE AN AMERICAN QUILT

by

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ABSTRACT

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Advisor:  Dr. Sara E. Hayden

This study offers a rhetorical critique of the 1995 film How to Make an American Quilt. The author argues that the distinctive patterns of women's private communication patterns result from their experiences as oppressed individuals. This film attempts to represent women's unique communication patterns and illustrate how these patterns establish identification between women based on their shared experiences as women in America. These experiences are communicated through the utilization of metaphors as a rhetorical strategy and collaborative storytelling. Moreover, the author maintains that through the film, women's private communication is brought "public" and the audience is invited to identify with the women in the film. Specifically, the communication patterns displayed in this film engage in what is referred to as "consciousness-raising" and attempt to politicize women's experience and distinctive communication patterns.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Stories entertain us...create community...help us see through the eyes of other people...show us the consequences of our actions...educate our desires...help us dwell in place...help us dwell in time...help us deal with suffering, loss, and death...teach us how to be human...acknowledge the wonder and mystery of Creation (Sanders, 1991, p. 115-25).

Numerous scholars have argued that women express themselves in different ways than men. For example, Foss & Foss (1991) suggest that significant women's communication includes gardening, jewelry making, keeping a journal, letter writing and talking to their children. Furthermore, Mary Rose Williams (1990) suggests that quilting is a form of women's protest rhetoric. Women do not speak publicly as often as men and their communicative acts are not as accessible to the "public" record; however, it is important to appreciate women's private communication patterns and to understand that women's communication is meaningful and expressive (Foss & Foss, 1991). Through analysis of women's communicative acts, scholars will come to understand the significant role communication plays in the life of individual women and in the lives of all women.

Historically, feminine prescriptives, such as "a woman's place is in the home," have influenced the communicative patterns of women in the United States. While women's roles have changed over time, certain fundamental expectations have remained constant. Traditionally, girls have learned that being someone's wife, homemaking, and childbearing was to be their primary focus. For example, Barbara Welter (1976) looked at American literature from 1820-1860 targeted towards women.
She argued that during this period, women's prescribed roles included expectations of piety, purity, domesticity and submissiveness to men. Welter labeled these expectations the Cult of True Womanhood. Although nineteenth century women were considered "morally superior" (Cott, 1977), placing them in a leadership role, a woman's role in society was contradictory. Women were considered the "angels" of the household and "exceeded men in spiritual fervor and moral strength" (Woloch, 1991, p. 73). In their moral superior role women were considered pious and pure. Furthermore, women's "place was home, a haven away from amoral capitalism and dirty politics, where 'the heart was' where the spiritual and emotional needs of the husband and children were met by a ministering angel" (Campbell, 1989, p.10). However, this contradiction became apparent as women began to speak out on issues of moral reform (in particular prostitution and slavery). According to Campbell (1989), women who spoke in public, about the injustices of prostitution and slavery "lost their claims to purity and piety"(p. 10). This contradiction is part of what ultimately led to the woman's rights/women suffrage movement (Campbell, 1989) and the further development of women's public speaking and public activism.

Despite many women's efforts to speak publicly there has been and still is a great injustice towards women resulting from the lack of acknowledgment of women speakers (Campbell, 1989). A perusal of various speech anthologies (See, Andrews & Zarefsky, 1989; Johannesen, Allen, & Linkugal, 1988; Ryan, 1987; Safire, 1992) display rhetoric which tends to focus on the significant speeches given by "great,
[white] men" (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1991, p. 285). There have been efforts in recent years to include "great women speakers" in the rhetorical canon (see Campbell, 1989). However, it is important to realize that despite these efforts, many important female voices are left out (Spitzack & Carter, 1987; Biesecker, 1992). Historically, most American women did not have the ability or opportunity to speak in public; however, it is important to acknowledge that just because women weren't on the podium does not mean they did not communicate. Most American women spent the majority of their lives confined to a life in the private sphere, thus creating an atmosphere for the development of "women's communication." This communication was facilitated by their common experiences, in particular their oppression and subjection to men, most notably their husbands. I mean to articulate this communication as private communication and differing from public communication in that it is characterized as collaborative, supportive, empowering and its meaning is somewhat ambiguous (see Tannen, 1990; Coates, 1989; Maltz & Borker, 1987; Spender, 1985; Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983). Whereas, on the other hand, public (male) communication is typically defined as being produced by historical or noteworthy individuals (see Foss & Foss, 1991) and seeks to accomplish a specific goal. In this study I offer a rhetorical analysis and critique of the film, How to Make an American Quilt, which is representative of some women's communication patterns. In this chapter I will do five things. First, I offer an overview of the film; second, I provide

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*It is important to note that the term "great, [white] men" excludes men of various social classes.*
a historical/contextual analysis; third, I argue that a rhetorical analysis of this film sheds light on the issues relevant to the study and understanding of women's private communication; fourth, I discuss the theoretical frameworks which guide my analysis; and finally, I outline the subject matter of chapters two, three and four.

Overview of the Film

The film *How to Make an American Quilt* is set around the life of a Berkeley graduate student, Finn Bennett-Dodd, who is spending the summer at the home of her grandmother and great-aunt in California. Their house is a private refuge where Finn intends to finish her master's thesis and contemplate a marriage proposal from her boyfriend Sam. Finn is unsure if she is ready and completely willing to marry Sam. She is afraid that with marriage, she will lose her own sense of identity. The film involves seven women who are members of Finn's grandmother's quilting bee. As Finn works to finish her paper and ponders her decisions, the women of her grandmother's quilting bee confide to her their stories of both the joy and the heartbreak of love which shaped their own lives.

In the film a total of six stories are shared with Finn. The first is about her grandmother (Hyacinth) and great-aunt (Glady Jo). This story shares with Finn the experience of her grandmother's heart-wrenching loss of her husband and her subsequent affair with her sister's husband. The second story is about Sophia. Sophia was an impetuous girl who married at a young age, losing her "joie de vivre, winding up congealed in bitterness like a fly in aspic" (Powers, 1995, p.186). The third story revolves around Em. Em's story is about how she endured a life with a man who had
been continually unfaithful, and how she felt she had very few options and little control of her life and marriage. The fourth story is shared by Constance. Constance is slightly younger than the other women in the quilting bee. She shares the story of her somewhat empty marriage, her husband's death and her subsequent affair with Em's husband. The fifth story is shared by Anna. Anna tells the story of how she learned to quilt from her great-aunt and how she came to find love in the birth of her daughter, Marianna. Thus, the final story comes from Marianna. She shares with Finn her stories of love in Paris and the finding of her "soul-mate," a Parisian poet.

Contextual Analysis

**Historical Situation of Women (1940s and 1950s)**

Communication with others takes place when they understand what you're trying to get across to them...People only understand things in terms of their own experiences, which means you must get within their experiences (Alinsky, 1989, p. 81).

The film *How to Make an American Quilt* is a film about women's personal expectations and society's expectations of women in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. To fully understand the significance of the experiences of some American women and the film *How to Make an American Quilt*, it is necessary to place the story in historical context.

This section provides a detailed discussion of the situation of women in the 1940s and 1950s. It is necessary to examine the situation of these decades because this is the era in which the older women in the film matured and came of age. The various expectations and societal pressures of that time period affected the patterns of
women's communication. First, I explore expectations and the shift of attitudes towards women in the workplace and in the private sphere (in particular in their traditional role as homemaker, wife and mother) with the advent of World War II. Secondly, I examine how these changes affected various subgroups of women during and after the war.

What it means to be a woman, or gendered, is neither fixed nor undeterminably variable, but that interaction between how one defines oneself and the historical circumstances which encase the act of selfhood. The rooting of a "feminine character" in time and place allows us to see it as political, as subject to the social arrangements of the particular society (Farganis, 1986, p.80).

The twentieth century, in the words of historian William Chafe (1991), was a "paradox of change," for women. In the 1930s, the depression era relegated women to a life in the private sphere and "fostered a wave of reaction against any change in women's traditional role" (Chafe, 1991, p. 121). There were few jobs, and working women (primarily young, single women) were seen as competition to men who needed work to support their families. Thus, women were essentially prohibited from taking the higher paying and skilled jobs (of men) during this era (May, 1988; Rosenberg, 1992). However, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the United States' entry into World War II, public policy and attitude changed from a virtual refusal to allow women to work, to an all-out recruiting effort, altering women's roles and expected behavior dramatically (Chafe, 1991; May, 1988). However, it is important to acknowledge that the advent of the war did not begin the trend of women entering the workforce; "the war [merely] accelerated it" (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 130). In fact, women's workforce participation increased starting in 1900. For example, in 1900
women accounted for 18.1% of the labor force and by 1950 that figured had risen to 27.8% (Brownlee & Brownlee, 1976). Furthermore, women did enter the work force in the 1930s, despite the public sentiment against it. In many situations women needed to work simply because their husbands did not. More than women's workforce participation, it was the type of job offered to women that changed with the commencement of World War II. According to Rosenberg (1992): "World War II accomplished what no amount of political organizing could gain in the 1930s. It ended the Depression, and in doing so created such a critical labor shortage that women who had been barred for a decade from high paying jobs suddenly found themselves in demand" (p. 126). Furthermore, at least on a temporary basis, "the war caused a greater change in women's economic status and outlook than a prior half century of reform and rhetoric had been able to achieve" (Chafe, 1991, p. 121). The war also resulted in a change in the type of women that were recruited for wartime jobs. As mentioned above, the war experience provided some options of upward mobility in the workplace. However the new options were presented to married, middle age women and the face of the workforce changed significantly, from young, single women to middle age, married women (May 1988; Woloch, 1996; Chafe, 1991). This dramatic change occurred simply because the supply of young, single women available to work was rapidly decreasing. As such, "the most lasting and significant change wrought by the war...involved the age and marital status of the new recruits to the labor force" (Chafe, 1991, p. 129). Married women with children were willing and available to work primarily because their children were older and in school
Employers during the war years actively pursued and sought the employment of women. For example, the percentage of employers willing to consider women's applications for employment increased from 29% to 55%. As a result, by the end of World War II in 1945, the number of women working had increased 60% since the beginning of the decade (May, 1988). However, despite the overwhelming need for women to fill in the job vacancies left by men going to war, many men still opposed their wives' work in the "public sphere." A 1943 poll asked men if they would be willing to let their wives take a job in a war plant. Only 30% of men were in favor of sending their wives to work (Rosenberg, 1992). American women were in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, they were being told that it was their "patriotic duty" to work while the men were away (Matthews, 1987); on the other hand, there was a reinforcement of the belief that a woman's proper place was in the private sphere (Rosenberg, 1992).

Despite the recruiting efforts and the seemingly impressive increase of women workers during the war years, the traditional roles of women were reinforced, not altered, during the Second World War (Woloch, 1996). For many women marriage was still a primary concern and goal. Women in the early 1940s outnumbered men two to one (Rosenberg, 1992; Woloch, 1996) and therefore many women in the early 1940s rushed "to the altar out of fear they may not marry at all" (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 131). Overall the war era created an urgency for women workers, but did not alter the expected roles and behaviors of women. According to historian Karen Anderson, "the war itself reinforced the traditional beliefs about family life and woman's place"
(cited in Woloch, 1996, p. 303). This was due in part to the scarcity of men, as mentioned above, which increased the significance of men, especially to young women. Also, women's increased job opportunities increased the divorce rate and subsequently social anxiety that, with the new opportunities available to them, women would discontinue their domestic duties. According to Woloch (1996) the "breakdown of traditional channels of authority" (p. 303) left many to fear that the level of sexual promiscuity among women would increase; therefore, the government started a campaign to keep women from engaging in debauchery (Woloch, 1996).

These concerns brought about by the war were essential "in shaping Americans' values and behaviors in the postwar era" (Karen Anderson, cited in Woloch, 1996, p. 303) and "made family life, with all of its demands on women, seem more desirable than ever before" (Rosenberg, 1992, 137).

The years following World War II signaled a trend which showed a return to traditional roles for women, along with an increase in marriage and the birth rate. Many women in the post-war era longed for stability and security, and therefore welcomed a return to their traditional roles and expectations. Having lived through the depression as children and the war as young adults, many women desired a life that would provide stability and, in the words of Betty Friedan, an atmosphere that would allow them "to be 'fulfilled' as a woman as my mother was not" (cited in Rosenberg, 1992, p. 139).

Post-war women were inundated with prescriptive media messages detailing how to create a happy home environment. Women were told to "adapt to men's
interests and needs" and that in order to satisfy the needs of their men, women must put their own desires on hold (May, 1962). According to Matthews (1987), magazines "celebrated the woman willing to sacrifice her own ambition for the more important goal of her husband's career" (p. 208). Women married to war veterans, in particular, were instructed to be "sensitive" to the needs of war men because of the hardships that men suffered during the war. Women were told that men arriving home wanted pretty, kind girls like the "young girl [they] fell in love with" (May, 1988, p. 65). As a result, young men and women married, had families and moved into the newly developing suburban districts. Young women eagerly entered this new life, because they thought it would be "fulfilling." However, as it turned out, women's lives became a realm of isolation on two level. First, women were isolated from adult contact in the public world; and secondly, they were isolated from their husbands in the private sphere.

The new housing developments left women alone during the day to care for the children and take care of housework. These new suburban neighborhoods lacked the sense of community and togetherness that a home in the city provided. As Matthews (1987) claims, "There is not much positive to say about [suburbia] as a locale for the stay-at-home housewife. Suburban housing patterns reinforced a woman's isolation from most of the world of adults" (p. 212).

The physical isolation women complained of was enhanced by feelings of being a servant to her husband and even to her children (Matthews, 1987). Women also felt isolated within their own homes as well. Many women felt an increasing
amount of isolation from their husbands due to their husbands' lack of communication with their wives (May, 1988). One woman, reflecting on her communication patterns (or lack thereof) with her husband, states:

I get the impression that what he wants is just a good housekeeper to keep everything comfortable at home and peaceful. And he doesn't want to be disturbed by conversation. [Although we are] within speaking distance 50 or 60 hours a week, usually there is a book, newspaper or radio between us. Actually we think a lot alike on many subjects but we're really not very companionable about it -- at least we don't discuss things much between ourselves" (cited in May, 1988, p. 198).

As a result of the feelings of isolation and subordination to their husbands, women in the 1950s began to feel depressed, unhappy, and unfulfilled. This "problem that has no name," as suburban housewife turned feminist author Betty Friedan termed it, was enhanced by a sense of boredom at home. Many household functions moved outside the home in the early twentieth century and homemaking became "de-skilled [and] increasingly unsatisfying" for women (Matthews, 1987, p. 209). For example, the level of skill required for cooking decreased, freeing women to do other things, yet these other things were usually mindless activities such as chauffeuring their children. During this time period, women were alone and thought (by society and themselves) to be at fault for their own unhappiness. Women were told that a truly "feminine" woman willingly caters to the needs of other adults (in particular her husband). It was popular opinion that "the 'normal' feminine woman would be happy staying at home. One who was unhappy was, in fact, by definition, not normal" (Matthews, 1987, p. 211). However after the publication of Friedan's (1963, 1983) book The Feminine Mystique, "there began to be an appreciation that social arrangements could
receive some of the blame for female unhappiness" (Matthews, 1987, p. 219).

The Feminine Mystique, is one of several precipitating events that led to women's awareness of their oppression. This book was a landmark in that it identified the "problem that has no name" and targeted a very specific group of suburban, middle class housewives.

The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States. Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night -- she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question -- 'Is this all?" (Friedan, 1983, p.33)

The identification of this problem allowed middle class women to realize for the first time that they were not alone in their suffering and allowed them to establish a sense of identification with other women who had similar experiences of oppression. This identification based on being a woman politicized the experiences and the communication patterns distinctive to some American women (i.e. middle class, suburban women). In this way, The Feminine Mystique is an early example of consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising is a communication strategy uniquely adapted to uncover the oppression of some American women and legitimize their experiences. The politicized patterns of women's communication are referred to as consciousness-raising. Eisenstein (1983) claims: "A crucial function of consciousness-raising was to enable women to connect the personal with the political" (p. 36). Moreover, this communication style (which will be discussed in greater detail in forthcoming sections of this chapter) was enclosed in the private sphere and is
identified as collaborative, supportive and empowering (see Coates, 1989, Maltz & Borker, 1987; Spender, 1985). I maintain the metaphors and collaborative storytelling in the film How to Make an American Quilt brings women's distinctive communication styles public and engage in the process of consciousness-raising. First, the film attempts to represent the consciousness-raising process through the women's stories and talks with each other; and secondly, the film enacts the consciousness-raising process in that the audience members are encouraged to engage in the process themselves.

The African-American Women in America

While the film is predominantly about the lives of middle class, white American women, there are two African-American women in the film How to Make an American Quilt, and their heritage and history must be acknowledged in my analysis. According to Kessler-Harris (1982), historically black women have been employed outside the home more often than white women. For example, 75% of black women in the 1920s worked in "jobs that consisted of agricultural, labor, domestic service and laundry work" (p. 237). During the Depression, many blacks (and other minorities) were displaced by white women who were forced to find other employment to support their families (Kessler-Harris, 1982; Rosenberg, 1992). Those minorities that did work were kept at a rate of pay significantly lower than the average white woman employee (Rosenberg, 1992). Additionally, many industries refused to hire people of color during the Depression. Rosenberg (1992) claims (with sarcasm) that "90% of all blacks...continued to labor in agriculture or in some form of domestic
service when less than 40% of white women workers were employed in these remunerative occupations" (emphasis mine, p. 106). Many black women found themselves as heads of household during the Depression. Numerous black men were laid off from their jobs and had little chance of finding a new job, with so many white men out of work and looking for employment (Rosenberg, 1992).

During World War II, many black women took advantage of the openings in some of the lower status jobs and were able to recover some of the jobs they lost to white women during the Depression. However, the more skilled jobs available during the Second World War were harder to gain. Often when blacks were hired in the higher status, higher paying jobs in industries or department stores, they were kept out of sight (Rosenberg, 1992). Activists' efforts to ensure equal opportunities for black women were met with considerable resistance by white women and by employer discrimination. For example, many white women went on "hate strikes," and employers hired black women for the "dirtiest, hardest, most dangerous jobs" (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 129). Despite this resistance, many black women did take advantage of the "war-born opportunities" and with the assistance of organizations, such as the War Production Board and the U.S. Employment Service many black women were able to increase their positions in the workforce by the end of World War II (Kessler-Harris, 1982). Kessler-Harris (1982) states: "Their [black] movement into better jobs reflects not changed attitudes but their ability to take timely advantage" (p. 279) of the opportunities presented to them during the Second World War.
Following World War II many blacks escaped the confines of the agricultural jobs and domestic work. The boom in the big northern cities allowed blacks to make significantly more money in the unskilled labor jobs in the factories in cities such as the "promised land" of Chicago (Rosenberg, 1992). For many black women, the "feminine mystique" was not a problem. Black women during the 1950s were expected to combine work, marriage, and motherhood (Johnston, 1992). Despite the increase of post-war black women in industrial jobs, inequality continued, and they continued to earn significantly lower wages than their white counterparts. In addition to differing pay scales, black families were not included in the move to the suburbs. Suburbia was reserved for the middle class, white, Protestant families. According to May (1988):

Black Americans...existed on the fringes of the middle-class family ideal. Suburbia was not part of the black experience, since blacks were systematically excluded from postwar suburbs. In segregated neighborhoods, black people created rich and thriving subcultures, rooted in unique historical traditions (p. 13).

These historical traditions include crafts such as quilting. Otto (1991) states, "[black women] learned to speak with needle and thread long before society finally 'gave' [them] a voice" (p. 182). Historically black women did not have a public outlet to share their individual stories and experiences. However, black women learned various crafts as a result of their historical traditions. Their stories were communicated with their hands in the quilting process, as identified in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*. Anna, one of two black women in the film, learned how to quilt as a young girl and as Anna states, when asked how she learned to quilt, "all the women in my
family quilt." In her possession Anna has a quilt which has been handed down for three generations. It is a story quilt and is called The Life Before and tells the story of Anna's heritage. This quilt depicts the experiences of some African American women's journey and is a symbol of their struggles and various oppressions they faced as a result of their race. As Patricia Collins (1991) states in her book Black Feminist Thought, "black women place strong color and patterns next to one another and see the individual differences not as detracting from each piece but as enriching the whole quilt" (p. 215). In other words, the collaboration of various patches enhances the quilt, and although the patches are not symmetrical, when stitched together provide for a more accurate reflection of the experiences and oppressions of black women in America.

Women's Situation Today (1990s)

The typical woman [in the 1990s] ends up feeling like the character in a vaudeville act who spins plates for a living. No sooner does she get all of her plates spinning than the one marked "children" begins to wobble. She rushes over to deal with that problem, only to see that another plate, marked "demands at work," is gyrating wildly. Just as she gets that plate spinning again the plate marked "household maintenance" topples and breaks. Despite the valiant efforts of feminists, women are still far from achieving economic equality with men. And they still remain very much tied to their families, providing most of the social services that the family claim has always exacted and without which society could not function (Rosenberg, 1992, p.255).

An analysis of the film How to Make an American Quilt requires an exploration and discussion of contemporary issues concerning primarily white, middle class women in the United States in the 1990s. This is important because it has implications and a direct impact in developing an understanding of Finn, and why she was experiencing so much confusion within the various segments of her young adult
Women have made great strides in the professional realm in the past twenty years. Women today are lawyers, doctors, university professors and hold political office. However, according to Susan Faludi (1991) author of Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, many women are "still stuck in traditional 'female' jobs" such as cleaning ladies, waitresses, and secretaries (p. xiii).

Furthermore, Faludi (1991) states, in the late 1980s, "the trend story we all read about women's wages: Pay gap between the sexes closing! [However], the trend story we should have seen: It's back! The 50s pay gap."(p.363-364). Along with the freedom and liberation women have achieved over the past thirty years comes a certain amount of confusion and suffering. The expectations of society for women have changed in content, but not in force. Indeed, Naomi Wolf (1991) author of The Beauty Myth states that women today feel worse than their "unliberated grandmothers" and claims:

It is no accident that so many potentially powerful women feel this way. We are in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth. It is the modern version of a social reflex that has been in force since the Industrial Revolution. As women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it waned on its work of social control (p. 10).

A perusal of women's magazines in the 1990s display the "prescriptions" for a happy, successful life. Women must be smart, yet sensual; sexual, but not promiscuous; thin, but not too thin; get married, but not too soon, or too late. These prescriptions communicate and tell women that "behind the celebration of the American woman's victory, behind the news, cheerfully and endlessly repeated, that the struggle for
women's rights is won, another message flashes. You may be free and equal now, it says to women, but you have never been more miserable" (Faludi, p. ix, 1991).

Popular culture reflects the paradoxical message communicated to women in the 1990s. Many people believe that women today have "equal" opportunity in the workplace and therefore are able to make their own living. Furthermore, they claim that women who experience dissatisfaction in their lives are experiencing the symptoms of "too much feminism" and autonomy. Faludi (1991) is quite critical of those individuals who believe women are unhappy because of "too much feminism." She believes that women's progress in the work place and in economic terms is often challenged and set back are created by the media and other outlets of popular culture (e.g., films, television, magazines, and fashion and beauty industries).

Furthermore, not only are females forced to deal with the media's dissemination of "backlash" messages (Faludi, 1991), but "women remain disadvantaged in the labor force because of the persistence of traditional attitudes regarding women's primary sphere; the difficulty of combining motherhood and employment without an enlightened, coherent national family policy; the absence of institutional and community support for parenting; and discrimination based on sex" (Johnston, 1991, p. 285). Furthermore, women's wages are determined in part by their marital status and role as mother (Johnston, 1991). Married women and women with children have less earning potential than their male counterparts, and for women at the end of the twentieth century, the biggest "obstacle in achieving equality with men is their greater responsibility for children" (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 248).
In addition to the inequalities women face in the workplace, women continue to confront unequal division of responsibilities on the home front. According to Rosenberg (1992) even women who are working for pay "devote more time to domestic responsibility than do men" (p. 247). While many women in the 1990s have a partner to help them with the housework and child rearing, men are actually doing less housework than they did in 1960. Furthermore, in a "New York Times Poll 62% of women agreed with the following statement: 'Most men are willing to let women get ahead, but only if women do all the housework'" (Rosenberg, 1992, p. 249). While women have the opportunity to work outside the home, many women feel that society continues to view them as the primary caretaker of the home.

The popular perception for women in the 1990s is that the sky is the limit. However, as we approach the new millennium, women find themselves drowning from societal expectations and mixed messages. Thus, women today ultimately realize that more options do not release women from the burdens of the past, but create new and different burdens. According to A.R. Hochschild (1997), author of The Time Bind, women in the 1990s comprise half of the workforce and this is a trend that will not be reversed. Hochschild claims "the difficulty is not that women have entered the workforce but they have done so 'on male terms.' It would be fine for women to adopt the male model of work, to enjoy privileges formerly reserved for men, if this model were one of balance. But it is not" (1997, p. 247). It is out of balance, because even though women have managed to gain ground in the workforce, they continue to bear the burden of being responsible for the majority of the workload at
home (Hochschild, 1997). Furthermore, women who have careers as executives or managers are offered the "mommy track." This plan is one that offers flexibility but compels women to surrender their ambitions at work (Hochschild, 1997). According to the majority of Americans, "mothers still represent the heart and soul, the warmth and human kindness of family life, a brake on the forces of capitalism, and a protector of the family haven in what is still generally imagined as a heartless world. It is a woman's symbolic role to preserve time for personal bonds, not to spend money substituting for them" (Hochschild, 1997, p. 233). Moreover, some corporations and members of society believe it is acceptable for mothers to work only in a limited or modified form, because they should be willing to sacrifice their career ambitions in order to provide for their children. Yet, many women are ambivalent about cutting their hours at work, because society continues to send the message to women that the "'male' [corporate] world [is] more honorable than the 'female' world of home and kids" (Hochschild, 1997, p. 247).

American women in the 1990s undoubtedly have more advantages and opportunities than the women in the mid-twentieth century; however, their lives continue to be hindered by the public policy and expectations. According to Johnston (1992): "Women today are no longer expected to be the angels of the house, but they are disadvantaged because of the economic vulnerability created by divorce, sex-segregated jobs and a national policy that has not recognized the changing realities of the new American families (not family)" (p.296). For example, women who want a career often put family as a secondary priority and are criticized for doing so. On the
other hand, women who stay home with their children are criticized for not taking advantage of the freedom, opportunity (i.e. in the workplace) and independence offered to the modern American woman. Also, society punishes welfare mothers who choose (or would choose) to stay home with their children. These women are told there is no reason why they should not get out of the house and work. So, it becomes quite apparent that women in the 1990s struggle with contradictory expectations and continue to deal with the "backlash" and oppressions directed towards a sex, which in many cases is still second (Faludi, 1991).

Rationale for Study

In the book, Women Speak: The Eloquence of Women's Lives, Foss & Foss (1991) seek to communicate the importance of women's rhetoric with a focus on the "ordinariness" not the "noteworthiness" of communication. Women express themselves in different ways than men and although not as accessible, women's rhetoric is equally meaningful, expressive and empowering. Foss & Foss stress the importance of exploring women's communication "as a starting point to question and reconceptualize definitions, constructs, and theories of communication that were developed from the study of men's communication" (p. 11). Moreover, while I recognize that in the 1990s women do have the capability and opportunity to speak publicly, I argue that studying the implications of women's private communication will assist in the overall understanding of women's history and experience as oppressed individuals.
Women's storytelling may be about the "commonplace" events that occur throughout their lives; however, it is these ordinary occurrences that help other women come to a conclusion about what it means to be a woman, while negotiating what society expects of women in today's world. For example, these ordinary circumstances include such activities as: baking, gardening, journaling, letter writing, and quilting. In addition, it is important to look at the significance of the "collaborative nature of women's stories and how they unfold through the joint participation of the women" (Foss & Foss, 1991, p.90).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the communication strategies in the film How to Make an American Quilt, as they relate to white and black, middle class, heterosexual women coming of age in America and searching for identity. With the phrase "coming of age" I refer to the individual development and maturation of the women in the film. This study attempts to expand the realm of rhetoric by providing an analysis of the communication patterns in this film, bringing a much deserved look at the importance of ordinary communication, particularly storytelling, in the life of American women. The film How to Make an American Quilt, a story about seven women in a quilting bee who share their stories of love with a younger graduate student, is a representation of women's unique communication (as identified by Foss and Foss).

I have several reasons that provide rationale for my selection of this film as a representation of the communication patterns of a certain population of middle class American women. First, as is evident in the film and as discussed in the introduction,
significant communication does not have to be in the form of a speech, be communicated in the public sphere, be produced by noteworthy, historical, or male individuals, or be a finished product. The rhetorical canon is dominated with the speeches of "great men" (Foss, Foss & Trapp, 1991, p. 285). With this patriarchal establishment come certain frameworks for analysis grounded in elements of power and control, standards against which all future pieces of discourse will be judged. However, according to Foss & Foss (1991), if women's communication is interpreted according to these standards it is often "muted and misinterpreted producing inaccurate accounts of both women's communication and of women's lives" (p. 1).

My second reason for choosing this subject is that women's private communication patterns are distinctive and this film is representative of a wave of films that depict the stories of women. The women in these films seek to overcome the oppression they have experienced, bond with other women, and attempt to raise consciousness by sharing personal experiences and narratives. The 1990s have provided the American public with a new film genre often referred to as "chick flicks." Films such as The Joy Luck Club and Fried Green Tomatoes, along with How to Make an American Quilt, reflect a shift in Americans' perception of women that attempts to give society insight into the development of women's identity and justification of their unique experiences as women. These films portray women as central characters and portray how women bond through the storytelling process, thus creating an empowering and supportive environment that allows them to overcome various adversities in their lives. As a critic, I realize it is important to question the
accuracy of the representation of women's communication in this film. However, in support of my decision to use this film as a rhetorical artifact representing women's communication, I would argue that as a novel/film written, produced and directed by women it represents one way of understanding women's history, lives and communication patterns. Moreover, I realize that while this film cannot be fully representative of all women in America, it is a reflection of a particular group of predominantly white, middle class, heterosexual American women "coming of age" in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. Furthermore, the film How to Make an American Quilt serves as a universal vehicle that brings public the experiences and private communication patterns of some American women.

I have selected this film (and not the others mentioned above) for three specific reasons: first, it is a reliable depiction of the experiences of American women in that it was written, directed and produced entirely by women2; second, it illustrates the employment of metaphors, by the film makers and women storytellers alike, as a powerful rhetorical strategy; and third, it focuses on the collaborative nature of storytelling as supportive and empowering communication among women. It is a film about women coming to terms with their own identity. Specifically, the term identity refers to the women's ability to create a renewed sense of self to establish and explore their similarities to and differences from the other women in the quilting bee. I

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2 While the film The Joy Luck Club had American women as central characters (the daughters) the women (mothers) sharing their stories were Chinese. Moreover, while the film Fried Green Tomatoes is about American women, it is a single story, told by one individual Idgy Thorougood.
maintain that the realm of identification is centered on both the small group experience, as well as gaining strength more broadly at a movement level. The women in the quilting bee share their personal experiences and in the process of sharing their stories they reveal events in their lives that represent the varying degrees of oppression many predominantly white, middle class women in America. In other words, while this film is a depiction of small group storytelling, the identification process is operating on a much grander scale. That is identification goes beyond the small group of women in Grasse, California, but rather it extends its sphere to encompass the lives and experiences of some American women in their journey through the twentieth century. While the women's communication is distinctly private, the stories function to raise the consciousness of women, thus encouraging women to realize that many of their feelings were a result of society's expected roles and behaviors for women. Furthermore, through the process of sharing stories these women were able to identify with Finn by relating their experiences. This collaborative storytelling reveals the problems with their lives, marriages, and love, thus establishing identification with Finn. This identification is created in the patterns of the women's private communication which create a supportive environment and empowers Finn to overcome personal adversities and make some critical decision in her own life.

Accordingly, I believe that it is important to acknowledge, explore and study the private communication of women as rhetoric. I feel that the communicative patterns of women hold significant meaning in the lives of women and therefore
deserve special consideration. (see Foss & Foss, 1991; Foss & Griffin, 1995, 1992; Biesecker, 1992). As Foss & Foss (1991) state, "when speeches are privileged over other forms of communication, women's communication tends to be excluded from consideration" (p.17).

*How to Make an American Quilt* is a film that privileges the distinctive characteristics of women's lives and their unique communication patterns. These particular characteristics of women's talk are identified in the work of socio-linguistic scholars. Thus, the following section will provide a discussion of three areas: first I provide an overview of the socio-linguistic literature on communication in all-women groups; second, I provide a brief discussion of consciousness-raising as a particular form of women's communication; and lastly, I acknowledge and address the debate currently underway in the communication field concerning the issue of women's private communication, characterized as empowering and based on personal experiences, *as* rhetoric.

Women's Unique Communication Patterns

**A Socio-linguistic Perspective**

The socio-linguistic literature in the communication field discusses in great detail the descriptive characteristics that make women's private communication patterns "unique." In particular, communication in all-women's groups is referred to as collaborative, supportive and empowering. This is supported in the work of scholars such as Jennifer Coates. Coates (1986) claims that in all-women groups, women tend
to share details about their personal lives that reveal aspects of their lives in relation to their "relationships" and "feelings" (p. 151). Furthermore, Coates (1986) states, all-women groups tend to be structured collaboratively and consciously seek to include all women, equally, in the discussion. All-women's groups tend to be less competitive, have varying levels of leadership with no one person in a dominant or controlling role (Coates, 1986; Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983). This collaborative effort allows women the opportunity to voice their experiences that are important to them and "when women come together and talk they have the opportunity to compare notes, collectively to 'see' the limitations of patriarchal reality and what they say -- and -- do can be subversive of that reality" (Spender, 1985, p. 108). Additionally, women tend to offer stories and information situated in context of what has preceded their offering. In other words, women are sensitive to the situation and "tend to see conversation as an opportunity to discuss problems, share experiences, and offer reassurance and advice" (Coates, 1986, p. 153). This is further supported by Kalcik (1975) who claims that in sharing their personal stories, women "attempt to tie them [other women] into the discussion" (p. 6) or when it is situationally appropriate and the narratives are "modified to fit the situation and emphasize certain points...to make a point or identify with others" (p. 8). Thus, this style of collaborative storytelling creates a type of talk that possesses the distinct element of "harmony" (Maltz & Borker, 1982, p. 211).

Additionally, this type of communication, as argued by several scholars, is empowering and supportive. Kalcik (1975) states, "the fact that [these] stories...were a group product may have its roots in women's sense of powerlessness and their
realization that they need to work together " (p. 11). Deborah Tannen (1990) claims that in all-women's groups, women tend to match each other's stories. I tell you my story, you tell me yours, in the process, women bond and establish community. Women's communication is characterized by the sharing of personal experiences and functions to establish a sense of community and to present a united effort.

Establishing a sense of community, then, is a source of empowerment and support for women (Tannen, 1990; Spender, 1985, Thorne, Kramarae & Henley, 1983). Women are empowered in that as they communicate with one another they begin to realize that many of their experiences and feelings of oppression are the result of "values and expectations of...society" (Wood, 1997, p. 60). By talking with other women, who value each other as "talkers" and "listeners" (Spender, 1985, p. 111) all-women groups provide a supportive environment based on shared experiences, which in turn empowers women to work through their personal crises. Women's speech, according to Maltz & Borker (1982) is "interactional," meaning it is informal, social and collective; thus creating "relationships which are characterized as a form of 'support' and 'closeness'" (p. 210). According to Becker (1987) separate worlds are brought together and "as time spent together continues and each woman brings important parts of her life into the friendship a world of shared meaning and understanding is created" (cited in Wood, 1997, p. 222). The process of collaborative storytelling in all-women groups contributes to the consciousness-raising of each individual woman and illumination (through their own communication) of women's experience. Moreover, the study of distinct characteristics of women's private talk reveals that "women seem
to initiate changes above the level of social awareness: such changes tend to be in the
direction of the prestige norm" (Coates, 1986, p. 147). By examining women's
language and communication patterns I am able to focus specifically on how the
women in the film use collaborative narration as a means to empower and support
each other, Finn, and female viewing audience.

Consciousness-Raising

A discussion of consciousness-raising as one form of women's distinctive
communication is necessary in that consciousness-raising is directly linked to women's
particular situation as oppressed individuals. A more detailed discussion of this issue
will be outlined in subsequent chapters. My intent in this section is to identify
consciousness-raising as a communication strategy uniquely adapted to the situation of
women.

Consciousness-raising, as identified by Campbell (1974), is "a mode of
interaction or a type of rhetorical transactions uniquely adapted to the rhetorical
problem of feminist advocacy" (p. 78). Moreover, Campbell claims that
communication between and among women "must transcend alienation to create
'sisterhood,' modify self concepts to create a sense of autonomy, and speak to women
in terms of the private, concrete, individual experience, because women have little, if
any, publicly shared experience" (p. 78). While women today have many more
opportunities to speak publicly and advance professionally, socially and politically,
women in the 1940s and 1950s, as represented in How to Make an American Quilt and
described in the historical section of this chapter, were confined to a life in the private
sphere (with the exception of World War II). Contradictions ranging from being barred from jobs in the 1930s, actively recruited for work in the 1940s, and then sent back to the home in the late 1940s and 1950s show the discrepancy in roles and the oppression of women by those in power. In sum, depending on the situation, women were oppressed by the expected roles and behaviors dictated by societal, political, and cultural norms. In the process of communicating their personal stories and experiences, women (many of whom endured varying levels of oppression) were able to develop an understanding that these personal feelings of oppression stem from larger (i.e. political, cultural, and societal) expectations and institutions. Therefore, it seems that women's private communication was significant for the lives of the women in the group; however, it raises an important question: Is this private communication as a form rhetoric? This is the debate I will confront in the following section.

Women's Private Communication as Rhetoric

I realize that by claiming women's private communication, such as quilting and storytelling, to be rhetoric I enter into the debate currently under discussion in the communication field. In this section, I will briefly outline the debate, specifically looking at the perspectives of some scholars (see Foss, Griffin, & Foss, 1997; Biesecker, 1992; Foss & Foss, 1991) who argue that women's private communication must be considered rhetorical, while other scholars (see Condit, 1997; Campbell, 1992) argue that the inclusion of women's private communication into the rhetorical canon diverts attention from the artistry and eloquence of great women speakers. Subsequently, I will place myself in terms of the debate, in justification of my own
study of women's private communication as rhetoric.

Celeste Condit (1997), in her article, "In praise of eloquent diversity: Gender and rhetoric as public persuasion," claims that dichotomy feminist theorists ("anti-rhetors" as she refers to them), in the communication field, portray oratory as being "manifested as an appreciation of the power and eloquence of human speech." (p. 95). Furthermore, she claims that these "anti-rhetors" seek to redefine rhetoric as "patriarchal" and "as a coercive, male oriented practice," and are moving toward a study of "communication," [which is] understood as a feminine activity integrally associated with everyday life and egalitarianism" (p. 95). The problem that Condit (1997) sees with this is that it "eschews" the traditional forms of social change that have occurred in this country, in the second wave of the women's movement (i.e. Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights). Moreover, Condit maintains that Foss, Griffin, & Foss (1997) and Foss (1996) devalue or minimize the importance these public persuasion campaign efforts to enact social change. In contrast, Condit (1997) offers an alternative view which she refers to as a Gender Diversity Perspective. This perspective encourages a view of rhetoric that goes beyond a form of discourse that is (and has been) predominantly "male" and, in her essay, she provides some examples to illustrate her claim that rhetoric has been, and continues to be "ambiguous" in terms of gender. Condit provides two examples. First, she mentions Dame/Harlot Rhetoric which "often appeared above an arch, [and depicts] a busty women bedecked in pearls;" Secondly, she states that "the decoration of words associated with rhetoric often has been despised by manly men as effeminate, and preachers and politicians
have often struggled with the sense that, compared to the military, the endeavors of their careers...were effete, and lacking in manliness" (p. 102). In other words, Condit uses these examples in support of her *Gender Diversity Perspective* because of the historical construction of male equals violence and women equals persuasion. Thus, men who spoke publicly were essentially "feminized" and the message of the image in the Dame/Harlot Rhetoric as a form of public persuasion, was essentially female. Thus, according to Condit (1997), females have been contributing to the rhetorical canon and, furthermore, she claims "that the simplistic portrayal of the history of rhetoric offered by dichotomy feminists does not provide a sufficient account of the complexities of the gendering of rhetoric, and there is much material ready to repay readings of this history that focus on the diversity of gender" (p. 103).

Accordingly, then, a *Gender Diversity Perspective* re-examines women's rhetoric as a means to construct their gender rather than their (women's) rhetoric being the outcome of their "constructed essentialists" gender (Condit, 1997). Furthermore, Condit (1997) believes that the communication field should focus on studies that explore the "ways in which women in the present/future reconstruct the range of genderings through their speaking (and thereby reconstruct rhetorical style itself)" (emphasis hers, p. 104). Additionally, she claims that while the mass media contributes, largely, to the problem of the patriarchy of rhetoric by giving preferential treatment to those in power (white, heterosexual males), this cannot be overcome with the "valorization of private communication" (p. 108), which she maintains as the intent of dichotomy feminists.
Foss, Griffin, & Foss (1997) in response to Condit's article offer a view they label as a *Feminist Reconstructionist Perspective*. In their essay, entitled "Transforming rhetoric through feminist reconstruction: A response to the gender diversity perspective," Foss, et al. (1997) argue, not simply to "valorize" private communication but rather to "begin theorizing new ways of communicating, that enact the values we envision as characteristic of this new society" (p. 119). This "new society" refers to a culture that is non-dominating and rather than being based on "multiple genders" is grounded in "cultural values" (Foss, Griffin & Foss, 1997). Furthermore, Foss et al. (1997), acknowledge that their specific approach to rhetoric does emphasize the specific concerns of women, but they will "not apologize for such talk" (p. 120). They claim, that their goal is to "celebrate women's communication, diversity, eloquence and power because these constructs generally have been neglected in communication scholarship. [We] talk about women because many other scholars do not" (p. 121).

Foss et al. (1997), again, refute Condit's claim (in their words) that "eloquence in rhetorical skill determines individual value" (p. 124). Foss et al. (1997), in their study are concerned with and wish to give voice to women's experience (see Biesecker, 1992; Foss & Foss, 1991; Foss & Griffin, 1992, 1995) because the "traditional conception" of eloquence provides recognition of communication only when people achieve in "spectacular" and noteworthy ways. Accordingly, they argue that everyone possesses the innate ability to speak and all people possess the qualities of value and self worth, which do "not have to be earned, acquired, or proven by a
particular position in a hierarchy" (Foss & Griffin, 1992, p. 334).

Furthermore, and along with Foss et al. (1997), Biesecker (1992) argues it is necessary to acknowledge various types of women's communication (i.e. private, collective communication such as quilting), because the women's rhetorical canon looks at artifacts which are not necessarily "traditional" pieces of rhetoric. Moreover, Biesecker expresses concern with the work of Karlyn K. Campbell (see Campbell, 1989). Biesecker fears that Campbell's efforts support of the notion of individualism will lead to "female tokenism" (Biesecker, 1992, p. 141), thus continuing the exclusion of many women's voices from the canon. This, Biesecker (1992) argues, will "serve, albeit, unwittingly, to perpetuate the damaging fiction that most women simply do not have what it takes to play the public, rhetorical game" (p. 142). In other words, by admitting only significant and predetermined eloquent works into the canon, Campbell's work serves to "affirm certain voices and discount others" (p. 143). By focusing on the individual and individual women speakers, the field of rhetoric does not effectively "challenge the underlying [patriarchical] logic of canon formation and the uses to which it has been put that have written the rhetorical contributions of collective women into oblivion" (p. 144). Biesecker, then, seeks to turn away from a focus on the individual and encourages a recognition of the differences between and among women as displayed in their collective rhetorical contributions.

In this study, in support of Foss, Griffin, and Foss' Feminist-Reconstructionist Perspective and Biesecker's concern of individualism and "female tokenism," I seek to challenge the traditional notion of rhetoric and provide an alternative to the domination
and competition typical of traditional rhetorical construction with a discussion of a style of rhetoric that is accepting, empowering, and supportive. I maintain that the rhetorical strategies in the film *How to Make an American Quilt* "provide options for alternative means of communication to those practiced by the dominant group and inscribed in communication theory. Of particular interest to [me] are strategies used by women and others who are oppressed -- strategies that lead to new conceptions of personal and social change through communication" (Foss, Griffin, & Foss 1997, p. 131). Additionally, in this study it is not my attempt to claim that this type of communication or the perspective I take is superior to any other. I simply offer a viewpoint and an analysis of the private communication patterns in this particular film as distinctive to and representative of predominantly white, heterosexual women in America. The film is worthy of study because it illuminates the experiences of a particular group of American women and highlights the ordinary events in women's lives that make significant contributions to their personal identity. Furthermore, it provides recognition and acknowledges the "eloquence of women's lives" (Foss & Foss, 1991). Finally, as Downey (1997) states, "because *gender constructs rhetoric* and the concomitant social inequities result from patriarchy, then rhetorical theory must be reconstituted to promote the inclusion and legitimization of women" (emphasis hers, p. 138). The idea to examine women's private communication as collaborative, empowering and identity forming is not a new one; however, in this study and outlined in the following section I claim that my analysis of metaphors and collaborative storytelling, as women's communication, contributes in the advancement
and modification of Walter Fisher's narrative theory.

Theoretical Issues

Narrative Theory

Stories...are the way we tell people who we are and they are the way we express what we are...'Character' is so hard to define. Maybe it's in stories like these where character is defined: You want to know who I really am? I am the person who tells a story like this one (Jackson, 1997, p. 13).

Walter Fisher (1984) presented a new theory for the evaluation of human communication and proposed a reconceptualization of humankind as "homo-narrans." According to Fisher, this new paradigm, the narrative theory, ultimately claims that humans are storytelling creatures and that all communication is, essentially, a story. In other words, narrative is an "umbrella" term that ultimately defines all human communication. Fisher's theory illuminates artifacts in many important ways, yet at the same time individual artifact's use of storytelling or narrative advance Fisher's theory in significant ways. One such artifact is the film How to make an American Quilt.

According to Fisher (1984) the power of the narrative form rests in the fact that it is a theory that has "relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of the imagination"(p. 2). Furthermore, and relevant to my study, Fisher argues that "narrative rationality is inimical to elitist politics" (p. 9). In other words the storytelling offers an alternative communication construct which provides all humans the ability to be rational, based on the "logic of good reason."

In my own analysis of human communication I would not go as far as Fisher,
as to say that all communication is in narrative form or can be examined through a narrative lens. Rather, I concur with Rowland’s (1987) claim that

the problem...is that narrative [according to Fisher] has been defined so broadly that the term loses much of its explanatory power. At one level, Fisher is clearly correct in labeling his work on narrative as a metaparadigm. His definition of narrative subsumes all other forms of human communication; it is tautologically true. Yet if all forms of discourse are narrative, it is hard to see how the paradigm aids the critic in describing or evaluating a particular work (emphasis mine, p. 265).

Despite this criticism of Fisher’s theory however, I maintain that narrative theory does prove useful. Specifically, I use the term narrative as one mode of discourse, which, when used by individuals (in particular women) allows for identification between the rhetor (storyteller) and her audience. Furthermore, I argue narrative proves to be a useful model to develop a better understanding of particular modes of discourse, such as women’s private communication (storytelling) patterns. An analysis of women’s communication patterns, through a narrative lens, allows for an accurate interpretation of women’s experiences and how, specifically, these experiences and feeling of oppressions were a direct result of their situation as women in America. In the process of sharing personal stories, many suburban, predominantly white, middle class women in America were able to create a sense of identification with each other and create a sense of renewed sense of identity. Moreover, I maintain the narrative theory does not apply to all forms of human communication; however, it does apply to some communication constructs. Therefore, studying narrative is useful because the sharing of stories provides humans (i.e. women) the opportunity to gain insight into the worlds of others and ultimately to learn from the experiences of others (Hollihan & Riley,
Furthermore, narrative proves useful because it assists making sense of humans' experiences and it presents a new form of argumentation, based on the "logic of good reasons." Fisher (1989) refers to narration as communication rooted in time and space. It invites listeners to interpret its meaning and assess its value for their own lives. Narration is defined as the "symbolic actions--words and/or deeds--that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" (Fisher, 1989, p. 58). Furthermore, he argues that the narrative theory is a "synthesis of two traditional strands in the history of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme and the literary, aesthetic theme" (Fisher, 1984, p. 2).

Fisher (1984) does not discount the use of logic; rather, he would claim it is only one of the factors to determine the consistency of a narrative. Human communication is a process of competing stories which, when shared, appeal to human beings' logic of "good reasons." Stories have the ability to appeal to humans' individual experiences and, thus, the storyteller relies on the audience's interest in the subject and their ability "to identify with the characters to produce persuasion" (Rowland, 1987, p. 266). The logic of good reasons refers to one's ability to interpret, make sense of and evaluate a story based on shared experience. In other words, the narrative theory puts a spin on the term "rationality." Narrative rationality is based on "identification rather than deliberation" (Fisher, 1984, p. 9). Stories are deemed rational when the narrator is aware of the story's narrative probability. That is the storyteller produces and shares a story that in compatible and consistent with the
beliefs held by the audience. Probability refers to the shape of the story and asks the question "what constitutes a coherent story?" Coherence refers to the story's consistency. Does the story possess the structural integrity to formulate a logical argument?

Another element of rationality includes the test of narrative fidelity. Fidelity is concerned with the question: Does the story represent what we know to be true in our lives? (Fisher, 1984). Thus, "the narrative [theory] does not deny reason and rationality; it reconstitutes them, making them amenable to all forms of human communication" (1984, p. 2). As such, narrative theory suggests that humans have the ability to judge and determine what is just and true (what constitutes a "good" story) based on their personal experience (Fisher, 1989). The test of fidelity should provide "a way of relating a 'truth' about the human condition" (Fisher, 1984, p.6). In other words, narrative fidelity includes the elements within a story that reflect and appeal to a society's values.

The abundant amount of scholarly research on the narrative theory would seem to maintain the importance of narrative in human communication and to our culture (Rowland, 1987). Furthermore, narrative theory has proven to be an indisputable and significant influence in the varied disciplines of communication research. (For example, see McGee & Nelson, 1985; Farrell, 1985; Hyde, 1985; Fisher & Filloy 1982; Bennett, 1978; Bennet & Edelman, 1985; Hollihan & Riley, 1987; Hollihan, Riley & Baaske, 1985; Lewis, 1987; and Lucaites & Condit, 1985).

Communication scholars from a variety of communication fields have analyzed
texts using narrative rationality. However, these studies predominately focus on a more linear, merely one dimensional, aspect of storytelling, providing an analysis of only one story and its significant contribution to human communication. For example, the rhetoric of Ronald Reagan has been deemed a great story. (See Fisher, 1982, 1987, 1989; Lewis, 1987). Reagan's rhetoric was that of a great "storyteller" and his story allowed him to "direct his policies...and inspire his audience" to act according to his ideals (Lewis, 1987, p. 281). These studies reflect an individualistic analysis of storytelling, with a concentration on a particular story communicated in the rhetoric of one individual. This claim is further supported in the analysis of Hitler's story, Mein Kampf (See McGuire, 1977). This study (published before Fisher's Narrative) examined the power of a single storyteller: Adolf Hitler. Once again, these pieces of narrative criticism examine the effects of a singular story, not a collaborative effort among various individuals. Additionally, other stories are told to evoke a particular response. For example, narratives of lawyers arguing a court case are seeking a response of either guilty or not guilty. According to Jackson (1997): "professional dreamweavers - like trial lawyers and politicians and men of the cloth - spin stories deliberately and consciously, seeking to manipulate us" (p. 277). These examples show how scholars have analyzed storytelling and demonstrate the manner in which Fisher's theory has been used to discuss narrative as utilized by single speakers, with a specific purpose or goal in mind (e.g., Lewis, 1989).

The purpose of this study is to offer a modified version of narrative theory, because Fisher's philosophy does not comprehensively explain the storytelling in the
film *How to Make an American Quilt.* Thus, a rhetorical critique of this specific artifact extends the narrative theory by focusing on the collective nature of the stories shared by the women in the film. Foss and Foss (1991) argue, it is important to look at the significance of the "collaborative nature of women's stories and how they unfold through the joint participation of women" (p. 90). The patchwork of women's stories stitched together to create *How to Make an American Quilt* illustrates the power of collaborative storytelling as supportive, identity forming and empowering communication among women. In this study, I examine these stories in terms of narrative fidelity and probability. This collaboration of stories, I submit, present a "rational" argument in their depiction of women's oppression and choices in their experiences in loving relationships. First, this collection of stories provide an argument with "structural integrity" and the ability "relate the truth" about the condition of women; second, these stories establish identification among women, both in the film and with the female viewing audience. This identification comes into significance on three levels. The stories told by the women encourage identification with each other, with Finn, and the film's viewing audience.

As stated above, the stories in *How to Make an American Quilt* are told in collaboration, thus making their meaning somewhat more ambiguous; whereas, a single storyteller's meaning will be more explicit and straightforward. In other words, the women of the quilting bee, come together to negotiate, through their shared stories, what it means (or has meant) to be a woman in America. Fisher (1984) claims that the narrative theory provides a new role for the expert, as "counselor" rather than
"master storyteller." What this implies is that the women in the quilting bee do not claim to tell the "Truth" for all women, but rather they share their individual stories and "truths," in a collaborative effort to communicate their experiences as women in America. When offered collectively the women's separate stories emerge into a semi-coherent whole. And, while there are some inconsistencies and gaps among the collection of narratives, the stories offer some level of comprehension and recognition of what it means to be a woman in America. This sharing of personal stories is intended to raise the consciousness of Finn and communicate to her that she is not alone in her struggles and feelings of oppression. The women in the quilting bee do not conclude their personal stories with a direct and specific call to action for Finn. Rather the women finish their stories with a certain amount of obscurity, thus leaving the ultimate interpretation and application of the story to Finn and the viewing audience, to interpret and come up with their own judgements.

This is accomplished as the characters in the film tell their stories about the experiences of their lives. It is these experiences which present the "truth" as women have known it. Based on their values, beliefs and experiences, women (Finn and the audience/reader) are able to interpret the stories and consider their significance and meaning in their own lives. The employment of storytelling as a rhetorical strategy in the film How to Make an American Quilt allows for identification among women, both in and out of the film, by appealing to shared values, shared experiences and "relating a 'truth' about the [condition of women]" (Fisher, 1984, p.60). Thus, the collaborative storytelling in the film encourages women to compare their personal experiences and
values to those being related by the individual storytellers, and through a recognition of these similarities and differences both Finn and the women viewing the film are invited to come to terms with aspects of their own identity. Furthermore, this study seeks to modify Fisher's theory by using the narrative as a method of analyzing the distinctive characteristics of collaborative storytelling.

**Metaphors and Identification**

Connected with the narrative theory and central to my analysis is the utilization of metaphors as a rhetorical strategy and Kenneth Burke's theory of identification. I believe these theories, along with the narrative theory provide a solid basis for analyzing the communication patterns of women's private communication as depicted in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*.

Rhetorical scholars dating back to Aristotle have discussed the utilization of the metaphor as a strategic device in rhetorical discourse. "In a metaphor, the qualities of one object are carried over or transferred to another object, with the result that the second object receives the qualities of the first object" (Sullivan, 1985, p. 4). Metaphors assist in determining the relationship between certain elements, and "modern theorists tend to regard the metaphor as the motive to equate" (Brummett, 1982, p.1). Aristotle states that a metaphor must encourage people to engage in reflective thinking, in other words the "figure must arouse curiosity" (Golden, Berquist & Coleman, 1984, p. 43).

The women in the film employ numerous metaphors to tell the stories of their lives. In addition, the film makers utilize metaphors in order to tie women's disparate
stories into a semi-coherent whole. Thus, I feel it is necessary to examine the strategic uses of the metaphor in the film, *How to Make an American Quilt*, to develop a complete understanding of the influence of culture on the women's lives in the film. According to Hastings (1970), metaphors are a main element in one's perception of reality. Moreover, he states, "we can say that every culture's view of reality is a metaphorical view which is structured in various frameworks of perception, values, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors (p. 187), [and] a culture itself is a broad metaphor, and with a culture, subcultures have their own metaphors for relating to aspects of experience" (p.194). The metaphors utilized in the film, such as the quilt, women and nature, and water and rock, appeal to the subculture and experiences of American women. In its appeal to cultural values the metaphor, itself, is essentially an argument: referring to what Fisher deemed as the "logic of good reason."

Metaphors in the film function by altering one's existing perceptions of reality (seeing an event from a new point of view), thus allowing for persuasion. Metaphors are able to perform this function because of the "dramatic substance" that two objects may share.

Looking for the dramatic substance of discourse would help to tell us how the rhetoric urges its audience to view its subject matter. In looking for dramatic substance, the critic is looking for what is often not made explicit...And for that reason, we may be better enabled to make ethical judgements about commitments that rhetoric urges upon us, about friends, enemies and point of view that a given discourse would have us accept. (Brummett, 1982, p. 3).

Metaphors allow humans to see a new reality by, in essence, appealing to aspects of our personal experiences which we hold to be true. The film *How to Make an*
American Quilt employs a myriad of metaphors which ultimately contribute to the development of the women's stories, allow the stories to function persuasively and establish a sense of identity among some women. The utilization of metaphors makes the argument and message of the film vivid and provides the audience (Finn and the audience at large) with material that allows them to identify with the characters in the story and encourages the audience to make meaning of the events they encounter in life. The film How to Make an American Quilt convincingly uses the metaphor as a rhetorical strategy in its attempt to empower women. The metaphors invite women to take control of their feelings of oppression by exemplifying women's experiences as a consequence of society's expectations. Furthermore, the metaphors in the film enable women to validate their experiences as middle class women in America by illustrating in vivid fashion specific adversities, burdens, and hardships (e.g., marriage, reproduction, motherhood) of women in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. The employment of metaphors allow women to see, that many of their personal experiences are shared with other women and ultimately brings women together in an effort to raise consciousness of what they have in common. First, the story and its metaphors are essential in considering the influence this film had on popular culture; second, it is equally important to look at the film internally to see what impact the individual stories and metaphors of the women in the quilting bee had on the life of Finn.

The rhetorical functioning of metaphor and the rhetoric of identification I maintain are inherently linked in this study. I believe that the utilization of metaphors
in this film is not only essential, but parallel, to the process of identification among some women, including the quilting bee women, Finn, and the female viewing audience. That is, the function of the metaphors is to convey the dramatic substance from which identification is derived. For example, metaphors bring together two items which on the surface appear dissimilar. Coinciding, then, with the rhetorical function of metaphors, the process of identification encourages the people, who may feel they are different, to overcome their distinctions and focus on what they have in common and what experiences they share. Thus, the identification process is twofold. First, the metaphors function to establish identification between women and various elements of nature, by focusing on their similar characteristics. Secondly, the metaphors operate to unify women with various backgrounds and degrees of oppression, which serve as obstacles to identification. However, the employment of metaphors in this film function to unite women based on the similar experience of being a female in America.

Kenneth Burke's theory of identification will, in addition to the narrative theory and metaphors, guide my analysis of the film and the patterns of women's private communication. Burke (1969) claims, "the individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification" (p.39). This section outlines the elements of Burke's theory that apply to my study. According to Burke:
You persuade a [wo]man only insofar as you can talk his[her] language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his[her]. (emphasis theirs, cited in Foss, Foss & Trapp, 1991, p. 174)

Burke claims that we form our "selves" or our "identities" based on substance we share with those we associate with. Burke defines the term "consubstantial" as the ultimate form of identification, and states "two entities are united in substance through common ideas, attitudes, material possessions, or other properties, they are consubstantial...shared substance constitutes an identification between an individual and some property or person" (cited in Foss et al., 1991, p.174). Ultimately then, one can only persuade another person, insofar as they have some degree of shared substance or consubstantiality to create the necessary identification.

Burke recognizes four way in which identification functions. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between identification as a transcendent goal, identification as "cooperative" rhetoric, identification as strategy, and identification as outcome of interaction. First, identification, according to Burke, can be defined as a transcendent goal, in which an individual goes beyond the realm of her experience and what she knows. For example, persons who have seen themselves as different are able to overcome those distinctions and empower themselves to "stress and enhance similarities" they see between themselves and something or someone else (Cheney, 1985, p.116 ). A second explanation of identification according to Burke is: identification as "cooperative" rhetoric. One instance would be war-time rhetoric when "identification is created among opposing entities on the basis of a common enemy" (cited in Foss et al., 1991, p.175). For example, one group of individuals (i.e. 
group A), who may ordinarily not be united are unified in a cooperative effort against an opposing group (B). Third, Burke proposes an interpretation of identification as strategy. He states:

The major power of identification derives from situations in which it goes unnoticed. My prime example is the word 'we,' as when the statement that 'we' are at war includes under the same head soldiers who are getting killed and speculators who hope to make a killing in war stocks (cited in, Cheney, 1985, p. 116).

Essentially, then, the most powerful manner, in which identification is established is strategic and occurs on the subliminal level. Burke states that, in cigarette advertisements for example, "identification is used to persuade at the unconscious level" For example, this concept is based on the assumed "we," as in "We all believe..." (Foss et al., 1991, p.175). Lastly, identification is an outcome of interaction. Humans, as the "symbol using animal"(Burke, 1968, p. 16) utilize language as their way to interact and speak to each other. Thus, by speaking in a shared language (and language is a symbol) human beings are able to establish identification with each other. Burke states: "Identification can...be an end, as when people earnestly yearn to identify themselves with some group or other. Here they...may be acting upon themselves to this end (emphasis added, cited in Cheney, 1985, p. 102-103).

I feel Burke's discussion of identification and consubstantiality is relevant to my criticism and analysis of the film How to Make an American Quilt. The stories and metaphors in the film employ two of the four explanations of identification provided by Burke. First, Finn and women viewing the film are invited to transcend
and identify themselves with the women in the quilting bee. For example, whereas Finn may have initially seen herself as different from the older quilting bee women, in terms of age and race the employment of metaphors and stories enable her to see the similarities between herself and the older women. Second, identification is an outcome of interaction between the women in the quilting bee, Finn, and the female viewing audience. Identification is an outcome of the communicative efforts of the women in the quilting bee and the film makers. They successfully employ a collection of stories and metaphors that function to establish a certain degree of "shared substance," by conveying, in a shared language, the experiences of some women's lives in America. Burke (1969) stated in his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*: "Only those voices from without are effective which can speak in the language of a voice within" (p. 39).

Human beings have a natural desire to have a sense of who they are and where they fit into the world. One of the struggles people face, as evident in *How to Make an American Quilt*, is the attempt to establish a relationship and merge into "a couple" while still leaving a little room for oneself, and allowing one's unique qualities to remain a vital part of one's identity. Rowland (1987) states, "through stories, average people can put into perspective the problems of the world. Stories produce identification which, in many cases, leads to persuasion (p. 268). Furthermore, "identification...allows not only for the rhetor's influence on the persuadee, but also for the persuadee's self-persuasion and rhetor's effect on herself" (Cheney, 1985, p. 93). In relation to this perspective, my analysis of the identification produced by the
storytelling in the film focuses on three issues: First, how the seven women are able to establish identification with Finn and ultimately persuade her to accept the love of a man in her life; second, how Finn was able to establish a sense of identity, upon hearing the various stories, which enables her own self-persuasion to marry Sam; and third, how the individual women are able to reconcile their past dreams with their present day reality, thus creating a renewed sense of identity.

Again, as mentioned above, the rhetorical function of metaphors is inherently connected to the rhetoric of identification in my analysis of the film *How to Make an American Quilt*. The metaphors, employed by the film makers and quilting bee women, function to represent the experiences of oppression of some American women. Furthermore, the metaphors attempt to associate individuals who on the surface appear dissimilar. Thus, the metaphors and storytelling, serve to create an atmosphere of shared substance or identification between the quilting bee women, Finn, and the female viewing audience is based on their distinct experiences as women in America.

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter One, I have argued that the rhetoric in the film *How to Make an American Quilt* depicts the degree to which storytelling serves as an empowering agent, thus allowing women the power to establish their own identity and identification with each other. However, it is the collaborative effort of the seven stories, that speak in a voice that connects with the language of the inner voice in Finn and the female audience. Ultimately this creates an atmosphere of "shared substance," and allows for
identification and empowerment. This claim, then, will be illustrated in Chapters Two and Three. Chapter Two offers a criticism that concentrates on the utilization of metaphor and the ability of metaphors to create identification. I argue the metaphors, as a rhetorical strategy of the film makers and the women storytellers, create an atmosphere of identification for women, both in the film and in the larger audience.

In the third chapter I provide a critical analysis of the narratives styles in the film and the distinctive style of women's communication. Furthermore, it will discuss the implications of the use of narratives and collaborative storytelling. I explore the strategies the collaborative storytelling and how these stories, when told in a collective fashion, foster an environment which empowers and establishes identification not only between the women in the quilting bee, but with Finn and female viewing audience.

In the fourth chapter I conclude with a reiteration of my thesis and my findings. Additionally, I provide a discussion of the implications of my study, in the area of narrative theory and metaphors as a rhetorical strategy as they relate to women's distinctive communication patterns.

I mentioned in the opening of this chapter that women, historically, have been confined to a life predominantly in the private sphere. This private life, which consisted of cooking, cleaning, child rearing, and isolation created a distinctive environment which fostered what has become known as "women's communication." Women in their "all-women's groups" come together to share their personal stories of oppression. In the process women become aware that they were not alone in their feeling. The feelings of isolation and frustration are shared by many women. I feel
the film *How to Make an American Quilt* reflects the unique communicative patterns of women which arose from their experiences as oppressed individuals. This film allows for the display of women's experience and provides women with a voice to share their stories and speak to the inner voice of some other individual women who have had similar experiences. In this study through an analysis of the film *How to Make an American Quilt* as it represents women's communication, I hope to bring public the private but significant voices of some American women.
CHAPTER TWO
ANALYSIS OF METAPHORS

In the twentieth century you may feel that all those things that went before have little to do with you, that you are made immune to the past by the present day: All those dead people and conflicts and ideas—why, they are only stories we tell one another. History and politics and conflict and rebellion and family and betrayal. Think about it (Otto, 1991, p. 14).

In the film *How to Make an American Quilt* both the film makers and the women employ numerous powerful metaphors in their attempt to create vivid and powerful stories, which represents women's distinctive communication. This unique communication style is identified in Foss & Foss' (1991) book *Women Speak: The Eloquence of Women's Lives*. In their book, Tamara L. Burk asserts there are several characteristic qualities of women's stories that make them unique communication events. Women's stories tend not to meet the male-defined criteria for a "good story." They may not have a point, and they may not be told in chronological order. Rather, they often begin with a complicating action and go in various time orders to explain it. In addition, they may not be about "remarkable" events but rather about commonplace events in women's lives (cited in Foss & Foss, 1991, p. 90).

In other words, women in collaborative storytelling do not adhere to the androcentric notion that knowledge is gained by strict, hierarchical standards. Rather, women in their unique storytelling patterns privilege sharing personal experience as a measure of learning and ultimately coming to develop a thorough understanding of what it means to be a woman in America.

Thus the collaboration of stories and metaphors are symbolic and function to establish a sense of identity between the elder women in the film and Finn, as well as
with the female viewing audience.

Accordingly, Foss and Foss (1991) have

consciously sought to expand the scope of significant women communicators beyond those active in movements or involved political activities by privileging ordinariness over noteworthiness. We believe the communication of all individuals is significant in its impact on their own lives and the lives of their families, friends, co-workers, and communities and that we can understand much about how communication works in the world by studying the communicative acts of ordinary people. We believe this is particularly true of women, who often assume the responsibility for communication in a wide range of interpersonal contexts (p. 5).

Women's storytelling may be about the "commonplace" events that occur throughout their lives; however, it is these ordinary occurrences that help other women come to a conclusion about what it means to be a woman, while negotiating what society expects of women in today's world. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter One, it is important to look at the significance of the "collaborative nature of women's stories, [and metaphors] and how they unfold through the joint participation of the women" (Foss and Foss, 1991, p.90).

The film *How to Make an American Quilt* is an excellent illustration of collaborative storytelling as persuasive and empowering communication among women. It is a film about women coming to terms with their own identity. Through the process of sharing stories these "average" women are able to identify with Finn by relating their perspective regarding the problems with their lives, marriages, and love, which ultimately persuades and empowers them to make some critical decisions in their own lives.

I maintain Kenneth Burke's discussion of identification and consubstantiality is
relevant to my criticism and analysis of the metaphors in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*. The women in the film are able to persuade and empower Finn by creating an atmosphere of "shared substance" and experience, and communicating their experiences with a shared language based on their lives as women growing up in America. For the women in quilting bee and the film makers to persuade and create identification with Finn and the viewing audience, it is essential they communicate with "images and ideas that are formative" (Burke, 1969, p. 39). To accomplish this the women in the bee, and the film makers, alike, employ various metaphorical strategies, that are impressionable in the lives of women in America. Thus the telling of stories and strategic use of metaphors will, ultimately, lead to identification and persuasion.

In my analysis, it is necessary to address and analyze the significance of the metaphors presented as essential elements in the film, utilized by the film makers and interwoven into the stories shared by the older women. An analysis of these metaphors assists in the overall understanding of the situation of women, both in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. In this chapter, it is my goal to provide an in-depth analysis of the metaphors and to reflect on how they contribute to the overall message of the film and the individual story/person they are attached to. Furthermore, I seek to examine these metaphors with a critical lens in order to discover not only what the metaphors are in the film, but how specifically these metaphors function in the overall development of the film.

In the film *How to Make an American Quilt* the quilt, itself, serves as the
central metaphor for the film. Each patch of the quilt is unique, yet the individual pieces cannot stand alone. As such, the quilt is a symbol of the connection of individuality and connections that defines the characters’ lives. However, I argue that there are two other metaphors in this film that warrant further attention. These metaphors include: nature and the high summer season and the water/rock images. The nature and high summer season metaphors suggest a comparison between the elder women and various aspects of the natural environment, in particular trees. The high summer season also implies a relationship between Finn and the notion of productivity and reproduction. All the metaphors work together to encourage an understanding of life as always changing and evolving. Each of the metaphors mentioned above contributes significantly to the development of the story. The three metaphors I have chosen for this analysis focus on emotional and visual elements to encourage the women in the film, as well as the female audience at large, to participate in the process of self reflection in order to validate their own lives and create a sense of renewed identity.

The metaphors and stories create identification in three ways: First, they illustrate the expected roles and behaviors expected of women in the 1940s and 1950s. Second, they denounce the "fairy tale" notion of marriage for Finn. This is communicated to Finn in the women's stories as they communicate their experiences of imperfect love and not so "happily ever after" marriages. This is evident in the film because six of the seven women have stories that have unhappy endings. The women never found their Prince Charmings who whisked them off to a life that was
"happily ever after."

In this chapter, then, I will consider the intrinsic functions of the film including the rhetorical strategies of metaphor, along with the structure and purpose of these metaphors. I maintain that the metaphors function in the following ways. First, as Aristotle claimed metaphors bring together elements which may, on the surface appear disparate. This in turn, encourages individuals to engage in some type of reflective thinking that can ultimately change their perception of reality (Golden, et al., 1984). Furthermore, metaphors appeal to the values of our established cultures and subcultures and what we hold to be true, while simultaneously expanding our existing perception thus creating an argument which allows persuasion. As Hastings (1970) wrote: "For a person from one culture [generation] to view the world from the point of view of another culture [generation] will, as with other metaphorical shifts, make [her] aware of other possible perceptions, feeling and responses" (p. 187). However, persuasion cannot occur without a certain degree of consubstantiality or "shared substance." These metaphors, I maintain are representative of the condition of a particular group of women in America and function to associate two items which on the surface appear dissimilar. Furthermore, they specifically function to establish identification among these particular women, along with Finn and the female viewing audience, who have experienced or are currently experiencing similar burdens and/or hardships.

Historical Background

As mentioned in Chapter One the 1940s and 1950s created a paradoxical
situation for many women in the United States. In the 1940s women were actively recruited for many jobs, left vacant by men going off to fight in World War II. However, despite the need for women to work in these typical "male" jobs, and women's ability to do so, societal expectations of the proper role for women were reinforced. The war did more to reinforce the belief that a woman's proper place was in the home. Therefore, following the Second World War many women left their wartime jobs for the stability and security of married life and moved into the new suburban housing developments. This new lifestyle forced many women into a life of isolation from other adults in society and more specifically from their husbands.

Through their stories, the women in the film explore some of the oppression they have experienced. The metaphors in the film How to Make an American Quilt represent these expectations and struggles of women in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. Moreover, because of the similarities in the situation of these different generations of women, through the telling of their stories the women create an atmosphere of identification. It is necessary that the women establish identification to come to the realization that they are not alone in their feelings of oppression and frustrations with life. By sharing stories with Finn, the women communicate "how [they] have been shaped by society's expectations of [them], how [they] share problems and fears and how [they] can help each other (Payne, 1971, p. 99). In other words, this quilting bee provides the women the opportunity to come together in an effort bring to consciousness "a realization of what they shared" (Payne, 1971, p. 100).

Identification between the women in the film is established in two ways. First,
the film makers\textsuperscript{3} utilize various metaphors in the opening scenes of the film to establish the tone and premise of the film. This establishes identification by communicating through metaphors the experiences and the oppression that women have encountered in the past. The film makers effectively employ several metaphors in the opening scenes of the film. This assists in establishing the premise of the story at the beginning of the film. Second, the women in the quilting bee, as narrators of their individual stories, speak with voices that identify various metaphors which in turn are represented in the film, both visually and verbally. The women's employment of metaphors, thus, allows for identification with Finn and the viewing audience.

Metaphors as a Rhetorical Strategy

The Quilt as the Central Metaphor

The primary metaphor in the film is the quilt itself. The quilt, designed by the women, in the Grasse Quilting Bee, is intended to be a wedding gift for Finn. What the quilt symbolizes are the various stories of the individual women, represented in distinct patches depicting how the women came to find love in their own lives. The quilt is a symbol for both diversity and unity: It unifies the experiences and women with a sense of community and commonality.

Women's communication, as I identified in Chapter One, is significant in what and how it contributes to the identification and unification of women. The quilt itself

\textsuperscript{3}The film \textit{How to Make an American Quilt} was written, created, and produced by women
is a metaphor representing the collaborative effort of the seven individual women, who are a part of the quilting bee. This quilt depicts women's communication styles, how women communicate and establish relationships in a "weblike," manner, with horizontal communication patterns. These horizontal patterns and the creation of the quilt allow the women to intertwine the diverse elements in their lives. Foss & Foss (1991) argued that significant communication is not necessarily created by a single individual. Additionally, Foss & Foss assert:

To focus on one individual as the creator of a text often is inaccurate in that it ignores the contributions of those around the communicator. More accurate[ly], we believe, [that] in women's lives, [there] is a view of 'author-ity' as a process of collaboration that emerges in interaction with others (p. 12).

For example, in the development of their book, Women Speak, Foss and Foss (1991) stress the collaborative effort of all the women involved. They point out that all the women that contributed to the development of each anthology (e.g., quilting, baking, gardening) are listed in alphabetical order, and "that the woman whose name is listed first should not be thought of as the primary contributor" (p.12). In other words, the experiences of all women are significant and must be recognized as an equal contribution to the whole and without each woman's experiences the anthology would be incomplete.

The claim made by Foss & Foss (1991) is exemplified by the various experiences of women depicted in the film How to Make an American Quilt. All the patches of the quilt are essential, and according to quilting bee member Anna: "the challenge with a quilt like this is each of these squares is made by different hands. So
[we] have to bring all of the different squares together in a balanced and harmonious design." Similarly, this is what Finn must do in her life. As she listens to the women's various stories she must bring together her own experiences with those of the women and create a new pattern: the pattern of her life. As Carol Gilligan (1992) wrote: "women learn to value connections with others and at least in part define themselves through their relationships with others." Again, listening to the women's personal stories Finn and the female viewing audience are able to establish identification with the women in the quilting bee, thus establishing a degree of "shared substance" and identification. This in turn allows them to see that they are not alone in their struggles and feelings of oppression.

Consciousness-Raising

A first assumption of consciousness-raising was that what women had to say about the details of their lives, about their personal experiences and histories, mattered, it had significance, and above all, it had validity (Eisenstein, 1983, p. 37).

The quilt also represents the journey of American women. The elder women in the quilting bee matured in decades in which they were afforded few choices. Similarly, quilters were denied mainstream access to display their art, much like the voices, dreams, and desires of women in the 1940 and 1950s that went unheard and unanswered. The emergence of quilting as a genuine art form parallels the efforts of women in their attempts to be perceived as human beings with capabilities beyond the home (e.g., wife and motherhood). In other words, the quilt as a communication form was not recognized for its true worth, nor were the women of the 1940s and 1950s. The quilt in the film represents the efforts of different women with various
experiences of life and love; however, they come together to create a piece of art to give to Finn.

The process of creating the quilt and the communication patterns it symbolizes are similar to the efforts of the women and issues in the second wave of the Women's Rights Movements, more specifically: consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising arose from what is referred to as "the problem that has no name" as identified by one of the "founding feminists" Betty Friedan (1963). In her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan claims that women in the 1950s and 1960s struggle in their effort to reconcile their own dreams and desires with the traditional notions of femininity. Moreover, Campbell (1974) states the following as the goal of the consciousness-raising group:

> to make the personal political: to create awareness (through shared experience) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared, a result of their position as women (p. 79).

Beginning in the 1960s, consciousness-raising emerged as a way for women to engage in reflective discourse and share their experiences of oppression. According to Frye (1993) "in consciousness raising women engage in a communication that has aptly been called 'hearing into speech'. It is speaking unspoken facts and feelings unburying the data of our lives." (p. 107). Thus, the sharing of individual experience uncovers the common elements in the women's experiences and this collaboration of women sharing stories (in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*) allows for them to create new "webs of meaning" (Frye, 1993, p. 107). This process is significant in the lives of women because it allows them to come to the realization that the struggles they
face and the oppressions they experience are not something "personal" or something they have done wrong, but rather they are "political" and a result of their situation as women in America. Thus, through consciousness-raising "women discover that similar 'anomalies' occur in most of their lives and that those 'anomalies' taken together form a pattern, or many patterns" (Frye, 1973, p. 104).

Moreover, in giving credit to women's voices we open up new ways of understanding women's experience and come to the realization that this way of learning may not meet the traditional criteria of how awareness is created (Frye, 1973). In this effort, then, of meaning-making it is necessary to acknowledge that "the challenge...is to make intelligible patterns that define, in broad strokes, the realities of women's experience while at the same time accepting that individual women may well experience these patterns differently" (Hayden, 1997, p. 133). Thus, "the challenge with a quilt like this is that [we] need to bring all these elements together in a balanced and harmonious design." In other words, the quilt must incorporate the various experiences, views and wisdom of women and create a single and balanced organizational pattern which accurately depicts the experiences of some American women in the twentieth century.

I maintain, in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*, the women engage in the process of consciousness-raising through their collaborative storytelling, which is represented in the quilt. The quilt is significant in that it invites women to reaffirm their identity based on their experiences as women in America. Furthermore, the quilt is a gift to Finn and encourages her reflect on and learn from the experiences of the
women in the quilting bee. The quilt is a tool in the consciousness-raising process which assists in establishment of identification of the women.

Accordingly, I argue, the quilt itself is a metaphor which represents women's distinctive style of communication. As mentioned in Chapter One women's communication styles in all-women's groups is characterized as collective, empowering, and supportive (See Coates, 1986, 1989; Wood, 1997, Spender, 1981, 1985; Tannen, 1990; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Kalcik, 1973; Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983). Therefore, the quilt as a metaphor of women's communication depicts the collaborative, empowering and supportive characteristics of women's interaction. This is supported in the fact that the quilt is a collective effort among women in which each patch of the quilt is significant and contributes, equally, to the whole. As Kalcik (1975) states, women's narratives are "modified to fit the situation and emphasize certain points...to make a point or identify with each other" (p. 8). This is parallel to the quilting process; each piece of the quilt must be crafted in such a way that is in harmony with the other patches and keeps the quilt in balance. As such, the quilt is an accurate metaphor which depicts the experiences and oppression of some women in America. Accordingly, then, Finn and the female audience are able to identify with the women in the film because the quilt is a collection of stories that depict the lives of women in America, which reflect oppression, tragedies, love, and betrayal. The quilt as the central metaphor represents what Burke refers to as identification as an outcome of interaction. First, the quilt is the end result of the sewing together of the individual patches. Each piece has its own identity, yet this
identity is the result of its interaction with the other patches. Similarly to the quilt, women are able reflect on their identity. Women are able to realize that their lives are intertwined and the outcome of their shared stories creates identification among some American women. The stories represented in this quilt reflect many women's changing roles and expectations. Furthermore, the outcome of collaborative storytelling is the creation of empowering messages that function to overcome the distinctions between women and raise the consciousness of Finn and the female audience.

Finn and the female audience are personally invited to participate in the consciousness-raising process. Although Finn and the audience do not participate by sharing their stories, they are encouraged to consider the creative options presented to them and to contemplate the impact of the women's experiences in their own lives. This process allows each woman to benefit from this collaboration of stories represented in the quilt in several ways. First, the quilt depicts stories of mistake and experience which, in turn, allows women (Finn and the viewing audience) to recognize the perils and the opportunities that they may face, as well as the many options available to women today. This allows women to benefit because the stories serve as compelling lessons, which, in turn, assist women, specifically Finn, to better understand the existing roles and expectations of women in the 1990s. This is accomplished, in the film, by compelling Finn to reflect on her existing relationship and her inability to commit to Sam. The women communicate their mistakes, uncertainties, hardships and expectations of love to Finn in a collaborative effort which
serves to unite women based on their experiences as women in the twentieth century. These women have survived various ordeals, ranging from disappointing love, unfaithful husbands, single motherhood, and relinquishing a "soul mate." Hearing their stories of strength and survival provides Finn with a feeling of strength and empowerment.

Additionally, the women's stories in the film *How to Make an American Quilt* invite the female viewing audience to participate in the identification process. This effort to establish identification with the audience occurs at the outset of the film. When Finn arrives at her grandmother and great-aunt's home for the summer, she provides a brief introduction of each woman in the quilting bee. She states:

The day Sam drove me to my great-aunt Glady's house, the Grasse Quilting Bee was there setting up to make another quilt. They always have met here at aunt Glady's. My grandmother moved in after she lost her husband; they [Hy and Glady] have been fighting ever since...Everyone defers to Anna who is the master quilter...she use to work for my great-aunt Glady...My least favorite is Sophia when I was a little girl always use to make me cry...Then there is Em who is married to an artist and for some reason that makes everyone feels sorry for her...I've always idealized Anna's daughter Marianna, she had lived in Paris which made her very mysterious to me when I was a kid.

Finn's introduction and brief discussion of the quilting bee women (with the exception of Constance) presents the women as ordinary and average individuals who have diverse experiences. These diverse and vague descriptions allow many women in the audience to relate and identify with the women in the film.

The women in the quilting bee are able to interact with some American women by speaking about experiences that, while not completely analogous, are common to many women. These experiences include marriage, infidelity, having children, and
love affairs. Indeed, the women's collaborative discussions of their loving relationships, encourage other middle class American women to relate to these experiences. This collection of stories the seven quilting bee members are able to establish a certain degree of shared substance between themselves and other American women. Campbell (1973) writes "women are divided from one another by almost all the usual sources of identification--age, education, income, ethnic origin, even geography" (p. 78). This is evident in the relation between the women in the film and the vast array of women who were able to see the film. However, the women viewing this film are able to identify with the women in the film based simply on their experiences of being a woman. For example, Constance and Finn are separated, most obviously, by age and they are separated in many ways from the potential female viewers. However, they attempt to establish some degree of identification, with each other and the audience, in their conversation about the challenges of womanhood.

Constance: I think the hardest part about being a woman is having women friends.

Finn: I think the hardest part about being a woman is not being able to just be friends with a man.

Constance: That's true.

Through personal disclosure regarding the difficulties of being female, Finn and Constance appeal to the experiences of some women. Moreover, their conversation invites the viewing audience to participate in the story and creates an environment of identification based on being female.
Women/ Nature/High Summer Metaphors

The film makers employ a metaphor which provides a comparison between women and nature: in particular women's reference to trees and the concept of women's worth residing in their ability to produce. One of the first scenes in this film opens with an aerial shot of the orange groves surrounding the home of Finn's great-aunt. It is the high summer season in California: a time of fecundity, fruitfulness and productivity. Finn is, in essence, equated with the orange groves in Grasse, California. Again, Finn, a feminist herself, has returned to the home of her grandmother and great-aunt, a place she in which she spent a considerable amount of time as a young girl. She has come back to the private refuge of their home to contemplate a marriage proposal and finish writing her master's thesis. These groves are now producing fruit for harvest, just as she is expected to produce a finished thesis, yet she is also feeling a constant external pressure to produce children. Finn is seen, by the quilting bee women, as the fruitful daughter who has reached an age in which she is not only capable of reproducing, but expected to as well. The definite association between Finn and reproduction is made evident in the opening scenes of the film. First, the film is set in the high summer season; and second, Finn is a twenty-six year old engaged woman. This is relevant because it implies that Finn is not only physically mature enough to have children, but with an impending marriage children seem to be the logical next step in her life as a woman. The expectation that women of a certain age will reproduce is supported in the film when Finn arrives at her grandmother's house. Finn is asked by Em, one of the quilting bee members, "when are you going to start
having babies?" This question epitomizes the expectations that the elder women and Finn were/are faced with. The twenty-six year old Finn is taken back by the question and the assumption that since she is a woman, and has the biological capacity to reproduce, she will.

Finn is again thrown by the expectation of her fiance, Sam, to have a baby. Sam comes to visit her during the summer to go over blue prints of their house. During this process, he remarks that one of the rooms he has remodeled is not going to be used as an office for Finn, as originally intended, but rather has been converted into a suitable room, "in case we have a baby." Finn retorts: "you expect me to have a baby right away?" Finn is overwhelmed by the expectations of some of the older women and her fiance to have children. This is exemplary of the situation facing many women in the 1990s. There are two sets of competing expectations challenging Finn. The expectations of biological reproduction and the pressure to complete her thesis paper are contributing to the distress in Finn's life, because she is having difficulty reconciling the two competing sets of expectations. The metaphors of trees and high summer in this aspect of the film provide a visual image for the situation of women. It is these metaphors, the things not explicitly stated, but rather depicted, that communicate and convey most effectively the expectations for women and how they have remained the same.

The home of Finn's great-aunt is nestled away from the main road, and sits under a canopy of tree branches, which in essence provides shelter from the evils of the world. In other words, it is a safe haven for Finn. She is able to find comfort
not only in her grandmother and great-aunt, but from her physical surroundings as well. The towering trees proved a canopy above the house and groves of orange trees distance the home from the road and the other homes in the area. The scene in which Finn arrives at their home provides an aerial view of the van approaching the secluded house. Sam turns the van off the main road and disappears down private drive which is lined with tall palm trees flanked by the orange groves. Closer to the house there are lofty deciduous trees with leaves and branches that obscure the view of the sky. Finn appears to be in awe of her surroundings as she leans to peer out the window to capture the essence of this secluded environment.

In the opening scene of the film, before she arrives at her grandmother's home for the summer, Finn, while packing her boxes at her Berkeley home, flashes back to her childhood. As a child she is shown sitting under the quilting frame and expresses how she perceives the women of the quilting bee. She states, "I remember sitting under the quilting frame pretending that I was surrounded by a forest of friendly trees and their stitches were messages from giants written across the sky." This scene accomplishes several things: first, it provides an initial comparison of women to nature. This message is conveyed when Finn identifies the women as "a forest of friendly trees." Second, it portrays women as strong, solid individuals. This notion is established in the common knowledge of trees as symbols of vigor, strength and endurance. In addition to the expectation to be fruitful, women as compared to trees represent the strength and endurance women are expected to provide to their husband and children, in their roles of wife and mother, in addition to the support the women
provide for each other. Lastly, this statement by Finn symbolizes the women as equals in terms of strength, age, and wisdom. The women are equal in that they have all been through some difficult times concerning love and experiencing varying degrees of oppression. However, they are distinct individuals, in that their personal experiences are unique. This notion of equality is communicated by the physical setup of the quilting frame. The frame, itself, serves as an equalizer and provides balance. All seven women are equal in terms of where they sit and what they contribute to the quilt. They each sew a patch for the quilt and without each of those patches the quilt would be incomplete. This metaphor works together with the individual tree as a source of strength metaphor, in that these women are able to provide strength for each other and for Finn, not only as individuals, but also together as a group. These women are similar to an "old-growth" forest: They have been through various ordeals, yet have survived because of their strength, thus enabling them to share their stories and wisdom with some other women. The film makers utilization of the women/nature metaphor appeals to the subculture and experiences of some American women, including Finn and women viewing the film in the 1990s. Identification is not only an outcome of the interaction between Finn and the women in the film; additionally, identification is established as an outcome for the women in viewing the film. This is evident because the film's metaphors speak in a "shared" language, based on the experiences of predominantly white, middle class women. This identification, then, is based on society's expectations of women to be productive, specifically in the biological sense. Furthermore, this metaphor encourages young
women in the 1990s to identify with the older women who matured in the 1940s and 1950s. This demonstrates what Burke refers to as identification as a transcendent goal. The film makers utilization of the nature/productivity metaphor empowers Finn and the viewing audience to overcome differences with the quilting bee women, specifically age and race, and encourages them to emphasize and increase awareness of similarities.

The Strength and Support of Trees and Women

The tree metaphor employed by the film makers in the opening scenes of the film is extended into the personal story of Hy. This metaphor provides Hy a strategy to effectively communicate her experiences. This, in turn, creates identification with Finn and the viewing audience by sharing her story that depicts the situations and expectations of women in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. One such way this is done is in the comparison the women to a "forest of...trees." This analogy acknowledges the valuable resource these women provide. The story shared by Finn's grandmother reveals the emotional and elaborate past of these two sisters, Hyacinth (Hy) and Gladiola (Glady Jo). The story is told in the first person and begins with Finn's grandmother, Hy, at the hospital with her dying husband. It is made apparent in the film that Hy is having trouble coping with the inevitable death of her husband and that it is tearing her apart. She claims that she is deeply connected to him, stating: "he and I had a very special love for each other." Extremely upset she attempts, unsuccessfully, to locate her sister Glady Jo. However, she does locate Glady Jo's husband Arthur. Arthur takes Hy for a drive in the country. They retreat
to an open field surrounded by lofty trees. As Hy emerges from the car she declares: "I need to find me a tree, I need some peace before I go back" to the hospital. With that phrase, Hy makes the analogy between trees, peace, strength and shelter.

Emotionally exhausted, Hy walks over to a tree and lays down on the ground. Soon she is asleep and appears quite peaceful laying under the tree and in the earth's natural surroundings. The tree in addition to symbolizing peace and strength for Hy, represents a source of shelter. For a brief moment in time this tree in the countryside provides Hy the opportunity to escape and shelters her from the tremendous pain in her life. This tree provides Hy with peace, which parallels Finn's situation and the shelter she seeks, from life's pressures at her grandmother's home, and from the women of the quilting bee.

This story shared by her grandmother establishes the premise which allows for identification between Hy, Finn and the film's viewing audience. The analogy comparing women to trees not only depict an essence of strength in the women, but also reveal the inner thoughts and feelings of Hy. When a tree is cut open the rings within the tree tell about the age and life of the tree. Hy, by opening up to Finn and expressing her story in terms of metaphors, is able to communicate with Finn the events, of love and despair, that shaped her life. Without the employment of these metaphors, by the film makers or Hy, these particular images of women would go unheard or unseen.

Additionally, while sharing her story with Finn, Hy confesses having an affair with her sister Glady Jo's husband, Arthur. Hy proclaims that it was a result of all the
pressure dealing with the death of her own husband. She tells Finn: "when you've spent your life with someone and they begin to die, you feel this terrible, terrible severing; so, you do things without thinking. Because, what you have to face is so deeply unthinkable." Thus, upon hearing this story, Finn realizes that as a young woman her grandmother wrestled with many tough issues and made some unfortunate choices. This affords Finn the opportunity to establish identification with her grandmother. Finn is able to relate to her grandmother's plight because she too is grappling with life altering issues, thus hearing this story provides her with some tools to work through her own personal crisis. Hy, during her time of despair and confusion, sought the protection and shelter of trees, similarly, so does Finn. While their situations are not completely analogous, Finn is also struggling with various pressures. These include: finish her thesis and contemplating Sam's marriage proposal. In an attempt to reconcile all the elements of her life she returns to the "forest of friendly trees." I argue that the outcome of the employment of this metaphor establishes that Finn and her grandmother have some degree of shared consubstantiality: a necessary element in creating identification and persuasion.

Kenneth Burke, as I mention in Chapter One, identifies four measures in which identification is established. Identification may be "used as a means to an end" (Foss et al., 1991, p.174), and is often an outcome of interaction between individuals. For example, a politician may seek to identify him/herself with the voting population, convincing them that they "share substance" in order to effectively persuade them to vote for him or her. Burke's discussion of identification and consubstantiality is
relevant to my analysis of the metaphors in the film. As stated above, the women are identified as a source of strength and support for other women and as symbols of endurance. More specifically, in the story discussed above, one woman, Finn's grandmother, offers Finn an opportunity to understand the experiences Hy endured in an effort to assist Finn recognize that she has choices and provide Finn with some creative options and learn from their past mistakes and/or hardships. Furthermore, this metaphor interwoven into Hy's story attempts to overcome distinctions between herself and Finn, specifically age. This is significant because both of these women have dealt with and are dealing with difficult situations. However, the metaphors place an emphasis on the women's similar situations, which result from the roles and behaviors expected of them.

These expectations include, for Hy, the notion that a woman's primary source of happiness in her life will be found in various household duties; which include providing for her husband and children. Subsequently Finn now struggles with the notion that while women in the 1990s are provided the opportunity to "have it all," they continue to feel pressure from society to get married and have children. These expectations are a source of conflict for both women because neither of them feel good about their situation. Hy is depicted, in her story, as suffering at the hands of her marriage/husband, quite contrary to the notion that marriage equates with a life that is spent "happily ever after." The painful elements of marriage are common, but they are rarely discussed in the romantic prescriptives directed to women. Moreover, and similarly, Finn is suffering because she feels the pressure from both society,
including women in the quilting bee, and her fiance Sam. On the one hand, she desires to do as she pleases, which includes seeing other people (i.e. men), working on her thesis and contemplating a future career; whereas, on the other hand she wrestles with the expectations of society and what she refers to as the "anachronistic" notion of marriage. In the film Finn proclaims:

See what they [society] don't tell us is that marriage is this anachronistic institution created for the sole convenience of the father who needs to pass off his daughters into the care of another man...Now that we've gotten our independence and that we earn our own living there is really no purpose in being someone's wife.

The trees, orange groves, and summer season all three come together to represent the roles women play and the behaviors that are expected of them. These initial scenes in the film establish the premise of the film's argument. The women are identified as a source of comfort, friendship, and wisdom for Finn. They provide her with advice and share their strength which empowers Finn to make some difficult decisions concerning her own life. More specifically, these metaphors employed by the film makers and her grandmother, represent the question of marriage, and therefore encourage Finn to explore her feelings and assist her in coming to her own decision about the institution of marriage.

Where rock meets water

Over and over women heard voices of tradition and of Freudian sophistication that they could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity. Experts told them how to catch a man and keep him...how to dress, look, and act more feminine and make marriage more exciting; how to keep their husbands from dying young and their sons from growing into delinquents (Friedan, 1983, p. 15).

The metaphors identified in the story of Sophia Darling Richards are extremely
significant in developing a thorough understanding of the sacrifices that women in the 1940s and 1950s era were making for "good" of their family. This story, again, establishes identification with and contributes to the empowerment of Finn. The metaphors in union with the story acknowledge the personal choices some women have made in the face of societal burdens and obstacles. Therefore this particular story affords Finn and the viewing audience as well the opportunity to reflect on the choices that they have as women in the 1990s, and perhaps how these choices have changed and/or remained the same from the 1940s and 1950s.

The metaphor identified in this story is the analogy between water and rock and the life of Sophia. Sophia, as a young girl, was a diver, and was identified through her swimming and diving abilities. For example, her boyfriend (and future husband) Preston told her "you swim like a mermaid." Sophia is associated with water; she is wild, untamed and carefree. A river, for example, is generally perceived as a mighty body of water that rushes with a strong current and force. In other words it, like Sophia, operates upon free will giving little consideration to the things or people in the way. Preston, on the other hand, is a geologist, and portrayed as a rock, he is solid and strong. He is a man who can provide Sophia with stability. On one of their dates, Sophia takes Preston to a remote swimming hole that is surrounded by

4 It is important to note that the story of Sophia Darling Richards is told in the film by Finn's grandmother (Hy) and great aunt (Glady Jo) while at the swimming pool where the three of them observe Sophia swimming in the pool and yelling at children. This is significant in that by having her story told in the third person and not sharing it personally depicts the separation between Finn and Sophia. Moreover, it highlights the notion that the two are not close and that Sophia, as an old bitter woman is, perhaps, jealous of the perceived opportunity women of Finn's generation have.
rock. Upon arriving at the pond Preston states, "there is nothing like water to wear
down a mountain and open up its secrets to you." This phrase is significant in that it
identifies Sophia as the water that will loosen up and break down the rock solid
Preston.

This is accomplished on the first date that Sophia and Preston have. Sophia
immediately establishes herself as the person in control. This is apparent when
Preston picks her up and states: "I made a dinner reservation for 7:30." Sophia
quickly responds: "I have a better idea." What this dialogue accomplishes is that
Sophia is the one with the control and influence over Preston. Rather than going for
a romantic dinner, Sophia takes him to the swimming hole where Sophia "normally
[goes] to swim." Sophia's dominance continues as she is shown guiding Preston
through a forest of trees that ultimately leads to the cliffs and water hole. Sophia is
depicted as the one in control of the situation. This is communicated, visually, in the
scene where Sophia is leading Preston through the forest. As the guide Sophia is in
front of Preston, however, he reaches up to grab her and attempts to kiss her. Preston
is unsuccessful, Sophia pulls away and runs ahead, leaving Preston behind. This scene
depicts Sophia as a woman in control and in charge of the destiny awaiting both
herself and Preston.

Again, Sophia's carefree side emerges when she tells Preston to "wait here." As Preston watches her move along the rocks with confidence, he appears to be in
awe. Then Sophia takes off her clothes, with the exception of her undergarments, and
does a beautiful swan dive into the water. Preston is amazed with her daring attitude
and seemingly fearless self assurance; however, he is also panic stricken because Sophia does not emerge from the depths of the swimming hole. Preston panics and dives in to rescue her. However, Sophia did not need to be rescued. She was hiding from Preston in an effort to get him to loosen him up and break down his rock solid facade. Sophia is successful in this attempt and the two wind up frolicking in the water and end with an intimate kiss. Preston shares with Sophia his vision for the two of them. He envisions the two of them traveling throughout the world together and experiencing what the earth has to offer. He states: "Let's go around the world together. I can study the rock and you can swim down in the bottom of the canyon."

Preston, ultimately, presents Sophia with an offer of marriage implying that it will be a union based on equality. As a married couple Sophia and Preston will travel the world together and experience what the earth has to offer both of them.

However, as life unfolds for Preston and Sophia they grow apart and change roles. Preston traveled and "flowed" through life, while Sophia stayed at home and created a mountain of bitterness and resentment around herself. Sophia was an imaginative and daring youth; however, she married and relinquished her dreams of seeing the world in order to become a wife and mother because she was not afforded the opportunity to combine the two. So, consequently, Sophia, as a young woman maturing in the "homemaker" era is forced to settle for being a mother and devote her energies to raising her three children: Duff, Evie and Preston, Jr. Sophia is forced to live her adult life remaining faithful to the traditional expectations of women of this era.
It is expected that Sophia will do as her mother did; this is the legacy of the time into which they are born. Sophia lives with the inheritance of her mother, who lived with the inheritance of her own mother. She is not expected to attend her own desires. Her time does not encourage it (Otto, 1991, p. 76).

In his job as a geologist Preston travels and is gone from home, often for weeks at a time. Not long after they are married Sophia and Preston have their first child, Duff. As a woman it is assumed that Sophia will stay home with the baby. This is extremely frustrating for Sophia, because she remembers the promise made to her by Preston that night they went to the swimming hole for their date. He promised her that the two of them would travel the world together. Unfortunately for Sophia this does not happen. As a mother it is expected that she will stay at home with the baby. Disillusioned by her situation Sophia expresses her disenchantment to Preston:

Sophia: I will not raise this child on my own. You have to get a job in town.

Preston: I can't stay around here, doing soil tests for farmers.

Sophia: And I can't be left behind like an old bag.

Preston: Look as soon as the baby gets older you can come along with.

Sophia's existence is now defined by her capacities in her new role as mother. She is confined to the home and relegated to being a mother and wife first, ignoring her own dreams and desires for her life. However, in contrast, Preston is not confined by his role as father. Rather, he is depicted as the authority figure and communicates to her that she does not have a choice in the matter. He will make the decisions regarding his travel, come and go as he pleases, and decides for Sophia when and if she can come with him.

Subsequently, as the years go by Sophia begins to believe that opportunities to
experience and learn about the world are reserved for the men in the world. Several years later, when her children are teenagers, she and her eldest daughter, Duff, have the following conversation:

Duff: But, I want to go to college.

Sophia: It is more important for Pres Jr. to go, you can get married.

Duff: But that's not what I want.

Sophia: Well, we don't always get what we want.

This scene is significant in that illustrates to Finn and the audience what few choices society afforded Sophia and as she aged she accepted, although with extreme bitterness, the traditional expectations of women. Preston notices this and attempts to wear down the wall she has built around herself. In one scene he is shown digging a pond in their backyard. Sophia approaches him and asks, "What's that?" He remarks, "It's a pond, for you. I thought you could wade around in it or keep fish in it. Whatever you want, I think it is deep enough." She does not respond and simply walks away from him. This small pond built by Preston functions to compare Sophia's life to the water in the self contained pond. As a young girl Sophia was a free spirit, with a natural and vast swimming hole at her disposal where she was free to swim and dive in the wild and mighty body of water. In contrast, Sophia as an adult is given a small pond from her husband. This pond is filled with tepid water that is contained in a small area, which restricts the water from its natural flowing course. Furthermore, this small pond does not allow for Sophia dive or swim in it. Because of the small size of the pond Sophia is only able to stand or dip her feet in
the water. In the following scene Sophia is shown sitting in an upstairs window looking out at Preston as he fills up the pond with water. This scene is also significant in that it symbolizes Preston's effort in building the pond and filling it with water as a feeble attempt to communicate with Sophia. He seeks to "wear down [her] mountain and open up [her] secrets to [him]." This wall is further symbolized in the placement of the two characters in this scene. She is in the house and he is outside. The actual walls of the house represent the wall that has been established between these two individuals.

This analogy and story, told by Hy and Glady Jo, again establishes identification with Finn, inviting certain members of the audience to identify as well. Identification, in this instance is based on Finn's fear that by entering into marriage she will be forced to sacrifice part of herself. This is one of the questions Finn asks herself at the beginning of the film when she is packing for her summer hiatus. She asks: "How can two people merge into a couple and still leave a little room for themselves?" This story demonstrates the power of women's communication and speaks directly to Finn's concerns regarding marriage and her fear of sacrificing her identity. Sophia, a woman in the "homemaker era" was forced to sacrifice her identity as a "diver" in order to take on the role of wife and mother. Furthermore, this story's outcome allows not only Finn to identify with Sophia, but also encourages the film's viewing audience to identify with the characters in the stories and the experiences of women maturing in America and confronting the expectations of American society.

Furthermore, the information shared in the story of Sophia communicates to
Finn and the audience that the personal choices made by Sophia were deeply influenced by the traditional expectations of the era into which she was born. Finn and audience members are invited, upon hearing this story, to reflect on the choices women have in the 1990s. While there are equal burdens for women in 1990s, Finn, for example, has more latitude in the choices and options for her life. She realizes this upon hearing Sophia's story. Finn is then able to reflect on her personal situation and considers if marriage to Sam is something she wants in her life.

Implications of Metaphors as a Strategy in Storytelling

The completion of the quilt at the end of the film and the presentation of it to Finn is the final element in the identification process and empowering argument. Finn wraps herself up in the quilt which symbolizes the "wrapping up" of the film and making sense of what has been communicated to her in the form of metaphors and stories.

The collaboration of stories and metaphors accomplish two things: First, it helps in illustrating the roles and behaviors expected of women in the 1940s and 1950s. Second, it denounces the "fairy tale" notion of marriage for Finn. Furthermore, the quilt, as a symbol of the seven women's lives, is a gift to Finn and she can do what she wants with the various messages and options it offers her. Throughout the film the stories of the individual women were made public and invite the audience to identify with the women in the film in an attempt to empower the audience to work through their own personal crises. The women in the quilting bee
were responsible for their own patch of the quilt just as Finn and the viewing audience are responsible for making their own decisions in life. However, it is only with the support of and collaboration with other women that individuals are empowered to reconcile their past experiences with their present day reality, and create a renewed sense of identity. The goal, as in quilting according to Anna, the master quilter is not to "seek perfection...[but] to learn the art of sewing shreds together, and seeing beauty in a multiplicity of patches."

This chapter has considered the intrinsic functions of the film including rhetorical strategies of metaphors, in terms of structure and purpose. The film *How to Make an American Quilt* is not simply about women who come together and quilt, but rather an examination at the life experiences of various women. I have supported my argument that the utilization of metaphors as a rhetorical strategy in the film contributes to the empowering and persuasive argument presented to Finn and the female viewing audience. This is achieved through the use of the three metaphors, which I identified as significant and meaningful. These metaphors include: first, the comparison of women and nature; second, water as a way to wear down walls and open up lines of communication; and lastly, the quilt itself as a symbol of stories that shape the women's lives and the life of Finn. The utilization of metaphors vividly illustrate the fact that some American women (in the 1990s) may have more opportunities to advance in life (i.e. professional) beyond the traditional roles of wife and mother. However, many of the traditional expectations remain. These expectations include the notion that women of a certain age will reproduce and be the
primary provider of children. The film *How to Make an American Quilt* provides Finn and the female viewing audience with material that allows them to identify with the women in the quilting bee, while raising consciousness and encouraging them to make meaning of the events they encounter in life.

Furthermore, the utilization of metaphors as a strategy in this film provides the opportunity for generalizations regarding women's life stories to emerge, empower the audience, and allow for Finn and the female viewing audience to develop their own conclusions. In other words, the women in this film engage in the process of consciousness-raising. Moreover, the stories and quilt metaphor provide insight into the implications of some women's life choices and the oppressions they experienced as women "coming of age" in the mid-twentieth century. In the process of creating this film the film makers and more specifically the women in the quilting bee give voice to the various experiences of women in America and ultimately create a new "web of meaning" (Frye, 1993). The creation of these new "webs of meaning" result from the women's ability to establish identification on three levels. First, the metaphors and stories allow for identification between the older women and Finn; second, the women establish identification with other women in the quilting bee and each other; and lastly, the process of consciousness-raising allows the women, Finn, and the film's viewing audience to find a renewed sense of their own identity. In this process the women involved with the film are encouraged to reflect on their past experiences and reconcile that past with their present day reality. This ultimately allows these women to recognize their place in the tapestry of life and see that "there's beauty in the
patterns of life" (Moorhouse, 1995)

In conclusion, these collective stories and metaphors allow for generalizations to emerge regarding women's experience in love, and allow for each different experience to have a voice, and invite the audience to explore the meaning of each story in her own life. These stories come together in the patchwork quilt and provide creative options for Finn. These options are not specifically stated, but rather inferred. Moreover, these stories provide Finn with the ability to learn from their mistakes and to understand the decision they made or were forced to make were a result of their situation as women.
CHAPTER THREE
ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

Once again, we come upon the tacit morality of stories, for moral judgement relies, as narrative does, on a belief in cause and effect. Stories teach us that every gesture, every act, every choice we make send ripples of influence into our future...Stories gather experience into shapes we can hold and pass on through time (Sanders, 1991, p. 123).

In several ways, Walter Fisher's narrative theory is applicable and appropriate for this study. While I do not fully support Fisher's theory as a new paradigm to describe or assess all forms of human communication, I do believe that it is suitable in an analysis of women's private communication patterns as illustrated in the film How to Make an American Quilt. I claim that the utilization of collaborative storytelling (in contrast to the single stories Fisher and other scholars have studied) is an inherent characteristic of women's communication which results from women's place in the social structure in America. The storytelling in this film is strategic in that it provides an atmosphere of identification and consciousness-raising, in that it is characterized as collective, supportive, and empowering. Thus, the women in the film (the quilting bee women and Finn) and the female audience are "empowered to reclaim their personal experiences and use them to generate knowledge about their worlds" (Hayden, 1997, p. 143).

Narratives of the Women in the Film

As stated above, women's distinctive style of communication includes storytelling. Women's stories are about the common events that occur in the lives of
women. They may not meet the prototype of a "good story," but they do hold significant meaning for the women who tell them, along with their families, friends and community (Foss & Foss, 1991).

In this chapter, I offer an argument which claims the women's storytelling in the film can be explained in terms of Walter Fisher's narrative theory; however the way in which the stories are shared differ from the typical "male-modeled" stories Fisher and others have discussed. These stories are intertwined and no story stands alone. Rather, these stories are told in a collective effort which provides a framework for Finn, which assists her in making decisions about her own life. Moreover, the stories, both individually and collectively, do not suggest a specific "right" answer, rather the stories end ambiguously, inviting the audience to interpret and come to their own judgements.

This film and the collaborative storytelling efforts by the quilting bee members contribute to the narrative theory in a new and significant way. Therefore, in this chapter I will first discuss the specific narratives the women use; second, I will consider the implications of collaborative storytelling for the film and how it establishes identification among the women in the quilting bee, Finn and the female viewing audience. I begin with an analysis of the specific narrative of quilting bee member Em Reed.
The Story of Em Reed

Stories play an important role in the lives of those who tell them for they are a way for people to capture and relate their experience in the world. These stories respond to people's sense of reason and emotion, to their intellects and imagination, to the facts as they perceive them, and to their values. People search for stories which justify their efforts and resolve the tensions and problems in their lives, and desire stories that resolve their dissonance and are physiologically satisfying (Hollihan & Riley, 1987, p. 15).

In the film *How to Make an American* a certain degree of consubstantiality or "shared substance" is established between Finn and the women. As Burke (1969) claimed we find our "distinct" selves, only when we are able to identify and "share" some degree of common opinions, perspectives, or concepts with another person, thus creating an atmosphere for identification and persuasion. This theory is illustrated in the film with the story that is shared by Em. This story, about love, marriage and infidelity, enables the audience and Finn to establish identification with Em by placing an emphasis on the similar experiences of many American women. This story is characterized by long descriptions of characters and settings and is told in a flashback in an attempt by Em to rearrange and recall events of her life. In her narrative Em is able to share with her audience the effects of having her livelihood determined by the actions of other individuals (e.g., her husband and parents).

Em's story follows the narrative of Sophia's life shared by Hy and Glady Jo. Finn, Hy and Glady Jo are shown driving home from a day at the local swimming pool. Upon their arrival home they see Finn's fiance Sam waiting at the house. Sam had come to visit Finn and go over some remodeling plans he had made for their house. However, Sam's visit ended in a fight, and he is seen in his van speeding
down the driveway, disappearing into the night. Finn is obviously frustrated, and is shown in the subsequent scene working on her thesis until late into the evening. At one point she stops writing and telephones Sam to apologize for their fight. She attempts to leave a message, but she is cut off by the answering machine. Finn continues to work on her thesis and later that same night she telephones Sam again. This time when Finn calls, another woman answers the phone. Finn is deeply disturbed by this occurrence, immediately suspects Sam of cheating on her and slams down the phone. This night juxtaposes explicitly the dual demands (Sam, thesis) with which Finn is struggling.

The next morning Finn stumbles down the stairs to join the quilting bee for some coffee. The women are curious as to the reason why Finn slept so late. Sophia comments: "What's going on with her?" Glady Jo informs the women that "[Finn] was up all night trying to call Sam...and some girl answered." This strikes a chord with Em, a member of the quilting bee, who has been married for thirty years to a man who has been unfaithful since the early years of their marriage. Thus, Em has some degree of understanding with what Finn is feeling. In an effort to console Finn, Em follows her to the back porch, where she shares her story with Finn.

Em flashes back to her youth and begins to tell the story of a young woman who matured in an era, that like the other women, offered her few choices in life. She was a beautiful young girl who married an artist named Dean. Her "happy" marriage ended rather quickly, for in the early years of their marriage Dean had his first affair. Subsequently, as the years passed his infidelities continued. As an artist,
he took on private students, consequently one of his ensuing affairs was with a student. When Em learned of this affair she left Dean and went to live with her parents. When Dean found her, Em was seven months pregnant; and accordingly, her parents sent her back home with Dean. Em's parents told her that "it's for the best dear." Finn, upon hearing this story, retorts: "unbelievable!"

As unbelievable as it was, it was what was expected of Em. She remained married to Dean for the next thirty years and he was never faithful to her. This story accomplishes two things: First, it helps in illustrating the roles and behaviors expected of women in the 1940s and 1950s. As mentioned in Chapter One these expected roles include the roles of wife and mother. Women in the 1940s were actively recruited for jobs during the Second World War; however, despite the need for women to work during this time, the war did more to reinforce the traditional beliefs that a woman's proper place was in the home. Therefore, following World War II many women vacated their wartime jobs for the presumed stability and security of married life. Second, this story debunks the "fairy tale" notion of marriage. This is conveyed to Finn in Em's story. This is illustrated in the scene where Dean comes to retrieve Em from her parents' house and whisks her away, back to their home and life together. However, this marriage which was deemed to be what was "best" for Em did not end "happily ever after."

By sharing her experience with Finn, Em is able to speak in a voice that validates her own life and knowledge of what she has experienced, but acknowledges that Finn's experience are significant, as well. Furthermore, Em's story invites Finn to
contemplate issues in her own life, in an effort to carry on the meaning-making process. The sharing of personal experience of being a woman in America invites the audience and Finn to explore their personal experiences and to realize that the oppression they experience is not something personal or the result of something they did wrong, but is a common experience among many American women.

This story parallels the societal patterns that impacted women in the 1940s and 1950s era. As Koedt (1970) claimed, "men look upon their women as property," (p. 166) and women, as illustrated in Em's story, were treated as possessions, belonging to the man. Dean referred to her as "Em, my beautiful Em," And, as alluded to above Dean picks up "his" Em up at her parents home and subsequently, believing "it [was] for the best," her parents sent her back with him. Dean continues to have affairs and Em refers to herself and the other women as "Dean's Women." Women in this era were expected to surrender their identity to the men they married. For example, a beauty bar advertisement published in *Ladies Home Journal* (March, 1940) identified a woman in as "Mrs. O.C. Gregory." This ad explicitly declares that when married a woman not only becomes a possession of a man, but becomes the man herself. This is represented in that the woman's birth name is left unsaid in the advertisement. Moreover, Dean's behavior and infidelity were, more or less, "acceptable behavior." As Em states: "Men are suppose to go and flaunt their feathers, while a woman stays home and keeps the nest." As Dalma Heyn (1993) claims, "men have had permissive policies built for themselves in the marriage system; for them [infidelity] is customary" (p. 11). Dean is a male, and specifically an artist, thus justifying his need
to act out and his unfaithful behavior.

Of course, Em does not speak in a position of authority for all women, she is only an expert concerning issues in her own life. Em's story meets Fisher's test of rationality, specifically the element of narrative probability. Narrative probability refers to the story's internal consistency. In other words does the story have the "structural integrity" to create a coherent argument. The purpose of Em's message is to share her experiences with Finn and the female viewing audience, and relate a "truth" about the condition of some American women (Fisher, 1984). Em's conclusion, based on her own experiences, is that marriage is not perfect and often does not end "happily ever after." Em is able to articulate this by illustrating with her story that as a young woman in the 1940s she had few choices in her own life. Many choices in her life were made by other people in her life (including her parents and husband), who did not consider Em's point of view. Furthermore, as a woman who had lived her entire life in Grasse, California Em told Finn that being married to Dean "makes me feel unusual." Em, unfortunately, adopted the prescriptives of society that claim a woman's identity is instituted in her relationships with men. As an individual person Em believes herself to be common; however, being married to an artist Em sees herself as distinctive among other women in Grasse. Em's story assists Finn and the female audience gain a thorough understanding of why Em made (and was compelled to make) certain decisions. Her actions were considered "normal" given the societal burdens, expectations and obstacles of this era. Em as the narrator provides a story that is consistent with societal beliefs and the expected roles and behaviors (i.e.
wife and mother) of women in the 1940s and 1950s era.

Another element of rationality includes the test of narrative fidelity. Fidelity is concerned with the question: Does the story represent what we know to be true in our lives? (Fisher, 1984). In this situation it seems that the story of Em applies itself to what Finn "knows" to be true in her own life. Her fiance, Sam, is cheating on her and Em had the experience/ability to identify with Finn. Furthermore, Em is not trying to establish an attitude in Finn, that says "I hate men." But rather, she wants to share her stories in an effort to suggest that all humans have the ability to judge and determine what is just and true, based upon on their individual experience (Fisher, 1989). Em expresses this when she claims "I've come to believe that Dean is more typical than not. It is a pattern of nature. The female keeps the nest, while the male goes out and flaunts his feathers, well, screw that." Finn replies: "yes." This scene specifically relates the "truth" according to Em. In her effort to identify with Finn, she shares her experience of a marriage with an unfaithful husband, and in the process she illuminates the aspects of marriage seldom discussed in the prescriptives given to women.

According to Fisher (1984) the test of fidelity should provide "a way of relating a 'truth' about the human condition" (p. 6). Em's story connects with Finn and demonstrates her effort to identify with Finn's current situation. This is accomplished by establishing a peer relationship with Finn. Em does not speak as an authority figure and prescribe what is expected of her as a woman in the 1990s; rather she shares a personal experience that is similar to Finn's current situation. As
Campbell (1989) states, a personal and tentative communication style relies on anecdotes and personal experiences to "create identification with the experiences of the audience [Finn] and the speaker [Em]." There is no alienation in Em's dialogue. She does not speak as an authority, proclaiming the truth. Em offers her story and shares her experiences with Finn and the viewing audience in an effort to raise consciousness. As Campbell (1989) states, "consciousness-raising is an attractive communication style...[it] invites audiences to participate in the rhetorical process — it empowers them" (p. 13).

The Stories of Anna and Marianna

_Trample not on the oppressed._ Your daughter will not be trampled upon. Your daughter will travel distances (emphasis hers, Otto, 1991, p. 178).

Anna and Marianna, as African American women, experienced different forms of oppression than the other women in the quilting bee. These oppressions include being relegated to jobs as domestic servants (as Anna is in the film), being displaced from their domestic jobs during the depression, and experiencing workplace discrimination. For example, Marianna experienced racism while looking for a job in 1953, even though she had earned a college degree (Otto, 1991). However, Anna and Marianna's stories have a significant impact on Finn. The establishment of identification between the African American women and Finn in this film demonstrates the cognizant effort of consciousness-raising, as a communication style designed to break down the barriers between races which result from many years of racial discrimination. This film applies what Burke classified as identification as
transcendence. This particular story enables women to see themselves in a similar light by focusing on their comparable experiences as women in America, not the differences between African American and Caucasian women.

Marianna is Anna's daughter, and the two women are only seventeen years apart in age. The story of Anna is shared in the first person and like the story of Em, it is told in the form of flashbacks. The story begins with Anna showing Finn one of the quilts in her collection. The quilt she chose to show Finn is a quilt that has been in her family for generations. It is called: *The Life Before*. *The Life Before* quilt is identified by Anna, as a "story quilt and is meant to be read." Therefore, Anna shares the story of her heritage, and subsequently, her own experiences. Her story begins with a brief description of how her great-grandparents met. She describes her great-grandmother as a young woman who set out to find her own parents after slavery had ended. However, along the way the young woman encounters a young man and as Anna states: "it seems that the search for her parents had led her to the man God had intended for her to marry." The story then skips ahead many years and continues with Anna describing her own childhood. She recalls the years of living with her Aunt Pauline, and working for a white, upper class family. As a teen-ager, Anna met a young man who was staying with the family she worked for. He approaches her one night after dinner. Anna is by herself, standing underneath a tree looking at the stars in the night sky. He asks her: "What are you looking at?" Anna remarks: "Pegasus, Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Hercules, the herdsman with star Octuras in his knee..." However, before she can finish her sentence he leans in to kiss her. Then,
noticing that she is cold, he places his coat around her shoulders. Anna is swept up in the moment, and subsequently, has her first sexual experience. This sexual encounter results in pregnancy. As a young, single girl Anna was sent away to live with another family (the Rubens) to await the arrival of her baby.

When the baby arrives, Mrs. Rubens and Anna have the following conversation:

Mrs Rubens: Now Anna, some ladies from the church will be coming to see you today.

Anna: I am not giving them my baby. I am raising Marianna myself.

Mrs. Rubens: But Anna, don't you want what is best for the child?

Anna: Yes ma'am, that's why I am keeping her.

This scene depicts Anna as a strong and determined young woman. This is evidenced in the fact that she was determined to raise a child on her own, despite what was otherwise expected of her. Anna states that as Marianna grew up, Anna shares with her the story of The Life Before quilt. Anna realized, through this process that she had become part of the story as well. She tells Finn that "it wasn't the love of a husband I was meant to find, but the love of my daughter." At that moment, Finn looks up to the sky and notices that there is a full moon and the two women have the following dialogue:

Finn: Look at that.

Anna: I never liked full moons, they give people an excuse to do foolish things.

Finn: I'm young I am suppose to do foolish things.
Anna: And, spend the rest of your life paying for them?

Finn: Well, it is better than wondering what I missed.

Anna: I'd rather wonder than kick myself.

Finn: Well, I'd rather kick myself.

Anna: Fine, you will end up with a deeply sore backside.

In this scene, Anna specifically states what she would do, but she does not specifically tell Finn what to do, or how to act. What this story accomplishes is that it communicates to Finn that everyone makes mistakes and does, what Anna referred to as "foolish things" in life, but fortunately those mistakes provide an opportunity to learn. This story meets Fisher's criteria of narrative rationality, which is based on "identification rather than deliberation" (Fisher, 1984, p. 9). This narrative conveys that love resides in relationships outside of marriage, and more significantly that making mistakes provide an opportunity to learn and grow from misguided personal choices. Anna, in her mistakes and "foolish" choices learned that, for her, love resides with her daughter. While Anna's and Finn's experiences are not analogous, they do share some qualities. For example, this scene between Anna and Finn occurs just as Finn is about to have a "foolish" affair with the sensual Leon, whom she met at the swimming pool. Finn is confused with regards to her own life and feels pressure from her fiance and society to settle down and get married. Yet, Finn is unsure if that is her true course in life. Upon hearing Anna's story Finn is encouraged to reflect on her own situation and to come to her own conclusions regarding her life and her relationship with Leon and Sam. Furthermore, it establishes identification with the
younger Finn and appeals to her "logic of good reason." This is illustrated in the dialogue mentioned above. Anna, as storyteller and counselor to Finn, ultimately leaves the interpretation and assessment of the story up to Finn. Anna's narrative allows her to make sense of her past and relate her experiences to Finn's situation. Accordingly, then, this story meets Fisher's criteria of narrative fidelity in that it represents what Finn is experiencing; and, in the words of Fisher (1984) Anna's story "ring true to with the stories [Finn] knows to be true in [her] own [life]" (p.10). That experience is the temptation of sexual fulfillment with a man, just as Anna did.

In the scene following Anna's story, Finn has an affair with Leon. Finn, at this point seemingly ignores the advice given to her by Anna. This supports the notion of Anna as counselor. She simply offers her point of view, leaving the interpretation and future action up to the Finn. This story, however, does not stand alone. Following her affair with Leon, Finn hears the story of Marianna, which provides Finn with more information and again invites her to contemplate her life and her relationships.

Marianna is a middle age woman, with whom Finn has a special relationship. As Finn stated at the beginning of the film: "I've always idealized Anna's daughter Marianna. She had lived in Paris which made her very mysterious to me when I was a kid. She taught me French, made cafe au laits, and the year I got my period she gave me a glass of red wine."

Marianna shares her "love" story with Finn one afternoon when Finn is visiting, and the two women are talking over coffee. Marianna is showing Finn
pictures of her former boyfriends, and tells Finn how many of them wanted to marry her, but Marianna never wanted to marry them. Marianna states, "I refuse to be tied down to anyone." Finn is impressed with Marianna's independence and single status. She tells Marianna (a portion of this quote is reprinted from Chapter One),

Good for you...to have that kind of courage. Especially someone from your generation...You see what they don't tell us is that marriage is this anachronistic institution created for the sole convenience of the father who needs to pass of his daughter into the care of another man...but now that we've gotten our independence and that we earn our own living, there is really no purpose in being someone's wife. Why can't we love as many people as we want in a lifetime? I mean monogamy is really a very unnatural state that has been forced on us for centuries, by screwed up religious leaders that are completely out of touch with their own sexuality.

Although Finn is engaged to be married, this statement suggests Finn's confusion about her own relationship and engagement. So, she asks Marianna, "if you had to choose between marrying a lover and marrying a friend, who would you choose?" Marianna replies: "I would marry my soul-mate." "Who is it?" asks Finn. Marianna proceeds to share her story with Finn and about the years she spent in Paris and the one man she met at a bistro who made a significant imprint on her life. This man came up to Marianna who had been crying "over the end of [her] latest relationship." The man consoled her and together they shared laughter, poetry and conversation as the day became night. Marianna invited the man to have dinner with her, but he declined. He stated: "I already have a dinner to go to, with my wife." As he turned to leave, he handed Marianna a piece of paper with a poem that he had written on it. Marianna gives the poem to Finn to read. Marianna's "soul-mate" wrote,
Young lovers seek perfection. Old lovers learn the art of sewing shreds together and seeing beauty in a multiplicity of patches.

This narrative shared by Marianna tells a story about the people we encounter in life, many of whom are not a part of your life for long, but make a significant impact and help to show you what is important in life. This particular story encourages Finn to reflect on what is important to her. Her brief, yet steamy, affair with Leon, can be interpreted in terms of the message communicated in Marianna's story. The message is: through a brief encounter with Leon, Finn is able to come to the realization that marrying Sam is the right decision for her. Furthermore, the poem mentioned above speaks directly to Finn. She is seeking perfection in her relationship with Sam. Her relationship with Leon is new, exciting and perfect in the physical sense. In contrast, her relationship with Sam is old, familiar and requires energy from both Finn and Sam to succeed. However, within those differences is where the beauty of their relationship lies.

Like Em and Anna, Marianna also assumes the role of counselor. As mentioned above Finn asks Marianna if she did get married would she choose to marry a friend or a lover? Marianna replies: I would marry my soul-mate" (emphasis mine). Marianna does not provide Finn with a specific answer or directives, but rather tells her story. This narrative concludes with a poem that encourages Finn not to "seek perfection" but to "learn the art of sewing shreds together and seeing beauty in a multiplicity of patches."
Implications of Collaborative Storytelling

The two stories of Anna and Marianna are linked together, not only because they are mother and daughter, but because they are told in sequence and their messages coincide. First, Anna shares a story of "mistakes" and the strength to overcome, followed by the Marianna's story which depicts the importance of various people we encounter in life and the important impact they make, regardless of how brief the encounter. These stories work together in order to establish identification with Finn and the female audience. This is accomplished in that they meet the requirements of narrative rationality. First, the stories are coherent in that they formulate a structurally sound argument. This is accomplished because Anna and Marianna are consistent in their storytelling and they each are proof of their reasoning. For example, Anna resisted the pressure to give her baby up for adoption. She raised Marianna by herself and ultimately found "the love of [her] daughter." She overcame adversity and oppression to succeed and do what she wanted, without succumbing to societal expectations. Secondly, the stories illustrate what Finn and the female audience "know to be true in [their] lives" (Fisher, 1984, p. 2). As mentioned above, Anna's story of her sexual encounter comes before Finn's affair with Leon. This story provides a backdrop for Finn to interpret and assess the meaning of the story in her own life.

While the experiences of Finn are not analogous to the experiences of Anna and Marianna, the experiences are compatible in that the experiences of Finn, Anna and Marianna are distinctive to women. Specifically, Finn is feeling the pressure of
society's expectations for her, as a young woman of twenty-six, to marry and reproduce. Anna as a young black woman was forced to deal with an unplanned pregnancy at the tender age of seventeen. However, with the birth of her daughter Anna found love. Similarly, Finn is able to relate with Anna, because she too is having a sexual affair. Fortunately, Finn does not become pregnant. Marianna was faced with the oppressions of being an African American woman in the 1950s. Many of the prescriptives of the 1950s were directed toward women and focused on how to maintain the home and provide for their husbands and children. However, Marianna did not fit into this category. Marianna was an African American woman and she perceived herself as "too stubborn to be a wife" (Otto, 1991, p. 237).

Finn learns from her experience with Leon and the stories of Em, Anna and Marianna. These stories relate experiences of women, which include: infidelity, an unplanned pregnancy, and the resistance to succumb to society's traditional expectations of women to marry and assume the role of wife and mother. Ultimately, what these stories accomplish is they empower Finn to make a conscious choice to marry with the understanding that her marriage might be successful or it might fail. Specifically, this is evident in the story of Marianna. Marianna was profoundly affected by her chance encounter with a man she refers to as her "soul-mate" and taught her the meaning of love. Similar to Marianna (and the other women as well), Finn is searching to find where love resides. Moreover, all three stories discussed in this chapter, in addition to the stories mentioned in Chapter Two, work in conjunction to establish identification with Finn and the viewing audience. Finn draws the
following conclusions about love and marriage. Finn comes to her own personal
decision that love and marriage is not perfect or a "fairy tale" with an ending that is
"happily ever after." She concludes, that while there are many risks to take and
mistakes to be made, finding love, wherever it resides, is worth it. In one of the final
scenes of the film Finn is shown with Sam and shares her newly discovered
interpretation of love. Her assessment resides in a comparison she makes between
love and what Anna says about making a quilt:

You have to choose your combination carefully, the right choices
will enhance your quilt. The wrong choices will dull your quilt, hide
their original beauty. There are no rules you can follow. You have
to go by instinct and you have to be brave.

Ultimately, then, what this statement displays are Finn's significant conclusion
about her relationship with Sam. The collaboration of stories enable Finn to take
responsibility for her life and come to some tangible decisions in light of the stories
she has heard. The women's stories empower Finn, by forcing her to reflect on her
actions, specifically having an affair with Leon, and weighing that purely physical
relationship with the relationship she has more completely developed with Sam. Finn
concludes that she is attached to Sam and that giving up her relationship with him
would be a mistake, and conclusively decides that is not a mistake she is willing to
make.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

The film *How to Make an American Quilt* brings women's private communication patterns "public" and ultimately invites the audience of the film to identify with the women in the film. In essence, then, the film enacts the power of women's communication as a way to establish identification. As mentioned in Chapter One, Burke offers four explanations of how identification is established. First, identification as a transcendent goal; second, identification as "cooperative" rhetoric; third, identification as a strategy; and lastly, identification as an outcome of interaction. In this study I have argued that the film *How to Make an American Quilt* employs metaphors and collaborative storytelling as a means to establish identification as a transcendent goal and as an outcome of interaction between women. I have argued in this study the importance of women's private communication patterns as meaningful and unique. These communication patterns emerged from their distinct experiences as American women in the mid-twentieth century. These communication patterns in all women groups are identified as empowering, supportive, and collaborative. Thus, in the process of collectively sharing their personal experiences, women engage in what is referred to consciousness-raising. Consciousness-raising is a communication process which makes the personal experiences public and allows women the ability to see that their experiences and feelings of oppression are not an individual problem, but a result of some expectations placed on women by American society. Furthermore, I maintain these experiences are identified by the film makers
and older women's use of metaphors and collaborative storytelling and function to invite identification among American women communicators. This chapter provides a discussion what my definition of narrative and how narrative might be configured in a distinctive way in light of this study. Additionally, I explore the implications of metaphor and collaborative storytelling in the communication field. Finally, I examine the implications of these rhetorical strategies for women's communication.

Narrative Configuration

This study defines narrative in a distinct way and provides a new understanding of narrative as a result of engaging the film *How to Make an American Quilt* and analyzing it. The elements that make up the configuration of narrative are not new, rather it is the interplay of elements that define narrative in a distinctive way. These elements include stories of private but shared experiences, stories that are diffusive not discrete, processual, have no clear or single meaning, and are collaborative, interactive, and dynamic. Furthermore, narrative can be understood as a form of communication that is understood through a gendered lens. Narrative in this case encompasses the elements mentioned above and is uniquely adapted to the situation of women. As argued in this study, many women in all-women groups are invited to share their experiences, tell their own stories, and engage in the process of consciousness-raising. The sharing of individual experiences in a collective manner allows women to develop a model of communication that is configured in distinctive and significant ways.
Implications of Metaphors and Collaborative Storytelling

Following the research of rhetorical scholars who have studied the utilization of metaphors a rhetorical strategy, I have provided an analysis of the metaphors in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*. The employment of metaphors in this film reiterates the significant impact of metaphors in the communication field. As I demonstrated in my analysis, the metaphors, such as the quilt, women and nature, water and rock, appeal to the subcultures and experiences of some American women. These metaphors function to empower women, based on shared experiences. In other words, the metaphors in this film work to establish identification, because they illustrate the degree of shared substance between the women in the film, Finn and the viewing audience. Metaphors function strategically to bring together two items that on the surface may appear dissimilar, but when uncovered the similarity between the two items is clear. As such, the metaphors and storytelling in this film establish identification as a transcendent goal by enhancing the similarities between the older women in the quilting bee, Finn, and the female viewing audience. I argued that the employment of such metaphors is an essential element of this film, the film makers, and women storytellers. These metaphors specifically communicate and depict the shared experiences of women in American from both the 1940s and 1950s.

Furthermore, as I argued the quilt serves as a metaphor of the collaborative storytelling of the women in the quilting bee. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the implications of collaborative storytelling for the overall story in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*. A discussion of the implications not only is necessary, but
will allow me to identify how my analysis contributes to narrative theory. As mentioned above, I believe the stories represented in the film are different from the stories analyzed by other communication scholars (e.g., Fisher, 1982, 1987, 1989; Lewis, 1987; McGuire, 1977). I maintain the "moral" of the story in collaborative storytelling is more ambiguous and less linear, than typical male modeled stories, with no pre-defined goal or objective. This section will examine my claim, by looking at two areas. First, I explore the implications of collaborative storytelling in the film itself; and second, I will explore how this collaborative storytelling contributes to the narrative theory.

The experiences of women as they are communicated throughout the film by various women, represent different ordeals, but similar experiences of oppression. The women in the quilting bee have authority based on their own personal experience, but are not presented as authorities or "master storytellers." More appropriately, in accordance with Fisher's narrative (1984) the women fall into the role of "counselors." The stories serve as an invitation for Finn to contemplate her life and encourage Finn to find her own way, rather than specifically dictating what she should do with her life. In other words, there is not a decisive call to action or a prescribed set of rules to follow in life. Finn is more than a passive listener, these stories represented in the quilt, invite her to take the message and assess it in terms of her own life, values and expectations; thus, deciphering for herself what the "moral" of the story is. Similarly, this is precisely what the collaborative storytelling encourages for Finn. Finn is "young" and is looking for specific answers to her questions and explicit prescriptions
for a "perfect" life. However, what she receives instead is the ability to take the various pieces of information, evaluate it and formulate her own conclusions. The beauty of this is that it lies in the collaborative efforts of women's voices in the film.

In Foss & Foss' (1991) book, Women Speak, contributor T.L. Burk, is "fascinated by the collaborative nature of women's stories and by how they unfold through the joint participation of women (p. 90). The stories in the film are shared in a collective fashion which serves to unify the various women in the film in their effort to share with Finn their personal experiences of love and betrayal, dreams and losses. As Finn wrestles with various decisions and concerns in her life, the women confide their personal stories, which are organized with the same precision and strategic placement of each patch of the quilt they are making. As Anna states, "you have to choose your colors carefully, the wrong colors can dull the images and hide their original meaning." This is parallel to the placement of the stories in the film. Each story is strategically positioned and told at a time that will allow it to have significance for Finn. For example, the story of infidelity shared by Em unfolds after Finn suspects Sam of cheating on her. Sophia's story is strategically placed as well. It is shared before Finn's encounter and subsequent fight with Sam concerning their impending marriage. This is important to note because Sophia's story emphasizes the expectations placed upon women and illustrates the sacrifice of identity when a woman gets married. These are issues with which Finn struggles, thus the women in the quilting bee, by actively involving themselves in the storytelling process, assist Finn in her efforts to come to terms with the various implications of marriage.
Moreover, the collaborative storytelling meets Fisher's criteria concerning narrative rationality. The stories meet the criteria of narrative probability and fidelity. That is, the stories provide the structural integrity to create a clear, coherent argument, and the stories represent what we know to be true in our lives (Fisher, 1984). I maintain that when told together the stories appeal to the experiences and beliefs of Finn, and the viewing audience. Moreover, the stories reflect and appeal to society's values. Many women in the 1990s (i.e. Finn) face burdens and struggles resulting from their prescribed roles as wife and mother to the expectation to climb the corporate ladder, for example.

Therefore, it would be impossible for one woman and one story to illustrate the expectations of the women of the 1990s or to accurately depict the experiences of women in the 1940s and 1950s. While some women in America share in the feeling of oppression, resulting from their position as women, many women experience those patterns of oppression differently. Therefore, in order to create a message that relates to the beliefs of the audience, in an effort to establish identification with and empower the audience, a collaboration of stories is necessary.

In addition to meeting several of the criteria of Fisher's Narrative, the collaborative storytelling, in this film, contributes significantly to the narrative theory rationale in that it represents one way of relating "truth" about some American women's lives. As mentioned above, the stories shared by the women make sense and present a clear, informal argument in that they are told in collaboration. The stories do not stand alone, because alone they do not represent a complete or coherent
message to Finn or the female viewing audience. As an illustration,

Imagine that a single individual had written up an exhaustive description of a sedated elephant as observed from one spot for one hour and then, with delighted self-satisfaction, had heralded that achievement as a complete, accurate, and profound account of the elephant (Frye, 1973, p. 103).

I believe Frye's anecdote parallels the necessity of collaborative efforts in human communication and more specifically in the storytelling in the film *How to Make an American Quilt*. This communication pattern is necessary if we are to develop a true and accurate account of the condition of some women's experiences in twentieth century America, as well as the true definition of narration as a rational theory.

Finn's ability to determine whether the stories represent a coherent message lies in the fact that she is able to evaluate them, collectively, against each other and determine the consistency of their message to her and evaluate and assess the meaning of the stories in her own life. This parallels the patches of the quilt. Each piece is unique, yet the individual pieces cannot stand alone. As such, the quilt, as a collaboration of personal experiences and stories, is a symbol of the connection of individuality and the necessary connections that define the characters' lives; and assist Finn in coming to a definition of her own life and what it means to be a woman in America.

**Implications for Women's Communication**

The film *How to Make an American Quilt* offers a view of women's private communication, more specifically collaborative storytelling, as a method to establish
identification and a renewed self identity, as well as a consciousness-raising strategy. The sharing of stories, in the film *How to Make an American Quilt* provides an opportunity for women to bring their "personal" experience to the "public" realm. Furthermore, there are political implications resulting from the women's communication patterns in addition to assisting Finn in her decision making process. While Finn's response to hearing this collection of stories seems quite personal, there are political elements to the understanding she (and possibly the female audience) achieves. As argued in this study, this film does not suggest that one story is more important than any other story. Rather, each story is an essential piece in the "meaning-making" process. The stories are derived from the various experiences of individual women and while the stories are shared in a private all-womens group, the intent of the stories, like consciousness-raising, is political. These stories are brought public through the film medium and they contribute to the consciousness-raising process. The purpose of women sharing their individual stories is "to make the personal political; to create awareness (through shared experiences) that what were thought to be personal deficiencies and individual problems are common and shared" (Campbell, 1973, p. 79). The film makers and women storytellers seek to illustrate, with the use of metaphors, the expectations of some women in the 1940s and 1950s. And, of equal significance the film sheds light on the expectations of women in the 1990s. For example, the news media, beauty, health, and fashion industries, as well as political policies in the United States disseminate conflicting messages to American women. This film seeks to display (in a somewhat modified form) the direct
implications of these messages and conservative policies directed towards women. Furthermore, the film illustrates how these values contribute to some women's inability to secure a sense of identity and feel secure in their position as women. The film's conclusions are, of course, built on the experiences of women. For example, Finn shares her struggle with her thesis, impending marriage, and expectations to have a baby; and Em shares her experience with an unfaithful husband. These testimonies, along with the contextual information I provide in Chapter One, illustrate that the happiness and well being of a woman is (and has been) put on the back burner (so to speak). Women in America continue to feel the pressure to sacrifice their dreams and desires for the well being of others and the realization that they are a gender "that in many ways is still considered second" (Faludi, 1991).

The sharing of stories assists in heightening the awareness of the some significant concerns and issues that women deal with. Furthermore, the stories encourage others (future generations, etc.) to benefit from the wisdom, mistakes, and experiences of oppression that shaped previous generations of women, including their mothers and grandmothers. In this section, I will outline the implications of this film, as it impacts women in America and women's communication.

Women's communication, specifically collaborative storytelling, is distinctive because they often do not meet the "typical" standard of a sound and coherent narrative. They are not fully developed nor do they illustrate a notable event, but rather, they illustrate "ordinary" experiences of women's lives (Burk, T.L. cited in Foss & Foss, 1991). The series of narratives in this film portray a communication pattern
that empowers women on two levels. First, within the film, collaborative storytelling functions to assist the women in the quilting bee work through their personal crises, thus providing a renewed sense of identity. Second, the female viewing audience of the film is invited to identify with the women in the film, in essence, and the film empowers them to enact the power of women’s communication patterns and its functions.

Collaborative storytelling enables the women of the quilting bee to work through personal crises and establish a renewed identity. These experiences, then, assist in the transformational process each of these women goes through by the film’s end. In the process of sharing their stories with Finn, the women are able to see their own lives through a new lens, thus reconciling their past dreams/experiences with their present day reality. There is a suspension of time which goes with each of the stories, drawing history into the present and providing an opportunity for the women to reevaluate their lives and the women they have become. For example, the story of Sophia illustrates this point quite effectively. Sophia, as a young girl was a diver. However, when she became a wife and mother she was forced to forfeit her dream and ultimately relinquish her sense of identity. In one of the preliminary scenes, when Finn first arrives at her grandmother’s house and is organizing her work material, Sophia approaches Finn and states: "shouldn’t you be using a computer." Finn replies: "I don't trust them, they lose things." Sophia responds: "not if you know what you’re doing." Sophia is depicted as an embittered woman with little tolerance for those individuals around her. As the scene continues, Sophia continues to harp on
Finn. This is exemplified when Finn's great-aunt Glady asks her to tell them all about the topic of her thesis. Finn explains her topic (women's handiwork is done with a sense of ritual) and most of the women in the quilting bee accept it. However, Sophia states: "I thought you were writing something about the Victorians?" Finn replies: "I was. I just became more interested in this subject." Sophia states: "You didn't finish it did you? Well why not?" Sophia is not very accepting of Finn and is obviously an extremely unhappy woman. It seems as though since she feels bad about herself, she verbally insults Finn in an attempt to make herself feel better about herself.

However, through the process of having her story shared with Finn and coming to an understanding of Finn's life. Sophia begins to break down the rock wall she had built around herself. In one of the final scenes of the film, a wind storm tears through the town of Grasse and blows the only copy of Finn's completed thesis throughout the neighborhood. Finn's thesis was not saved and therefore must be rewritten and reorganized. Finn is unsure if she can do this and tells her grandmother. "I'd have to go back reconstruct and rewrite the whole thing; I just can't do that." "How nice it must be to be so unattached to something," her grandmother responds. This comment allows Finn to come to the realization that her thesis is important to her and worth the painstaking efforts to reassemble it. Similarly the women in the quilting bee are able to reflect on their lives and experience moments of realization about what is important to them, specifically where love resides. This is well illustrated in the film makers continuing narrative of Sophia.
The windstorm that rips through Grasse deposits pages of Finn's thesis in Sophia's backyard. As Sophia attempts to collect the scattered paper, she notices that a couple of the pages had landed in the pond her husband Preston had built for her many years ago. In an effort to retrieve the page she slips off her shoes and steps into the pond. Stepping into the water is the beginning of Sophia's transformation from a discontented old woman, to a woman who is able to reconcile her unfortunate past with her present day reality. In other words, the water is beneficial for Sophia and allows her to restore her former foundation of identity. As a young woman Sophia was a diver, thus by returning to the water Sophia is able to recapture her youthful identity. This transformation is illustrated in the next scene. Sophia, while quilting with the other women, notices Finn reassembling her thesis and steps away from the quilting frame. She states to Finn: "I gave the pages of your paper to your grandmother...they were wrinkled, so I ironed them. I singed one of the pages, I think you're only missing a word or two." "Oh, okay that's fine," Finn replies somewhat nervously. Finn is taken back by Sophia's kind gesture and conscious attempt to establish a line of communication with her. Then Sophia compliments Finn when she states, "I read what you wrote, it's really good. I'd like to read the whole thing when you're done. You're a good writer. I was a diver" (emphasis mine). Sophia utilizes the wind storm ordeal, stepping into the pond, and reading a portion of Finn's thesis as a means to make sense of her own life. This is accomplished by Sophia actively reflecting on who she was, a diver; what she was forced to become, a wife and mother; who she is now, a bitter old woman and ultimately reconciling the two. Due
to societal expectations of society during "her time" of maturing into a woman, Sophia was forced to live a life in which her dreams and identity had to be sacrificed for the good of her marriage and family. This process allows Sophia to see that she still possesses those qualities of her youth and is still a diver.

In the final scene of the film, Sophia is shown diving off the high-dive at the local swimming pool. The message from this scene is that by creating identification with the other quilting bee women and Finn, Sophia is able to alleviate the bitterness of her past and emerge with a renewed sense of identity. Accordingly, Eisenstein (1983) states: "the impact of this experience was a kind of transformation of consciousness, a redefinition of identity, in which a woman's sense of herself became readjusted to fit the new reality that she encountered (p. 39). Additionally, this demonstrates what Burke refers to identification as an outcome of interaction. As Cheney (1985) stated it is also important, in the identification and persuasion process, to explore the "rhetor's effect on herself"(p. 93). As a result of several occurrences, which include: having her story shared, reading part of Finn's thesis, and talking to Finn about her youth, a "redefinition of identity" is achieved by Sophia, as well as the other women in the quilting bee, and serves as an inheritance of wisdom, given to Finn in the form of stories and in represented in the quilt. The stories shared in collaboration provide Finn with new wisdom and personal, yet thorough history into the expected roles and behaviors of women in the past, and how they have changed and remained the same over time. Thus, with the inheritance of hard earned wisdom Finn is better equipped to deal with various struggles and personal issues in her own.
life.

The second implication for women's communication is the series of narratives in the film serve as an invitation for the female viewing audience to identify with the women in the film. This is significant because it brings women's distinctive storytelling communication public, creates identification and empowers women to enact the power of women's distinctive communication patterns and recognize how it functions in providing "eloquence" and meaning to women's lives (Foss & Foss, 1991).

*How to Make an American Quilt* brings the power of women's private communication to the public realm, through the film medium. Women, by sharing their personal experiences, feel less isolated and are able to face their past. This is accomplished in the film by demonstrating how the women in the private communication pattern of storytelling were able to share their individual experiences. The women, in this exercise of collaborative storytelling, serve to raise the consciousness of each other by bringing their "personal" experiences "public."

Moreover, and significantly, the film makers, in their production of this film, serve to take the level of "public" awareness to another level, by depicting women's distinctive communication patterns in a medium which is available for the general population of women.

The collaborative narrative form results in identification and encourages women in the film's audience to participate in the identification process because each female audience member is invited to see herself as a potential, central character in these
stories and, in that effort, these stories give a voice to the various experiences of some women. These stories are expressed in a voice, which speaks to the language of the inner voice of a certain population of American women (Burke, 1969). The stories in the film attempt to validate the experiences of some American women. The women storytellers engage in the process of consciousness-raising, which attempts to make the personal political. The quilting bee women share personal experiences, such as marriage, death, infidelity and motherhood, and demonstrate how certain societal constructs and expectations have contributed to the oppression of some women. The collection of stories present women's understanding of the events in their lives as distinct and meaningful. Furthermore, the women do not offer their stories as the "Truth," but "rather, the goal is to provide explanatory maps that serve as starting points from which women can begin to make sense of the experiences in their lives" (Hayden, 1997, p. 157). The identification that is established with the female audience allows them to accept the messages communicated in the form of collaborative storytelling. The film makers employ metaphors as a means to establish identification among women, as do the women in the quilting bee in their collaborative storytelling. These metaphors provide an interpretation of the experiences of some women in America, experiences which are focused primarily around, but not restricted to, the oppression of women in the role of wife and mother. In other words, the film makers and the women in the quilting bee encourage identification based on their common experience of being a woman in America. This is illustrated, in the film, by the disparate stories shared by the women. While each woman experienced various
measures of oppression and various types of experiences, ultimately each of them had a destiny determined beyond the realm of their own control. In other words, their behaviors and roles were dictated by the expectations of the eras (1940s and 1950s) in which they matured.

The identification process, specifically consciousness-raising in the collaborative storytelling of the women in *How to Make an American Quilt*, demonstrates the power of women's communication and how it functions. This in essence takes identification a step further to what I mentioned above. Consciousness-raising is an attempt to make the "personal political." In other words, it is a communication framework among women that encourages the belief that women's experiences and "problem[s] with no name" (Friedan, 1963) are the result of societal expectations and pressure, and not something personal or something wrong with the individual woman or what she was doing. According to Campbell (1974), consciousness raising involves the effort to make the "personal political" as an effort to heighten the understanding that personal issues and felt inadequacies were shared, and were a consequence of the oppression experienced as American women.

Conclusion

The analysis I have provided of the film *How to Make an American Quilt* is not intended to profess that women's private communication patterns, specifically storytelling, are superior to any other form of communication (male or female). My intent was to offer a rhetorical critique of a specific film that I maintain highlights and
brings public the experiences of some American women. I have demonstrated how collaborative storytelling and the employment of metaphors work to create identification between the older women in the film, Finn and the viewing audience. The vivid and expressive stories, along with dramatic metaphors offer a profound look at the experiences of some American women. These experiences are specifically highlighted in the film makers' and women's employment of metaphors within their stories as a strategy to communicate and make public the expected roles and behaviors of women in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the 1990s. Moreover, I maintain my study advances the narrative theory, by expanding the narrative to include an analysis of collaborative storytelling as a way to effectively meet the criteria of narrative rationality, including probability and fidelity. I have shown that the women's collaborative storytelling creates a rational story based on the "logic of good reason" and works to create stories, that when told in conjunction, present a coherent argument and do not proclaim specific and precise directives for Finn and the viewing audience, but rather end ambiguously, inviting the audience to interpret and come to their own judgements, about loving relationships and where love resides for them.
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