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**THE BALANCING ACT: HOW WORKING MOTHERS MANAGE HOME, WORK,
AND FAMILY**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF NURSING SCIENCE

in the

GRADUATE DIVISION

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

San Francisco



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by
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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the working mothers who generously shared their time and powerful words with me. I will try to honor each of them by accurately sharing their collective experiences with others who are engaged in the Balancing Act.

Throughout this experience I have been reminded of my own journey as a working mother and the associated effort to manage home, work and family. I am fortunate to have a career that never fails to be satisfying and challenging. However, the joy of my life is being a part of a growing and dynamic family. In that context I have experienced unconditional love and support as a daughter, wife, mother, niece, family member and friend. They have all kept me centered and focused on my life's priorities and valued me as a thinking and caring woman of both the 20th and 21st centuries. To George, TJ, Kari, and Victor, you will always have my heart and my love. To my extended family and friends who patiently encouraged me, thank-you for your unfailing devotion even in my moments of great procrastination and indecision. My thanks to the matriarchs and patriarchs of past generations in our family that lead the way and served as role models. I especially want to name, Shirley, Marna, Palma, Rita, and Vic.

I hope the next generation of young people in our family will see my pursuit of a doctoral degree as an example that there are no barriers to one's educational dreams except those that we create. May they also know that education is the journey of a lifetime and not the goal.

Preface

In 1975, I became an OB/GYN Nurse Practitioner upon completion of my Masters Degree. It was a relatively new area for nursing practice and many of us at that time felt like pioneers as we forged our way in the health care arena that proclaimed a singular focus on women's health care needs. It was a big practice area covering everything that affected women's reproductive and gynecological health. It was also a time of great learning for women and about women. We were finally being recognized as "worthy" of health care that would meet our unique needs and wants. The lessons from those early practice years have never been forgotten. While my practice area has tended to focus on undergraduate education of baccalaureate nurses, I have remained a strong advocate for women's health and the need to provide woman centered health care to all women. My dissertation research is one more phase in a lifelong nursing career focusing on women and their special needs and issues.

On my journey, I have been mentored and counseled by colleagues and friends who are role models for excellence in both research and practice. My gratitude for unlimited patience and willingness to teach me how to be a nurse researcher and scholar is extended to my committee members, Dr. Janice Humphreys, Chairperson, Dr. Juliene Lipson, and Dr. Susan Proctor. They encouraged me to do research that would be meaningful and insightful, as well as rigorous. They understood my passion for qualitative research and supported my efforts. I have tried to meet their expectations and challenge.

Throughout my research, several colleagues and friends have readily offered thoughtful and stimulating critique to improve my research efforts as well as provide numerous working mother anecdotes from their nursing experiences. A special thanks to Angela Albright, PhD, RN, Virginia Anderson, BA, MA, Cynthia Greenberg, PhD, RN, Peggy Goebel, DNS(c), RN, Suzanne Sutherland, PhD, RN., Peg Timney, RN., and Verle Waters, MS, RN. Our scholarly discussions were instrumental in helping me once again to expand the vision of my professional role. Our “from the heart” conversations helped me sort through working mother “issues” and better understand emic versus etic viewpoints.

My research efforts would not have come to fruition without the “birthing skills” of Dr. Jeanne DeJoseph. Over the past years she has been an advisor, mentor, and friend. She challenged me to think beyond the comfortableness of twenty-five years of nursing practice and dared me to believe that I could engage in a research agenda. Her encouragement and support goes beyond any words and her friendship can only be described in my heart.

It is my hope that this research provides the reader with a better understanding of how some working mothers manage. For those nurses involved in women’s health care, I want you to be compelled as I am, to continue the quest to understand how women manage and how we can provide for their health care needs. I invite you to join me in this new century as we care for and about women and create health care that is reflective of our passion.

ABSTRACT

The Balancing Act - How Working Mothers Manage Home, Work, and Family

Brenda Hanson Smith, RN, DNS, OGNP

Women with young children are entering the public labor force in growing numbers. Understanding how working mothers combine person, health and environment is central to providing woman centered health care. This study examined how working mothers manage home, work, family and self care. It specifically focused on the balance and interplay of the multifaceted lives of working mothers as they revised and rethought the traditions and rituals that define their experience.

Ethnography and grounded theory were used to explore the culture of working mothers and the ways that they achieved balance in their daily lives. Pertinent research questions included, "What behaviors are exhibited by working mothers in relation to their home, work, family and self care?" and "How is balance achieved?" The use of participant observation and semi-structured interviews coupled with constant comparative and coding techniques yielded information about the culture of middle class working women with children and how they manage complex lives.

The results of the study demonstrated that there are subsets of balance that include balance between work and home, family and home, and work and family. All required the working mother's attention in varying degrees and at differing times. The ability to achieve balance came about through the use of

several balancing behaviors such as relinquishing, controlling, organizing, and negotiating. It was apparent that working mothers who saw connections between all of the subsets also felt more comfortable with the cause-and-effect relationships that were associated with the “ripple effect.” Understanding of the “ripple effect” was an important cornerstone of the balancing act.

The “Working Mothers Model” evolved as a conceptual model to explain the intricacies of the Balancing Act. Balancing behaviors were employed by all women at different times and in different situations but were seldom specifically labeled or identified as strategies used to achieve balance. The importance of empowering working mothers with tools or balancing behaviors to manage multifaceted lives was integral to the “Balancing Act.”

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The arrival of the 21st century sharpened the awareness that change was occurring in the United States that profoundly affected American women and societal norms. Presently two of the most salient issues in this country are the changing work and family roles of American women and the promotion of health in the American population (Reifman, Biernant, & Lang, 1991). It seems as these two issues meld into one, that nurses and health care providers, with a responsibility for health promotion, must consider and address the specific health care needs of working women who are mothers.

Women have always worked in the home with the family and, throughout the majority of the past century many women have taken a part in the paid work force as well. As increasing numbers of present day women who are mothers enter the public labor force, they often face many realities that lag behind social norms. An example of this is the belief that mothers should be home with infants and young children. Central to this problem are long held notions of motherhood that are possessed by both men and women in the American culture. These beliefs may sharply contrast with the values in the work place. When viewed together with the demographic changes of the past century, it is clear that nurses must understand and address the problems associated with being a working mother. The problem for nurses and other health care providers is how to plan and implement health care that is truly woman centered and respectful of

these unique needs and wants. The insight necessary to provide such care comes from the study of the multifaceted life that is the "everyday" experience of working mothers. This was the focus of the body of research presented in this dissertation.

At the heart of providing quality health care for working mothers is the need to know and understand how they balance home, work, family and self care needs. The purpose of this ethnographic study was to examine the culture of a group of working mothers with young children, so as to better describe and understand the experiences occurring in the context of their daily life. The way those experiences shape the day-to-day decisions that are an integral part of the working mothers' journey are pivotal to this research. They provide the template for studying the "balancing act," or how working mothers manage.

The dearth of information about working mothers highlights a compelling need for research in this area. The unanswered questions that fueled this research included: how do working mothers walk the tightrope and do the balancing act? What are the daily experiences for the women who are employed and have a home and a family? When and how do they take care of themselves? Who, if anyone, helps them? Where did they learn the skills that enable them to balance home, family, work and self-care?

To answer these questions and others that were generated from the research, it is best to begin within the context of motherhood in 20th century capitalist United States. An understanding of the historical context in which a

problem is rooted can provide important and empowering information with which to create change.

Historical Perspective

During the past fifty years there has been a continuous increase in women's participation in the labor force. In 1940, one fourth of the women worked outside the home. By 1970, 43% of women age 16 years and over were in the labor force and by 1989, 57% were employed (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991). In 1940, 9% of married women worked; by 1970, 40% of married women worked. By 1976, 31% of mothers with children under age 1 were in the labor force either full or part time. By 1980, 35% to 41% of women with children under 18 years of age worked, and 45% to 50% of mothers with preschool children were employed outside of the home (Howell, 1983). In 1990, approximately 56% of married women returned to work before their infants were one year old (Tulman & Fawcett, 1990). Between 1970 and 1986, the number of working mothers with children three years old or younger in intact marriages doubled from 26% to 51% (Matthews and Rodin, 1989). By 1998, 71.8% of mothers in intact marriages were employed outside the home. 73% of the 31.3 million women with children older than 1 were in the labor force. Of married mothers with children three years old or younger, 60% were employed. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999).

The notion of "work" has been largely transformed for both sexes during the 20th century. In addition to the fact that America is a country of immigrants with different definitions of work, it is generally held to be true that with the advent of

industrialization the concept of "work" also changed (Vicinus, 1985). Prior to the industrial revolution, family units worked together. In the United States, a predominately agrarian culture at the time, families shared the work to be done, which included multiple tasks associated with farming the land, food procurement and preparation, livestock care and management. The work to be done occurred at home for both men and women and the structure was somewhat flexible, thus accommodating the needs of children and aged family members who were included in the family unit. The home environment very often was multi-generational, providing work responsibilities for all who were able. It was an accepted norm that family members of all ages were cared for. Therefore, when a family member became ill or unable to care for himself or herself, the women in the family would do so and it was acknowledged to be women's work.

It can be said that women have always worked. However, industrialization separated work and home and gave a new, but not necessarily better, look at the woman's workplace (Kessler-Harris, 1981). Work came to be viewed as that which occurred in the public domain, in the public work force outside of the home. The work that occurred in the private domain of the home or household was considered to be domestic work (Sanday, 1974). Quite simply, work outside of the home was productive and earned money with which to buy goods that were mass produced. The work that was needed to manage a home or household and done for the family, on the other hand, was considered of no value in the market place. For women, "homesteading" was replaced by

"housework" and became the primary responsibility of the woman for her family. It was characterized as less gratifying work than that of previous times (Illich, 1982).

Ironically, the woman who was working at home doing agricultural or cottage industry type labor had greater access to her children compared to the woman who worked in the formal work force. The housewife was left with the primary responsibility for child-rearing. For middle class women, this set the mother-child dyad separate from the rest of the family and community; public and private parts of lives were dichotomized. Three to four generations ago, mothers who worked outside of the home, even out of sheer economic necessity, violated the norms of role definition and risked the scorn of peers for neglecting their primary role as mothers (Lawrence, 1989).

Early census reports do not show the extent of women's work except when it occurred outside of the home. Historically, it is known that many women labored, regardless of socioeconomic or marital status, in low-paying jobs and wage-earning domestic type activities such as taking in laundry and ironing, growing vegetables for sale, providing room and board in their homes, sewing and mending, and a variety of other "invisible" (Baber & Allen 1992, p.179) but necessary jobs.

From the turn of the century until the Depression there was a 40% increase in the number of married women in the work force (Zigler & Frank, 1988). However, the Depression was a dark time for women in the labor force, with laws

such as the 1932 Economy Act declaring that the spouse (wife) would be the first fired if both husband and wife were employed by the government (Scharf, 1980). The advent of World War II changed a nation's attitude, for a time at least, about where it was socially acceptable for women to work. The necessity to have workers in the aircraft and steel industries caused gender barriers to be pushed aside, in favor of maintaining vital war efforts. The Lanham Act facilitated women with children entering into the labor force by providing subsidized day care for children of working mothers (Kessler-Harris, 1982). National economic needs proved to be a great gender mediator for working mothers during the war years.

While the end of World War II saw the return of men to the heavy industrial, aircraft, and steel mill jobs, it did not end women's increasingly active participation in the labor force. By the mid 1950's, over 30% of mothers with school-aged children were employed (Nye & Hoffman, 1963). Women were going to work and continuing to work while raising a family. The notion of women working in the labor force until they became mothers and then not working again until their children were grown and gone was becoming less commonplace.

The changes that began in the 1960's and continued well into the 1970's were profound and lasting. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared discrimination in the labor market illegal. The advent of the birth control pill increased contraceptive choice and reliability for women, giving them greater control of reproduction. Betty Friedan (1977) challenged women to aspire to more than an overly glorified housewife-mother role. It was a time of questioning the previously

held societal norms about what types of work women do and where they do it. As the traditional women's work of "keeping the house" and not earning a wage became devalued, educational and employment goals expanded for privileged women. For lower class and many middle class families, a place in the workforce was a necessity for married women due to the inability of husbands to earn a wage that could support an entire family.

The present day reasons that women work are increasingly diverse. For some the economic necessity, regardless of parental or marital status, is compelling. There are others who are heavily invested in their careers and choose to work while managing parenting as well. Regardless of working mothers' purposes for being in the work force, there are some shared stressors. The cultural norms defining a good mother, a good employee, a good wife and homemaker, are still present day concerns, requiring the working mother to mediate the conflict between an educational/occupational role and the traditional wife/mother role. The decision to be employed or to remain at home was a mighty struggle for women as this past century closed. This decision is pressure laden and influenced by economics, culture, personal values and beliefs, marital status and family dynamics. The "crux of the time is choice" (Swanson-Kaufman, 1989 p. 102). While not all women have the same opportunities, they nevertheless will have to make choices that affect their personal lives and those of their family members. They cannot escape the issues that managing family, work and home present nor can they escape the simultaneous pain and pleasure

that accompany the freedom of choice (Swanson-Kaufman, 1989) available to woman at the beginning of the 21st century.

Motherhood as Ideology

"Anatomy is destiny" has become a trite but accurate phrase which unfortunately reflects often held societal attitudes toward the role of women. In an effort to comprehend the lived experience of a working mother, it is necessary to understand the historical, sociological, economic and psychological explanations for notions of motherhood that exist today.

Dinnerstein (1976) has critiqued the notion of motherhood, pointing out how women are seen as mothers and mothers as women; thus women come to be regarded as a consequence of their involvement with children. She sees this ideology of the mother-child dyad as a historical, however, and believes it cannot be claimed that the current social arrangements regarding gender based roles in the family are inevitable, only socially reinforced. Dinnerstein further goes on to say that society has so well legitimized the division of human sex roles with women as the primary caretakers of children that they are perpetuated by psychic factors. It is an assumption that this arrangement must be continued and any efforts to change will cause anxiety and trepidation. She has argued that these arrangements served a patriarchal, capitalistic society which has prevented women's freedom to move into more equitable economic and political relationships with men.

Integrating a sociological and psychological perspective, Chodorow (1978),

utilized object relations theory to dismiss maternal instinct. She discusses how women want to mother for psychological reasons, having the "capacity and sense of self as maternal to do so" (p.33). Chodorow makes a strong argument that while mothering produces psychological self-definition and capacities appropriate to mothering in women, it curtails and inhibits these capacities and this self definition in men. From this it has been generalized that women "naturally" take care of children (Chodorow, 1978, p. 208). Chodorow (1978) further emphasizes the nearly exclusive maternal care of children in a relatively isolated nuclear environment is responsible for men's resentment and dread of women and their need to deny dependence and attachment to women.

Chodorow and Dinnerstein base their strong views about motherhood on a psychoanalytical perspective and are often criticized for ignoring the historical, economic and biologic factors which are a part of the larger picture. Farganis (1986) asserted that the motherhood issue is only one part of the larger and more compelling issue of gender. Swanson-Kaufman (1989) makes a point of dissecting the word motherhood and noting that mother is "another word for lover, nurturer, protector, cheerleader, madonna, martyr, carpool driver, and cookie baker" (p.102). She suggests that the use of a gender-free word such as parent or parenting "would denote the person responsible for feeding, clothing, and raising a related or adopted member of the next generation" (p. 102).

However, the point is that whatever the exact explanation or description of motherhood as an ideology may be, it is compelling and powerful. It shapes the

attitudes and behavior of both men and women and subsequently the structure of social institutions. Farganis stated, "The ideology of motherhood as an institution acts to keep women out of the labor force, or at least involve them in the labor force in ways that are not compatible to the patterns of work undertaken by men" (p.105).

As the historical perspectives on women as mothers in the workplace are joined with a view of motherhood as an ideology, there is a heightened awareness of the need to understand exactly how working mothers do manage. Clearly, the challenge for nurses is to do more for the working mother of the future than has been done in the past.

The format of the dissertation includes Chapter 2 with the literature review, an exploration of the concept of balance, critiques of contemporary theoretical models, a review of the pilot study, assumptions and the definition of terms. Chapter 3 includes the research design, setting, data collection methods, procedure and data analysis. Chapter 4 discusses the research findings including balancing behaviors, the ripple effect, subsets, decision making, division of tasks and self care activities. Chapter 5 concludes with the significance of the research, limitations of the study, implications for nursing and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

A review of pertinent literature that described the experiences of employed mothers was essential to understand the "balancing act." While there is no distinct body of literature on how working mothers manage home, family, work and self care, the literature review and critique provided a background and a foundation for an ethnographic study that examined how middle class working mothers manage a multifaceted life. Understanding how employed mothers walk the tightrope of the balancing act and juggle the commitments related to parenting and working was addressed in different ways in the literature. Some of the major research themes were social support, multiple role management, family/work conflict issues, and self-care issues. It was clear from the literature that this is both a timely and frustrating issue in women's health care as our nation makes the transition from the 20th to the 21st centuries.

For the purposes of this research effort, the terms working mother and employed mother were used interchangeably as the literature cited both with the same definition. The use of the term "career" implies that there is an investment in the job situation that goes beyond the financial remuneration. The term "job" implies work that is done for pay that may not have any long term psychological rewards. However it should be noted that most of the literature reviewed for this study did not clearly differentiate between a mother with a career and a mother with a job. While the specific definitions of work versus career are clouded, the

effects of maintaining a job or career path are the same for the working mother. She is trying to balance work, home, family, and self-care.

The literature to support this research was found in a Medline search of the nursing literature on maternal employment, maternal role transition, parenting, and employee health. While the initial search reviewed publications from 1985 to the present, it was extended to cover 1980 to the present due to the limited number of relevant articles that were found. The nursing journals that were most helpful included: Health Care for Women International, Journal of Nurse Midwifery, BIRTH, JOGNN, The American Journal of Maternal-Child Nursing, Western Journal of Nursing Research, MCN, Journal of Human Lactation, Research in Nursing and Health. When the literature review was expanded by way of Medline and Melvyl Mags searches, the social sciences yielded further pertinent literature from such sources as Journal of Marriage and the Family, Women and Health, Psychology of Women Quarterly.

The review of the literature demonstrated the dearth of knowledge about how employed mothers manage a multifaceted life with multiple responsibilities. The selected studies in this review were cited to provide a theoretical base which supported further study on the more specific concept of "balancing," or how working mothers manage home, work, family and self care.

Social Support.

The role of social support as a way to decrease the stress of maternal role taking is well known in nursing. The work of Norbeck (1981) clearly identified

how to measure the dimensions of social support. Subsequent researchers have demonstrated that functional and network forms of social support do indeed help to lessen the role transition frustrations experienced by new mothers.

Jordan (1987), using a repeated measures prospective design, examined data from the third trimester through six months postpartum to determine if there were differences in social network structure, perceived social support, marital satisfaction, or postpartum adaptation associated with maternal employment status. The sample included 48 married couples, whom Jordan described as "a financially secure and educated group of repeat parents" (p. 136). It is noteworthy that 44% of the wives were employed during their last trimester of pregnancy and 56% planned to return to work within four to 36 weeks after delivery. Jordan was unable to find statistical support for the commonly held notion that maternal employment is deleterious to the woman, the couple or parental adaptation. In fact employed women showed no difference in their social network, perceived social support, or postpartum adaptation when compared to the unemployed women in the study. While this was a small sample, the results have clinical applicability and emphasize the need for and benefit of social support.

The impact of employment on the well-being of women was studied by Pugliesi (1988) using a large ($N=534$) probability sample and Bradburn's (1969) model of well-being. Pugliesi found that the "characteristics of employment do have effects on women's social support, self-esteem, and well-being" (p. 51).

Autonomy and complexity were two aspects of employment that were studied and both had a positive effect on social support. While the study tended to validate that social support is positively affected by employment, the researcher noted that the findings were not "altogether consistent" with the predictions. Also noted was the fact that differing aspects of the work environment may account for inconsistent findings about the impact of employment on a woman. The most significant limitation of this study was that the measure of social support did not separate out the various spheres of support such as spouse, family, friends and co-workers. Therefore spurious effects cannot be completely ruled out.

Reifman, Biernat, and Lang (1991) studied 200 married professional women with children less than six years of age as part of a large longitudinal project that examined stress, coping and well-being in married professional women with young children. The researchers hypothesized that social-support would help to moderate stress symptomatology, specifically depression and physical symptoms. It was hoped that social support would protect the participants from the negative health effect of stress. Regrettably, social support did not provide any buffering effects for stress in the sample of married professional women with young children that were studied.

Unfortunately, the literature on how social support impacts employed mothers with young children was sparse. There were several studies (Collins, Tiedje, & Stommels, 1992, Majewski, 1987, Cronenwett, 1985) that focused on postpartum women and the activities and support that facilitate reentry into the

workforce after the birth of an infant. Clearly the phenomenon of social support as it relates to working mothers, is an area that lends itself to further exploration. Further studies are necessary to answer questions about how social support affects the "balancing act" experienced by working mothers and in what circumstances is social support most helpful for working mothers. It would also be noteworthy to understand how social support provided by co-workers compares to that offered by family or friends.

Multiple Role Issues.

The topic of multiple roles is critical when studying working mothers and how they manage home, work, family and self-care. The literature gave a broad and varied view of the impact of multiple roles on the lived experience of working women and working mothers. It was from the multiple role vantage point that much of the self care content about stress was considered for review. Some of the literature was very specific to working mothers managing many different roles. However, there were other articles included in this review that studied mothers who had recently given birth and were experiencing multiple roles associated with the return to the work force and the integration of new parenting behaviors. Both bodies of literature were considered as it was necessary to take a broad view of the multiple role literature to provide a theoretical foundation for further study about how working mothers with young children manage.

Angela Barron McBride (1988) noted the importance of studying the effects of women's multiple roles on mental health. She encouraged researchers to

develop theoretical models that explain how mental illness can be caused by role overload/conflict, and most importantly, how it can be prevented, limited or modified by specific interventions. McBride further noted that "the anecdotal evidence for the stress of women juggling multiple roles is extensive. What is needed now is systematic research that moves away from a count-the-burdens approach to understanding women's experience, to a dynamic approach linking perceptions of stress with subsequent coping strategies, strain and illness" (p.16).

The relationship of role theory to multiple role issues of the working mother with young children was also worth noting. Fundamental to role theory is the belief that the social world is a network of interrelated positions. Within the network are various sources that have expectations for all the social world. Turner (1991) used the analogy of a play and the terms script, players/actors and audience to describe the sources of expectations and the interactions for the social world. The use of role theory implies that there is an interactive, behavioral part of each person that is influenced by expectations of the role, the individual in the role and the person in the reciprocal role. Role theory can be very helpful in understanding maternal role taking behavior or parenting behaviors.

Role theory is not without limitations, the most noteworthy being the belief that individuals are actors of given roles. Working mothers would take umbrage with the notion that they are "acting" out multiple roles. A healthier perspective is to view the working mother as a manager of multiple roles, which are facets of a

multidimensional life.

Waldron and Jacobs (1989) analyzed longitudinal data obtained from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience, which were conducted jointly by the Center for Human Resource Research of Ohio State University and Bureau of Census. Their sample was a large ($N=3,283$) multi-stage probability sample of women who were initially interviewed and then reinterviewed ten years and fifteen years later. The researchers examined the relationship of increased health problems to the number of roles held, age, race, education, and initial health status at the beginning of the study. When women were first interviewed, the age range was 30-44 years old and at the time of the final interview the population age range was 40-54. This study had particularly high response rates. The initial interview response was 94%, at ten years 78%, and at 15 years 70%.

The findings supported the hypothesis that involvement in multiple roles generally contributed to better health. Caucasian women who were married and in the labor force had favorable "health trends." whereas Caucasian women who were neither married nor in the labor force had poor "health trends". The researchers accounted for this by noting that a commonality between marriage and labor force participation may be the increased social support. For Black women, labor force participation was beneficial, but only for those women who had children. The researchers suggested a possible reason for this outcome was that employment may buffer the stresses of child-rearing by providing social

support and time away from children's demands as well as providing a structured and more readily controllable source of gratification. This study was helpful in explaining the effect of multiple roles experienced by a working mother because it pointed out that the health effects of specific roles are dependent on both personal and social factors coupled with the other roles that she occupies.

Other important findings in the study were that multiple roles did not cause role overload and role conflict with consequent harmful effects on health. Also, for women with children the potential role conflict and role overload associated with working was no greater than that of women with no children. Lastly, there were no significant differences in health effects between part time employment and full time employment for all women married or not.

A study by Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, and Wethington (1989), examined stress contagion across multiple roles. The sample was 166 married couples who participated in a community survey. The researchers were interested in looking for evidence about the causal dynamics of stress contagion across work and home domains. The results of the study demonstrated that husbands were more likely than the wives to bring home stress to work. However, both husbands and wives were equally likely to bring work stress to the home. This research seems to validate that overloads in one role domain lead to overloads in other domains. It is interesting that work stress brought into the home appeared to set in motion a dyadic adjustment, whereby wives tended to modify their housework activities to compensate for the work stress of husbands. It was

the wife who acted as a buffer for the husband and took on one more role as she protected him from the excessive accumulation of role demands. Ironically, this asymmetry in buffering helps to explain why marriage is associated with improved emotional adjustment for men but not women. This was an explanatory piece of research that examined the context of the employed mother managing multiple roles.

Pietromonaco, Manis, and Frohardt-Lane (1986), conducted a survey of 500 employed women to explore the potential negative and positive consequences of having multiple roles. The respondents were very well educated with everyone having at least one college degree. The number of participant roles ranged from one to five. The respondents completed a survey that focused on type and number of social roles, self-esteem, job satisfaction, perceptions of life stress and pleasure, and satisfaction with marriage or partnership and children. The results demonstrated that women with multiple roles had markedly higher self-esteem. Those with three to five roles expressed greater satisfaction with their jobs. The women who held more roles did not report more satisfaction with marital or parental roles; they also did not report greater life stresses.

The researchers noted that the limitations of this study included that the sample was well educated, career oriented and middle class women. It would be important to investigate the findings as they relate to women with less education and income and to women who are not career oriented or employed outside the home. The researchers also noted that employed women with multiple roles may

actually have stressful lives, but are able to redefine what stress is and thereby reduce their personal stress level.

Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner, and Wan (1991) used experience sampling methodology (ESM) to study the effect of multiple role juggling on mood states in 20 working mothers with an age range of 19-45 years. The subjects kept ESM diaries for eight days and recorded in them at eight randomly selected times each day during the study. The diary entries were structured so the subjects would respond to certain types of activities in which they were engaged in during the day. Role juggling was divided into two subsets: inter-role and intra-role juggling. Inter-role juggling was defined as juggling of two or more tasks from different roles, such as work and family or work and other. Intra-role juggling was defined as juggling different tasks from the same role, such as work only, or family only. The subjects were also asked to respond to questions about enjoyment of the task they were engaged in and their affective (mood) state. Each day the subjects completed a Likert style diary entry indicating how satisfied they were with that day in terms of with home life, work life, and social life.

The results of this study suggested that role juggling has immediate negative effects on mood; however, working mothers seem to have an ability that allows them to continue managing. The researchers noted that this study was narrow in scope in that only the role juggling aspect of work-family conflict and "personality moderators" of work-family conflict were examined. The significance of this study

was that with increasing numbers of mothers in the work force, the amount of time spent on home and child-care responsibilities did not decrease when they become employed. The research suggests that the effects of role juggling may be more problematic for women who are highly involved in both work and family roles. This is consistent with the findings of Hochschild (1989) in her book The Second Shift.

In a now classic study, Myers-Walls (1984) interviewed new mothers prior to hospital discharge and then at two months postpartum. All subjects were Caucasian, married, and living with their husbands. All but three of the women were employed outside the home prior to pregnancy and, at the time of the two month interviews, 15 had already returned to work. Recognizing that previous studies have identified four areas, work, social life, marriage, and housekeeping as problematic for new mothers, the researcher examined coping strategies to assess the ease of transition to parenthood. A coping strategies score was obtained by using Paloma's (1972) Coping Strategies and ease of transition was measured by using Steffensmeirer's (1977, 1982) Adjustment to Parenthood scale. The results of this study demonstrated that the use of coping strategies, specifically, holding a positive view of the situation, establishing a prominent role, compartmentalizing roles, and compromising standards relate to easier transition to parenthood for new mothers. The researcher identified these coping strategies as especially important for the mother who is balancing parenthood, employment and social roles.

Role Conflict

As more women in the workforce also have family obligations, there is an increased awareness of a greater potential for conflict. In the past 30 years the terms "dual-career" marriage or "dual career" life style (Westervelt 1973) have become increasingly popular to describe a cooperative style of relationship where the adults try to fulfill the roles of full-time professional and full-time parent. The terms are not limited to professional or "career" oriented people exclusively. However, it is implied that the individuals involved are employed in job situations that compete for time that needs to be divided between the workplace and the family. Some of the very early research in this area (Bryson & Bryson, 1978, Heckman, Bryson & Bryson, 1977, Holahan & Gilbert, 1979, Johnson & Johnson, 1976) indicated that the conflict between professional and parental roles was most stressful for females.

Gilbert, Holahan, and Manning (1981) investigated 22 women who were mothers in dual career families. They examined how these well educated and employed women viewed several elements of their professional and maternal roles. They compared the effectiveness of strategies for dealing with conflict between the roles. It was found that this group of women had high self-esteem, were liberal minded and career motivated, and derived very high satisfaction from their professional and maternal roles. While there was considerable stress caused by conflicts between the professional and maternal roles, the participants did not find it to be debilitating. The women in the study reported that the

demands from the two roles were simultaneous and continuous in time. The study found that two possible sources of stress for mothers in a dual career lifestyle are lack of experience and attitudes. These women may be very capable of handling conflicts occurring in the professional role but not as capable of dealing with conflicts in the family roles. This was evidenced by the fact that the women in this study repeatedly described the demands and expectations of the maternal role, but not those of the professional role. Secondly, it is possible that professional women did not recognize the extent to which they, their spouses, and/or society still held traditional views about the maternal role. This explanation was consistent with the findings of Lott (1973) in a now historical yet relevant study titled "Who Wants the Children: Some Relationships Among Attitudes Toward Children, Parents and the Liberation of Women". Participants all reported experiencing guilt. The researchers found the older women in the study, with more established careers, seemed to have learned to give up "doing everything" and had redefined their role expectations in order to meet career goals and objectives. While they may have "let go" of some parenting functions they still struggled on an emotional level with what they should be performing in their maternal role. Thus they had considerable guilt from neglecting aspects of the maternal role.

Voydanoff (1988) studied the relationship of work role characteristics, family structure demands and work/family conflict. This study involved a very large sample of 1,027 married respondents. Of the sample, 270 were women and 757

were men, all of whom were enrolled in the Quality of Employment Survey 1977 done by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. While the original survey was completed well over 20 years ago and the 1988 analysis by Voydanoff is twelve years old, there were interesting findings that have relevance for today. The variables in the study included work/family conflict, work role characteristics, family structure demands and perceived control. Through multiple regression analysis several findings were significantly related to working mothers. Among women the number of work hours and workload pressure were related to work/family conflict, as was the presence of children of all ages. This study supported previous work by Pleck (1977) regarding asymmetrical boundaries between work and family roles for women and men. Voydanoff found that work role characteristics have a greater impact on work/family conflict for men and family structure demands are more important for women. She also suggests that women tend to engage in extensive coping strategies designed to coordinate the demands associated with work and family roles. It was found that perceived control over work schedule and job demands buffers some relationships between work role characteristics and work/family conflicts. It was further noted that work and family role demands combined additively to influence work/family conflict for women.

In examining the relationship between multiple roles and psychological distress of working mothers, Barnett and Marshall (1992) studied the effects of the quality of the employee and parent roles and the interaction effects between

these variables in a sample of 403 women who were licensed practical nurses or registered social workers with children under 18 years of age. They tried to discern the negative and positive "spillover effect" from job to parenting and parenting to job that might exist for working mothers and the relationship of multiple roles to employed mother's vulnerability or resilience to psychological distress.

Using multiple regression analysis, the researchers found no negative spillover effects from job to parenting. In fact, having a rewarding job mitigated the relationship between mental health and poor mother-role quality. The results of this study indicated that employed mothers seemed to compartmentalize their subjective experiences in their parenting and job or career roles. This ability allowed women with multiple roles to reduce the consequences of stress arising in one area of their life by participating in another. Therefore, for employed mothers, problems on the job were not compounded by problems at home or vice versa. Women who have problems at home and at work, however, did experience greater distress than the other women in the study. This study was significant because it questioned the myth that employed mothers occupying two demanding roles will experience role conflict and role strain with resulting high levels of psychological distress. It pointed out that women who are employed in jobs that are rewarding can enjoy better mental health than non working mothers because of the positive spillover effect of job to parenting.

Barnett, Marshall, and Sayer (1992) did a second study using 228 employed

mothers from the previously mentioned study. The focus was to determine which jobs help to mitigate the relationship between parent-role quality and psychological distress and secondly, which parental concerns, if any, are buffered by these stress mitigators. The analytic strategic was two phase, using confirmatory factor analysis and least squares regression analysis. The first study had already demonstrated that working mothers who reported "troubled" relationships with their children found their psychological distress was moderated if their job experience was satisfying. In the second study, six job rewards, five job concerns, four parental rewards and three parent concerns were analyzed. The only specific job reward factor that moderated parental stress was challenge. Challenge in the work setting had a positive spillover effect from the job to home. Of the parental concerns that were analyzed, the only significant finding was that psychological stress from disaffection in the parent-child relationship was positively affected by challenge from the job in the maternal work setting. Therefore, for women who were having difficulty with disaffection in their relationships with their children, the rewards from challenging work helped to decrease their psychological distress.

Health and Self-Care Issues

The awareness of women's health issues was increasingly documented in the nursing and social science literature. It is especially noteworthy that links between stressors and supports inherent in women's work and family roles are being studied as well as the women's roles in employment, parenting and

marriage. Coping and illness behavior patterns are influenced by a wide array of women's roles.

Houston, Cates, and Kelly (1992), conducted a pair of studies that focused on job stress, psychological strain and physical health problems in women employed outside of the home and homemakers. The majority of the subjects ($N=223$) in the two studies were married, widowed or divorced with children still in the home. Only 12 of the subjects had never married. The analysis was correlational, using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, partial correlation, and/or multiple regression. The results indicated that for employed women and homemakers alike quantitative overload was associated with more tension and health problems. Perceived under-utilization of skills in both groups of women also led to increased self-reported tension and poorer quality of marital relationships, but was not associated with actual physical health problems. The researchers also found that less reported tension was associated with greater overall social support for homemakers and social support specifically from supervisors of those working women. For working women social support from supervisors and coworkers also was found to moderate some of the effect between job stress and psychosocial strain. There was no correlation with the number of children in the home for either group of women.

Killien and Brown (1987) studied daily stressor and coping strategies reported by women with varied family role and work commitments. The researchers used the concept of "hassle" to describe "irritating, frustrating, and

distressing demands that characterize everyday transactions with the environment" (p.174). During the study the subjects wrote about the ways they responded to "hassles" in a daily diary. The results of the study showed that what was perceived as a "hassle" by one individual may not be so for another. It was also found that several women in response to a "hassle" chose to "do nothing" as their coping strategy. The researchers believed that this non-response to a hassle is an area that needs further study. The second most frequent response to hassles reported by the women was problem solving. The predominant types of hassles that were reported related to self, including physical and emotional symptoms, unfulfilled expectations, and doubts.

A now classic study by Verbrugge (1986), using data from the Health In Detroit Study, examined the widely held notion that the duties and responsibilities of adult roles increase the individual's stress and therefore can lead to poor mental and/or physical health. It was commonly believed that women who work, were married, and a parent as well, would have the poorest health when compared to women who were employed, single and without children. In this exploratory analysis Verbrugge considered how role burdens were associated with physical health. She tried to identify the components of job and family roles that were detrimental or beneficial to health. The findings were compelling. Individuals with irregular job schedules were found to have poor health. However, long working hours and long work weeks were not contributing factors to poor health. People with very low as well as very high time constraints

or pressures had worse health than those with only moderate constraints. Of special relevance was the finding that having numerous roles was associated with good health, as was having moderate responsibility for dependents and household income. Another finding was that people who disliked their roles or who were upset about life overall had poorer health than those who had a happier outlook. Individuals with no or high family dependency also reported poorer health.

While the results of this particular study are revealing, they also create questions. Most obvious for working mothers is how to find that "middle ground" of enough roles and responsibilities and perceived the quality of one's job to be healthy and not overburdened. This is especially important when many of the jobs available for women are perceived as low quality.

The issue of caring as it relates to women's health was explored by Woods (1987). She notes that caring is "central to women's lives" and needs to be examined more deeply so as to learn about the "pressure and pleasure" of caring relationships on health. Some of the difficulties cited by Woods about caring are the risk of burden, conflict and guilt which may occur when a person is overwhelmed, has many objects of engrossment, or when there are competing demands for time or service. When there is conflict in any of these areas, the potential for guilt arises. Because women's growth and development tends toward attachments, caring is exhibited in all facets of her life such as family, marriage, parenting and employment. While relationships produce conflict and

support, pleasure and pressure remain central to women's lives. Woods notes that women remain healthy in spite of considerable pressures and are able to persevere under the worst circumstances. She believed that by understanding women's caring relationships more fully, it is possible to better understand the relationship between women's roles and their health.

The single article that was found addressing the "balancing act" was by Swanson-Kaufman (1987). While not a research study, it provided a glimpse into the complexities of managing multiple roles. This is an issue for now and for the future in women's health care. Modern women are confronted with the fact that "the opportunity for choice is a source of celebration and aggravation" (p.101).

The need to provide sensitive woman centered care remains an urgent issue for our time and the future. Nurses as partners in the health delivery system, have a measure of responsibility to provide support and care to women as they balance many commitments and desires. Woods (1987) has noted that the traditional research done so far has helped achieve a "crude picture of the factors influencing women's health but has provided limited evidence to explain how they operate in women's lives" (p. 228). To that end, she suggests that future research focus on the "experiential, dynamic analysis of women's lives, including transitions to and from parenthood and employment" (p. 229). This thought is supported by the work of Klein (1983) and Reinharz (1983), both of whom have suggested that in women's stories lie the explanations for how work, marriage, and parenting simultaneously are sources of stress and support. It is

timely to look at the day-to-day experiences as a starting place for women's health care. This is especially true for the working mother balancing commitments to home, work, family and self-care.

The literature gave only glimmers of information about the "balancing act." True insights about how working mothers manage will only be known when working mothers from various socio-cultural backgrounds and situations are studied in greater depth and listened to with greater intensity. Indeed the need to listen, to question, and to search for meaning that is explanatory for working mothers as well as for nurses providing health care to women, is compelling.

Conceptual Framework

An eclectic view of various conceptual and theoretical frameworks was used in an attempt to describe how women who work outside the home and are mothers manage work, home, family and self-care. This has been referred to as the "balancing act" by Swanson-Kaufman (1987). While the work of Swanson-Kaufman was noteworthy, her focus was primarily on multiple commitments to work and family. The need to understand home and self care as equally compelling parts of the "balancing act" was not addressed. Research was needed to discover the ways by which working mothers manage all the areas, so that nurses can both facilitate and provide sensitive and appropriate health care. Likewise an understanding of the "balancing act" provides insight that can foster social, economic or political policy changes that over time can enhance the quality of life for working mothers.

The review and critique of the concept of balance and contemporary theoretical perspectives that can be used to explain balance were foundational to understanding the issue. Specifically, exchange theory, systems theory and role theory were examined. While none provided a "perfect fit", they were nevertheless, when viewed as a whole, helpful in sorting through the complexity of the problem and provided a strong base for better understanding balance and "the balancing act."

A Dynamic View of the Concept of Balance

The term balance at once conjures up mental images and meanings that run the gamut from a circus tightrope walker, a waiter with a heavily laden tray of food, the scales of justice often used to portray the legal system, a sense of equilibrium, and a feeling of well being and mental stability. Understanding how the concept of balance is used and described by other disciplines is important. Application of the concept of balance in biology, physics, and nursing is commonplace.

Biology.

The word equilibrium derives from the Greek language *aequus* and *libra*, meaning equal and balance respectively. In several high school and college level science books balance is referenced to equilibrium (Heutter & McCance, 1996). When coupled with the original Greek definition it is apparent that equilibrium and balance are interchangeable. In biological sciences, dynamic equilibrium, as it is often referred to, is the point at which a chemical reaction runs forward as

fast as it runs in reverse. The concentrations of reactant molecules and product molecules show no net change. The amounts of reactant and product molecules at equilibrium may or may not be the same. It is possible, depending on the substances involved, that the forward reaction may produce more or fewer molecules in the same amount of time. (Starr, 1994 p. 62)

Nursing.

Homeostasis is a word frequently used in nursing. It is derived from the Greek homoios and stasis which when combined mean like or similar and standing (Taber's, 1983). A commonly held nursing definition of homeostasis is that it is "a state of equilibrium of the internal environment of the body that is maintained by dynamic processes of feedback and regulation. Homeostasis is a dynamic equilibrium" (Merck, 1981 p.667). All body organs and tissues work in harmony to maintain constant conditions. Biological examples include the lungs providing oxygen to the cells, the kidneys managing the electrolyte concentrations, and the gastrointestinal system providing nutrients. When any one system of the body does not function appropriately other systems may compensate or there is an imbalance in physiological function that may or may not alter the quality of life for that individual.

Physics.

The science of physics deals with the properties, changes and the interactions of matter and energy. Balance and/or equilibrium are intimately connected to most aspects of physics. The ability to measure and quantify

reactions between energy fields, changes in fluid and mass, weights and measures all return to the basic concept of balance. Balance can be dynamic in that a system can accommodate increases in one area through the use of counter compensatory measures in an other area. These accommodations achieve and maintain balance.

The straightforward application of the concept of balance in biology, physics and nursing provides a linear view. It challenges the exploration of how balance is understood when viewed through the lens of systems theory, exchange theory and role theory. While the application of the concept of balance may be unconventional in this context, it nevertheless seemed relevant to the subject matter of this dissertation.

Critique of Contemporary Theoretical Models

There are numerous theories used in family nursing, some of which are more helpful than others in attempting to explain how working mothers manage home, work and family. A critique of systems theory, exchange theory, and role theory is offered to expand on the notion that a different model is needed to fully describe these working mothers world. They were chosen because they most closely, although not completely, offered possible explanations for the intricate balance needed by working mothers to manage a multifaceted life.

Systems Theory.

Initially, systems theory was proposed by Bertalanffy in the early 1950's. It derived from principles of biology and physics. Bertalanffy (1968) believed that a

system was a set of interacting elements. A system is made up of interdependent, interactive parts that endure over time. Systems and their parts have both structure and function which serve to arrange and organize the parts of the system and define the goals and purposes of the system. Function can also be defined as the result or outcome of structure (Friedman, 1986)

As systems theory was eventually applied to people, Parsons proposed social systems theory. Eventually nurse theorists such as Rogers (1983) and Leahy and Wright (1987) applied systems theory to families in which the family becomes a social system, an open living system (Fawcett, 1975). Rogers (1983) noted that the family "is an irreducible energy field, different from its parts (members), in which change is continuous and innovative. The whole is more than and different from the sum of the parts" (Gillis, 1989 p. 20). The ability to receive information and give information is an essential element of the feedback process inherent in systems theory. There is always an element of mutual interaction and interdependence present when systems theory is applied to family clusters. Much like a hanging mobile, when one part is touched all the parts of the mobile are effected. In the best of situations, a family is an open system that is able to exchange goods, information and energy with the environment through physical, social, and cultural experiences. The family system is never static.

The application of systems theory to the experience of how the working mother balances home, work and family is somewhat problematic. For example,

systems theory assumes there are many hierarchies within the system proceeding from higher to lower levels. When there is disruption in a system it can be isolated and studied in relation to the larger (supra systems) and smaller (subsystems). Therefore if each system has boundaries that separate it from the environment, a working mother should be able to identify a hierarchy that exists between work, home, or family that would enable her to establish supra systems and subsystems.

A second dilemma posed by systems theory is how the overlap of home, work, and family are represented. If the model of a hanging mobile is used to represent systems theory, there is no overlap of work, family and home. While it is true that a change in one of the areas of the mobile would cause a change in the other areas, it does not account for the interface between family and work, home and family, and work and home.

A third issue is that of culture. It would seem with systems theory that culture would be a suprasystem of the whole because culture is part of the larger environment. However, it is possible with systems theory that culture could also be a subsystem of each of the areas of work, home, and family. The question of culture existing within each system of home, work, and family, or without is not clearly answered.

A final unanswered question has to do with the person or self. With systems theory applied to the working mother it is clear that the individual, the working mother, is a part of the system. She does interface with each of the other

systems. However, it is not clear as to whether she is at the higher or lower end of the hierarchy. Or does she have parity with work, home, and family? Perhaps she is the link to culture. These questions also remain unanswered.

The explanatory power that systems theory brings to the phenomenon of balance and the working mother is that it is goal directed and places emphasis on the parts being interdependent and interacting.

Exchange Theory.

The origins of exchange theory are most often credited to Homan (1958) who believed that "interaction between persons is an exchange of goods, material, and non-material" (p.597). He proposed that when people enter into relationships they are rewarded by the interactions and company of others. They then have an obligation to reciprocate in kind. The "give and take" leads to balance, or lack of balance, if one party chooses not to reciprocate. Blau (1964) noted that when an imbalance occurs and is not corrected, or when one individual has no means to reciprocate, the other individual who is able to reciprocate then has power over the other person.

Exchange theory, while deeply rooted in simple economics and behavioral theory, has always maintained a focus on the exchange relationship with attention given to "factors that mediate its formation, maintenance, breakdown and the dynamics that characterize it" (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993 p.396). Individuals choose to enter into exchange relationships because there is material, psychological or social gain. Relationships are able to continue

because balance is achieved through reciprocity. When there is no longer a need for gain or reciprocity is not maintained, the relationship ends. The importance that is attached to such relationships varies among individuals and may change over the course of time.

The application of exchange theory to explain how working mothers balance home, work and family could be fairly straightforward. In the perfect exchange the working mother would be able to give equally to each of the three units. In exchange she would receive in equal amounts to the proportion given. There would be no overlap of the three units since each would be managed separately. The reality of women's lives is that in any exchange the amount given and the amount received may not be in equal proportion. An example of this would be the mother who is working full time, doing a good job, and is considered a good employee. The work setting experiences downsizing and she is notified that her benefits will no longer cover her family members. At the same time she is aware that there are numerous school related activities for her children that conflict with her work schedule and her husband wants them to go to a ball game together. The house has not been cleaned in two weeks and she feels guilty about this because she truly enjoys their home and its comfort.

In all instances the exchanges fell short of the ideal in the above hypothetical case. There is no accommodation with exchange theory that allows for the self, the woman, to have a place. The self is viewed as the individual making rational decisions that result in the most gain with the least expense. Feelings of guilt,

frustration, anger, and conflict do not have a place. Likewise, the process involved with making "rational decisions" does not seem of concern with this theory. Instead, the emphasis is on an individual bargaining and exercising free choice for their own self-interests. However, the lived experiences of women who work both in the home and in commerce, and who bear and rear children, emphasize the overriding of a woman's self interest to maintain her home, community and family (Osmond and Thorne, 1993).

Within Exchange Theory the connections between home, work, and family are not clear. It appears that with each family member, co-worker, work expectation, and home responsibility could be dealt with totally separate from all the others. In actuality there could be several more units added to accommodate exchanges with individual family members, co-workers, and others. In that case, using exchange theory to explain balance becomes very cumbersome and unmanageable as the working mother must keep track of and maintain myriad connections.

Likewise, cultural values and beliefs are not acknowledged because it is the individual, not the cultural milieu that determines the actions. However, many people make choices because of their cultural beliefs, responsibilities and/or values.

Role Theory.

Role theory evolved from a mixture of viewpoints including those of Park (1926), Simmel (1907), Linton (1936), Moreno (1935) and Mead (1934). Turner

(1991) offered an insightful synthesis of previous scholars of the subject of "role."

A commonly held view is that role theory has both structural and processual perspectives (Turner, 1991). The structural viewpoint stresses the normative or cultural influence associated with particular statuses and their related roles (Linton, 1945). The process or interactive viewpoint emphasizes the emergent quality of roles which generate from social interaction (Turner, 1990). Role theory is often used to explain or examine issues of gender development, power, family roles, role stress and/or strain, maternal/ child roles, and crisis adaptation. The following passage from Shakespeare's As You Like It is often used to capture the essence of role theory: "All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts" (Act II, scene vii). It is helpful to understand the analogy between players and actors. In role theory individuals are actors with clearly defined positions (parts), societal (cultural) defined norms (orders of the director), responsiveness to others (response to other actors), and roles expected by others (response to audience). Role theory makes assumptions about social organization, the nature of individuals, and the relationship of individuals to social organization patterns (Turner, 1991).

The use of role theory to explain balancing is problematic. The employed mother could occupy the roles of mother, nurturer, employee, housekeeper, coworker, wife, lover, cook, chauffeur. The list is endless. Each role has a set of socially and culturally defined expectations. The working mother would be

expected by others to fulfill the responsibilities associated with each role she assumed. In the ideal situation, a woman would be able to maintain a singular focus on work, or home, or family. She would move from one role to another, much like changing hats. There are some roles that have similar expected behaviors associated with them. For the working mother the expected roles generated by the workplace may be very different from those associated with home or family. In these situations the woman could experience role conflict or role strain.

A significant issue posed by the use of role theory to explain balance is the notion that a woman moves in and out of roles, performing her part and then moving on to another part. Working mothers do not go to work and leave thoughts and concerns about family and home on the threshold of the workplace. Childcare concerns (Rosenfeld, 1992), family health (Schwartz, 1989), and household management (Swanson-Kaufman, 1987) are a part of whatever she is doing in whatever location.

Using role theory, the working mother is always moving between roles. This does not answer the question, "Where is there a place for the self, the individual, that is not an actor role?" Is there ever a time or place that a working mother is not an actor, in a clearly defined position, with socially defined norms and expectations for her behavior and relationships with others? It is questionable if this reality can be explained with role theory.

The Pilot Study

While systems theory, exchange theory, and role theory provided insightful understanding about the experiences of the working mother, singularly and collectively they failed to give a comprehensive explanation. In response to the need for a deeper understanding of the experiences of the working mother, a pilot study titled "Understanding the Meaning of Home for the Employed Mother with Young Children," was undertaken. Approval for the research was granted by the UCSF Committee on Human Research, approval number H971-09609-01. The specific study design focused on how working mothers constructed and reinvented home as a place to nourish and sustain themselves within the context of balancing a multifaceted life. From a health care point of view, there was a need to understand how working mothers sustained themselves given the complexity of their lives. The literature gave considerable evidence that employed working mothers experience stress as a result of the combination of work and family roles (Hall, Stevens, & Meleis, 1992, Pugliesi, 1988; Cleary and Mechaic, 1983; Verbugge, 1986). It was hoped that a greater understanding of the meaning of home would lead to a broader view of the culture of the working mother and provide a template for the development of a conceptual model that accurately reflected her experience. Ultimately this knowledge would lead to enhanced woman centered nursing care.

The Participants.

A total of six working mothers were interviewed for the pilot study. All were

employed outside the home for approximately 30 or more hours per week. Five of the women had graduated from college with baccalaureate degrees and one had one year of community college study. They were employed in a variety of job situations as a high school teacher, a college teacher, a probation department analyst, a pharmaceutical sales representative, a registered nurse, and an insurance office manager.

All of the participants were married to the father of their children and were living in homes they owned with their spouse. Two women had three children and four women had two children. All of the children were in elementary school or in preschool and ranged in age from three to eleven years old. The participants were mainstream middle-class working women ranging in age from 30 to 41. No women of color were in the sample as there were no minority respondents in the initial query for volunteers.

Access and Data Collection.

Participants were recruited from the parent population of one elementary school in a semi-rural community of 14,000 people. The community had a minority population of less than seven percent at the time of the study. Permission for access to the parent population was granted by the elementary school principal and the District Superintendent. An ad was placed in the weekly parent newsletter that the school sends home with the children requesting those interested in participating in a research study to please call for further information. The response was overwhelming and there were twenty calls from

volunteers. The first six who called were interviewed for the pilot study.

There were no barriers to access or gaining entree. The researcher was well known in the school community through extensive volunteer work and community involvement which enhanced the trust of the participants. To maintain trust and assure confidentiality, all participants were asked to choose a pseudonym that they wanted to be called throughout the interview. The only place their legal name appeared was on the consent form.

Data were gathered during semi structured taped interviews, that were later transcribed verbatim. All the interviews occurred at a place and time chosen by the participant. In each of the six interviews the women chose their home, which allowed for the gathering of observational data in addition to the interview. Each of the participants chose times to do the interview when their husband and children were at work and school, respectively. This was interpreted in the context of not wanting to take time away from home and family or wanting to be able to speak freely and without interruption.

Recognizing the Problem

Given that the intent of the pilot study was to better understand what home meant for working mothers with young children, and thereby provide a somewhat enhanced view of the culture of working mother, it was important to ask questions that were both engaging and focused. The use of the term balance was purposefully chosen to be in the first interview question. The intent of the question was to capture how the working mother was able to "do" all that she

believed related to home while also meeting other responsibilities. The use of words such as "manage," "fit," or "do," did not seem to have enough latitude to them, or they had other connotations that were not satisfactory for this research. In each interview the participant was told that the word balance was the choice of the researcher only. The participant was free to use any word or phase that she felt captured her feelings and thoughts. It was hoped that the use of the term balance would allow for the dynamics of the working mothers experiences to come through in the interviews. All six of the participants seemed comfortable with the term balance and it served as a catalyst for the interviews.

The analytic problem emerged when initial coding started on each of the interview transcripts. The term balance was used in so many different situations. Sometimes the word was not stated but the milieu of being in balance was described. At other times the participants described what seemed to be a process of trying to achieve balance. It was the emergence of the codes control and manipulation in the coding process that heightened the confusion about balance and just exactly what it was. Because balance seemed to trigger so much varied information, it seemed obvious that balance was a significant entry point for understanding not only the culture of these working mothers but also how their definition of home fostered their sense of well being. Balance became a term that needed to be clearly understood. The need for more in-depth research beyond the limits of the pilot study also was apparent.

Working Through the Problem

The participants were interested in talking about home as a place and home as a feeling. However, in spite of focused questions they continued to offer information about "keeping things in balance" and what it felt like to be in or out of balance. They clearly had a need to talk about balance and it was apparent that it was of greater importance than the meaning of home.

Through narrative analysis of the verbatim interviews coupled with rereading of field notes, it became more clear that balance had subsets and that strategies were used to achieve balance between and within the subsets. The need for working definitions became apparent as the concept of balance was dimensionalized.

The following working definition emerged to describe balance. Balance for the working mother is multidimensional. It is both a state of being and a process. Home, work and family singularly or in combination are "in balance" or "out of balance." Feelings and/or words are used by women to describe being "in" or "out" of balance. As a process, balancing describes the strategies or activities utilized by working mothers to achieve and maintain balance.

The analytic process also found three subsets within which working mothers try to achieve balance. They are: work and home, family and home and work and family. Simply stated, working mothers utilize balancing strategies to achieve balance between and within the subsets. The participants gave numerous examples of trying to achieve balance as well as describing the way things are

when they are in balance. In all instances the working mothers consciously made choices to do something. It is also apparent that the link between control and balance is strong. When the participants did a task or decided to not do a task they were exhibiting control of the situation. For the participants, the lack of control and the feeling that something needed to be done to get back in control seemed to relate to the lack of balance in their present situations.

The need to find the relationship between control and balance took on a new importance. By working through the codes of balance and control, it became clear that balance was what the participants were searching for and trying to achieve in all the subsets. They were not trying to achieve control in the subsets. Control was merely one of several behaviors that were utilized to accomplish balance. This was an important differentiation to make and in doing so it helped to clarify the meaning of balance.

The emergence of the Working Mothers Model evolved in response to the findings of the pilot study. The absence of any one conceptual model or theoretical framework, coupled with very little literature to adequately explain the Balancing Act lead to its development. It was hoped that as a conceptual model it would offer further insight to the Balancing Act. The central concepts of the model included family, home and work. Related concepts included self, self-care, and culture. The description of the dynamics of the Working Mothers Model provide a framework for understanding the complexity of the concept of balance as it related to working mothers with young children.

The Dynamics of the Model

The proposed model is a design of three interlocking equal sized spheres which represent home, work, and family (Figure 1). The intersections of the spheres are labeled home and work, work and family, and family and home. At the center of the diagram all three areas overlap and the area is labeled home-work-family. Intersecting with each sphere are two dotted lines which represent self, and the working mother. Self can expand or contract. The area in between the dotted lines is the health-illness continuum for the working mother. The outer sphere is representative of the culture of the working mother. The spherical nature of the model was chosen because of the complexity and dynamic ever-changing nature of working mothers multifaceted lives.

Balance and Balancing

The model gives a visual representation of balance and balancing. Balance for working mothers is dimensional. Home, work, family or any combination of the three are "in balance" or "out of balance." Working mothers are able to articulate feelings and descriptions associated with being "in" or "out" of balance. When things are out of balance, one or more of the three main cells or the three overlapping cells are placing increased demands on the working mother. An example would be the working mother who must work overtime or who needs to take work home to complete for the next day. The work sphere then becomes larger than the others and she experiences imbalance. The imbalance is caused by the work sphere "pulling" at the home and family spheres. The actual stress

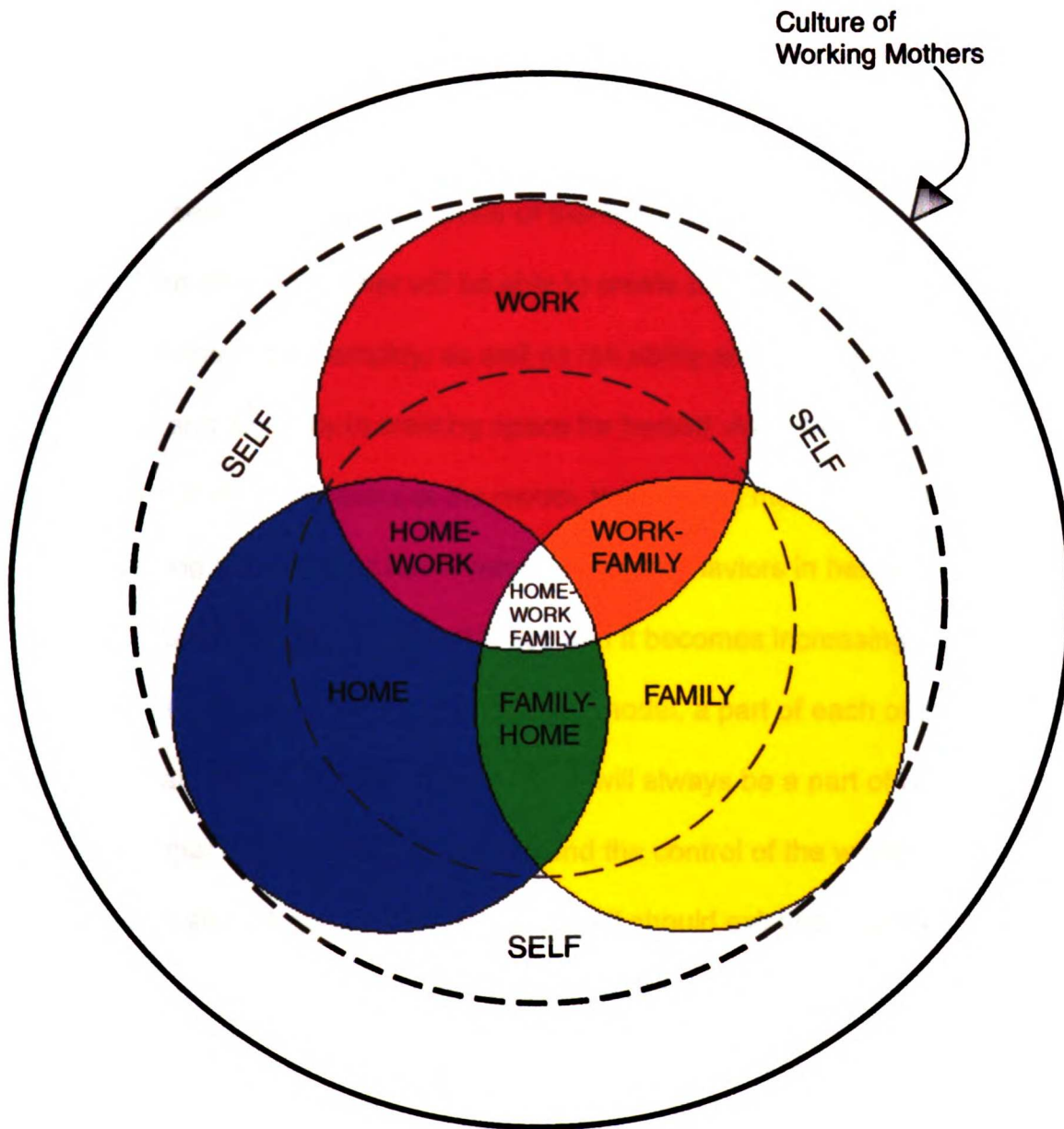


Figure 1. Working Mothers Model

of the imbalance is generated by the corresponding overlapping cells of home-work and work-family.

Balancing is the process used by working mothers to create, maintain, or reestablish balance. It is comprised of strategies called balancing behaviors that generate from the self. As seen in Figure 1, a part of the self is within each of the three main cells and a part is outside of them. The larger the self sphere, the more apt the working mother will be able to create balance. She has more balancing behaviors to employ, as well as the ability and time to learn new behaviors, and flexibility in creating space for herself. As the self sphere contracts closer to the center of the model, the working mother is less able to use balancing behaviors or has fewer balancing behaviors in her repertoire. She also is unable to create space for herself and it becomes increasingly difficult for her to achieve balance. As illustrated in the model, a part of each of the three main cells also exists outside of self. There will always be a part of work, home, and family that exists outside of self beyond the control of the working mother. The reverse should also be true. A part of self should exist beyond the boundaries of the three main cells. The ability of a working mother to achieve balance depends upon behaviors that are describable and observable and that serve to achieve balance between the spheres of home, work, and family.

Significance of the Pilot Study to Future Research.

The pilot study served as an object lesson about ethnography. When studying a subculture such as that of working mothers, the researcher must

receive all information that is available about the culture being studied. The pilot study while designed to focus on home, served to provide the participants with an avenue to share information about home and everything that related to it. It also gave them permission to talk about balance which seemed to have greater importance than home. The interviews gave direction to the dissertation research as well as support for the use of Working Mothers Model as a means to organize and conceptualize information about the Balancing Act. The participants identified that balance and balancing were indeed core issues for working mothers that were not clearly understood by the participants or the researcher. It further helped focus upon the need to understand how balance related to the subsets and the dynamic interchange between them. Likewise, identification and definitions of the behaviors that working mothers employed when attempting to achieve balance were needed.

Assumptions

The literature review coupled with the critique of contemporary theoretical models and the results from the pilot study provided focus and direction for future research. Most certainly the awareness was heightened about the assumptions surrounding working mothers and how they manage. The assumptions that were inherent in this research included:

1. Working mothers have multifaceted life experiences.
2. There are identifiable behaviors or actions that working mothers use to manage, that are not related to race, class, or socioeconomic status.

3. Working mothers want to achieve balance between home, work and family.
4. There is a commonality of experiences and feelings that are shared by working mothers, that are identifiable and describable.
5. The Working Mothers Model provides an emerging conceptual model for understanding how working mothers do the Balancing Act.
6. The Balancing Act can be described.
7. Knowledge about the culture of working mothers will lead to health care that is informed and sensitive to their specific needs.

Research Questions

The pilot study made a compelling case that the concept of balance, as it related to the study sample of working mothers with young children, could be more fully explored through the application of a larger research study. Likewise it was encouraging that the relationship between the subsets home, work, and family as presented in the Working Mothers Model had room for further development to gain a clearer understanding of the meaning of balance for working mothers. Most certainly, the pilot study acknowledged that the culture of working mothers was a rich venue for further research about how working mothers manage the multiple roles and multiple responsibilities associated with home, work, and family. The combined validation served to shape and define the dissertation research questions which were:

1. How do working mothers with young children manage home, work,

family, and self?

2. What is the significance of the concept of balance when applied to the multifaceted and multi-dimensional experiences of white middle class working mothers?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of the dissertation research there were several key terms essential to the exploration of balance as it applied to working mothers and their multifaceted experiences. The Working Mothers Model served as a framework to organize the terms for the larger research study. It was further hoped that the definitions would add breadth and depth to the application of the model.

Family.

Family has a broad context and was used to encompass not only individuals but lifestyles and functions. Family derives from the Latin familia which in historical times meant household including servants and kin of the householder. Webster (1995) identified family as "household, parents and children, relatives, all of those descended from a common ancestor or lineage. Legal definitions of family focus on blood tie relationships" (p. 404). The US Census Bureau, in 1992, simply defined family as "a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together" (Hanson & Boyd, 1996). Early family social science theorists (Burgess & Locke, 1953) were specific in identifying marriage, blood, or adoption as essential and then expanded the definition by naming social roles such as father and mother, husband and wife,

son and daughter. They further defined the term as being a single household where members communicate and interact in their social roles to create and "maintain a common culture." In the early 1980's there was a shift in the definition of the family that moved it beyond blood, marriage or adoption. The Faculty in the Department of Family Nursing, Oregon Health Sciences University in 1985, created the contemporary definition that remains relevant to this study: "The family is a social system composed of two or more persons who coexist within the context of some expectations of reciprocal affection, mutual responsibility, and temporal duration. The family is characterized by commitment, mutual decision making and shared goals." (Department of Family Nursing, Oregon Health Sciences University, 1985, p.11). Hanson and Boyd (1996) suggested that family "refers to two or more individuals who depend on one another for emotional, physical, and/or economic support. The members of the family are self-defined" (p.6).

The key to understanding family for the working mother with young children is that family is self-defined. The woman needs to identify the persons whom she calls family. The important issue is that the woman has significant others whom she identifies as family. Whether or not they are traditional nuclear and extended family members or are contemporary units such as single parent, blended or same gender families or some unique combination is of only secondary significance. For many middle class working mothers it is the needs of the family and the obligation to meet those needs that moved her into the work force.

Likewise it is the commitment to the family that brings her home from work each day. Family is one of the integral parts of the Working Mothers Model.

Home

Home has been variously described by working women as "a place" and "a feeling". Webster (1995) identified home as "the place where one lives, a place where one was born or reared" (p.829). He further defined it as "a place thought of as home and as a household and its affairs" (p.829).

Home as a place is a structural dwelling. For working mothers it can be a haven that comforts them and surrounds them with personal possessions that give pride or evoke happy memories. It also is a physical place that requires maintenance and upkeep. This is commonly referred to as housework which in the United States is often seen as women's work. Hochschild (1989) interviewed 50 working couples and found that 20% of the men shared housework equally, 70% did less than half but more than one third, and 10% did less than one third. Her book The Second Shift clearly identified how the work of home affected working women.

For women who want home to be a place of visual relief from the work place, the need for tidiness and lack of clutter can be great. Ironically the better the woman is at achieving this goal the more it appears that she does so effortlessly. The strange paradox is that over time what appears to be effortless becomes the norm and an expected matter of course (Baber & Allen (1992).

Home as a feeling is best characterized by the comfort that one receives

from being wherever home is. For some individuals home is not dependent on a physical dwelling place, so much as it is on the ability of the person to be comfortable wherever she is. Some women can "feel" at home in strange surroundings because they do not need certain things or belongings around them. Home is more ethereal and exists in their mental imaginings. They have the ability to be sustained by memories and an appreciation for their present situation.

It is important to acknowledge that some working mothers will never be able to create the ideal physical space that they want home to be. However, they are able to be content, comforted and rested because of their ability to find home in many ways and places.

Like family, home is not constant even though for some the physical dwelling place is the same as the contents of the home. Because of the dynamic nature of home and the potential demands of physical upkeep, home as a physical structure is always subject to change. Even when home is more of a feeling than a place, it is not static.

Work.

Work is an action and a place. It is the effort put forth to do a job or to make something that is associated with one's occupation or avocation. Work can take many forms and provide many pleasures. It often defines tasks that are necessary to maintain a home and to raise a family. Likewise it can be used to define a place of employment. In this model, work is defined as occurring outside

of the home and involves remuneration for services rendered. It focuses on the workplace and associated environment and responsibilities of that setting.

The impact of women on the work force is undeniable. In a study by Lunneborg (1990), it was found that women "insisted upon a more balanced lifestyle that acknowledged the interwoven connections between work and family" (p.203). Rudolph (1990) found that women strive for coordination rather than control when solving problems. Likewise when women did use power in the work place it was to empower others or promote equitable distribution of the available resources.

For working mothers the geographical location of their employment and the job requirements may be a source of joy or conflict. For the woman who likes where she works and what she does while there, the conflict of leaving home to go to work is decreased. On the other hand, if the location and/or environment of the work place or the demands of the job are unsatisfactory, the act of "going to work" can prove to be a major problem.

Self.

Self has been defined by Webster (1995) as "the identity, character of any person or thing, one's own person as distinct from all others" (p.1001). While this is too simplistic of a definition of self to suffice for the purposes of the dissertation, it did give insight to the generally held public understanding of the term. William James (1950) did some of the initial and now historical in-depth defining of self and is credited with the development of a typology of selves. The

typology has three parts: the material self, reflective of the physical objects that humans include as essential to their identity; the social self, which is made up of feelings about and from experiences with other people; and the spiritual self composed of the general "cognitive style and capacities" of the person (Turner, 1991 p. 370). Lowery-Palmer (1982) noted that self is the "product of interaction with the social and physical world" (p.190) and that self reflects comparisons made with other people.

Commonly held terms for describing and defining self are self image, self concept and self-worth. For the working mother, knowledge of self is rooted in the beliefs about herself and the awareness of herself in the world. Kjervik and Martinson (1979) noted that knowledge of oneself occurs consciously and unconsciously through life experiences. Especially poignant in the development of self are the successes, failures, humiliations, and journeys into oneself as well as feedback from others.

For the working mother, the need to come to grips with her being and inner nature are essential. With the daily competition for her time to be divided between work, home, and family, it is understandable that her sense of self may be challenged and at times unclear. The ability to have a clear sense of self enables the woman to manage the multifaceted experience of being a working mother. Balancing behaviors are incorporated in the self. The self has the ability to learn and to utilize and evaluate the effectiveness of balancing behaviors.

Self-Care.

Self-care was defined by Orem as "the practice of activities that individuals personally initiate and perform on their own behalf to maintain life, health, and well-being...It is an adult's personal, continuous contribution to her/his own health and well-being" (1985, p. 31). Webster's (1995 p.168 &1001) definition reported self-care as two independent words with the combined meanings of "the identity, character of any person or thing, one's own person distinct from all others, and to feel concern about or interest in." There is no exact or singular definition for the word self-care in the general public.

While the use of Orem's term "self-care" as a nursing theory first appeared in the literature in 1959, the use of self-care techniques and methods dates back to ancient history to times of home remedies, folk medicine and mystification. The scientific revolution set in motion events that culminated in a general mind set that the experts needed to determine care; doctors were needed "to fix" what was wrong with the body (Hill & Smith, 1990). Self-care skills came to be in vogue when such diseases as hypertension, ulcers, and cardiovascular disease were linked to individual life style choices. Ironically, economics has forced a change back to the former ways that empowered individuals to try to heal themselves. Naisbitt (1982) identified the move from institutional help to self-help as a "mega-trend." It includes encompassing new self-care habits that actualize the responsibility for health, self-care that illustrates self-reliance on areas not genuinely requiring professional help, and a new paradigm of wellness,

preventive medicine and holistic health care. The Women's Boston Health Collective and Feminist Women's Health Centers serve as a contemporary examples of excellence in health care that encourage women to understand their bodies, seek information and practice self-care.

For the working mother, self-care can include activities that promote rest, relaxation, restoration and respite. The need for adequate rest is essential. Often sleep deprivation is an issue if there are infants or very young children in the family. Relaxation and the ability to put others' needs and demands "on hold" is often guilt laden for working mothers. Restoration to maintain physical fitness, or return to prepregnant body size is important for the overall health of the woman. Respite, the ability to remove oneself from the environment, allows for mental rest and time to bolster personal coping behaviors.

Culture

The need to understand and value culture and ethnicity is critical with the transition to the 21st century. Culture is pervasive and encompassing. To understand what culture means to an individual is one of the first necessary steps in developing insight into the individual's personal life story. For the purposes of the model, the definition of culture is derived from the pilot study that included middle class white employed mothers with young children.

Webster (1995) commonly refers to culture as the skills and arts of a given people in a given period. While this limited view may be common in everyday usage, it falls short of the breadth and depth necessary for conceptualization and

application. Aamodt (1991) provided the needed depth when he noted of Spradley (1979, 1980) that culture "is viewed as a system of knowledge used by human beings to interpret experience and generate behavior" (p. 45). Equally important is the language used by the people, which is the foundation for establishing cultural knowledge and behavior.

In the Working Mothers Model the culture of employed mothers includes the contemporary culture with norms and standards for child rearing, schooling, parenting, home management and community participation. However, on a deeper and perhaps more personal level the historical culture of the woman is equally influential. A woman's historical culture comes from her beliefs and values that have been influenced by family and friends and in many instances transferred from previous generations. These are the cultural beliefs that help and in some cases hinder a working mother as she defines herself. The manner in which she was parented will influence how she parents and whether or not she will emulate or reject the model set forth by her parents. Family beliefs about the type of work that women can do may play a more powerful part in the working mother's life than commendations from the actual workplace.

Culture is in every part of the model. Culture influences how employed mothers feel, think, act, and believe. Their ability to develop and utilize balancing behaviors to achieve balance in their world, is influenced by contemporary culture as well as their individual historical and family culture.

Balancing Behaviors.

The term balancing behaviors describes behaviors and actions used by the participants as they try to manage home, work, and family. Balancing behaviors are observable and can be described. Through ethnography and grounded theory, the use of balancing behaviors as they relate to the Balancing Act and working mothers will be further explored.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design

The use of ethnography as the research methodology for the dissertation enabled a deeper understanding to emerge about the culture of middle class working women who are mothers of young children. Of special concern was how they manage to balance work, home, family and self. Ethnography facilitated understanding the culture of working mothers by enabling me to observe the environment as well as ask descriptive questions about values, beliefs and practices associated with how working mothers are able to combine home, work, family, and self. It provided insights about the ways working mothers revise and rethink traditions, rituals, attitudes and values. Spradley (1980) noted that "ethnography means learning from people" (p.3). In this instance it also meant learning about the concept of balance as applied to the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional experience of the working mother within the culture of white middle class working mothers. Special attention was given to the concept of balance and balancing as it related to the "walking the tightrope" lifestyle of working mothers.

Ethnography was selected as the methodology for this study for several reasons. First, the primary focus of ethnography is culture, the gathering of knowledge about a group of people, their social behavior and way of living. There is a breadth of data that can be gathered through the use of ethnography. The word ethnographic means "portrait of a people" (Burns & Grove, 1997). In

this case ethnography enabled the researcher to closely examine the culture of the working mother in the specific setting of the study. Secondly, it is only through knowing about others that one can truly understand beyond one's own ethnocentricities. Having spent over twenty-eight years in women's health care, treating working mothers, observing their stress, listening to their stories, and sensing that the health care system never really understood what it meant to be a "working mother" led me to be concerned. If more was known about the needs of the this group and how they manage, perhaps health care could be more sensitive and holistic. The lack of information in the literature about how working mothers manage led to further exploration of the issue. Through ethnography, a deeper understanding was gleaned about the culture of working mothers in the study setting. Lastly, I had the opportunity to work within this culture as a peer researcher, ultimately hoping that, because of my closeness to the issue, new insights would emerge to enable health care providers to better understand the daily experiences of working mothers. Without an understanding of how working mothers live, the health care for this group of women can only be based on assumptions and speculation. In order for change to occur within a culture or subculture knowledge must be gathered from within as the researcher develops an emic perspective. A first step in providing woman centered health care is to understand the culture, the journey, and the way of living day to day, as it is experienced by working mothers.

No doubt there were other qualitative research methods that could have

been used to study working mothers. For example, phenomenology, could have been a likely choice of methodology. It focuses on the lived experience of the respondents. The emphasis is on the interactive process that enables individuals to make sense of, and find meaning about each social situation, thus promoting and maintaining communication (Anderson, 1991). Generally there are intense interviews with a small number of people. The use of grounded theory could also have been explanatory in that it would create categories of data about working mothers that would ultimately lead to theory construction (Lipson, 1994)

By comparison, ethnography created a broader focus, examining the experiences and actions of the individuals within the context of their environment and culture (Aamodt, 1991). Until more is known about the intricacies and intimacies of working mothers, theory construction generated from grounded theory is probably premature. Likewise, intense interviews with a few people, as would occur in phenomenology, may not yield enough information about how people, think, see, hear, speak and act. Ultimately, phenomenology and grounded theory result in data to be analyzed that is in a written form based on interviews. Neither is able to "feel" the culture, the everydayness of the people being studied as one does through participant observation, which is the hallmark of ethnography. For the purposes of the study it therefore seemed most prudent to use ethnography, to gain a broader and deeper view of the working mothers experience and world.

Origins of Ethnography.

The use of ethnography reportedly can be found as far back in history as Herodotus, an ancient Greek who wrote about the diverse cultures of that time (Sanday, 1983). Certainly the influence of Malinowski in the 1920's who encouraged researchers to "grasp the native's point of view" moved ethnography into a position of prime importance to anthropologists (Payne, 1981). The contemporary beginnings of ethnography study probably began with Franz Boas' (1948) work with the Eskimo culture. This was in keeping with traditions of cultural anthropology and the focus on cultural patterns of village life (Morse & Field, 1995). Spradley (1997, 1980) and Pelto and Pelto (1981) have continued the tradition and are often cited as contemporary authorities on methodology in ethnography (Mitchell, 1993).

Ethnography is a way to study the life patterns of groups and individuals that evolved from social scientists who were anthropologists. Within cultural anthropology, ethnography is the byword for thick rich description of how people are. The resulting classification, comparison, and explanation of the described data is known as the sub-discipline of ethnology (Radcliffe-Brown, 1958; Spradley & McCurdy, 1972). Streubert and Carpenter (1995 p.89) noted that anthropologists found traditional science "inadequate to discover the nuances of people who live together and share similar experience" (p.89). Ethnography enables the researcher to categorize cultural knowledge, thus enabling the complex and contextual meanings of the culture of the people to become known.

Ethnography is now used in multiple disciplines such as social science, sociology, political science, education, and nursing. Its use often depends upon the perspective of the discipline. Whatever the school of thought, the common link in the use of ethnography is to gain "meaning and understanding, from situations and actions, through interpretation and explanation of behavior" (Mackenzie, 1994, p.775). This is in sharp contrast to the use of cause and effect to gain meaning and understanding of situations as often exhibited in quantitative research.

In the early 1970's Leininger (1970) and Ragucci (1972) used ethnography to study the effects of culture on health care. As nurse-anthropologists they used the methods of anthropology "to study phenomena which they perceived were not reducible, quantifiable, or able to be made objective" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995 p.89). It was from Leininger (1985) that ethnonursing research would eventually evolve. The use of ethnonursing was and is guided by Leininger's theory of cultural care diversity and universality. Nurse researchers study "cultural care patterns, values, and practices" (Leininger, 1988, p. 155) that are interpreted through the lens of cultural care. Nursing practice using ethnonursing is directed at providing culturally congruent care. (Leininger, 1988, p.156). Her work enabled nursing to have a clearer view of the meaning and application to practice of transcultural care. Likewise it helped nursing realize the need for care practices that were based on the commonalities and the differences for each cultural population. While ethnonursing did not become a major research

methodology, it nevertheless demonstrated the increasing awareness that culture and the desire to understand the lives of others was an important aspect of nursing research.

Other studies that have broadened the application of ethnography to cultures within the larger society include Germaine (1979) and Golander (1992) who studied institutions as cultural settings, Parse, Coyne, and Smith (1985) who examined the meaning of aging in the elderly, and Cassell (1992), an anthropologist, who examined a professional group (surgeons) organized as a cultural system. In all instances ethnography shares the common themes of being "holistic, contextual, and reflexive" (Morse & Field, 1995 p. 23).

Agar (1997) noted that the traditional view of ethnography is changing. For the past two decades the awareness and appreciation of cultural differences and increasing complexity of society have come into sharper view. The ethnographer may be found studying one of the many cultures or subcultures that exist within the larger society in which we live or pursue the study of people from a different culture in a distant land. Ethnography is used in multiple disciplines, and the breadth of application increases as does the view of what is a culture.

Ethnography posed some interesting challenges for me that warranted further examination, such as "insider status." It is necessary to keep in mind that ethnography is both a process and a product (Agar, 1980). The researcher is therefore searching for a broad picture filled with rich description about the group being studied in the hopes of capturing the essence of it all.

Insider versus Outsider Status

Ethnography as a research method is always linked to culture and attempts to understand behavior of others from the position of an insider. The emic view reflects the language, beliefs, customs and experiences people in a specific group. It is this intimate and intense closeness with the cultural scene that the ethnographer strives for, knowing full well that she will not ever completely have the emic or insider's view. However, it is from the etic or outsider's view that the strength of the researcher's observations gather momentum. Observation and interpretation can only happen from the etic viewpoint. The ability to describe an observed behavior or ritual in the context of the group or culture is the essence of ethnography (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) noted that the ethnographer "participates overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available... on the issue" (p.148). However it is the combination of both the emic and the etic viewpoints that ultimately enable the researcher to develop conceptual or theoretical interpretations from the research (Boyle, 1994).

A challenge posed by research focusing on the relationship of home, work, family and self for the working mother with young children, is that the researcher may have both insider and outsider status. This is a very real possibility especially if the researcher is a woman with children. Finch (1984) described occasions from her research where through "shared experiences as women a

basis of trust was established with the participant that allowed for disclosure of information that might not have otherwise been forthcoming. Finch stated, "The ease with which one can get women to talk in an interview situation depends not so much on one's skill as an interviewer, or one's expertise as a sociologist, but upon one's identity as a woman" (p.78). In these instances the researcher as an insider needs to develop ways that allow for the richness of the interview data to be forthcoming. At the same it is necessary to be able to utilize the etic viewpoint so that observation and interpretation may proceed.

An important component of the research process is the researcher's ability to become a part of the subculture being studied. Fieldwork, the prolonged association with the participants in their environment, is the key to this process. The need for close physical association with the people, in this case working mothers, in their own natural setting became pivotal in the data collection stage. Thick, rich and dense description can only come from participant-observation and in-depth interviews of the members of the cultural group. (Germaine, 1993). Ultimately, ethnography demands prolonged, systematic in-depth study. Gehring (1973) described ethnography as

the art and discipline of watching and listening and of trying to inductively derive meaning from behaviors initiated by others. One must see the general in the rich, particularizing detail of good ethnography. To watch and to listen must come before interpretation and analysis (p. 1223).

Boyle (1994) noted that ethnography is labor intensive and "always involves

prolonged, direct contact with group members" (p. 163). For the researcher, the challenge remains to protect the integrity of the research. This depends on her abilities to stay alert to her own personal biases, values and experiences. It is through self-awareness of one's own mind-set that the researcher can begin to develop the closeness that enables and facilitates participant-observation and in-depth interviews.

Data Collection.

The heart of data collection for ethnography is the ethnographer. Data is primarily gained through the use of the human senses thus requiring the researcher to be a keen observer and an astute listener.

Participant - observation and interviews are the main methods used for data collection (Germain, 1993) and the substance of field work. Document analysis can be a helpful supplement in the process. Participant - observation is the emersion of the researcher into the cultural setting. The ability to take on a "low key" profile while becoming a part of the culture being studied is essential. The use of one's eyes to observe and one's ears to hear yields the rich data necessary to go beyond stereotypical concepts of the culture. The senses enable the researcher to observe the actual behaviors of the people and describe and assess the real versus the ideal. The researcher can hear the words of the participants and establish congruity with their behaviors or lack thereof.

Participant - observation yields large quantities of data that are recorded in

field notes. Well done field notes are filled with verbatim conversations, specific detailed examples and descriptions of the time, the place, the milieu, the people, and the behaviors and actions of the participants, including those of the researcher. It is the work of the researcher when engaged in fieldwork to seek the richness to be found in the most ordinary encounters. Thick, rich description of the people and their culture yield knowledge necessary to generate theory.

Pearsall (1965) identified four levels of participant observation that the ethnographer may experience in the course of data gathering. They range from total participation of the researcher in the participants' activities to that of complete detachment and nonparticipation to complete observer. Pearsall's classic article was significant for me. In addition to defining or describing the levels or depth of participant observation it emphasized the need for self-awareness of the actions, words, and body language of the researcher during the fieldwork. Lipson (1991) has noted that "self-awareness and fieldwork are reciprocal. Self-awareness is not only necessary for good fieldwork, but fieldwork itself is a potent source of self-awareness" (p. 83).

Ethnographers will often keep a personal field journal to record their feelings, reactions, biases, and insights about their research. This process is usually referred to as reflexivity. It is a way of reflection that enables the researcher to react to what has been learned and observed about the participants and what is simultaneously being experienced by the researcher. It is necessary for the ethnographer to remain vigilant about her "personal journey" as she does the

research. The researcher "is a part of the world that she or he studies and is affected by it" (Boyle, p 165). Reflexivity is the combination of what is known about the participant and how the ethnographer is affected by it. When done well it creates good ethnography that reflects a product greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Participant observation takes time. Long term association with the participants enables the researcher to access the very heart of the people being studied. The basic beliefs, hopes, fears, and expectations are able to be observed and talked about (Boyle, 1994). When done well, participant observation also lays the groundwork for interviews.

Interviews may take on many forms for the purpose of ethnographic research. They should to be in-depth and not rushed. They may include formal, informal, structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Germaine (1993), identified three key purposes of interviews. First the essential process of interviewing is to capture the "native's" point of view. Secondly, they provide the opportunity for any discrepancies among the members of the group to be clarified. Last of all, interviews provide a vehicle for clarification of the researcher's perceptions and members' perceptions.

Qualitative interviews tend to be flexible and dynamic (Taylor & Bogden, 1984). When in-depth interviews are used, much like long term participant observation, a familiarity can develop with repeated face-to-face meetings. In ethnography it is possible to find less structure in the interviews than those in



formalized situations (Germaine, 1993). The possibility for serendipitous and unexpected information to emerge is also more apt to happen with less structure.

Expecting the unexpected is one of the exciting parts of data gathering.

Data Analysis and Management.

Ethnography tends to produce copious field notes that require the prompt attention of the ethnographer. The sooner they are processed in relation to the visit or observation, the more likely they are to produce a review of data that assists with the plan for the next observational experience. Sanjek (1990) and Wolf (1992) have both noted that a principle of fieldwork is the recording of field notes with the researchers "raw" or gut level observations and thoughts. This is an important part of data analysis because it helps the researcher to recall her intuitive response, her thoughts and feelings that occurred during the interview and/or observation. Reading and rereading interviews and field notes is a major technique of analysis used by ethnographers. There is a continuous process of analyzing and rethinking the observations that have been made. This occurs at the time of the event and at other times and places which are totally unrelated. The interpretation requires a logical development that requires both time to ponder and a commitment to honestly represent the people being studied (Muecke, 1994).

Description of the Research Setting

A semi-rural northern California foothills community located approximately thirty miles from the State Capitol was the selected setting for the research. With

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Description of the Research Setting

A semi-rural northern California foothills community located approximately thirty miles from the State Capitol was the selected setting for the research. With

a population of 20,000 people, it has four elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. At the time of the study the community's population was less than ten percent non Caucasian. The median home price was approximately \$200,000. The socioeconomic profile included a number of retirees as well as middle and upper middle class wage earners. While statistics were not available, it is generally accepted that the community at large has a high proportion of citizens who have obtained college degrees and /or completed some college course work post high school. Primary employment categories include technology, business, education, medicine, dentistry, law, human resources and state government positions. Significant employers, in addition to the State of California, include Intel, Aerojet and Hewlett Packard.

There was a strong sense of community and community spirit as evidenced by the numerous community service activities for adults and children such soccer, baseball teams, swim team, and volleyball leagues. The citizens tended to rally around the activities of the high school and support sporting events and performing arts programs and concerts. There is a strong cross generational presence that includes numerous military and aerospace retirees, due in part to the proximity of two Air Force bases. There are also many families with young children who are mobile due to job transfers related to the presence of a major computer technology firm. The crime rate is generally low, a fact that the citizens take pride in. Community service and volunteerism are encouraged and numerous venues exist for such activities.

Sample

Human Subjects Assurance.

The Committee on Human Research reviewed and approved the application for the dissertation research proposal titled "The Balancing Act: How Working Mothers Manage Home, Work, Family and Self." Approval number H8443-15490-01 was granted for the period of August 19, 1998 through August 1999 and renewed until August 2000.

Nature and Size of the Sample

The sample included twenty-five participants who were recruited from the parent population of the four elementary schools in the town's School District. The participants were mainstream middle-class and upper middle-class working women ranging in age from 24 to 44. All of the participants considered themselves to be Caucasian. However, two of the participants identified their fathers were part Caucasian and part Asian. None of the participants had ethnic surnames that suggested Asian or Latin ethnicity.

Criteria for Sample Selection.

To be included in the dissertation research study, the participants were required to meet the following criteria.

- * Work at least 32 hours per week outside the home.
- * Have children who were no older than eleven years of age.
- * Live with a husband or partner.
- * Willing to participate in the study and be interviewed and audio taped at

least once during the course of the study.

Several points were considered when establishing the selection criteria.

First, I wanted a population of women that were full-time employees in the labor force. It is generally accepted that 32 hours or more per week is full time in relation to health and dental benefits. For the purposes of the study, 32 hours of work outside of the home was chosen as the baseline. A second consideration was related to growth and developmental phenomenon. The issues facing middle school and high school age children are very different from those of elementary school age and younger children. Likewise the parenting challenges are different. In an effort to keep the focus on how working mothers manage, I decided to use mothers who were not yet dealing with the issues associated with middle school and high school age children but rather focusing on elementary age or younger.

Five participants were employed outside of the home for thirty-two hours per week or eight days in each two week pay period. The remaining 20 worked forty hours per week or more. All were married to the father of their children and living in homes they owned with their spouse. The ages of the children ranged from three months old to 11 years seven months of age. All of the school aged children attended K-6 elementary schools. None were in a middle school program. Ten women had two children, eight women had three children, four women had four children and three women each had one child. (Table 1)

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information

NAME	AGE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION
Abby	22	1	A.A.	Bank Teller
Abigale	26	2	B.A.	Account Manager
Angela	36	4	M.S.W.	Social Worker
Anne	36	3	B.A.	Dental Hygienist
Annette	30	3	1 yr. college	Grocery Checker
Betty	31	3	2 yr. college	Website Developer
Cathy	34	3	B.S.	O.T.
Eleanor	28	2	A.D.N.	Nurse
Ellie *	32	2	1 yr. college	Ins. Office Manager
Elsie	30	4	High School	Secretary- High Sch.
Gena	33	4	A.A.	Shop Manager
Gloria	34	2	M.B.A.	C.P.A.
Hanna *	42	2	M.A.	College Teacher
Janet *	36	3	B.S.	Probation Dpt. Analyst
Jayne *	39	4	B.S.N.	Nurse
Jeanne	26	2	B.A.	Teacher - Elementary
Jenny	28	2	B.S.	Dietician
Jill	40	4	B.A.	Phys. Therapist
Karen *	37	3	B. A.	Pharm. Sales Rep.
Kathy	34	3	A.S.	Computer Technician
Laura	36	2	A.A.	Preschool Teacher
Marsha	23	1	A.A.	Payroll Supervisor
Marta	33	3	B.A.	C.P.A.



Mary Beth	25	2	A.A.	Bank Loan Officer
Nancy	42	4	M.A.	Engineer
Pat	31	2	1 yr. college	Store Manager
Polly	29	2	A.A.	Ins. Office Sect.
Rachel	31	3	High School	Bank Teller
Ruth	39	3	J.D.	Lawyer
Sylvia *	23	1	B.A.	High School Teacher
Zelda	35	3	B.S.	Project Manager

* denotes participant from pilot study

Data Collection Methods

Techniques

As in the pilot study, ads were once again placed in the weekly parent newsletters that each of the schools send home with the children, requesting those individuals who were interested in participating in a research study to please call for further information. I also attended a monthly P.T.A. meeting at each of the elementary schools where I was invited to talk about my research project at each school site. At that time any women who were interested in participating in the project were invited to call.

Due to the prior success recruiting participants for the pilot study the same technique was used for the dissertation research. I was highly visible in the community and was well known at each of the schools due to extensive volunteer work and community involvement. This familiarity served to enhance the trust of the participants.

The initial questions and probes for the interviews built upon those used in the pilot study. A finished list of twenty-two items was prepared for use in the semi-structured interviews. All of the interviews were taped and later transcribed. The questions and probes focused on the meaning of home, work, family, self care, management of multiple tasks, and feelings held by the participant about being a working mother and their meaning. Throughout the interviews, I encouraged the participants to share anecdotal stories as exemplars of their experiences. In all instances the participants were encouraged to restate the question or probe in a way that had meaning or clarification for them. No answers from the participants were considered inappropriate or irrelevant.

Quality and Credibility of Data

As in all ethnographic based studies, the instrument used in the research effort was the researcher. The initial questions for the interviews built upon all that was learned from the pilot study with additional questions being developed to expand beyond the meaning of home. To study and understand the culture of these working mothers places the ultimate responsibility for data collection upon the interview, observation, and descriptive abilities of the researcher.

The focus of this study was an "everyday" issue. The scene of the working mother was a familiar one and, while often taken-for-granted, it nevertheless had importance in the greater picture of women's health care. To this end, it was important for this study to have findings that were credible and trustworthy. The data gathered in the interviews needed to be rich and copious to produce a

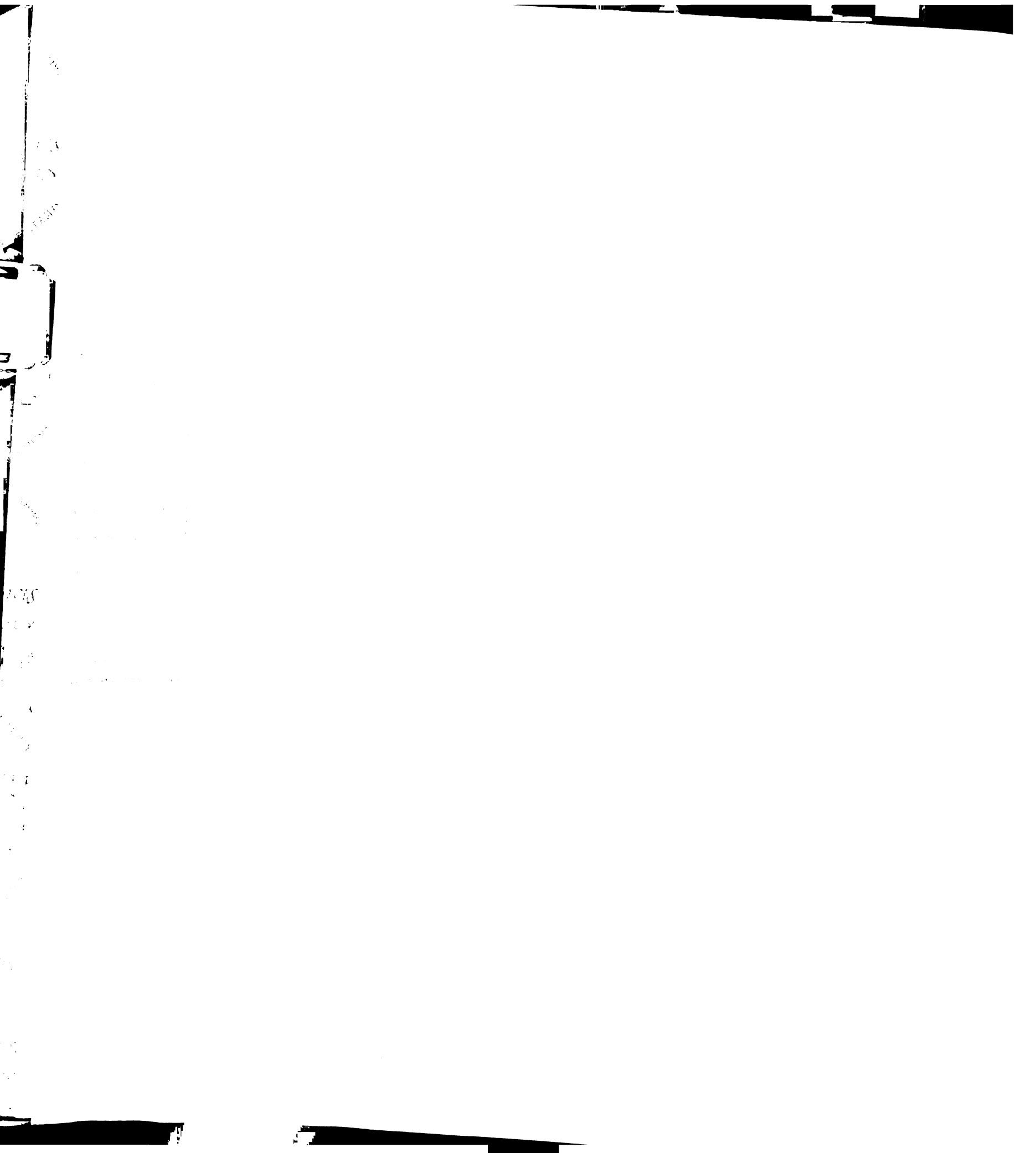
quality study. Likewise, the field notes needed to be dense and full of rich observations and verbatim conversations that demonstrated that I had thoroughly observed and participated in the culture being studied.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided a useful template for examining credibility. They suggest a focus on "activities that increase the probability that credible findings will be produced." (p. 85) Specifically, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation are encouraged. Their work was noteworthy and relevant when related to this study.

Prolonged engagement was an area of strength in this research study. Knowledge of the culture of the working mothers' local world was well known because of my insider status as a researcher. Within the community where the participants live, I was recognized as a working mother whose entire professional career has been spent in a variety of women's health care settings. Additionally, I was well known for volunteer activities in the local schools and in the scouting programs. Due to the small size of the town, I of course was frequently seen in local shops and businesses.

As a part of the process of prolonged engagement, I spent a significant amount of time making lengthy journal entries about my personal feelings and the "issues" of being a working mother. This analytic process, coupled with dialogue with colleagues, helped to clear the way so personal agenda items and attitudes did not creep into the work unrecognized or unacknowledged.

Throughout the interviews and analysis I made a great effort to stay alert to



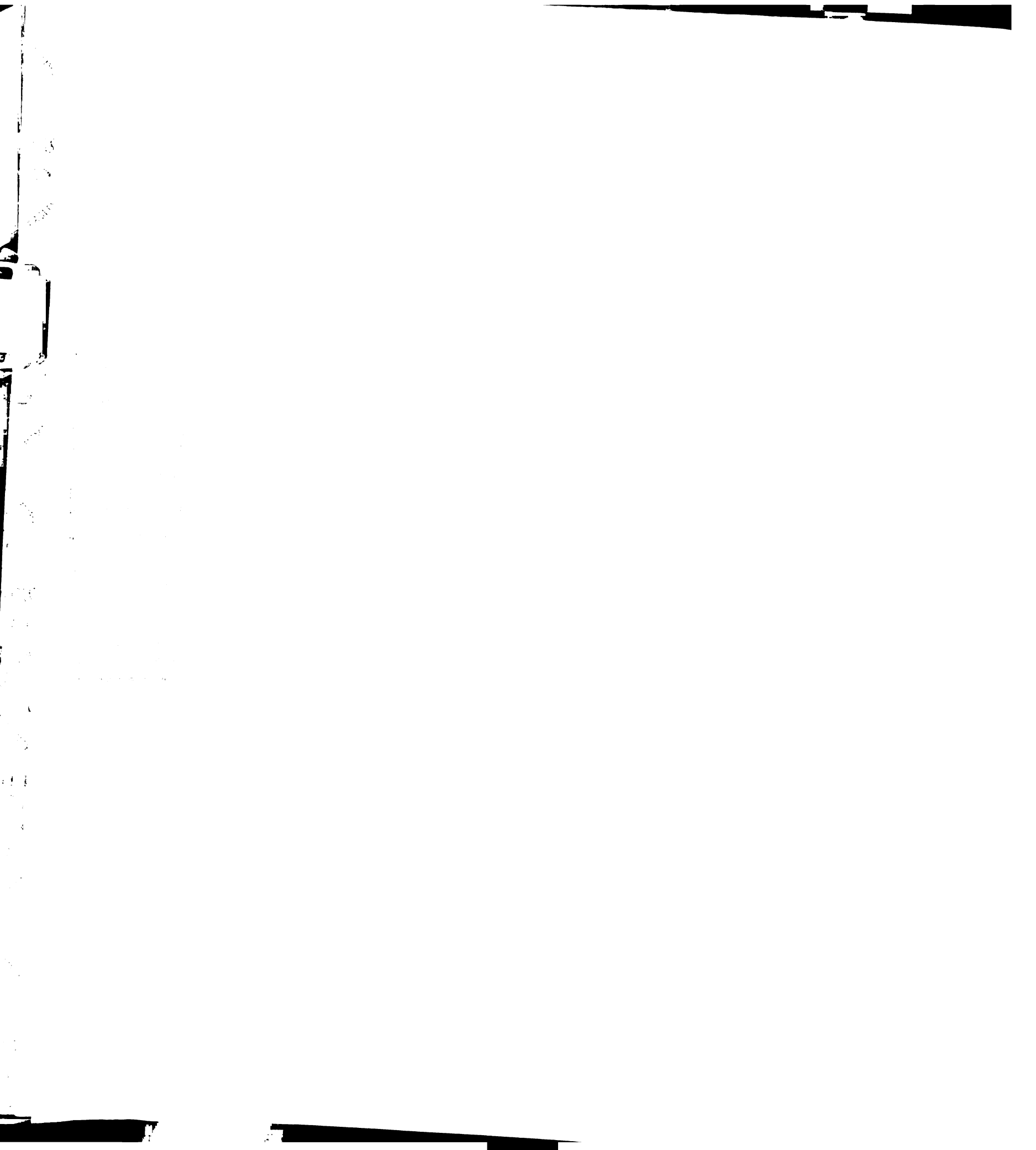
personal biases and experiences related to work, motherhood, home, family, and self care. Knowledge of the need to be continually vigilant about my own agenda as a wife, mother, employee, colleague, and researcher served to strengthen the analytical process.

To build trust, which is a necessary component of prolonged engagement, the participant and I spent time talking about the study in general terms prior to each interview. It was a time for each person to ask questions and to "chat". The interviews took place in the participants' homes. Allowing the participants to choose the environment freed each one to be able to speak her mind in a place of absolute security. Each of the participants knew of me because of my community involvement in parent groups at the local schools. However, only four of the women were actually known by me. Lincoln and Guba (1985) imply that trust building can take a long time. In this study that did not prove to be the case. Usually within ten to fifteen minutes into the interview the participants were very relaxed and in some cases sharing what seemed to be very personal information. In those instances where the statements were about private concerns such as sexuality, I offered to omit the material from the transcript. The trust building that had occurred in all instances was such that respect between the participant and myself seemed to be mutual. I respected the woman and her right to privacy and the participant valued the research question knowing that the information given would not be exploited. This "give and take" seemed to exemplify a characteristic of prolonged engagement and was consistent with the



previously noted findings of Finch (1984). Indeed the feeling of "knowing the other" allowed the participants to be comfortable and not threatened in any way. In this study the brief time interval required to achieve trust may also have been related to the lack of threat posed by the interview topic. The perception by the participants that I personally understood at a deeper level the experiences they were relating also enhanced the trust.

Persistent observation provided the medium for the codes of balance and balancing to truly blossom. The rereading of the interviews to the point of feeling like they were conversations with old friends helped to evolve the strategies associated with balancing and identifying the subsets of balance. With each read of the interviews it became clearer that there was a place and/or feeling that the participants tried to reach in establishing a sense of normalcy within each of the sets and between the subsets. This was a feeling that things were manageable and "do-able." The term balance was chosen to describe this behavior. The examples the participants used in the interviews identified a process that they were using consciously or unconsciously to arrive at a place or feeling of equilibrium. Initially, it was not clear how balance was achieved. Further coding enabled single words to emerge such as postpone, control, and delegate. At this point the term balancing was chosen to describe the behaviors used to achieve balance. Because the participants were open and honest with me, there was no reason to doubt that they were sharing the unembellished truth as they experienced it during the interviews. There was no gain or motive for them in



exaggeration. Their anecdotal stories were very believable, which seemed to give strength to the choice of the key terms balance and balancing.

Eisner (1975) talks about coming to terms with the "pervasive qualities" of the research - those things that really count. Inherent in this process should also be sorting out irrelevant information or things that do not count. This sorting process is exactly how the balancing behaviors were identified from the interviews. Through the multiple rereading and coding of the interviews key words and descriptions began to emerge. These became identified as the balancing behaviors. While the process was lengthy it was also necessary to satisfy the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. Even though the interviews yielded much information it was important to find the nucleus or heart of the balancing act. It was the search for this core that allowed for balance and balancing to not only emerge but to be explored in detail and to be more deeply understood.

The third activity cited by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to increase credible findings is triangulation. In this study, data triangulation using participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal group process were used. This technique was especially useful for evolving the subsets of home-family, work-family, and family-home. Once these were identified then triangulation helped look at balance from the view of time, place and events. Balance was examined from the perspective of what home, work and family were like when each was in balance and out of balance. Likewise, looking at those events that

lead up to being out of balance coupled with events that lead to restoration of balance gave a deeper view and understanding of the balancing act for working mothers in the study.

During the time when the interviews were being conducted and then analyzed, there were several opportunities for me to talk about the progress of the research with women's groups in the community. Two of the experiences proved to be very helpful and affirming. The first noteworthy experience occurred when addressing the local chapter of the Zonta International Association at their annual Woman's Day celebration in 1999. All of the members present had been or were still working women, the majority of whom had persevered in the workplace in spite of difficult odds and were in mid and upper level managerial or executive positions. Most of the members had been or were working mothers. Several retired members were present,

When relating examples of the Balancing Act from the participant interviews, many club members raised their hands to share their personal and very similar experiences. The interest in the research findings, which were still in the preliminary stages of analysis, was overwhelming. Repeatedly, the members offered examples of the difficulty experienced in trying to manage home, work and family. Senior members of the group related to the historical trials and tribulations of working and raising a family in the mid 20th century. Others spoke of the tug-a-war between their frustrations and lack of support versus their desire to be a part of the workforce. The encouragement for understanding the

Balancing Act as a way to improve women's health was beyond any expectations I had for the experience.

A second serendipitous event occurred when I was invited to a holiday party for neighborhood women. While not all of the guests had been interviewed by the researcher, there were several who had been participants in the research. During the course of the afternoon two of the women initiated a conversation about how much they had each valued being a study participant. The conversation group enlarged and soon six of the women were sharing their experiences with the others as participants in the research project. The "feel" of this experience was that of a focus group. As I listened, all ten of the women began to talk about work and family, work and home, and family and home issues. They were validating each of the stories that were being shared and acknowledging the commonality of their experiences and attempts at managing the Balancing Act. The party dialog was laden with rich, anecdotal stories that spontaneously captured some of the essence of these working mothers culture. The ease with which the guests at the party initiated conversation about the Balancing Act, and readily divulged highly personal information, was seen as an expression of the need working mothers have to share and validate life experiences with their peers.

Subsequent to each of these experiences, lengthy field notes were made about each gathering. The information, observations and field notes gathered from the experience were thoughtfully considered, coded and included in the

data analysis. While none of the participants had time to be in a focus group after their individual interview was completed, the data gathered during the two described events served to provide similar observations that would have been generated from a focus group.

Procedure

Access, interviews, observations and field notes were at the heart of the research. The ground work for access to the population to be studied had been clearly establish during the pilot study on the "Meaning of Home For Working Mothers." Fortunately, I was never seen as an intrusive threat to the participants but rather as a friend and person who was easy to talk to about many things. This belief was validated by the response to the ad in the school bulletins and the welcome at the P.T.A. meetings. As in the pilot study, there was overwhelming interest in the project, with forty calls from potential participants occurring in the first two weeks of data gathering.

After the initial telephone call to each of the women, it was determined that some did not meet the criteria for selection: working outside the home at least thirty-two hours per week, married to the father of their children, and the children were not older than eleven years of age

The participants in the pilot study had commented on how much they liked choosing a pseudonym for the interview. With this in mind as an effective technique to maintain trust and assure confidentiality, all participants in the larger study were asked to choose a pseudonym that they would like to be called



throughout the interview. The only place their legal name appeared was on the consent form. Data were gathered during semi-structured taped interviews that were later transcribed. All the interviews occurred at a place and time chosen by the participant. The majority of the interviews occurred in the woman's home. Three of the participants invited the researcher to come to their place of work and conduct the interview during the lunch hour in their office. In all instances the location of the interviews provided an opportunity to gather other observational data about home and work. All of the participants chose a time to do the interview when their husband and children were not present. Locations such as parks and restaurants were not deemed suitable sites due to noise constraints and/or lack of ability to control for confidentiality. The site selections by the participants afforded them privacy to speak freely without interruption and control over who heard their personal remarks. It also gave them the choice of not taking time away from home and family, if they so desired.

A persistent dilemma encountered in data collection during the study was that of "catching up" with the women to be interviewed. It was a problem that continually besieged the data collection phase of the dissertation research. The experience in and of itself shed light on how working mothers manage home, work, and family. While the participants verbalized that they "really wanted" to be a part of the study, there were many activities competing for what precious little time they had or could create. A total of 14 interviews had to be rescheduled at



least once and four were rescheduled twice. Such things as chickenpox plaguing the elementary school over a period of two months, the start of soccer season, scouting activities, work commitments, family emergencies, unexpected guests, and the need to spend a day "getting caught up" were all valid reasons for postponing and rescheduling the interviews. Prior to the start of the scheduled interviews it was already clear to me that employed mothers with young children were always focusing on how their time would be allocated.

Data Analysis

Timely attention and diligence to the copious field notes and interview transcripts was of singular importance for data analysis. As noted earlier by Sanjek (1990) and Wolf (1992), an important component of fieldwork is the researchers field notes which record the "gut" level observations and the unabridged thoughts and feelings. Well done field notes enabled me to capture the memories and the feelings that were generated by each of the interviews with the participants. When field notes were then coupled with the transcript of an interview, the picture of the working mothers' daily lives began to emerge.

The volume of data to be analyzed was beyond expectation. It quickly became evident that while grounded theory was initially not chosen as the methodology of choice for this research, it was needed to assist with the data analysis phase. Grounded theory made it possible to code interviews line by line and cluster the codes based on similarity. As each of the interviews were each carefully coded they were individually compared to each of those previously

coded. The use of constant comparative methods and memoing helped to sort through the data and realize dominant codes and how they were beginning to cluster into groups relating to such issues as balancing behaviors, decision making, and the ripple effect to name but a few. Grounded theory provided a way to organize and analyze the unexpectedly large volume of data from the interviews which needed to be sorted to determine the relationships that existed. Through the use of coding and constant comparative techniques the balancing behaviors were identified and refined. However, it was the rereading of field notes and interviews that highlighted the subsets of balance between home and family, work and family, and home and work.

During the coding of the interviews and the rereading of field notes I was very close to the data. A constant challenge was to be aware of the insider versus the outsider issues. As a peer researcher, many of the interviews triggered strong feelings of identity with the participant. As a woman, a mother, and an employee, I had personally experienced many of the situations that were described in the interviews. At times I had strong personal feelings that were divergent from those of the participant interview being coded and analyzed. The emic view of the insider was never far away and always needed to be carefully monitored by being reflexive and contemplative. The on-going sorting of personal thoughts and feelings that had been carefully recorded as field notes during the interviews continued during data analysis. On the other hand, understanding the need to have strong descriptions and clearly stated observations that reflected



the etic viewpoint of the outsider were equally compelling. It was important for me to recall that Boyle (1994) noted the combination of the emic and the etic viewpoints is necessary for the researcher to develop conceptual or theoretical interpretations from the research data.

Throughout the data analysis stage of the project, I remained vigilant to the need to thoughtfully consider myself and the emic viewpoint as it related to each interview. In doing so the ability to recognize and acknowledge my own feelings as separate from those of the women I interviewed enabled the etic viewpoint to emerge greatly strengthened.

CHAPTER FOUR

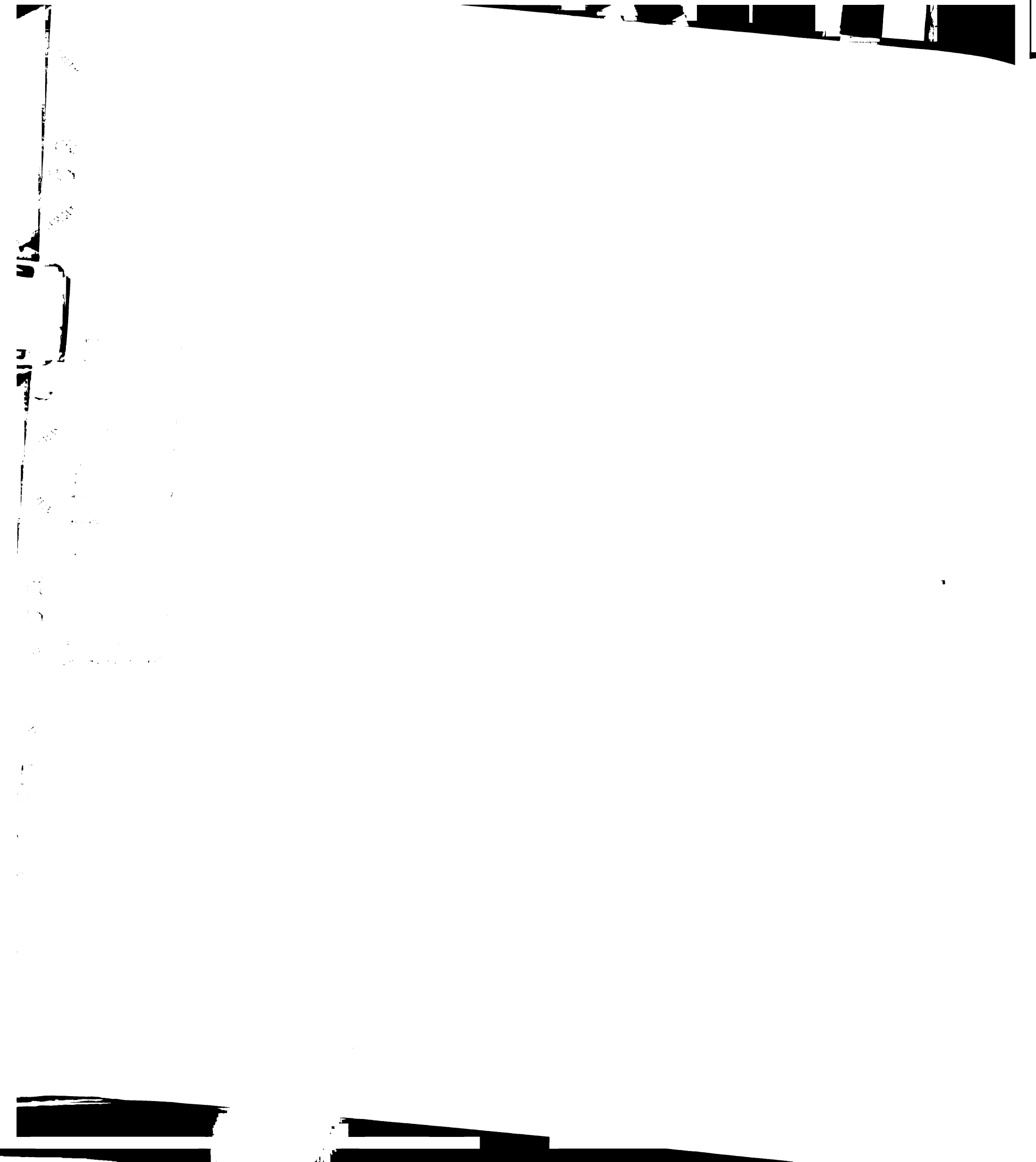
Introduction

For working mothers with young children, the Balancing Act is a way of life. While some of the participants were not aware of how they managed from day to day, others were completely in touch with what they were doing and the difficulties associated with being a working mother. All of the participants were highly verbal and freely offered their thoughts, opinions and anecdotal stories. The Balancing Act was an issue that they wanted to talk about.

The interviews and field notes provided a wealth of information about the culture of working mothers and supported the assumption that the Balancing Act can be described. The significance of the concept of balance, the process of achieving balance and the maintenance of balance for these working mothers with multi-faceted and multi-dimensional lives was the epicenter of the research.

The Working Mother's Model provided a template for understanding how the balancing behaviors were utilized as described by the participants. As a conceptual model it helped to create a unification of definitions and terms that facilitated a deeper understanding of what it meant to be a working mother with young children. At the same time, it also created a visual picture of The Balancing Act.

Results of the research will be discussed as they related to the following areas: balancing behaviors, the meaning of balance, the ripple effect, subsets of home, work, and family, decision making, division of tasks, self care, and



unexpected findings.

Balancing Behaviors

During the interviews each woman was asked to describe how she managed to balance home, work and family activities. It was a question that yielded dense descriptions of personal experiences. It also brought out feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, inadequacy, hopefulness, and happiness. While coding each of the interviews and comparing them, certain terms and actions repeatedly emerged that were highly descriptive. Due to the already completed analysis of data from the pilot study, there was no need to readdress the issue of whether or not women were trying to keep things in balance or merely trying to be in control. The pilot study established that control was a behavior and balance was the over-riding concept. With that in mind, the term “balancing behaviors” was selected to describe the fourteen behaviors that were identified by the participants in both the pilot study and the dissertation study. Through the use of constant comparative methods the behaviors became apparent in the coding and analysis of the interviews. The specific behaviors listed in alphabetical order include: controlling, coordinating, delegating, leaving work at work, living systematically, making choices, manipulating, negotiating organizing, postponing, relinquishing, seeking help, setting priorities, and taking responsibility. It is noteworthy that each of the behaviors were identified in the process of open coding. When selective coding was applied, each behavior was still able to “stand alone” and not become enfolded in another.



The voices of the participants in the study were strong voices of women who were trying hard to manage multifaceted and complex lives. Their words came from a place deep within themselves and were offered to me almost as a gift. To understand the description of each of the balancing behaviors, the voices of several women have been selected as representative examples of the whole. The exact interview excerpts are listed next to the corresponding behavior to which they apply with the participant identified parenthetically. The balancing behaviors are presented in alphabetical order as no one behavior was prioritized as greater than the others.

Controlling: "I'd like to be ... more in control. (Cathy)

"I'm not real controlling but maybe with the family I am a little bit because I'm concerned about their welfare." (Karen)

(when husband is out of town) "That's when it is most critical to be in control of the situation. I have to be on top of things." (Anne)

"It is something like driving a car, someone has to hold onto the steering wheel and know when to put on the brakes or accelerate and get out of the way."

(Sylvia)

Coordinating: "We coordinate our schedules to get everything in - childcare, soccer, work, dinner, all that stuff." (Kathy))

"I just keep trying to have us work together like a finely oiled machine. If we are in sync then things go along smoothly and when we are messed up it is a crazy type of loud noise and nothing that needs doing gets done." (Gena)



Delegating: "I delegate child care. I pay a wonderful lady to do it while I'm at work and when I'm home I ask my husband to do specific things like bath time. I just don't have to be the only one who does it all with our kids, that's why there are two of us parents." (Cathy)

"The best thing I've ever learned in my job is that I can honestly and without guilt ask someone else to do a job because that's what they are paid to do... that is true at home too, I don't have to do it all. In fact I have a responsibility as a parent to help my children learn to do things... and of course my husband too."
(Jayne)

Leaving Work at Work: "I left work at work and I don't bring things home, home is different than work." (Cathy)

"It is useless to bring work home from the office, I have enough other work to do when I get home. Dinner and laundry and childcare do not happen by themselves, there is a real person at home doing those activities. Besides the distractions are too great to do my office work well when I'm at home ...and I hate the guilt." (Zelda)

Living Systematically: "Living systematically, defining those other things that have to get done. A Monday chore, a Friday chore." (Hanna)

"There needs to be a rhyme and reason for things to get done - living in chaos is just that...chaos. We have a system in this house and it works, we have jobs and tasks for the kids to do, and the same for my husband and I... there is not enough time to always be reinventing the wheel. Pick a system that works and

use it." (Kathy)

Making Choices: "Ya have to make choices as a family, I have to make choices as a mom, we have to make lots of choices and well sometimes they are easy and sometimes not." (Betty)

"I learned long ago that you can't have it all, life is about choice and making the best one you can when you have to...do it without guilt and regret.(Jeanne)

Manipulating: "I manipulate (work) to the point they don't know I'm doing it. I do my job well but I also know how to work things to my advantage." (Hanna)

"Sometimes you just have to look at things more creatively and move the pieces around so it works out how you need it to... I'm not dishonest but sometimes I am cunning and conniving at work and think about myself first." (Kathy)

Negotiating: "I create flexibility (in my job), I negotiate with my employer and he's happy and I am too...the job gets done and that's what it is all about."

(Abigale)

"Most people want a certain outcome and they don't care about the process too much, so I use that to my advantage. At work I negotiate to take some things home to do so I can leave a little early. At home, I trade off jobs with my husband and it works fine." (Zelda)

Organizing: "Everything has a time and a place to be done. I'm always paying attention to what has to be done, what is getting done and what is yet to be done." (Abby)

"I hate to waste time, it's so foolish. With just a little bit of thought we can save

steps and time and actually have more time because we weren't wasteful. It isn't hard, it's a habit of thinking about what to do before doing it." (Laura)

"Thinking in a logical way helps a lot, it keeps me organized and I have less screw-ups. It also helps when I have to pick and choose what to do first or last."

(Nancy)

Postponing: "There are household jobs, like clean the toilets and bathroom sinks, or wet mop the floor, sometimes they just have to wait another day or so."

(Annette)

"Everything does not have to be done exactly as planned. There are times when I just say "enough", it can be done later. It's the same for home and family and work. Of course what I usually first postpone is working out at the gym."

(MaryBeth)

Relinquishing: "There are some things that don't get done...over the years my expectations have dropped. I put up with clutter and not dusting for a week or so." (Jenny)

"I'd like to have it all done, all the time - a perfectly clean house, a neat and tidy desk, no kids with muddy shoes, no husband working late. But what I want more than that is for us to be happy and healthy as a family - so I frankly have said to hell with kvetching about how I wish it was and realize that it is really pretty good as it is." (Zelda)

Seeking Help: "It was okay to get a cleaning lady to come in every week and now I don't have to worry about it." (Kathy)

"A working mom can't do this alone, she will die or go crazy trying." (Laura)

"It was good for me when I realized that I like to help others so why wouldn't other people like to help me if I need it...and they do like to be asked when there is a need, just like I do. (Polly)

"If you don't ask for help or tell people what you need then a woman better hope that she lives and works with a bunch of mind readers. This is not mission impossible." (Nancy)

Setting Priorities: "So I balance things by making lists and deciding what is important, you know like setting priorities." (Hanna)

"I have to prioritize and make sure that I get the things done that need to be done. The hard part is realizing that not everything needs to get done by me" (Karen)

Taking Responsibility: "The fact is I take responsibility for the ground work of the logistical side of running a house. There are too many things to be done and you just have to do what needs doing...you can't always wait to have little talks about who does what and when, you just get in and do it." (Hanna)

"The buck has to stop on somebody's desk whether it is at work or home. At times it is simply a time saver for me to just do it and not try to delegate or negotiate...you know...just do it and then I'm free to do something else. (Jill)

"We share a lot in this family, but the reality is that someone has to be in the driver's seat, I guess you could say we share responsibility - sometimes I am in the lead and other times he (husband) is in the lead." (Nancy)



The balancing behaviors were vital for these working mothers to achieve and maintain balance. While none of the participants identified using all fourteen balancing behaviors, all of them utilized three or more on a regular basis. There was no apparent priority of importance among the balancing behaviors, however, some were utilized more often than others. Two of the balancing behaviors that many of the participants gave examples of using frequently were organizing and coordinating. These behaviors were utilized with varying degrees of success in the workplace, the home and with the family. Jill, a physical therapist and mother of 4 children provided the following:

Sometimes I feel like I am the master calendar for our family, knowing where everyone is, needs to be, and the times and dates everything is supposed to happen...I never can lose my place or get out of step, I keep everybody on the same page...other times I feel like a band conductor trying to get everyone to march to the same tune.

When the tension increased within the subsets of home and work, home and family, or work and family the use of relinquishing and taking responsibility became more apparent. Working mothers related the need to “find time” and often did so by giving up (relinquishing) another activity such as exercise. For some it meant relinquishing a standard of performance as in the interview citation from Zelda where she described how she changed the household standard defining what was a happy home and family. Similarly, when a lack of balance was perceived or anticipated, these working mothers tended to take



responsibility for trying to change or manage the situation. Gena, an insurance office manager said, "It is not okay to take the wait-and-see position, at work or at home. Being responsible goes with the territory for moms who work and have kids, you do what needs doing and move on".

A small number of the women felt that they did whatever had to be done. Identifying how they did it was not as crucial as accomplishing the task. They all stated that they were "really busy" and just did not want to take the time to think about how they managed, they "just did it." While they were interested in managing more effectively, they were not necessarily interested in analyzing their present use of or lack of balancing behaviors. Likewise they did not feel that they needed to explore new ways of managing. In most instances they related doing whatever was necessary to complete the task, job, or activity. They did not relate well to the idea that there were behaviors and actions that actually helped achieve or maintain balance. As a consequence, they tended to be more random in their balancing behavior selections when doing the Balancing Act. This was not always an effective or time efficient process for them. However, it eventually got them to their outcome and that was viewed as good because the task had been completed.

The use of balancing behaviors was not influenced by education, family size, or socioeconomics. When the coding was completed a common set of behaviors had emerged that had definition and were a part of the subculture of these working mothers. They were unified by the experiences of working mothers with



young children coupled with complex and multifaceted lives.

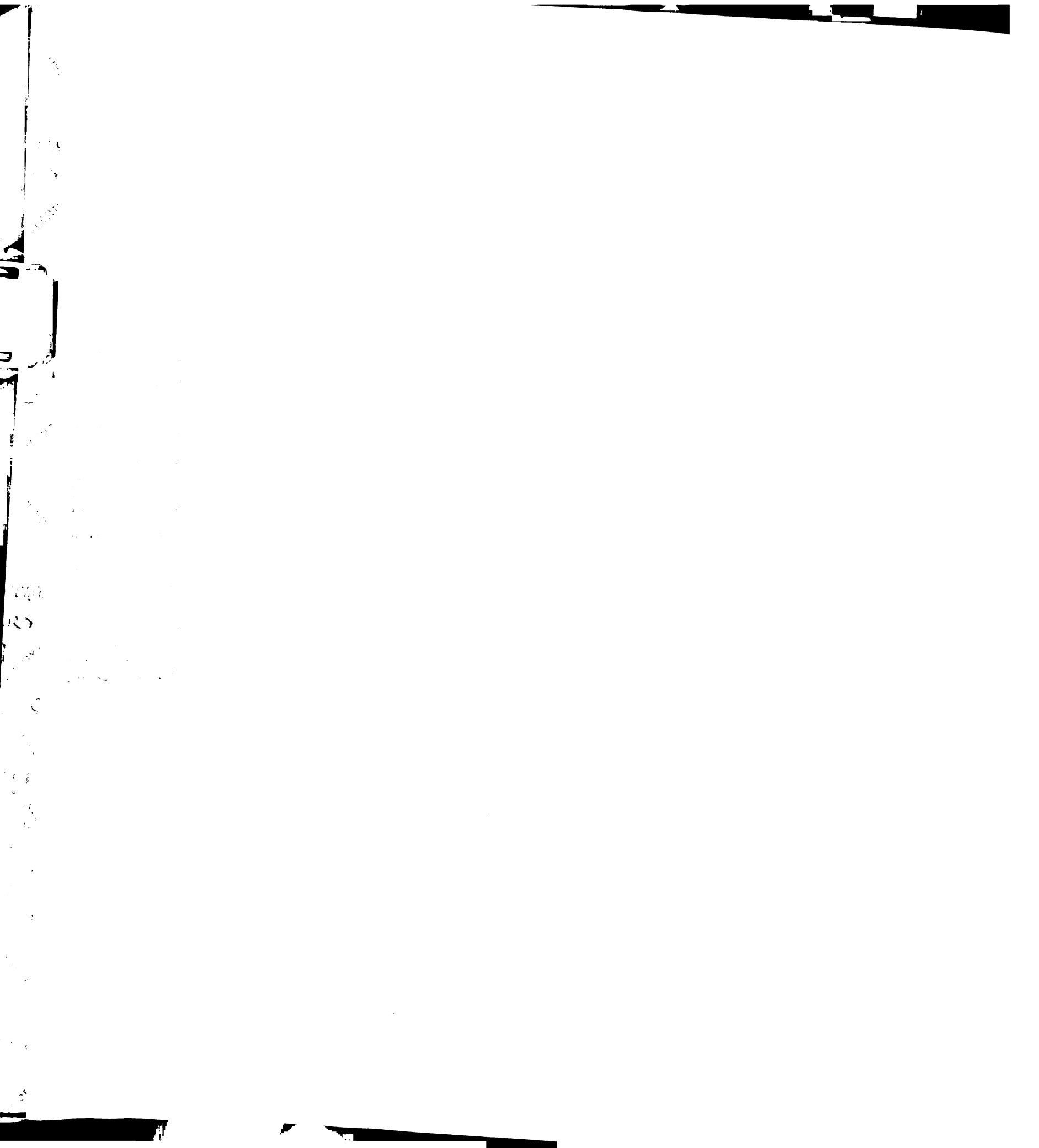
The Meaning of Balance

Working mothers valued having home, work and family in balance.

Numerous anecdotal examples were shared that illustrated that balance is both a state of being as well as achieving. For example, participants identified “being in balance” as the end stage of “achieving balance.” For working mothers balance is always dimensional. Home, work, family or any combination of the three were “in balance” or “out of balance” at any given time. Balancing behaviors were the “tools” used to achieve balance.

When working mothers were striving to achieve balance between home, work and family, most often they tended to omit those activities that were related to the self and self care. Repeatedly, anecdotes were given about making choices between “going to the gym for a workout” versus getting to work early. Another example was postponing a haircut to attend a child’s Saturday soccer game, because the husband, who usually attended those events, had to unexpectedly work on the weekend. Even taking a walk around the block was given up by one participant because of last minute carpool issues.

While many of the participants were using three or more balancing behaviors on a regular basis, they wanted to know and learn about others. It was very important to them to try harder and to do a better job of keeping home, work and family in balance. They wanted to improve their abilities. At the completion of each interview, I was often asked by the participant if I would call or send them a



note describing what was learned from the research. A participant named Laura noted that her mom, who had died two years ago had been an important example in her life. She said:

My mom taught me a lot, I just wished I had paid better attention and made better mental notes - she worked as a secretary and things always seemed pretty good in our family. I want to have a handle on all of this stuff (family and work) just like she did, and the more I learn, then the better job I'll do at home and at work.

Another participant named Gena said, "It is hard work to do all this (keeping things in balance) but the alternative is awful. I am not willing to have my family live with chaos and keeping things in some type of balance is my insurance against all of us going crazy." Annette said, "I chose this lifestyle, I like it and it is my choice to do a good job managing or a crummy one. The more I learn the better I'll be, that's just how life is."

Clearly, achieving and maintaining balance coupled with utilizing balancing behaviors was empowering and valued by the participants in the research project. Of the women who were interviewed, it was obvious that the greater the number of balancing behaviors that were mastered or considered as a resource by the working mother, the better her abilities were at managing and feeling empowered with choices.

The Ripple Effect

Twenty-one of the participants specifically related the importance of being



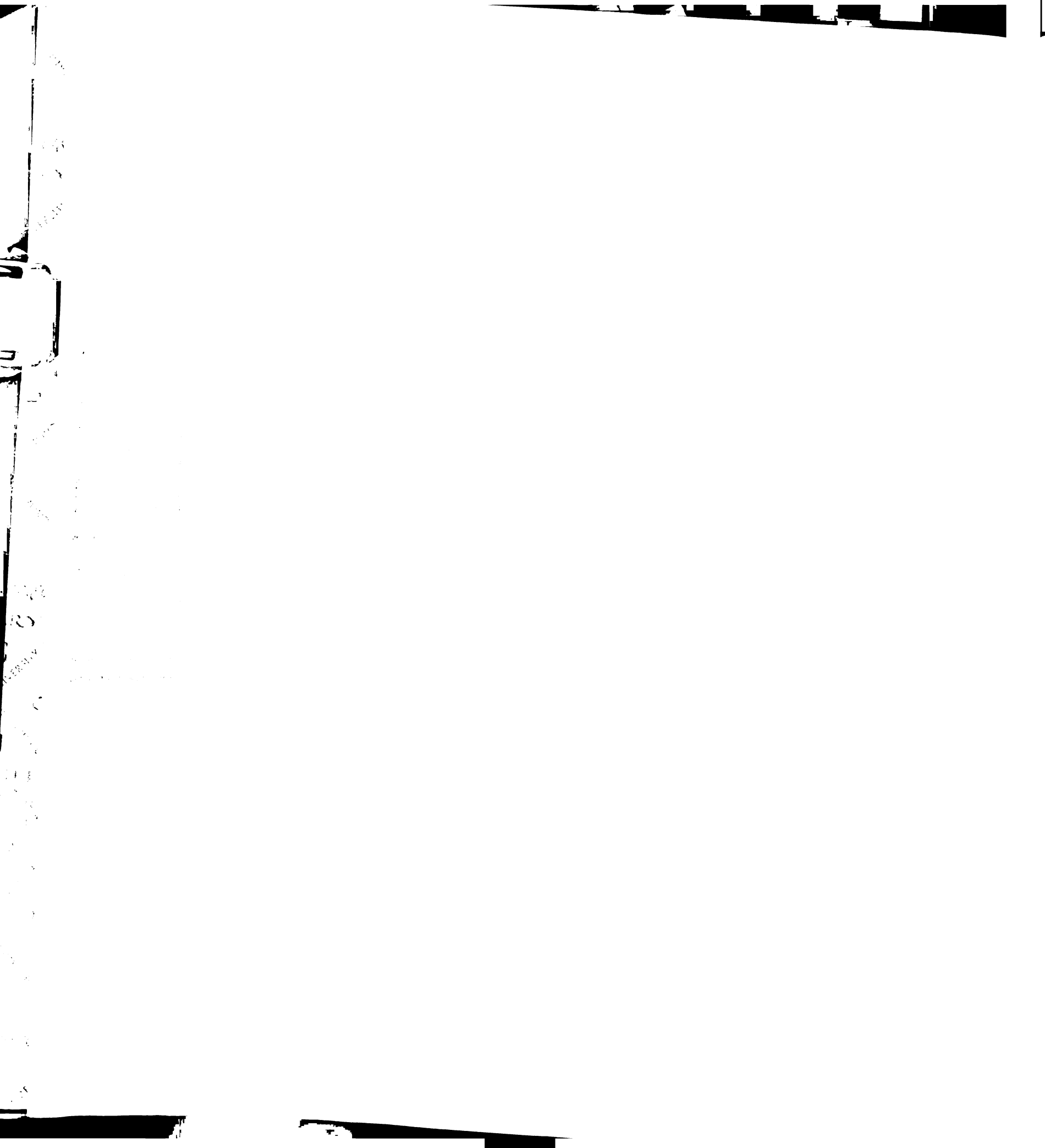
able to anticipate and prepare for situations before they happen. Within the context of balance and balancing, the need to limit or attempt to lessen the impact of being "out" of balance held great significance. They acknowledged that when home, work and/or family were "out of balance," their work load was increased. Whatever small amount of "free" time or "down" time they might have available to use on self care activities was generally used to meet the added demand placed on them. This situation was named the "ripple effect" because when one area was out of balance it tended to effect the other areas. Events seldom happened in isolation. A participant named Anne quite eloquently described the "ripple effect" in the following anecdotal incident.

I just know that when my husband is traveling that I'm paying attention to details and trying to keep track of all the loose ends. Even though my folks are nearby, I still feel very responsible and that when something goes wrong, it tends to feel like more of a big deal than if the same thing went wrong when he was home. You know it's not like a big catastrophe goes wrong, it's usually a little thing. Like the other day, the washer broke and was full of clothes and a tub of water. I had put the clothes into wash at bedtime figuring that I could pop them in the dryer when I got up in the morning before work. Of course I had to go to work, the kids had school, and the dog had a vet appointment scheduled after I got done at work. So all that meant I had to reorganize the day to get the Maytag guy out to fix the damn washer and of course they don't give you a specific time they will come - just be

there in the morning or the afternoon. I called my folks and of course they had a full day of activities. My dad had left for the golf course, Mom had a hair appointment and wouldn't be back til 9:30. So she agreed to come over at noon and wait for the Maytag guy. Luckily, I was able to leave work a little early and take my work with me because Mom had her weekly bridge game at 3:00 and could only stay until 2:30. The dog got canceled out of the days activities completely and rescheduled. Well you see what I mean...it all just follows each other...it's like when you toss a rock in the lake.

For this working mother who was facing an "out of balance" situation that was compounded by the ripple effect, reestablishing balance was no easy task.

Anne had a very well developed sense of self with the ability to use many balancing behaviors to realign home, work and family. For example, the event necessitated her setting priorities (the repairs could not wait to be done another day), seeking help (from her mother and the Maytag repairman), taking responsibility (the washer was broken and needed to be fixed), making choices (to deal with the problem or not), postponing (the vet appointment), and negotiating (to leave work early). Perhaps she also relinquished some peace of mind that would have otherwise accompanied a formerly well organized and "in balance" day. Anne had many resources at hand. She was skilled in the use of balancing behaviors. The Working Mothers Model would place Anne's sense of self at the outermost dotted line. She demonstrates a high level of wellness. By comparison, for the person who would be closest to the inner dotted line in the



Working Mothers Model, it is likely that the above anecdotal incident would have had a very different resolution or at least not such a timely and well orchestrated reestablishment of balance.

The Subsets of Home, Work and Family

The overlap of each of the areas of home, work and family created the subsets of home-work, home-family, work-family. During the coding and narrative analysis of the interviews it became increasingly clear that the subsets were the areas that caused working mothers the most distress and required the utilization of already learned balancing behaviors or the acquisition of new ones. It was through understanding the significance of the subsets that an understanding of the Balancing Act fully emerged.

Often working mothers were able to anticipate that conflict would arise and would identify the subset of origin. When this occurred working mothers tended to be proactive and initiate balancing behaviors that would minimize or at least make the imbalance more manageable. For example, Marta was a certified public accountant who experienced heavy work demands during tax season that often kept her at work late into the evening. She prepared her family for this by utilizing four balancing behaviors. First she negotiated with her husband to be home every evening with their children. Secondly, she coordinated after school childcare until her husband could pick up the boys. Thirdly, she asked for help by hiring a cleaning lady once a week for the two most demanding months of tax season. Last of all she acknowledged (relinquishing) that there were some of her



sons' weekend sporting activities she would miss due to work demands. When explaining how it all worked, Marta seemed satisfied that it was the best that could be done, given all the circumstances. She felt that she was keeping things in balance and managing without guilt. She typified the working mother who was always balancing and always holding a larger view of life and the surrounding events.

By contrast, some of the working mothers seemed to be continually experiencing the collision of work, home and family issues. At times all three of the areas would be out of balance and pulling in different directions while competing for a limited amount of time. An anecdotal incident from Jayne's interview exemplified how difficult it was for some of the working mothers.

What is a usual day like? There are no usual days in my life. I get up and mentally prepare to do battle with what comes my way. I work on an acute psych unit so it's always wild there and my schedule rotates. My husband is a fireman so he is gone for twenty-four hour shifts at a time and I have 4 boys under 10 years old, two of them have ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). We have a menagerie of animals...there is no rest except at bedtime. I do the best I can, I just never let my guard down, I always pay attention.

The demands of home, or work or the family creating singular or multiple conflicts was a dilemma that was at the very core of the culture of working mothers. Frequently, the women noted that they had to stop and recognize that

there were simultaneous demands being placed upon them from two or more of the areas and that was the cause of the conflict. One of the first interviews was with Kathy, who noted:

I need to be cloned sometimes. I hate it when I have to lie to my boss and claim that I have a dental appointment at 3:00 when the reality is that there is no one to pick up my child at school. Once in a while I just have to pull strings to make things go my way and not look back.

In another interview Gloria said,

My house is a mess, fortunately this bothers only me...but this is tax season and I'm working very long hours. When I'm home I want to be with the kids and my husband. I don't want to use what little bit of non-work time I have doing housework. The kids do some household chores and so does my husband but I wish it were really tidied up. At least things are better after April 15 each year!

It was generally accepted by the working mothers that sometimes there would be conflict between home, work and family. However, they felt they could manage or find new ways to do things without dropping out of the workforce. The women were hopeful and understanding of themselves and their situation.

Jeanne said, "I am an expert problem solver and I am still loving the journey even though some days are unbelievable." Three participants who were dissatisfied with their employment setting felt that it contributed to the conflict they felt most of the time between work and home and work and family. They

were each looking for new employment settings and expressed that a job change would improve their attitude as well as decrease the stress.

Decision Making

While examining how working mothers made decisions about home, work, family and self care, numerous examples were found in the interviews about family beliefs, raising children, working parents and career goals. Working mothers made decisions about home, work, family and self care based on several key points.

First of all, family cultural beliefs had a strong effect on decision making in all of the participant interviews. Culture was pervasive and found in every part of these working mothers' world. It was both contemporary and historical. It tended to wrap around a working mother, giving her a type of scaffolding with which to remain strong and firm in her decision making. In most instances there was congruence between the historical family culture of the woman and her present day situation. However, for some women in the study, their historical culture from their family of birth did not include combining motherhood and employment. These women frequently experienced questioning about their decision to combine work and family. Abigale said,

I like to work and I'm a good mom but my house is cluttered. None of the older women in my family worked, they admit that I'm a good mom but think I'd be better if my house were tidy and I worked at home instead of the office.



By comparison, women like Abby said, "I've had lots of encouragement from my family to make this all work and they trust me to use good judgement....they believe in me."

A second influence on decision making was role modeling. Role models of other working mothers, both in the workplace and the family, were seen as a positive influence. For those participants who came from families where their mother had worked outside of the home, the role of a working mother was not viewed negatively. Several women stated that if their mom could do it so could they. Lulu said, "all us women in my family have worked for generations and we are stronger and better because of it - if it is what ya know how to do then ya just do it." In another interview, Angela said,

It was a lot harder for her (her mom) than it is for me - I know I can manage, I just have to look at my mom and know I'm made of the same stuff.

Sometimes I ask myself what my mom would do if she were in my place... it always helps me make a good decision.

Working mothers who did not have female role models in their immediate family who had worked outside the home frequently cited knowing someone who was influential. Hanna said,

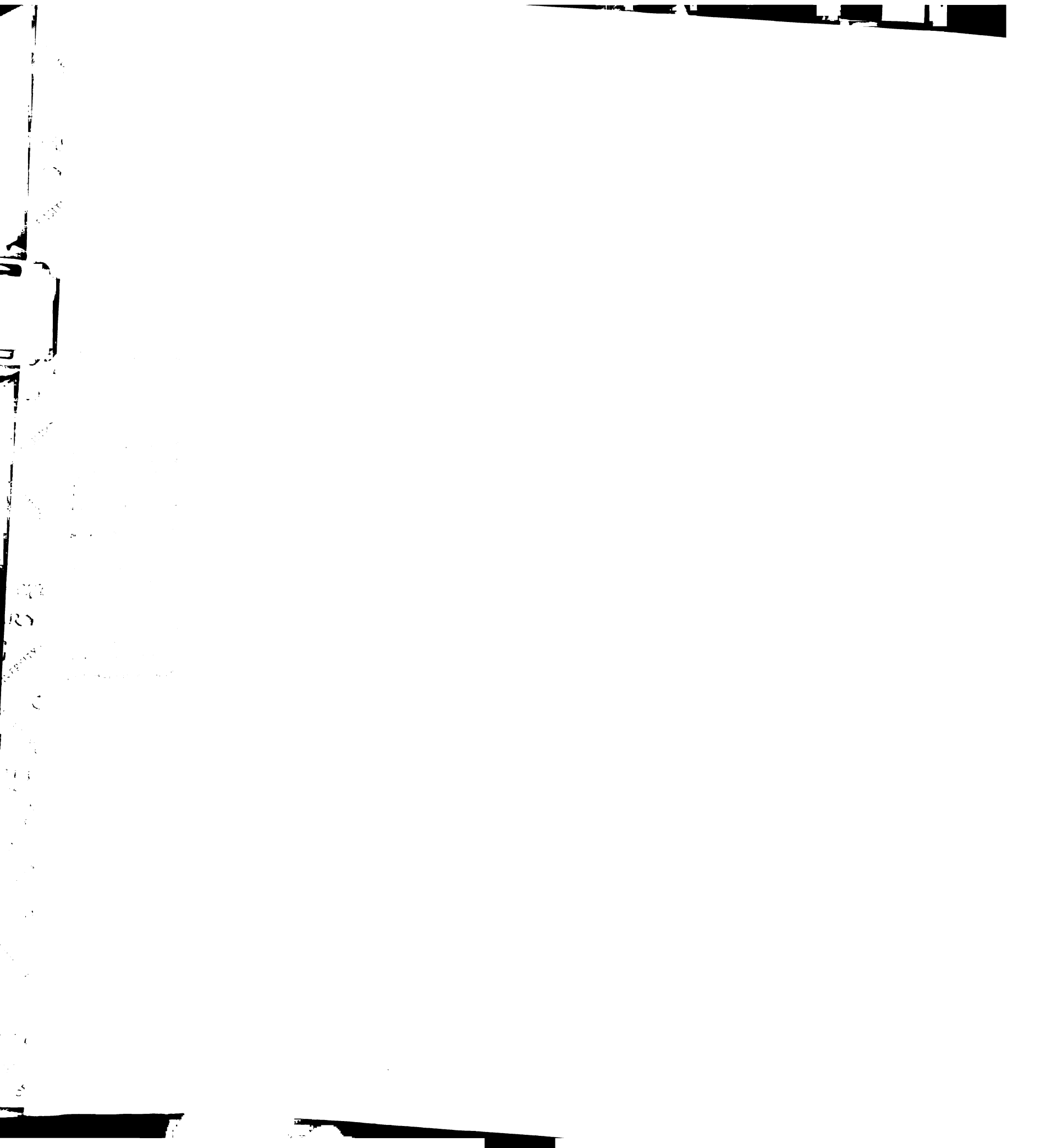
Mom was a homemaker and it was good for her. But I got a different view from Mrs. Applegate, our neighbor, who taught school everyday. I liked her a lot and babysat her kids. A lot of what I do today is like how she did it she was a role model for me and now I'm a school teacher too.



I observed groups of working women in the community at school and social events and saw that there was a sharing of ideas and experiences. Women told each other how they were managing to keep things in balance. This was peer group role modeling. While the participants for the study were women with children in elementary school or younger, it was impossible to avoid hearing comments from working mothers with older children. These comments often served as validation and encouragement. Mary Beth stated how important these contacts were for her: "I just love it when Sally (a working mother of teenagers) tells me I'm doing a good job. It's nice to hear from somebody who's been there and done this." Likewise, Gena said, "I always learn so much when I talk with her (a neighbor with high school and college age children) and come away feeling recharged. It's good feelings."

A third influence on decision making were the expectations of society and family. The participants with college degrees noted that they had an investment in themselves and that their families had invested in the future by helping them get educations beyond high school. Jenny, a mother of two children under six years of age said, "I loved going to college and I am happy with my work, my family would think I was crazy if I didn't use my college education. It (college) gave me skills for managing a home and family as well as work." Abigale, echoed similar thoughts in saying:

The best gift I give to my family is to teach by my example. Working is a way for me to contribute to society - I want my kids to be fully vested in our world



- I role model that everyday and they know it is important just like they know they are important but for different reasons.

Division of Tasks

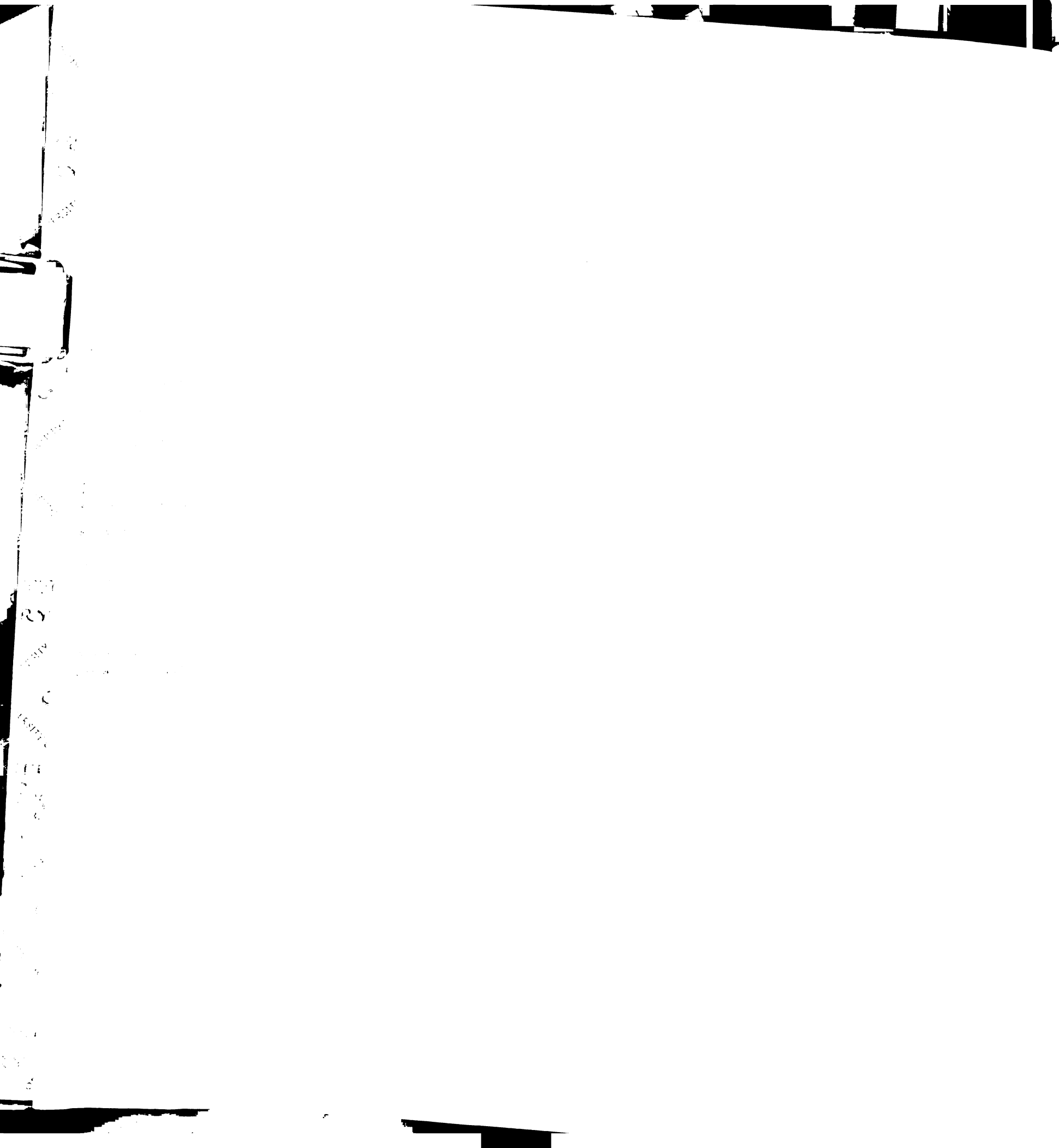
In relation to home and family, the working mothers used a variety of ways to divide the household and childcare tasks with their husbands. Numerous participants gave examples of sharing cleaning, cooking and household responsibilities with little regard for traditional gender assignment. For some, like Pat, it was a matter of parity. She said,

Most of the jobs around this house are equal opportunity employers. We don't have strict division, more like if you can do it then do it. I don't do lawn mowing or car fixing though and my husband doesn't do washing or mop the kitchen floor...everything else is fair game.

Pat and others felt comfortable with these type of arrangements and identified that it was a part of keeping things in balance.

In several instances, when describing a usual day after work, the participants told of spouses who had been raised in traditional, non-working mother homes. In those situations the division of tasks was very prescribed. Eleanor related her situation as "we are inside and outside type of people. If it happens, inside then it's my job, if it happens outside, it is his job." Elie said,

When we got married it was very stressful to come home. He didn't want to cook, or clean or do anything. I'd do dinner and all the clean-up. Now that we have kids, I do the dinner and he puts the dishes in the dishwasher.



In another instance, Janet related that she felt as though she were the “luckiest woman in the world” because her husband was so helpful. Later in the interview she elaborated on her feelings of good fortune by saying,

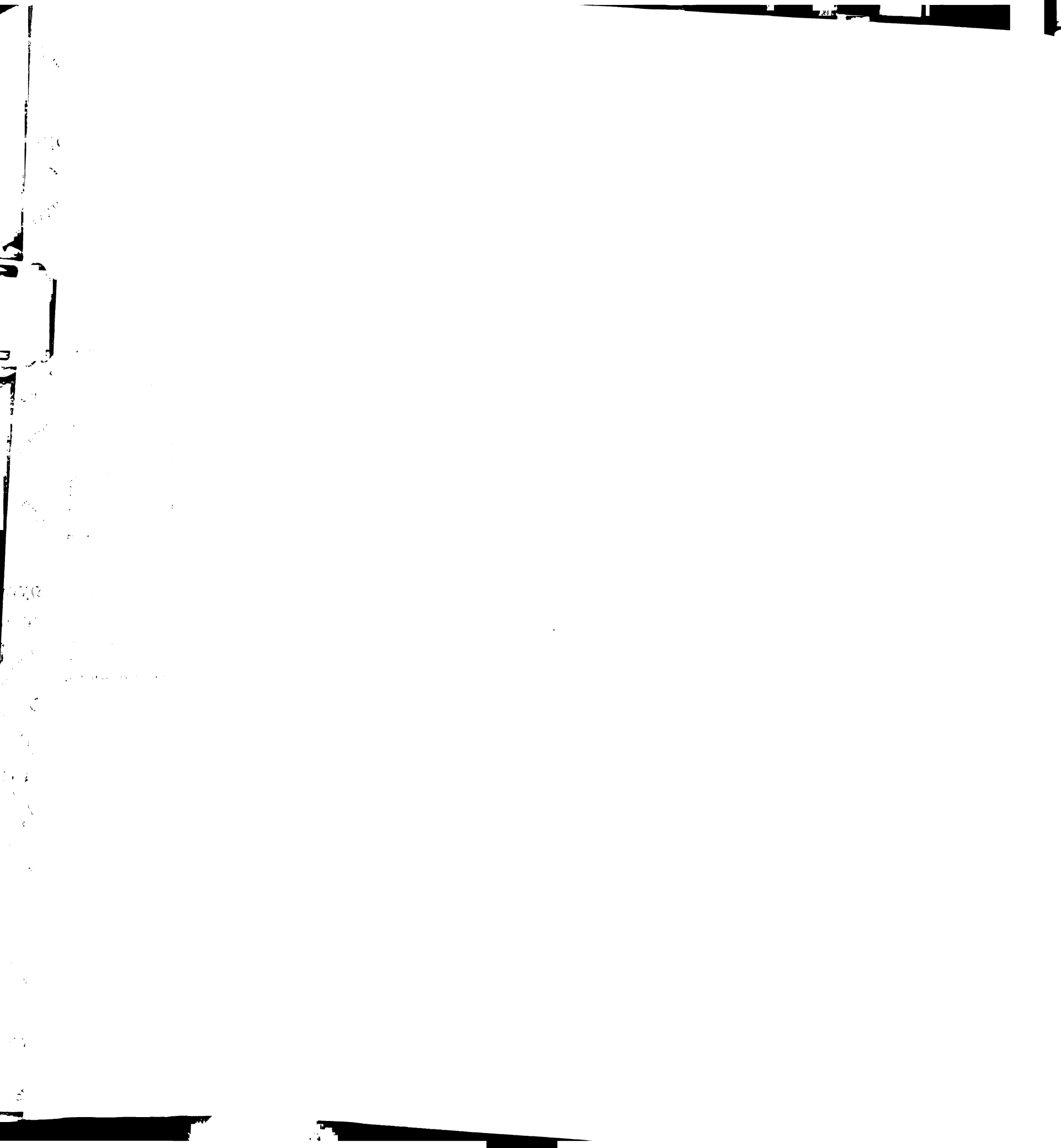
When I come home I have 45 minutes alone to get dinner going and other stuff. My husband picks up the kids and we eat when they get home. Then he loads the dishwasher and takes out the garbage while I bathe the little ones and the older one works on homework. After baths he reads each of them one story while I help do homework or pick-up things or start some laundry. Then it's bedtime for everyone and I put the kids to bed and say prayers. Then I can sit down with him and we have 30 or so minutes before we go to bed too. I am so lucky to have so much help.

Janet and others with similar responses genuinely felt that their situations were typical of the working mothers experience. They did not acknowledge that they were doing a far greater share of the daily family work. It was surprising to experience their unquestioning acceptance of their situation.

There were no anecdotal incidents relating to the division of tasks in the workplace. Home and family, on the other hand, presented numerous stories and experiences. The participants often cited that they divided everything to be done in the managing of a home and family, the same way their parents did. Once again, the significance of role models for working mothers was emphasized.

Sylvia said,

We tried to be like my mom and his dad when we got married....I was



miserable and finally said we have to do this our way, so we did. Now it works - I cook, he cleans up. I wash the clothes, he folds them. We just work like a team and it's better now.

However, for the most part, the working mothers tended to shoulder more responsibility for household management and child care than their spouses. Whether this was by choice or happenstance was not clear. In some interviews such as those with Eleanor, Elie, and Janet, there seemed to be a wistful wishing on one hand, that their husbands would be more involved in managing home and family issues and responsibilities. However, there was also an acceptance of how things were in their multifaceted lives. It was the latter feeling that seemed to enable them to shoulder the responsibility for multiple situations and keep things in balance. They did not question the inequities in the division of tasks, rather, they accepted them and made them a part of the balancing act. They did not appear to be unhappy nor express feeling of unhappiness.

Self Care Activities

Self care activities and creating a time and space for themselves was a difficult task for most of the participants. The need to exercise and eat right were readily verbalized, but the implementation was difficult. The ability to manage home, work and family enhanced the ability to create time for the self and self care activities. Sylvia typified those who had made overt changes in their lives that included diet and exercise. She noted,

I had to be brave when I decided I was fat. In order to exercise every day I



had to learn to say "no" to myself and food, to others and committee work, and make this life a little simple...it worked.

Others cited the need for quiet or alone time. Marsha said,

Every now and then I send up the white flag and then every knows that mom is off duty...they all manage to find something to do that doesn't require me, and my husband knows he needs to step up to the bat and take his turn. I take a bubble bath and read a book in the tub.

This example was typical of other working mothers. They created time for themselves on an episodic rather than a regular basis. Only a few women were able to relate to the luxury of "going to the gym" or "taking a walk" everyday. The participants who were able to regularly enjoy such activities also had more flexibility or control in scheduling their work hours. For the most of the participants, self care activities were not overtly addressed on a daily basis even though they were intellectually acknowledged as important.

When talking about how they spend "alone time" or time when no one else is at home with them, most of the working mothers reported that they liked to read, or take a long restful bath. However, the same participants also noted that when things were very busy and there were many demands placed upon them, they used their alone time to get caught up on tasks. Janet apologetically confessed that she wasn't used to time alone by saying, "I just don't do much of that, I spend time with the family because I work all day, it doesn't seem fair to shut them out for my own selfishness." However, several other participants' thoughts



were summed up by Jill when she said,

Time alone is a gift, I treasure it and treat it like a reward for doing a good job with all the rest of the stuff. Like the kids get a half hour of TV if they get their homework done - well, I get to sit and read or watch TV and not be interrupted.

The issue of health activities such dental exams and annual check-ups were not neglected by the participants. However, the scheduling of these types of appointments was not an easy task for most of the working mothers. Often they related postponing or rescheduling a personal appointment because there was an unexpected conflict at work or with the family. Women who had traditional work schedules cited difficulty in getting appointments that fit with their work schedule. Oftentimes, they used vacation days or took time off without pay to make a scheduled appointment. There was an acceptance and a resignation of the fact that schedules did not always work. Gena noted,

The kids have to be taken care of - they are number one priority. So if something comes up with them being sick, I always get them to the doc right away. If I'm sick I probably don't go right away but wait and see what happens for a few days...I can't always get off from work real easy so I have to wait."

Gena's work situation was unusual in that the manager was very understanding about sick children and let employees leave work with pay for children's doctors' appointments. However, he was not as understanding when the adults in the



business were sick. He required them to use vacation hours or not be paid for the time they were gone. She related that in her workplace the working mothers accepted this and felt that they had negotiated a “deal” or trade off because of the children being placed first.

Overall, the majority of the working mothers with young children believed that they could do more to be healthy. However, they acknowledged that at the present time they could not always attend to health related activities such as exercise and diet. They participated in whatever activities they could as often as possible and accepted that at some future time they would most likely be able to change their situation. It is possible that because the participants were for the most part, not yet middle aged, they have not made the connection between regular health promoting behaviors and decreasing the risk for chronic illness such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes. The ability to intellectualize the need for exercise, good diet, and stress management was ahead of these working mothers ability to actualize such practices on a daily basis. Rachel summed up the feeling best by stating,

Everyday is a new start and me and others like me just try to do the best we can...this working and being a mom is a journey, not a race...I have to enjoy each part of it while I'm there...nothing lasts forever you know...sometimes it's easy to do stuff (exercise and meditation) and other times it is just not possible.

Other Findings

Throughout the interviews the participants repeatedly commented about “being busy.” During the scheduling of the interview appointments and the numerous phone calls to reschedule appointments, the participants frequently voiced concern about “being busy.” While none of the interview questions and probes focused on “busy”, it nevertheless emerged in the data.

It was clear that working mothers have multi-dimensional life experiences. The adaptation to “busy” confirmed that multi-tasking was a way of life. Working mothers were always doing more than one thing. They accepted and adapted to being busy and were seeking ways to be more efficient. They did not identify the need to do fewer activities and therefore become less busy. Rather, they were looking for ways to manage better the many activities that were associated with home, work and family. Rachel gave a good example of what “busy” means for a working mother by stating, “in addition to whatever is on the list of things to do, I must keep my eyes and ears open because our children are so young...I just can’t take a time out, I must always be paying attention.” Likewise, Cathy, who had all school age children, said,

A person can’t understand busy if you haven’t had kids...my kids are good, but no matter what, all kids require parent time and participation time...busy is fitting all the pieces together as best as you can - every day of every week.

Some of the participants believed that “busy” was analogous to a life passage. It



would end or at least slow down as the children became older. Ruth said,

The people who say they are too busy, need to get past their own egocentric needs. Being a working parent implies that the days will be full and that we need be looking at the big picture. We don't have the kids around forever...after that then things can slow down.

Hanna voiced equally strong sentiments,

...working and raising a family, of course I am busy, but then this is no surprise, I like to work and we chose to have a family, so being a whiner about it would be stupid, better to just do the best I can.

In community groups "being busy" was universally understood by the working mothers. They were understanding and kind to one another when someone voiced concern about be "too busy." Working mothers commented that they all had times of feeling overloaded and without any extra time or energy to spare. In many instances working mothers would excuse one another from participation in a P.T.A. event or like activity by saying, "next time you will be able to help, don't worry about."

There was a generosity of spirit and understanding among these working mothers providing support as well as validation that the individual experience was like that of others within the subculture of these working mothers. The overriding desire to do the best they could, to live with the circumstances that exist, realizing that not all things could be changed, and the commitment to manage the Balancing Act were all significant findings in the data.



CHAPTER FIVE

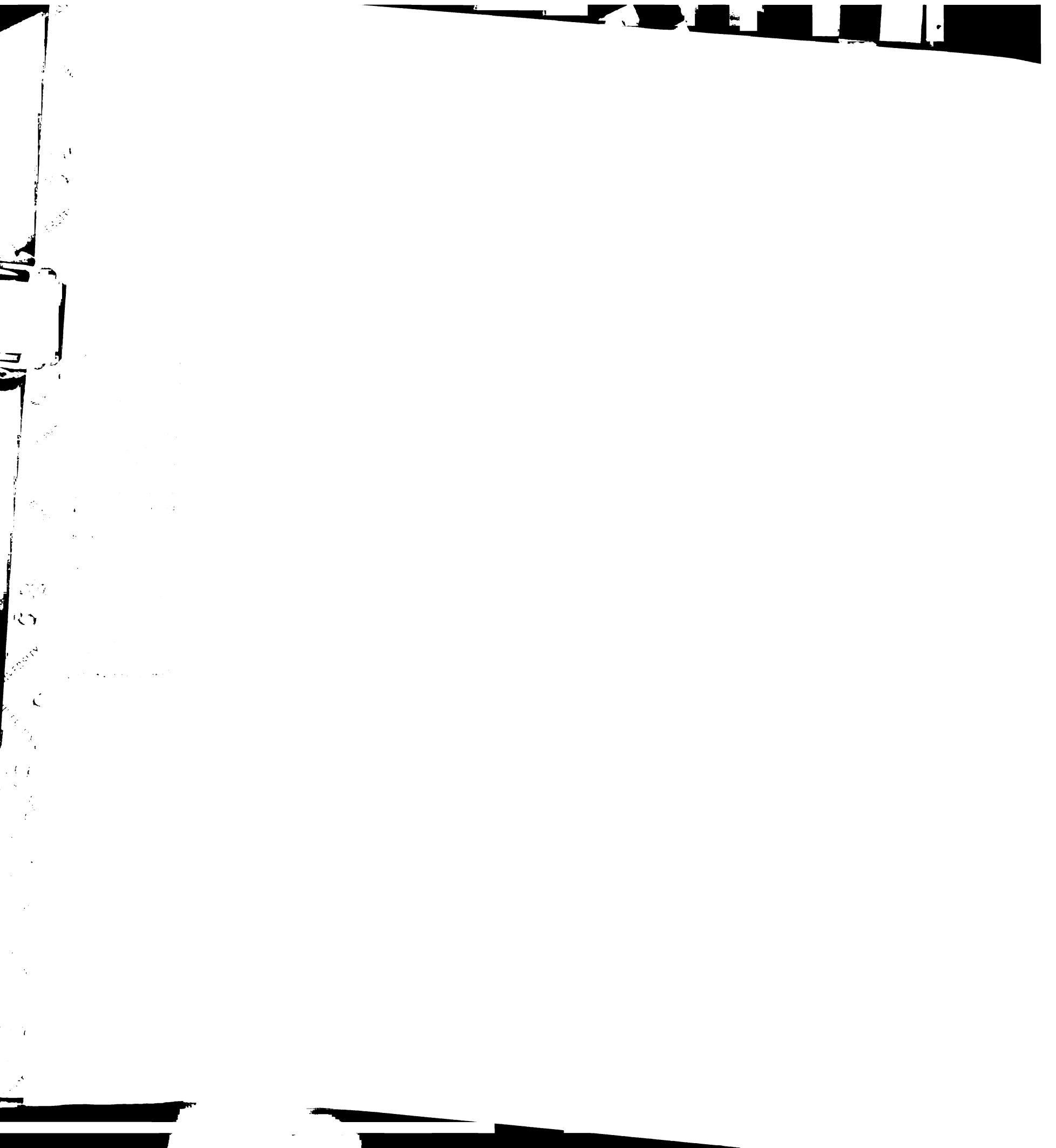
Discussion

Meaning and Significance.

The meaning of the findings from this study must be viewed in the context of white, middle class working women at the end of the 20th century in the United States of America. The research sought to answer two questions: How do working mothers with young children manage home, work, family and self? and What is the significance of the concept of balance when applied to the multifaceted and multi-dimensional experiences of working mothers within the culture of middle class working mothers?

In this study it was apparent that working mothers utilized behaviors that enabled them to manage home, work, and family even though they may not have identified the behaviors by name. The use of the term balancing behaviors was chosen to describe and encompass those critical behaviors which were utilized equally in each of the three areas. While behaviors such as controlling, delegating and coordinating are often associated with the workplace, this study found them to be applied to the home and the family as well (Voydanoff, 1988).

The identification of the fourteen balancing behaviors coupled with the definitions of each behavior provided a starting place for understanding the culture of these working mothers. This understanding subsequently enabled the Working Mothers Model to emerge as a conceptual model explaining the connection between home, work and family, as well as the application of the

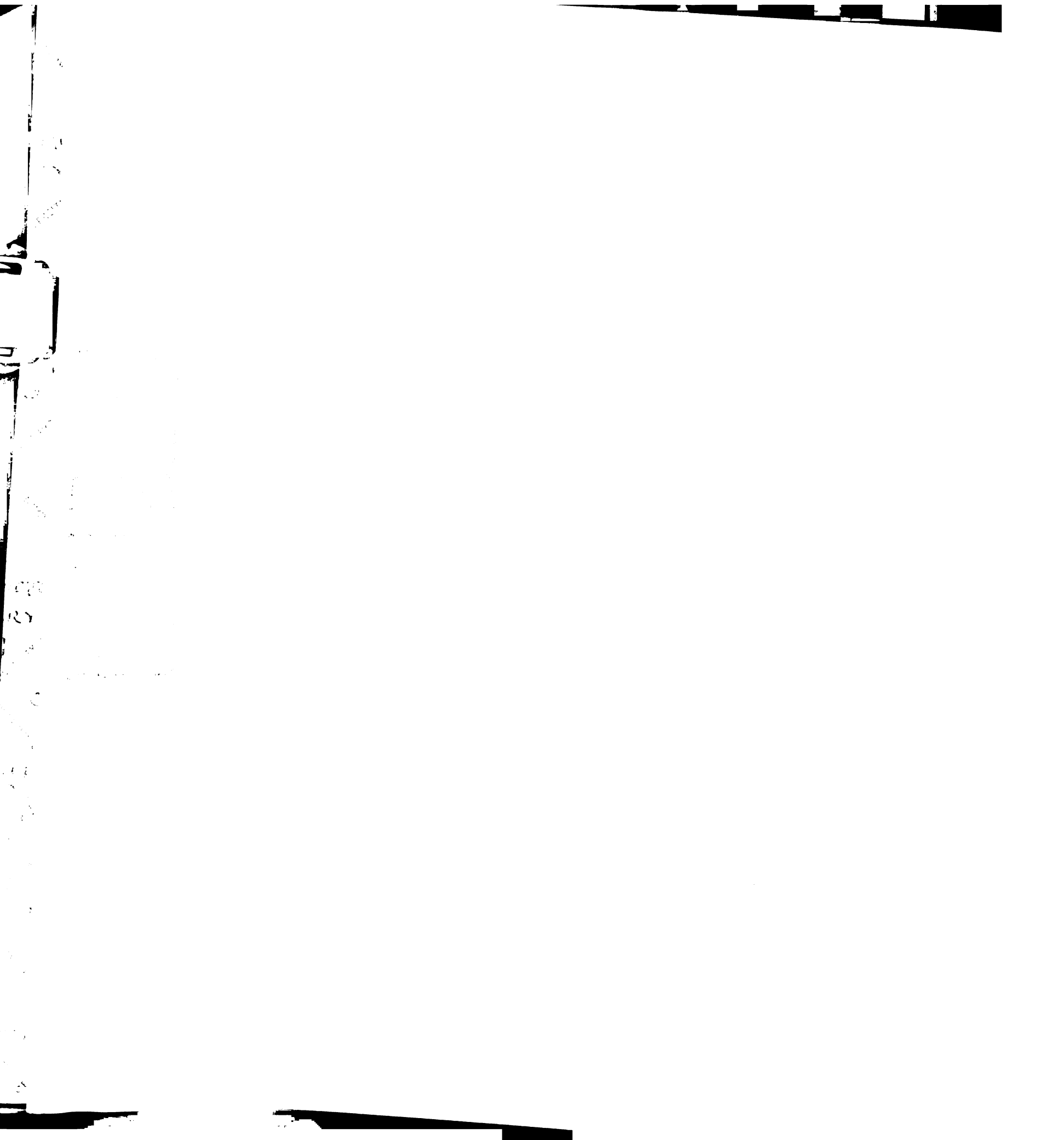


balancing behaviors to the model. It further demonstrated the relationship of self and balancing behaviors to self care.

Throughout the participant observation, interviews and subsequent coding there was sense that working mothers had some way of managing the Balancing Act or believed that they could find ways of doing it better or more efficiently. In some instances however, they had never given much thought to how they managed, it just happened. Overall, there was a readiness to talk about their experiences and share anecdotal stories that was refreshing and enlightening. It demonstrated that they were for the most part willing to consider change in lifestyle and habits if it made home, work and family easier or more manageable.

Working mothers learned to manage home, work, and family in multiple ways. For those women who were raised in homes where the mother worked outside of the home, clearly there was a role model present. Even though both negative and positive role modeling were encountered, both served as teaching examples of the Balancing Act and were cited by the participants in the study as the way they learned to manage. For working mothers who had no immediate family role models, others were found. Friends, neighbors, and/or peers provided a type of eclectic model of how working mothers managed to which the women were able to relate. This finding was significant because it demonstrated once again, that working mothers are seeking ways to manage and have a willingness to learn.

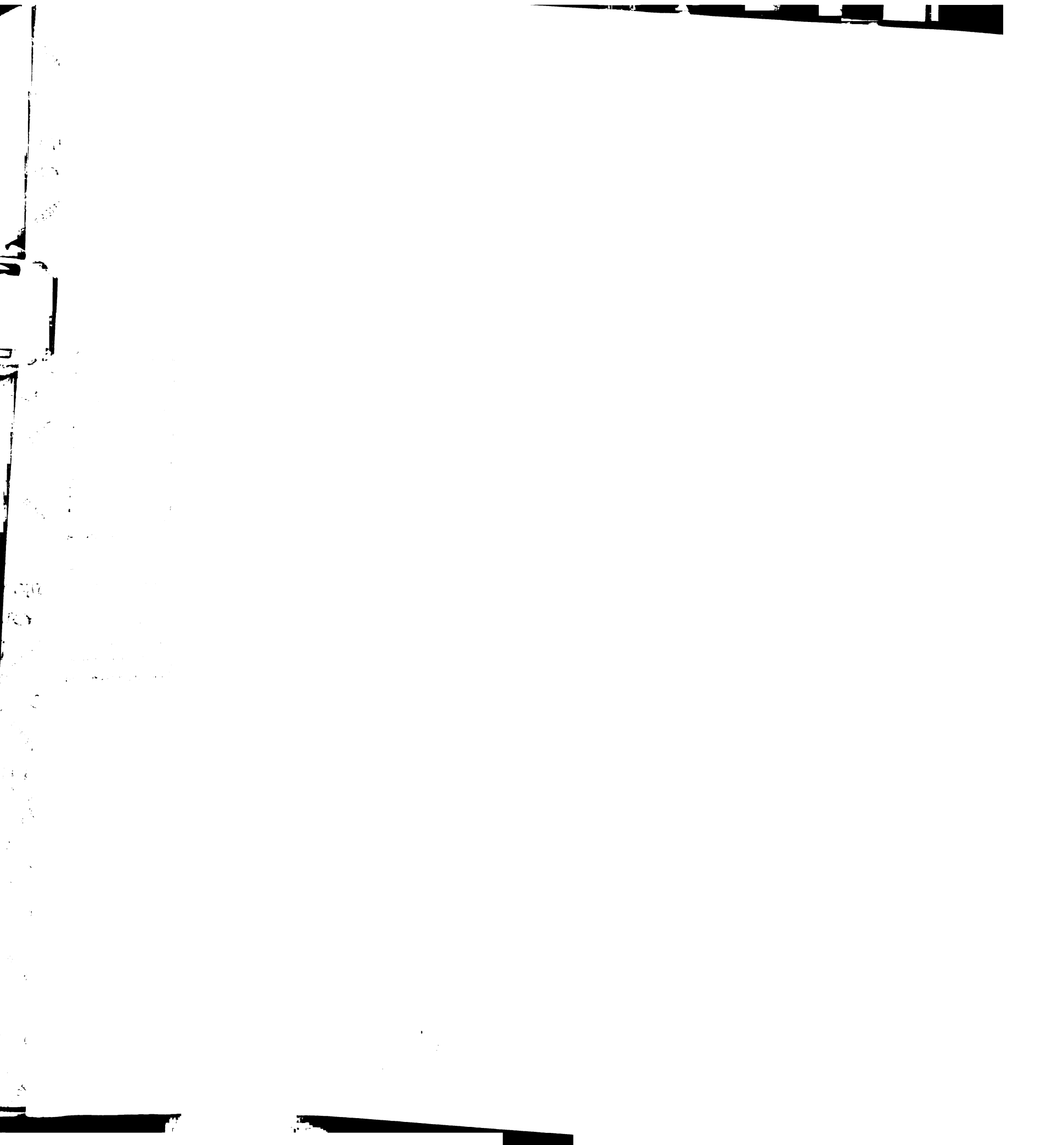
The identification of specific balancing behaviors helped to explain how



working mothers with young children manage home, work and family. The behaviors chronicled the actions and gave insight into the participants' decision making process to successfully or unsuccessfully manage the Balancing Act of home, work, and family. Barnett, Marshall, and Sayer (1992) noted the positive spillover effect from work to family as being responsible for providing resilience to psychological stress. It would seem plausible that the use of balancing behaviors was also a major contributor to stress reduction for working mothers.

In 1987 Woods suggested that future research in women's health care should focus on the "experiential, dynamic analysis of women's lives, including transitions to and from parenthood and employment."(p. 229). This statement had previously been expressed by Klein (1983) and Reinharz (1983) who suggested that in women's stories lie the explanations for how work, marriage, and parenting are sources of both satisfaction and stress. While the work of Hochschild (1997 & 1986), Daly (1996) and Swanson-Kaufman (1987) provide pivotal viewpoints on the experiences of working mothers, the literature on the balancing act is still in short supply.

This study of working mothers and how they manage home, work and family adds to and complements the growing body of knowledge about the dynamics of the multifaceted experiences of women who are employed and have young children. The arena of women's health care and women's issues remains a relatively new area of research, not yet fifty years old. This study highlighted the need to continue to search for ways to increase the collective understanding of



working mothers experiences. The same intensity and passion for women's issues that emerged during the 1970's and 1980's remain today. This research identified new ground to be explored about the life experiences of working mothers.

A heightened awareness about the experiences of working mothers contributes to the holistic view of the working mother as parent, employee, and wife, in addition to multiple other sub-roles. It establishes that working mothers seldom are doing just one activity; they are always involved multiple ones. In the study by Pietromonaco, Manis, and Fronhardt-Lane (1986), women with multiple roles had markedly higher self-esteem and greater job satisfaction. The sample of women were well educated, middle class, married, and parents.

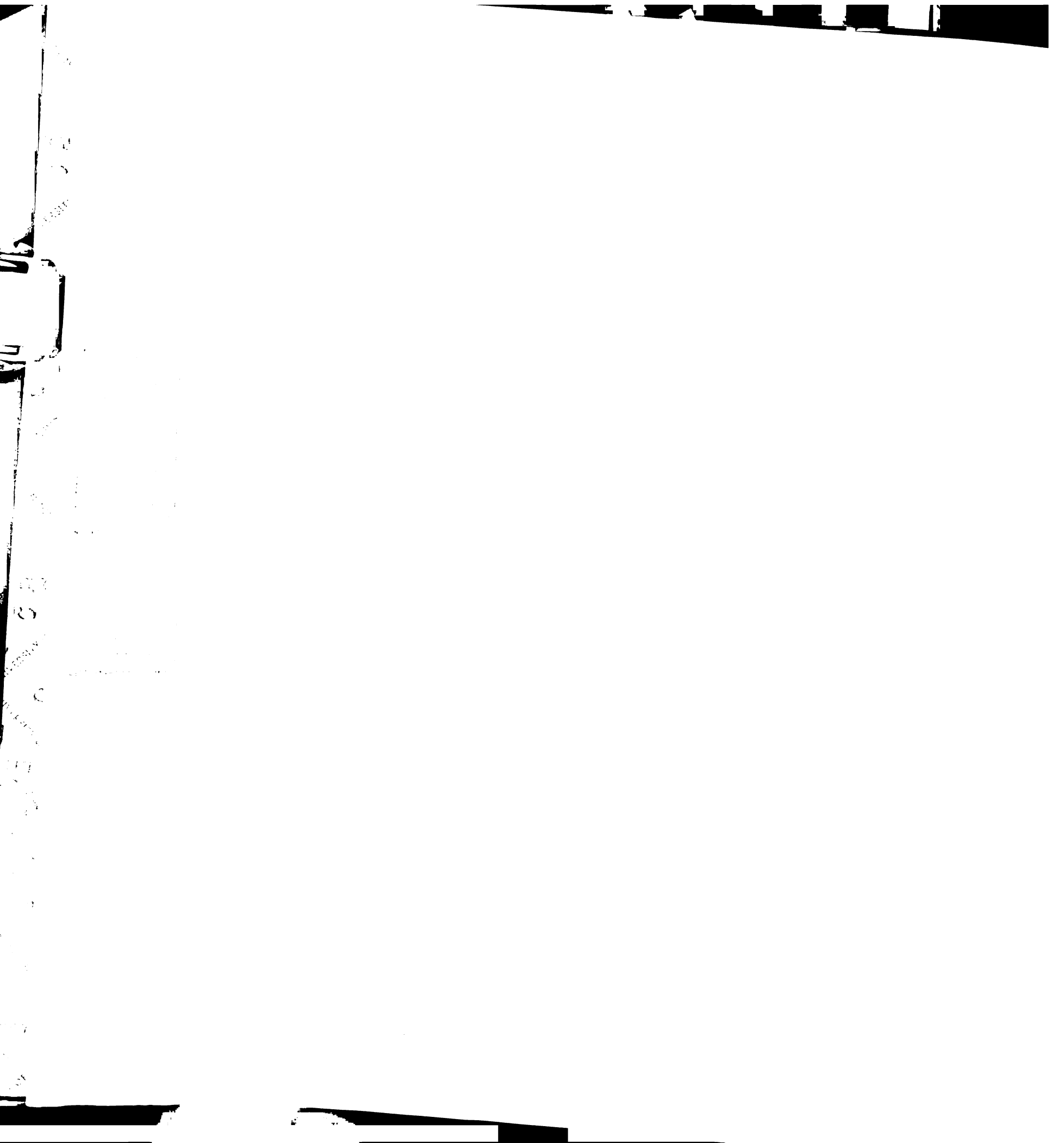
A similar profile was characteristic of the participants in the Balancing Act study. The ability of working mothers to utilize balancing behaviors to achieve balance in home, work and family tended to bolster their confidence that they were able do to the balancing act and find ways to manage better.

Language and actions are essential to understand a culture. The balancing behaviors are descriptive of the actions utilized by working mothers. They provide a language that is understandable and identified the experience of being a working mother. When placed within the conceptual framework of the Working Mothers Model, the balancing behaviors, or lack thereof, illustrate what a working mother is doing or not doing, to maintain balance between home, work, and family. The connection of the balancing behaviors with the conceptual model



helps to define the Balancing Act. It also provides direction to promote and support the working mother in the maintenance of already learned behaviors and the development of new ones. For health professionals as well as working mothers, this knowledge can be diagnostic as well as prescriptive.

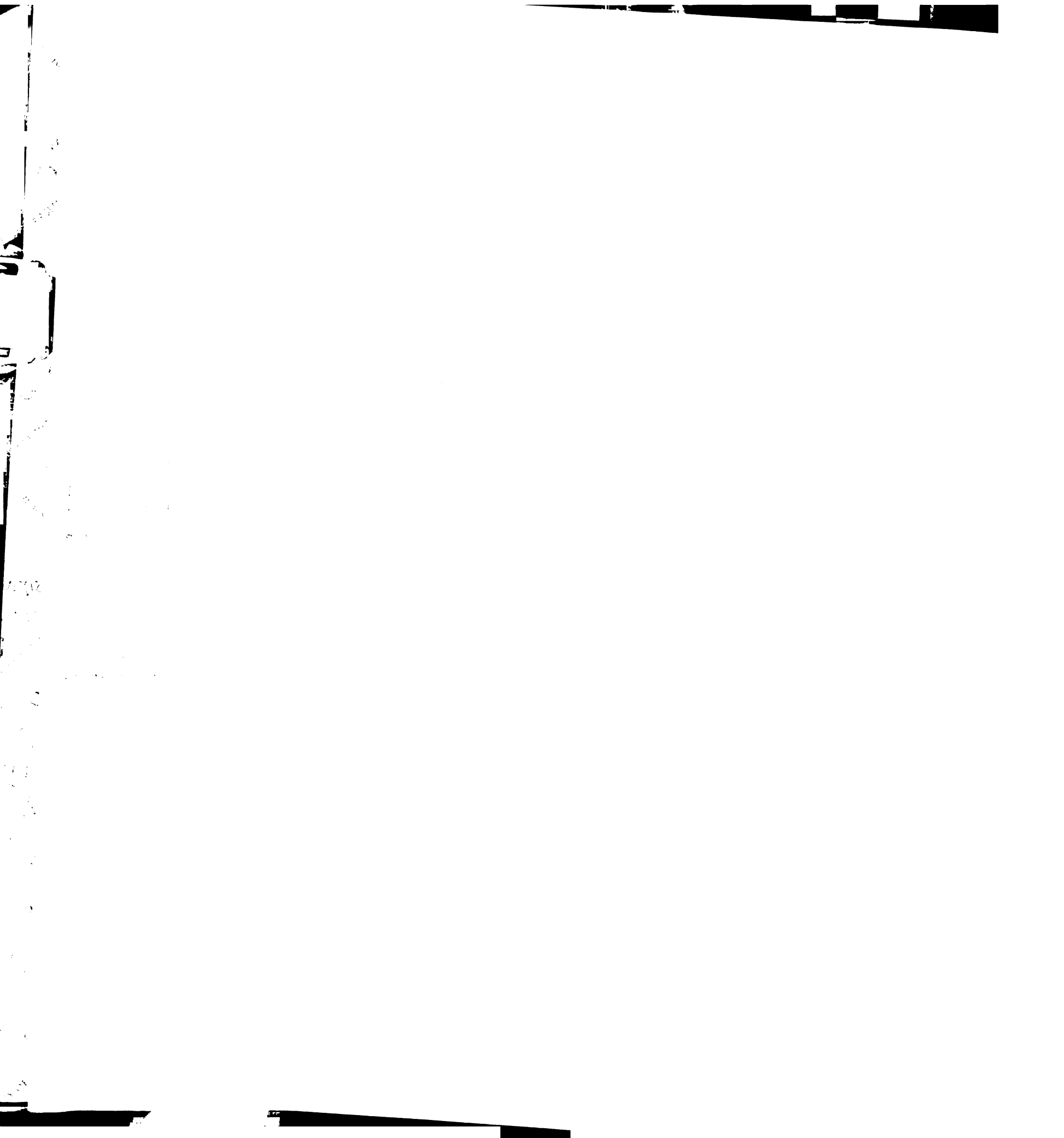
As noted in the results, the working mothers were busy. For most of the participants who were interviewed "busy" was a part of the balancing act. The use of balancing behaviors enabled them to feel as though they were able to manage in spite of seemingly overwhelming commitments and responsibilities. The significance of this finding illustrates how working mothers structure their time and meet their responsibilities. It further affects how they seek to create time for self care and health related activities or are unable to find time for such things. The message from the research is clear. When home, work, and family demands are high and the conflict between the subsets of home and work, home and family, and/or work and family are demanding, working mothers usually gave up at least a part of whatever time they have created for self-care activities. This means that some of the participants were involved in an occasional exercise program that was not regularly scheduled or involved goals. For other working mothers it means that moments of quiet rest and relaxation were forfeited to manage the conflict. The impact on diet is equally profound. When time is in short supply, attention to exercise, rest and diet are given a lower priority. The available time is utilized for other purposes. While this did not apply to all of the participants, it nevertheless was a trend. It points towards the need for continued



work by nurses and others in health care to find ways for working mothers to manage stress, practice relaxation, engage in exercise and eat healthy diets. Continuing to focus on the long range view of women's health care for working mothers is essential. The multifaceted and complicated life of a working mother does not insulate her from present day health issues such as cardiovascular problems, cancer, or depression. Her need for routine screening and health maintenance must become a part of that everyday experience.

Trying to mediate the impact of the "ripple effect" is also a significant finding. The majority of the participants had experienced the phenomenon on more than one occasion and found it to be disconcerting and disruptive to already full days. It was fascinating to learn that the participants tried to be vigilant and predict when the "ripple effect" was about to happen, so they could try to take corrective measures whenever possible. The corrective measures were synonymous with the balancing behaviors. The need to moderate the "ripple effect" is consistent with Daly's (1996) observations of the need of working families to acquire time when there is a time scarcity. A major issue for working mothers is having time wasted or taken from them unexpectedly. The result in both situations is the same. They give up self time or time for home, work, and family. By trying to anticipate the "ripple effect" working mothers can actually save or prevent the waste of precious time that would be used for other purposes.

The division of tasks within the participants' families were consistent with the

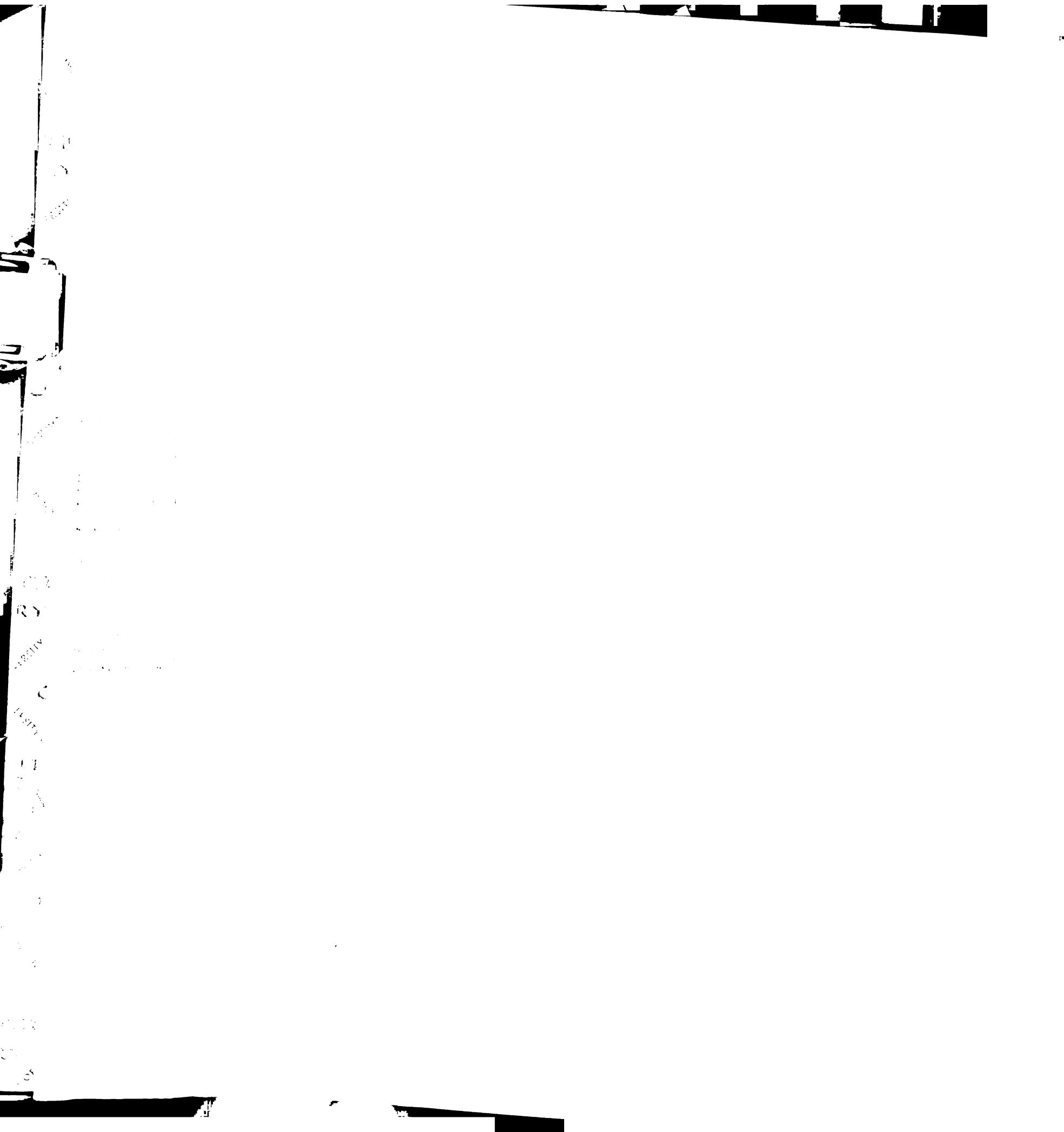


work of Hochschild (1997, 1989). The primary responsibility for creating and maintaining balance generally belonged to the working mothers. Upon completion of a work day, there always remained further tasks to be done in the home and with the family. The participants tended to take the initiative and either assign things to be done or do the majority of them alone. How the issue of task assignment was resolved between working mothers and their husbands depended upon their cultural and family beliefs as well as the communication strengths of the couple. Parity was seldom reported although some of the participants seemed to have more of an equal sharing than others. This is a significant finding and helps to expand the view of what an average day of activities is like for working mothers. When coupled with the findings about "busy" it gives a deeper appreciation for the Balancing Act and the everyday rigor associated with managing home, work, and family.

Limitations of the Study

The singular and most poignant limitation of the study was the lack of true cultural diversity. The available population to be studied in the selected geographical setting provided a minority population of less than 10% in the general population and little socioeconomic diversity. The interview sample reflected the population. The implications of the lack of cultural diversity in this study will only be known when more culturally diverse populations of working mothers are studied and compared in the future.

A second limitation, but not necessarily a liability was capturing the moment.



The study results are based on one interview with each woman, observing the women in community settings over a period of two years, and dense field notes. While there was extensive information to be coded, nevertheless, the results were reflect of "how it usually is" for working mothers. The results are a snapshot of the moment because it was not possible to know what the participants did all of the time, each day. Likewise it is not possible to know if the findings relate well to other populations of women such as single parents, working mothers with older children, and culturally or economically diverse populations.

Great effort was placed on being reflexive and trying to capture the true voices of the participants through the interviews and multiple community observations. However, a limitation of the study is the personal understanding of the researcher about what was said. Even though there seemed to be consistent validation of the findings when shared with other professionals in women's health care, it nevertheless must be acknowledged that emic and etic viewpoints are intertwined in the researcher. These can never be completely and purely separated and both viewpoints enrich the study.

Implications for Nursing

There are three major implications for nursing practice posed by this research study. They can be categorized as assessment, teaching and advocacy. In each category there are straightforward implications for nursing practice that relate to women's health care and more specifically to working mothers with young children.

Assessment.

Integral to the practice of nursing is the ability to assess a patient's or client's status. Assessment is at the very foundation of practice and is considered to be a cornerstone of quality patient care. Carpenito (1993), noted that assessment "is the deliberate and systematic collection of data to determine a clients's current and past health status and functional status and to evaluate the client's present and past coping patterns." (p.46) For nursing assessment to be useful it must focus on the client's needs and the purpose of nursing in relation to those needs (Bandman & Bandman, 1995).

The Balancing Act is an issue in women's health care that is seldom overtly assessed. Generally, information about how working women are managing tends to focus on coping, stress, and time management issues. For those employed women who are also parents, occasional parenting issues may rise to the surface and be acknowledged as a causation of stress or a time management dilemma. This is insufficient health care for working mothers.

The results of this study provide a model and language for nurses to assess how working mothers are doing the Balancing Act. Identification of balancing behaviors or lack thereof can establish areas for intervention and teaching. Assessment of the Balancing Act can be far reaching. Specific areas might include prenatal and postnatal care. These are both times of reorganization and new skill acquisition for women. For working women regardless of parity, pregnancy and childbirth create a ripple effect that extends to home, work, and



family. Childbirth is an important time in women's lives but it is also a time of upheaval and uncertainty. The ability to assess how well a woman is doing from the vantage point of the Balancing Act could at the very least, provide reassurance, focus, and anticipatory guidance for the new mother and validation for the multiparous mother.

When assessment of the Balancing Act is incorporated into regular health care, nurses and other health professionals have the opportunity for early diagnosis and intervention. While the sample was limited to working mothers with children eleven years of age and younger, there were strong indications that women want to have some way to know how they are doing and how they can do better. By assessing the Balancing Act with working mothers of young children this critical area of information could be known and utilized. The possibilities seem unlimited. As long as a woman is employed and continuing to confront home, work, and family issues, the need to assess how she is managing is ongoing, regardless of the ages of her children. Growth and developmental stages of family members change as well as the response of the working mother to those changes. Both home and the workplace are likewise dynamic and each presents a similar need on the part of the working mother to change with the times.

By incorporating assessment of working mothers and how they relate to the Balancing Act within the regular health agenda, nurses would have the opportunity to validate and acknowledge their areas of strength. In the interviews



participants frequently related how meaningful it was to have others tell them that they were doing well. They also valued sharing experiences and learning from other working mothers who were doing the Balancing Act, especially those who were older and had already dealt with many of the issues. Validation and acknowledgment are powerful and needed reinforcements for a working mother.

By comparison, regular assessment would also enable nurses to help working mothers identify and confront areas of need when they are still manageable. Preparing for and trying to minimize or avert the “ripple effect” was apparent within the working mothers culture. It was accepted by working mothers that when there was an issue or problem in one area of home, work, or family, it would “ripple” to the others. This “ripple effect” was stressful and was best managed by the working mothers who had a greater number of balancing behaviors that they were able to utilize. This was exemplified in the interview excerpt from Anne relating her story of the Maytag washer. The need to help working mothers identify balancing behaviors that could be developed and therefore decrease the impact of the “ripple effect” can have important health and health maintenance implications.

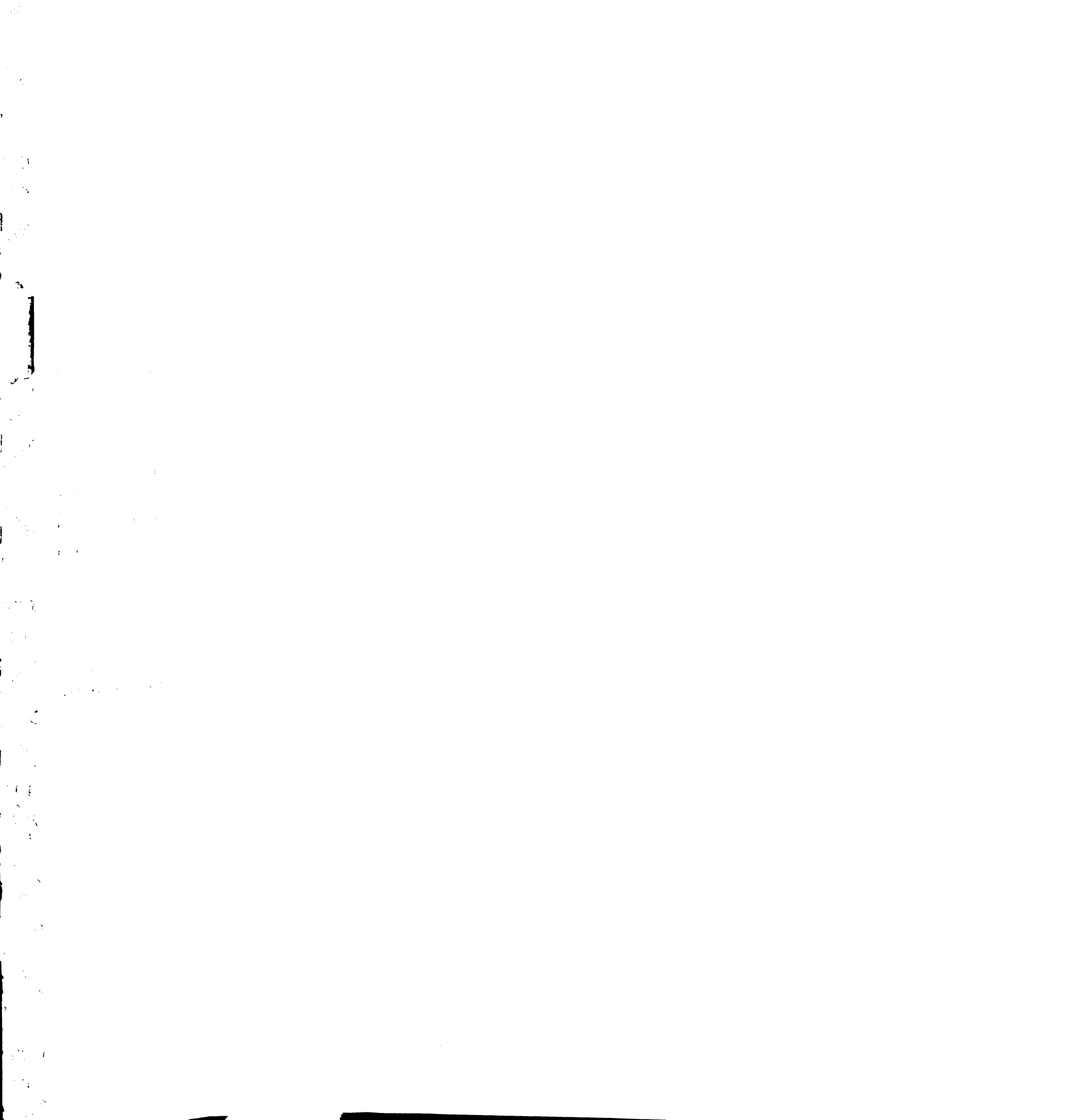
Teaching.

Working mothers continue to search for the ways and the means to do the Balancing Act. The participants wanted to have the resources ready-at-hand with which to manage home, work, and family issues. When patients/clients are seeking information about themselves and their health care, it provides a



“teachable moment” for the nurse. The balancing behaviors are just that, teachable and describable. They can be learned and practiced and improved upon. The application of balancing behaviors to life situations is a women’s health issue. The more proficient a working mother becomes at managing the Balancing Act, the more likely she is to have time for self care and health seeking and health practice activities. The need for nurses to be able to assess and teach about balancing behaviors is increased when viewed in relation to time for self care and health. Facilitating working mothers to increase the number of balancing behaviors they are able to utilize in any given situation, is directly connected to increasing their options for home, work, family and self-care.

As evidenced by the interviews, not all women had positive role models from whom to learn how to manage home, work, and family. For some women who develop eclectic models of managing there may be gaps in their knowledge base. The concern for managing home, work, and family can be the over arching goal to the exclusion of health maintenance activities. Nurses have the skill and expertise to facilitate working mothers in this type of knowledge acquisition. The scope of patient/client teaching includes not only the development of balancing behaviors but also the need for health maintenance. Once defined and identified, nurses can help working mothers look at how they presently manage the balancing act and how they can make changes to create the time necessary to include health seeking and maintenance behaviors such as exercise, diet, and stress management.



The Working Mothers Model identifies areas outside of the home, work, and family spheres that are designated as self. The balancing behaviors emanate from the self which explains why those women who utilize only a few balancing behaviors tend to have less space for self in the model. By comparison, the working mothers who utilize several balancing behaviors have more space for self. It is a given that space for self is analogous to time for oneself. For nurses and nursing practice, it means that teaching directed at enhancing and reinforcing already learned balancing behaviors as well as teaching new balancing behaviors increases the opportunity for a working mother to have time for self care. Balancing behaviors increase a working mother's options for managing the balancing act which in turn increases her ability to find time which can spent on improving and maintaining her health.

Advocacy

Nurses and nursing as a profession have always had strong ties to patient advocacy. Historically, the health care needs of the working mother have been and continue to be championed by nurses. The need for strong advocacy and community activism on the part of nursing has not yet diminished. Working mothers need to have their voice carried forward in the public forum. Given the long history of nursing and women's health concerns, nurses have the knowledge as well as the responsibility to speak out on behalf of working mothers.

The research highlights the demands placed upon a working mother with a



multifaceted, multi-dimensional life. The need for flexibility in health care services once again is emphasized by this research project. Working mothers need appointments for themselves and their children that do not require taking time away from their workplace. This is especially true when absence from the workplace to accommodate a medical or dental appointment also means a decrease in pay or the use of a vacation day. The issue of flexible scheduling in the workplace remains a problem for employed mothers.

Clearly, the everyday experiences of working mothers are complex and seldom free of worry. While the population studied consisted of middle class, wage earning women in stable relationships, their experiences of managing home, work and family were demanding. The problem solving needed in most situations came from within the individual as opposed to external sources. Nurses can honor and support working mothers by acknowledging the complexity that is part of their everyday experience. At the community level, nursing needs to be a voice for alternative health care options and schedules. The promotion of clinic appointments in the evening and weekends, the establishment of health care clinics in the workplace, and physical fitness centers at or near employment sites are all examples of enhancing health care for working mothers.

None of the participants in the study knew of any women's groups, other than Lamaze Childbirth classes, that met during non-working hours in their community. The establishment of parenting groups and women's support groups



are within the purview of nursing. The community studied is typical of many semi-rural areas where the majority of women's health care services are offered only during traditional times. Nurses as advocates and activists have the ability to create programs that are designed for working mothers with a sensitivity to the many demands they must manage.

The ultimate goal of advocacy on behalf of working mother's is vigilance about woman-centered health care that considers the circumstances of the working mother. Many nurses have first hand experiences as working mothers and have a passion and understanding of the issues and needs because their daily experiences include managing the Balancing Act. The strong collective voice that enables the profession to be speak forthrightly about working mothers remains essential in the public forum.

Future Research

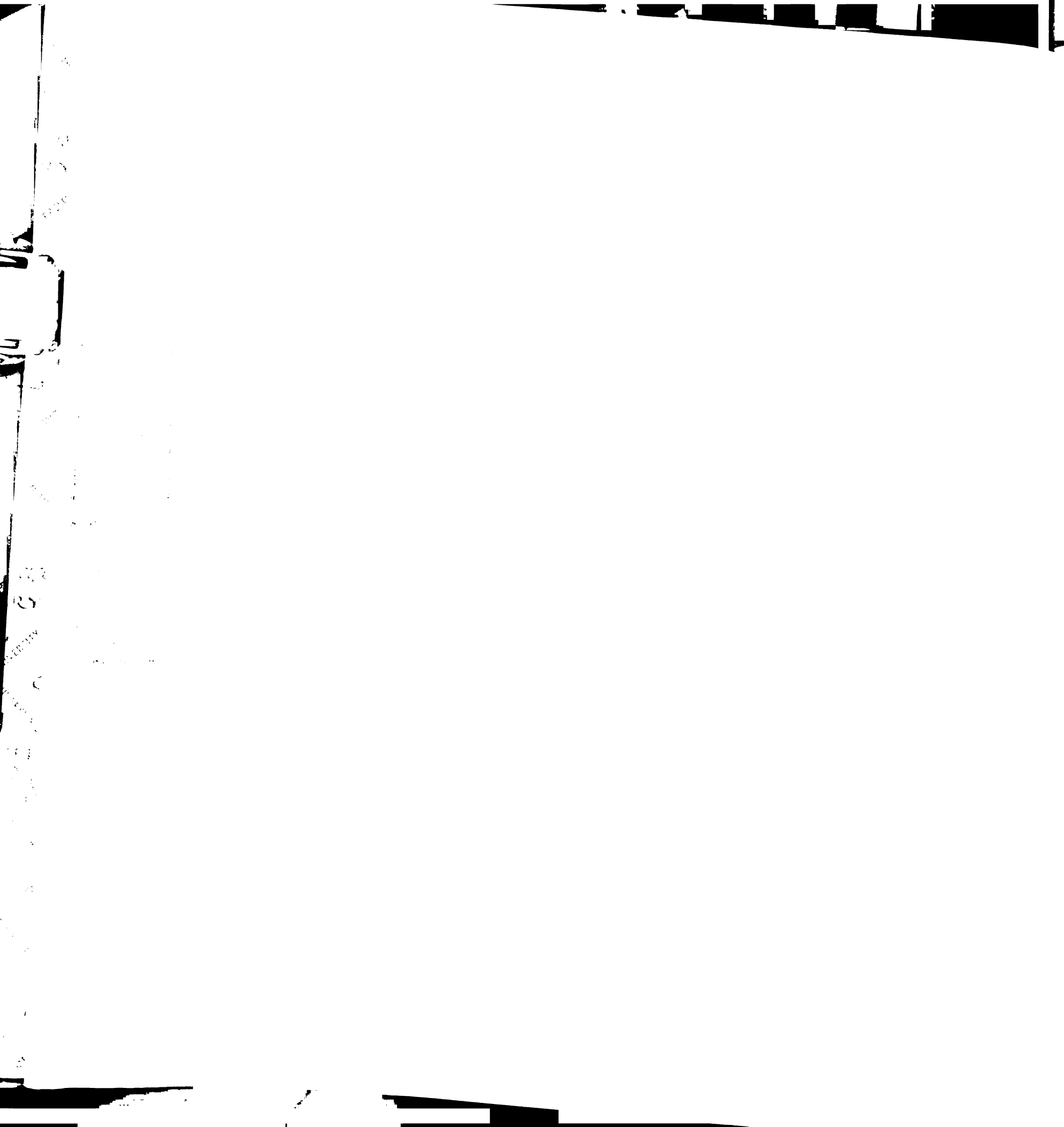
Future research on the Balancing Act needs to focus on other populations of working mothers. There are at least five distinct groups yet to be interviewed. They are working mothers who are single parents with young children, working mothers who are single parents with teenage children, working mothers who are married with teenage children, working mothers who have already launched their children and working mothers with children of all ages with dependent parents. In all groups the need for ethnic and cultural diversity remains essential. This type of study should be done in a multi-racial or culturally diverse community. Similarly, the need for socioeconomic diversity must be addressed in future



research. The present study could be duplicated with each of the groups thus creating a large ethnographic based study on a diverse population of working mothers.

A second focus of future research should be on the Working Mother's Model. Due to the relatively small number of working mothers in the participant population, it would be premature to draw permanent conclusions about the conceptual model for working mothers in the population at large. However, for the purposes of this research project, the conceptual model was accurate and reliable. With further testing it can be known if the model is also accurate for all working mothers without regard to the number of children, marital status, and socio-cultural and economic status. By interviewing a larger research population, information will be available that enables the balancing behaviors to be validated as well.

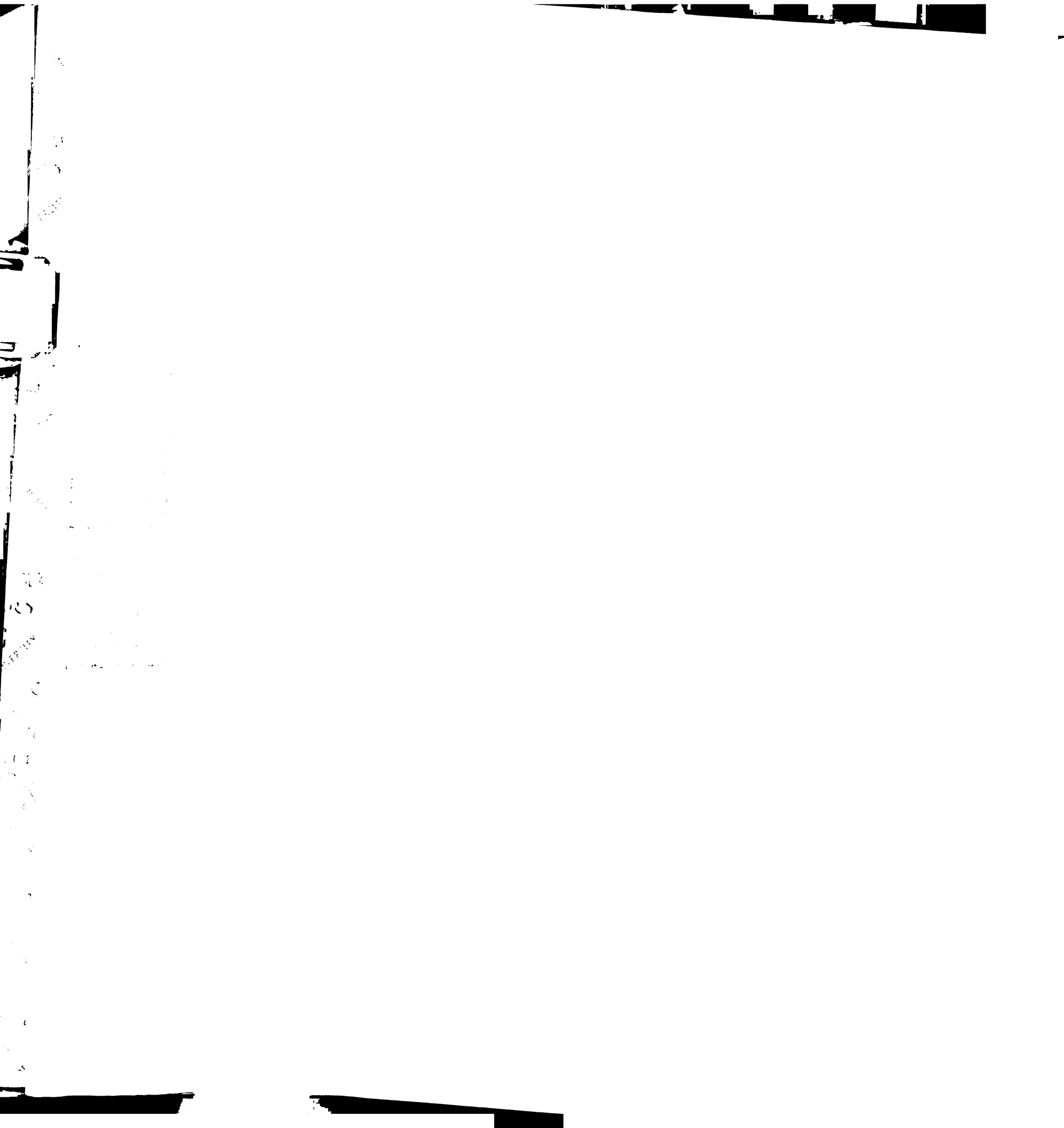
It is also necessary to expand on the knowledge of the meaning of home, the meaning of work and the meaning of family for the working mother. These were strongly eluded to in this research study, however, there is room for further and more in-depth exploration of each of the three components of the model. A deeper understanding of each of the areas will hopefully yield greater insight into the ways that working mothers manage as well as specific issues that arise in each of the three areas. This could be very helpful information for a working mother to have, especially at it relates to the ripple effect.



Conclusion

The need for woman centered health care remains a significant issue. Understanding the specific health needs of various sub-cultures of women promotes health care, recognizing that no one pattern of care works for all. This study focused on the sub-culture of working mothers. It identified how they manage as employees, wives, mothers, homemakers, neighbors, and citizens while emphasizing the complexities that these women face on a daily basis. Acknowledging the ways working mothers attempt to manage the Balancing Act provides nurses with many opportunities to be both supportive and instructive.

Concern for the health care of working mothers must remain at the heart of nursing. The skills of assessment, teaching and advocacy are cornerstones of professional nursing practice. When utilized well, they have the potential to create health care that will be genuinely responsive to the needs of working mothers. The mandate for nurses in this new century, is to understand and be knowledgeable about the issues in women's health care, and brave enough to pursue the necessary research and advocacy that will lead to change. Women's health care will then be truly woman centered.



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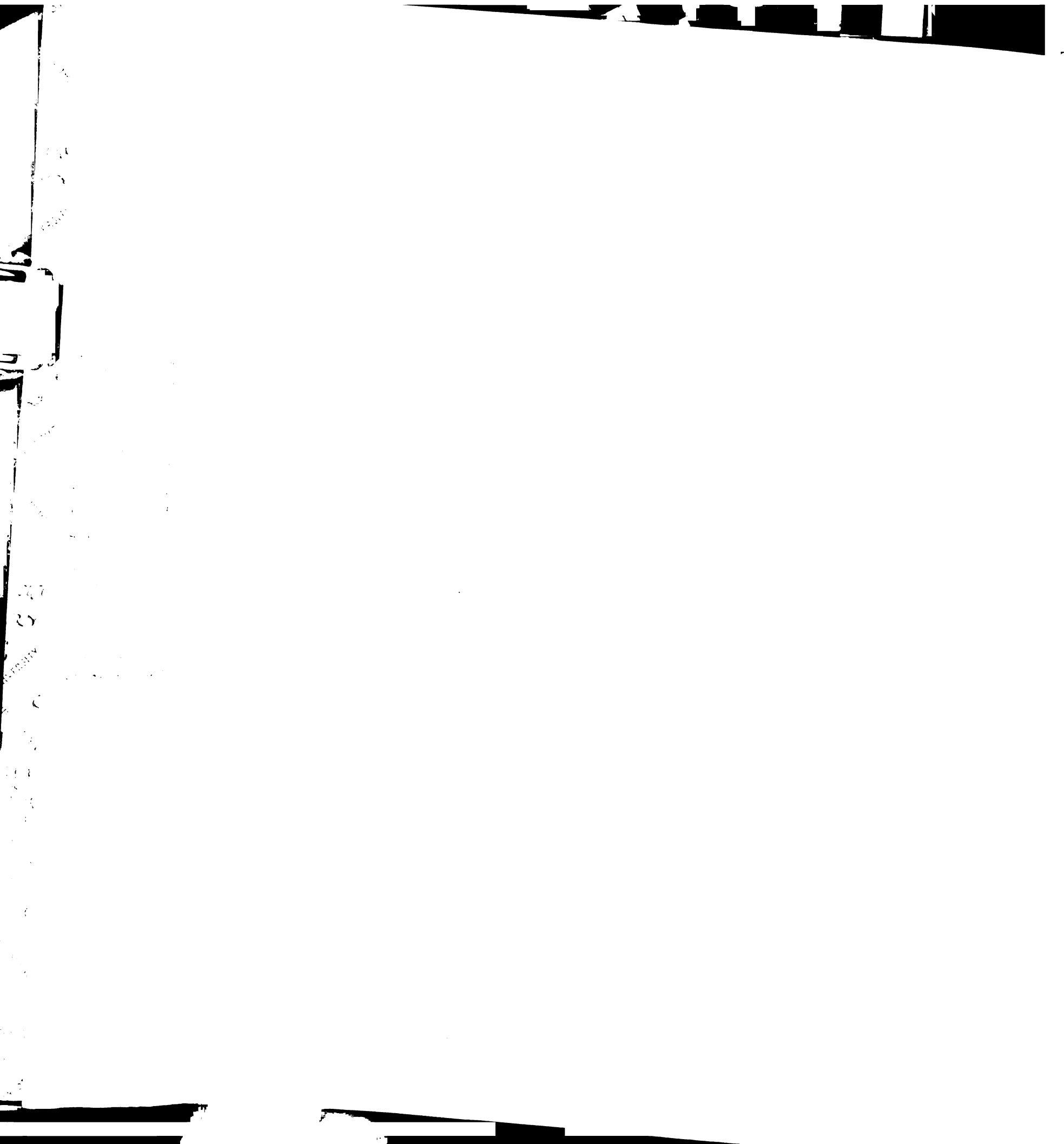
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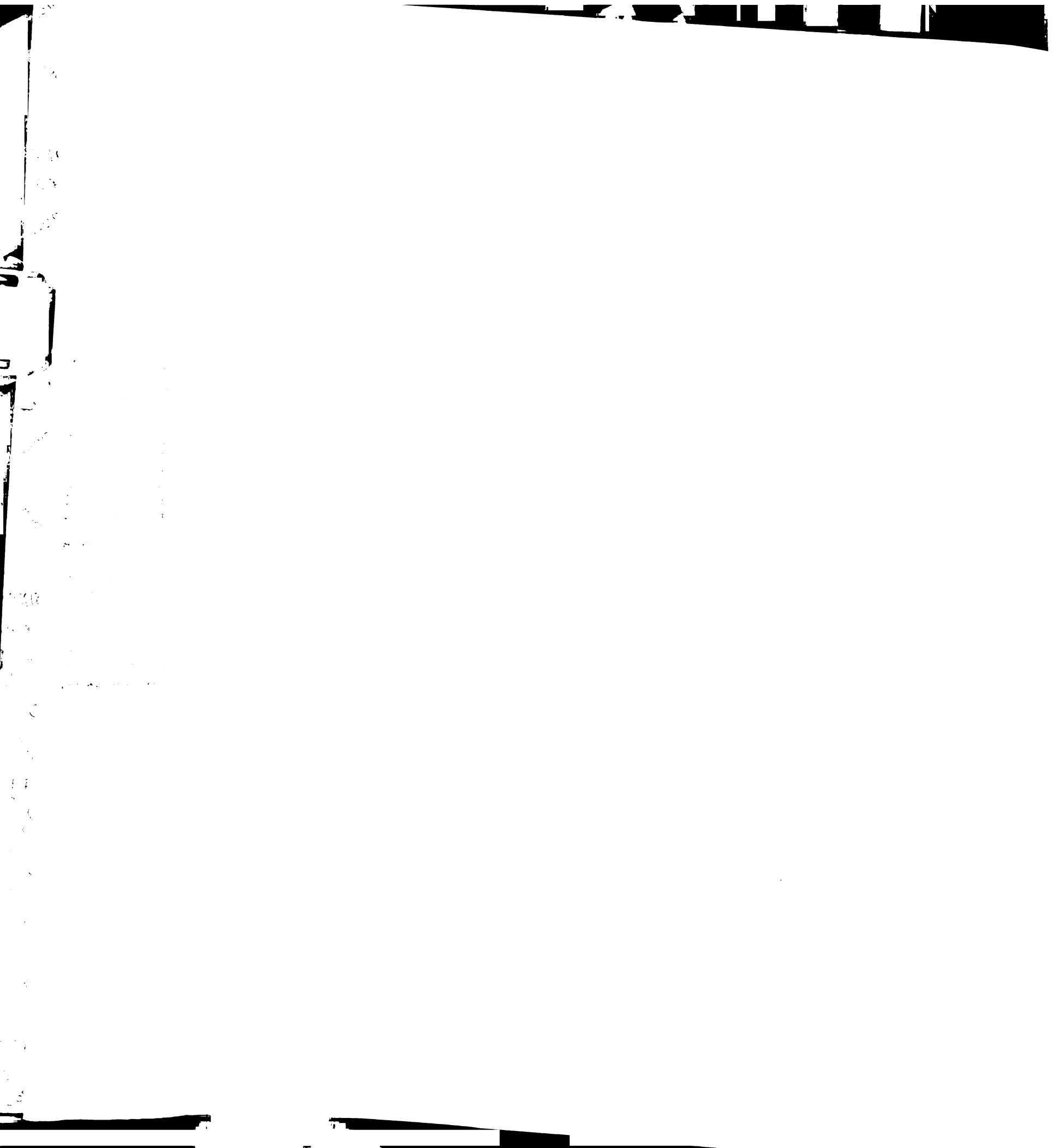
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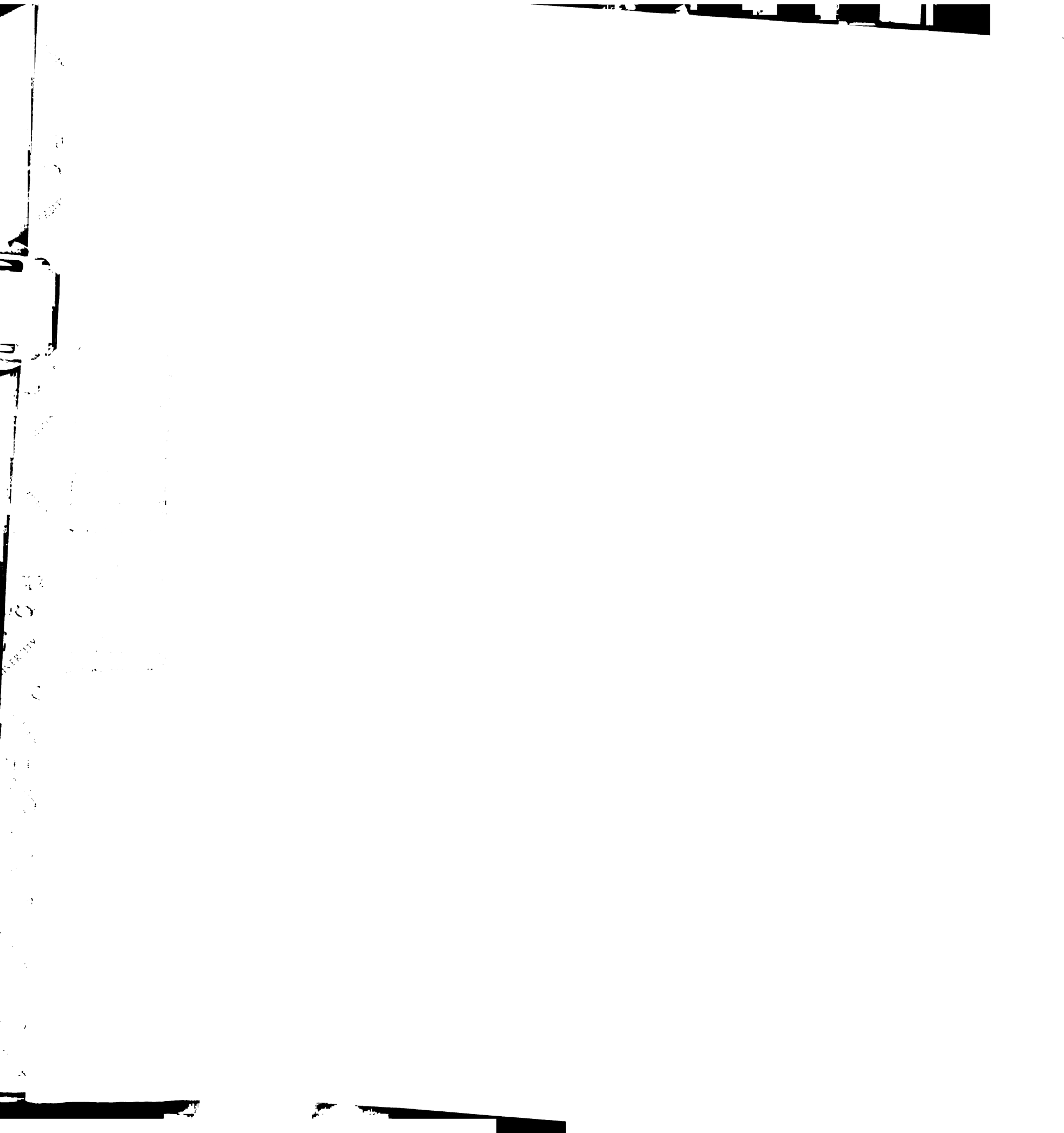
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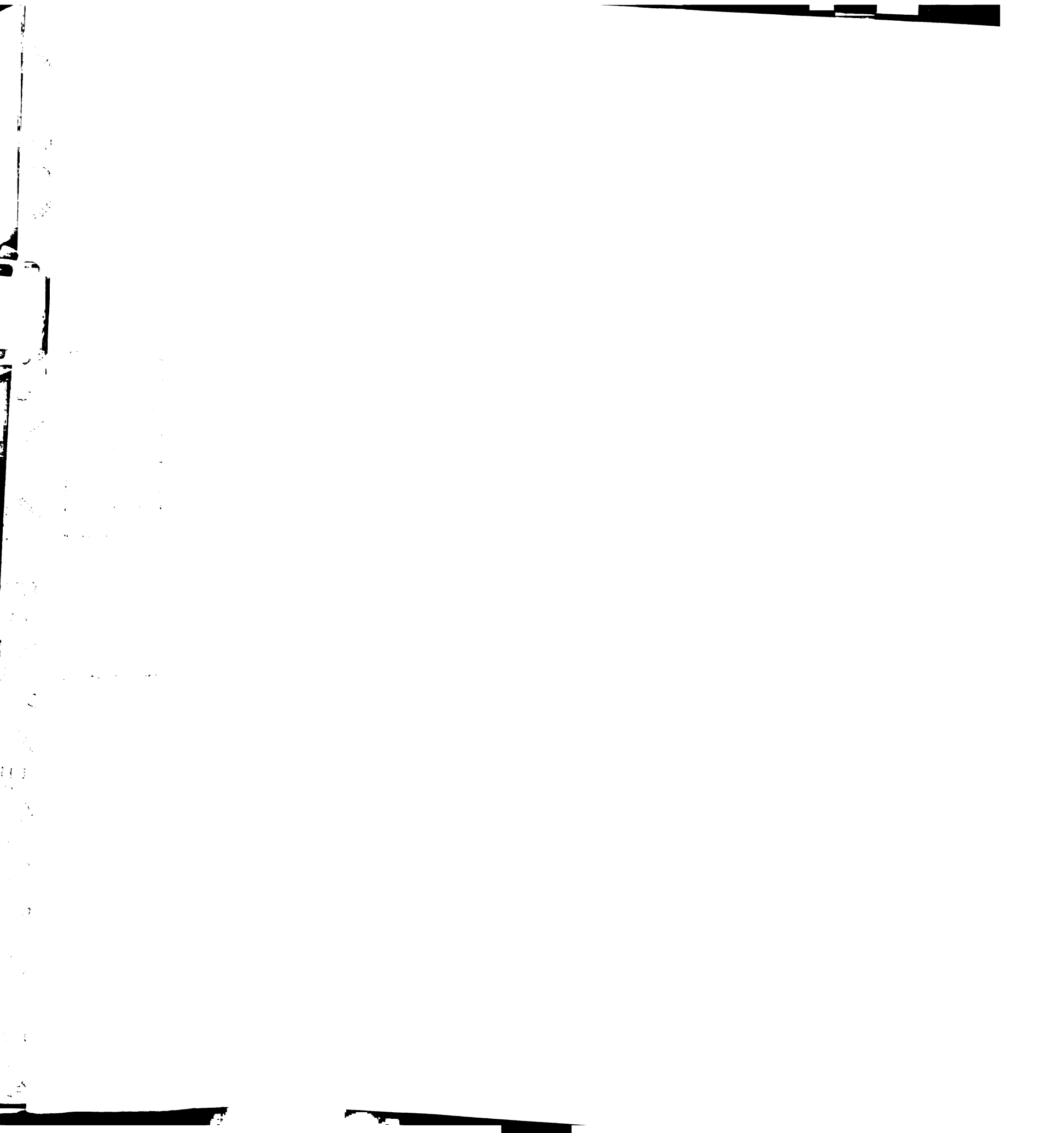
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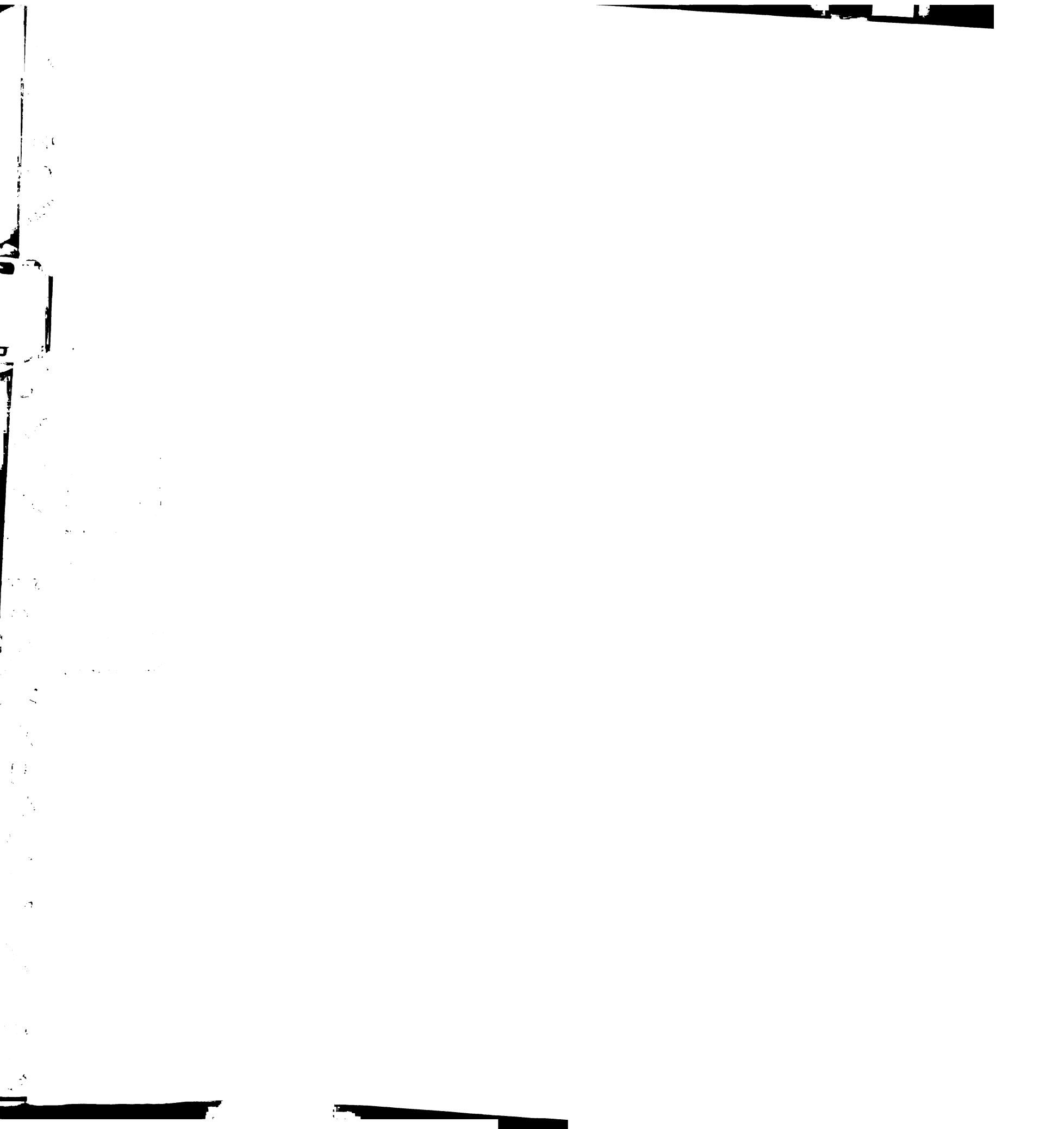
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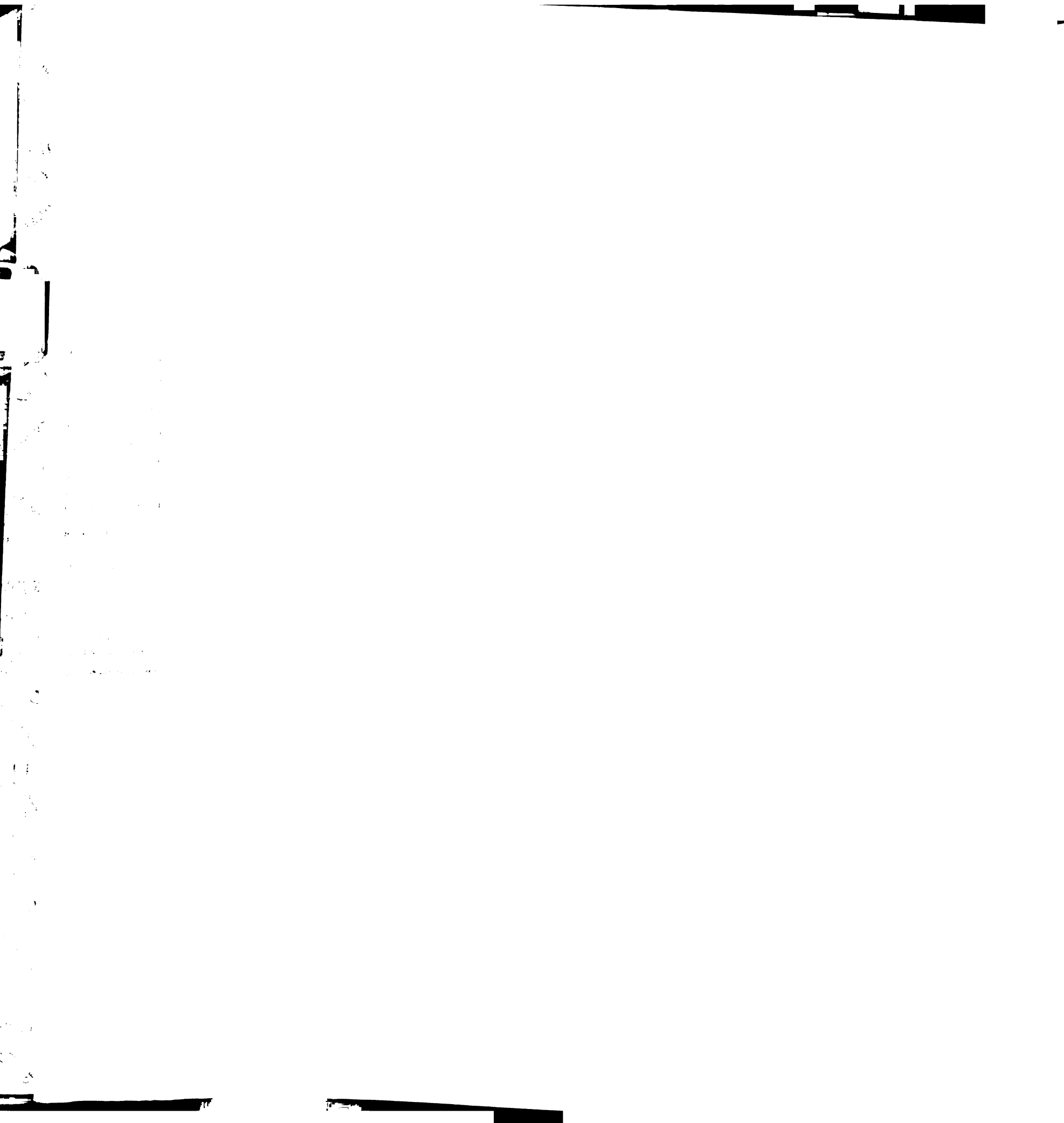
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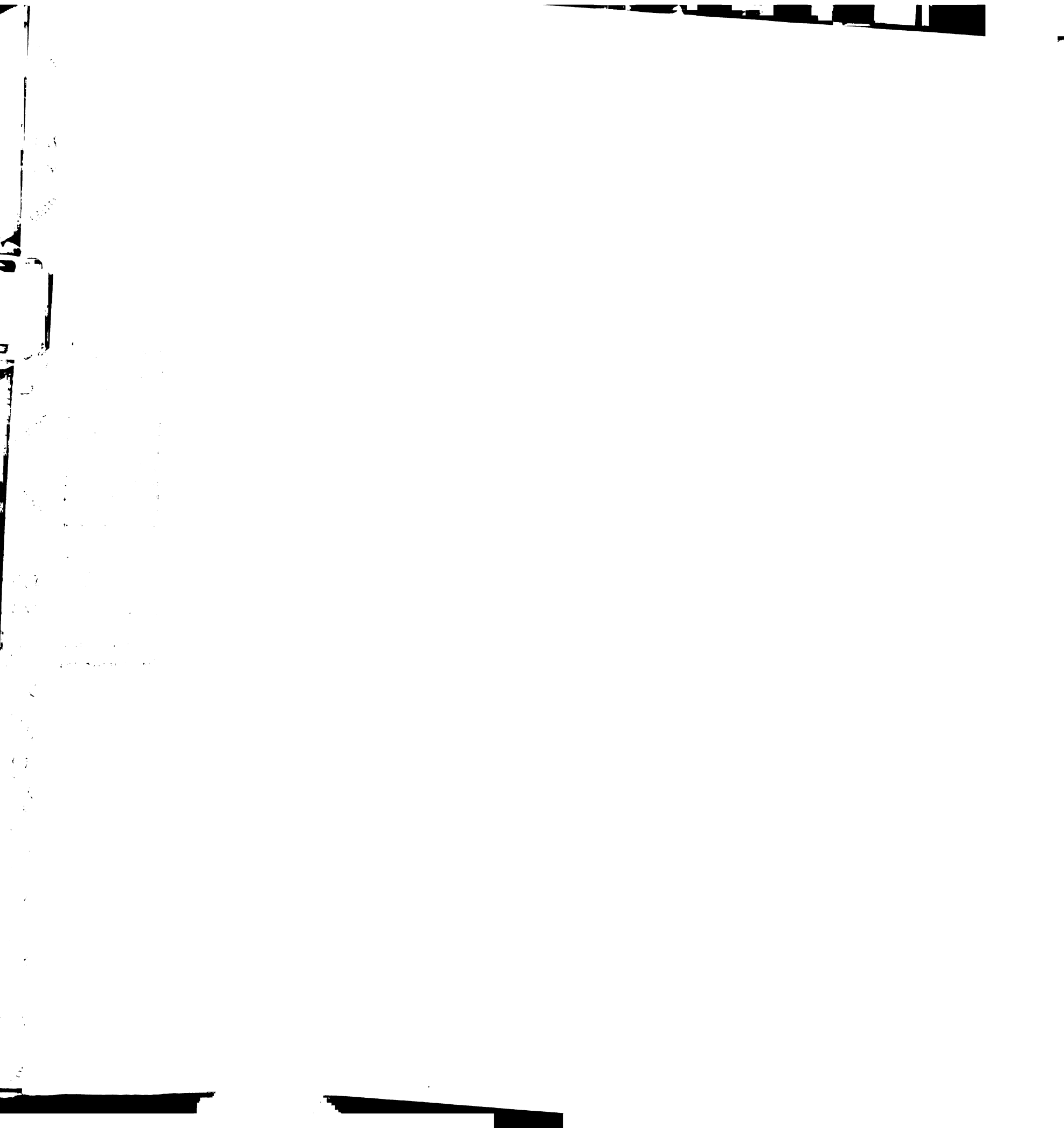
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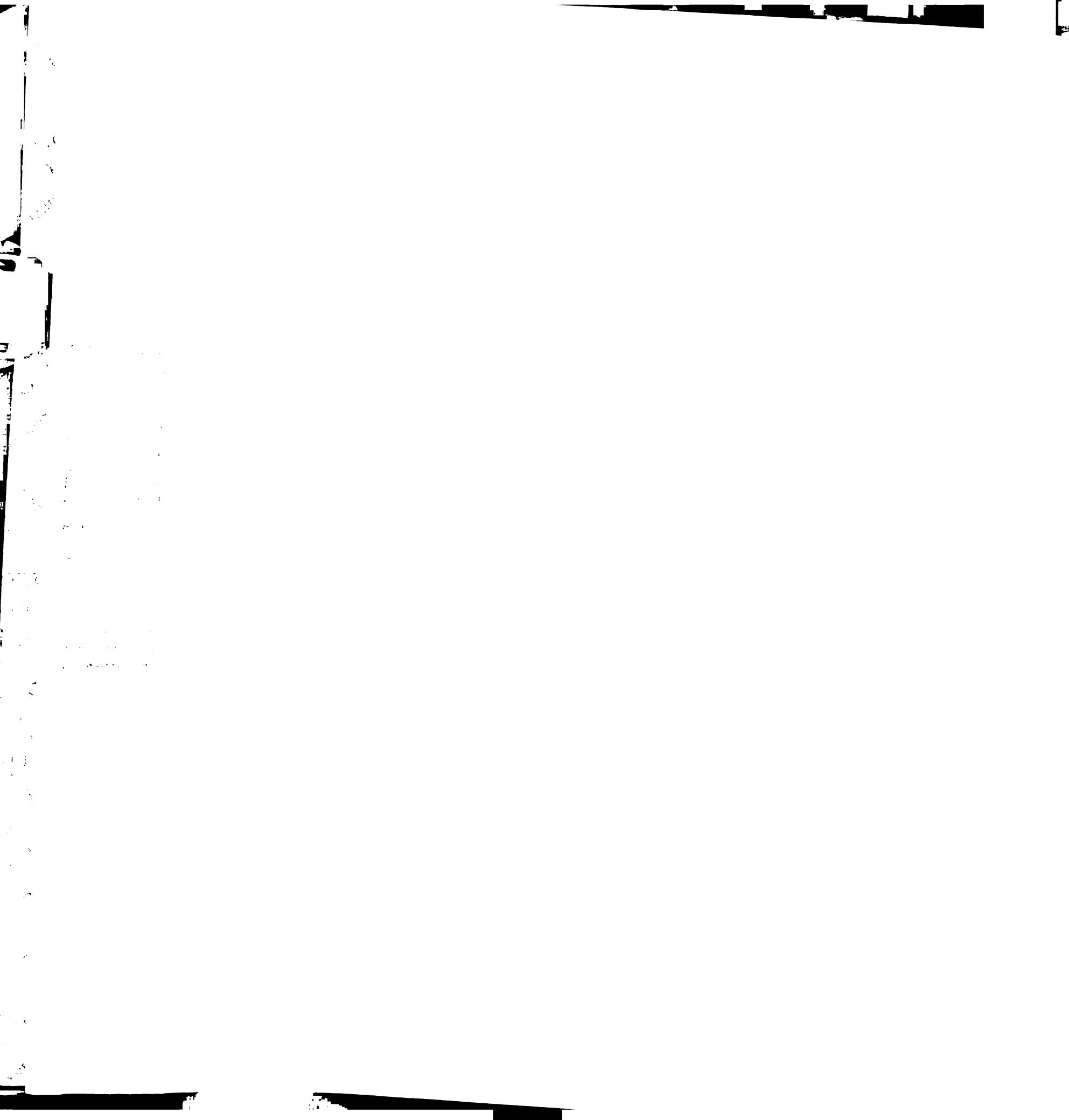
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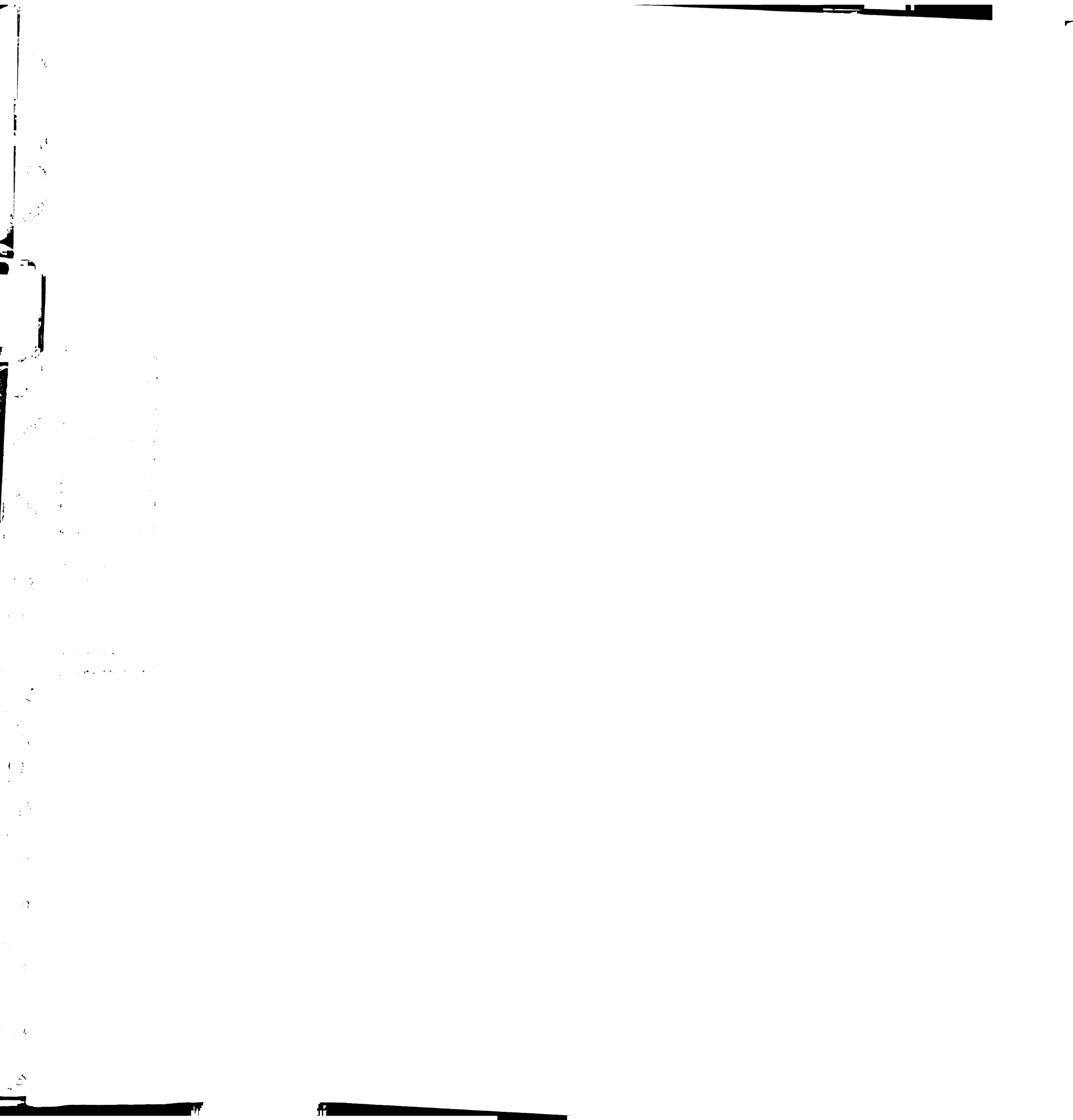
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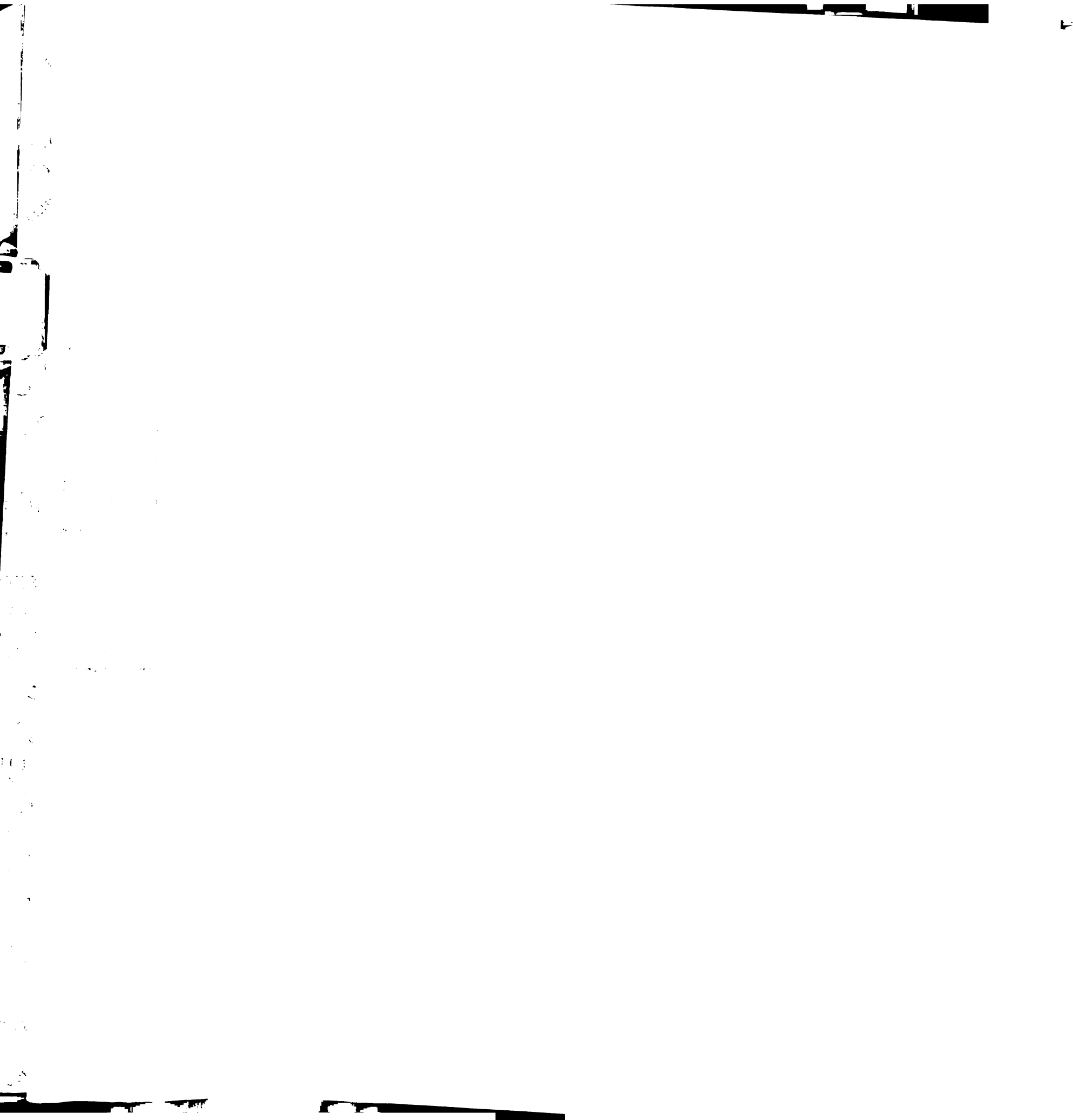
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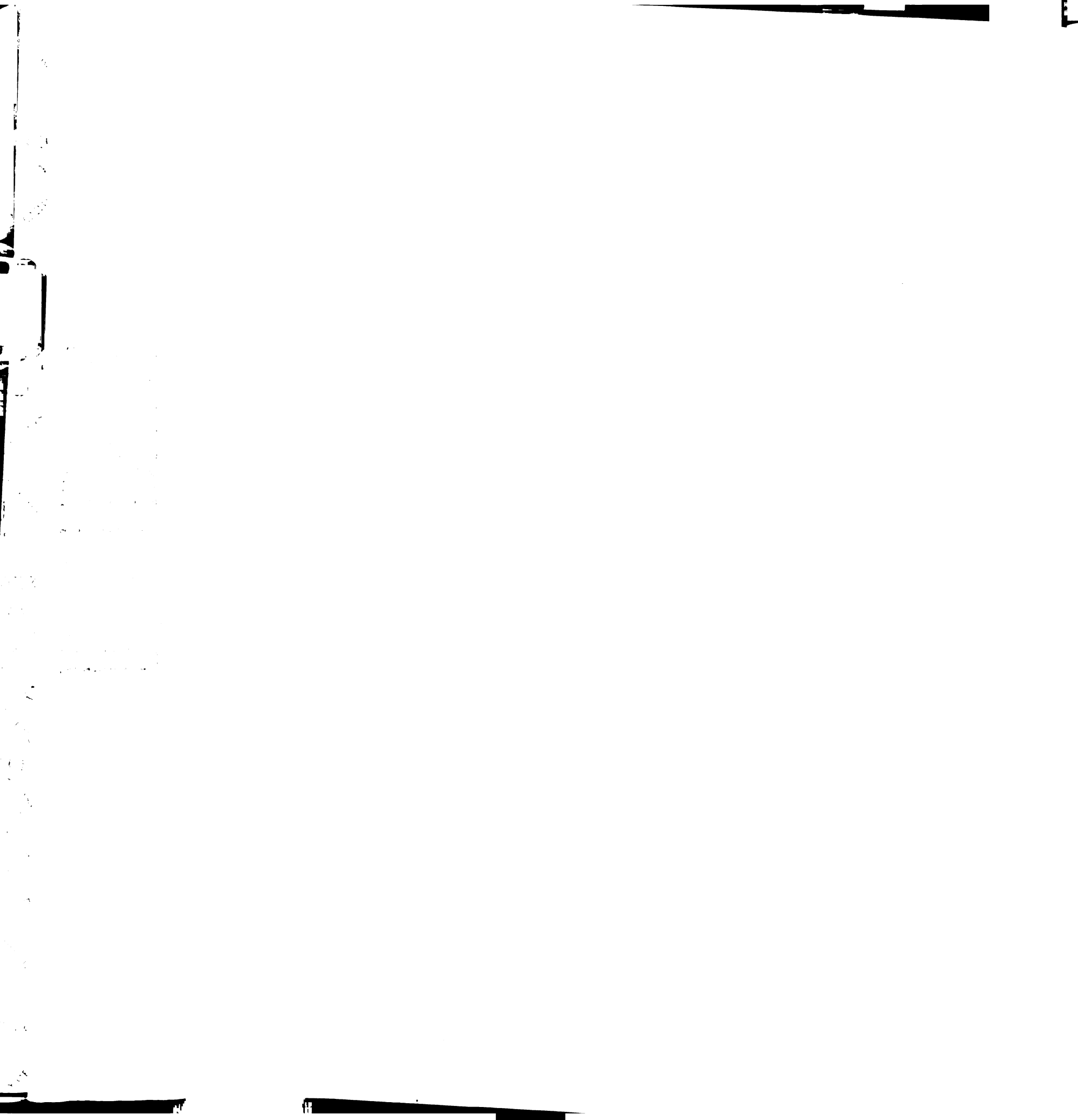
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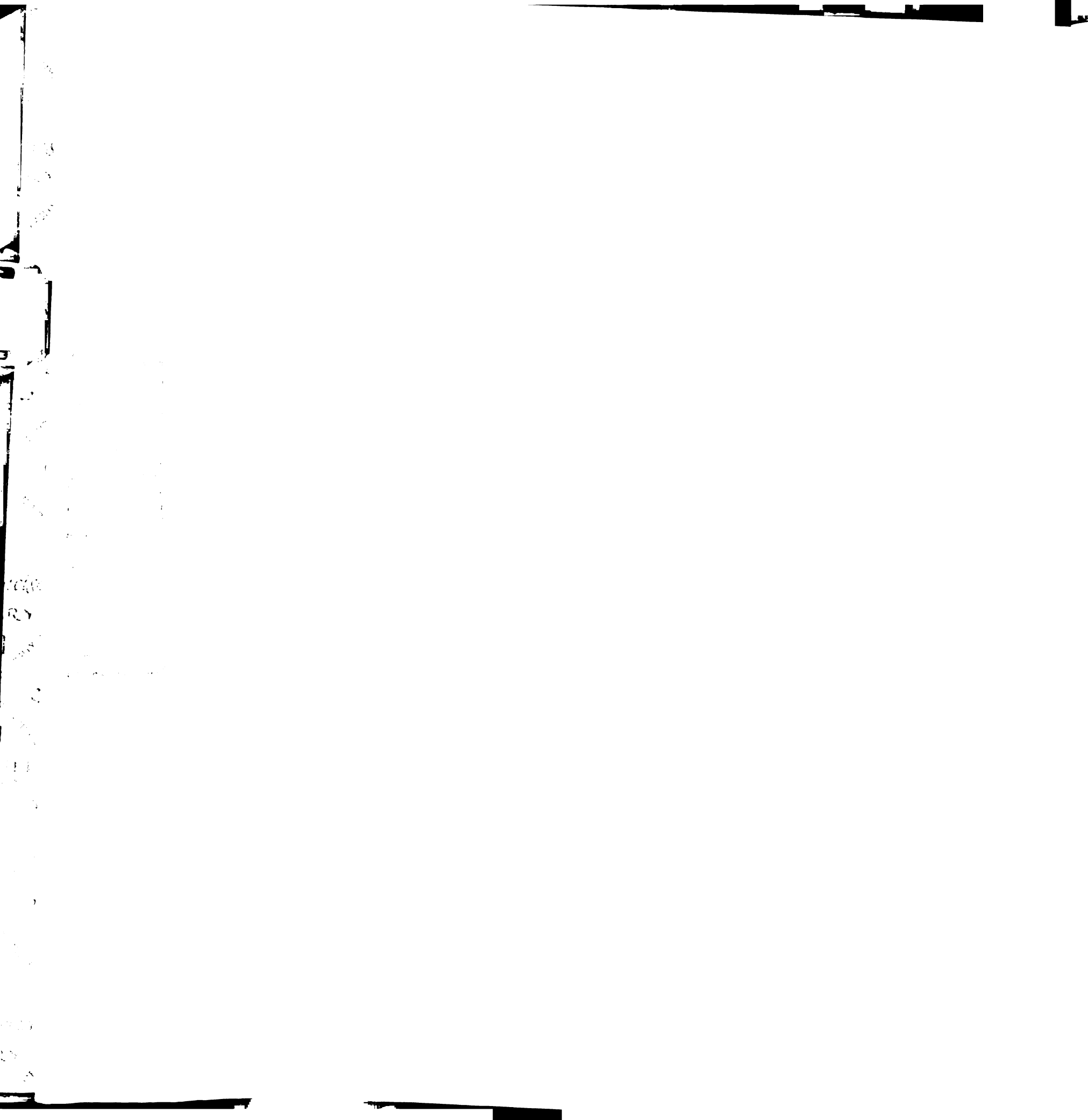
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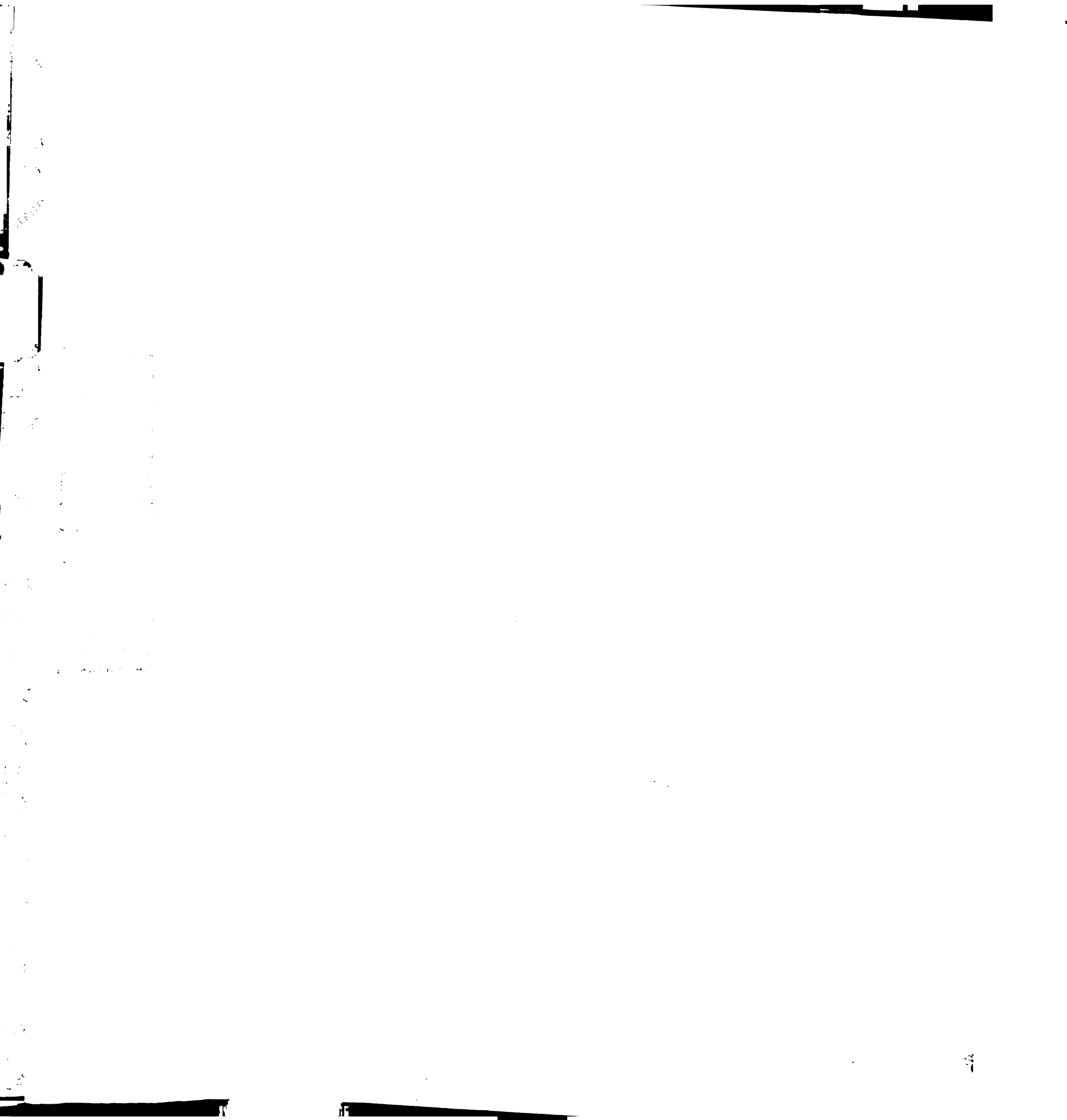
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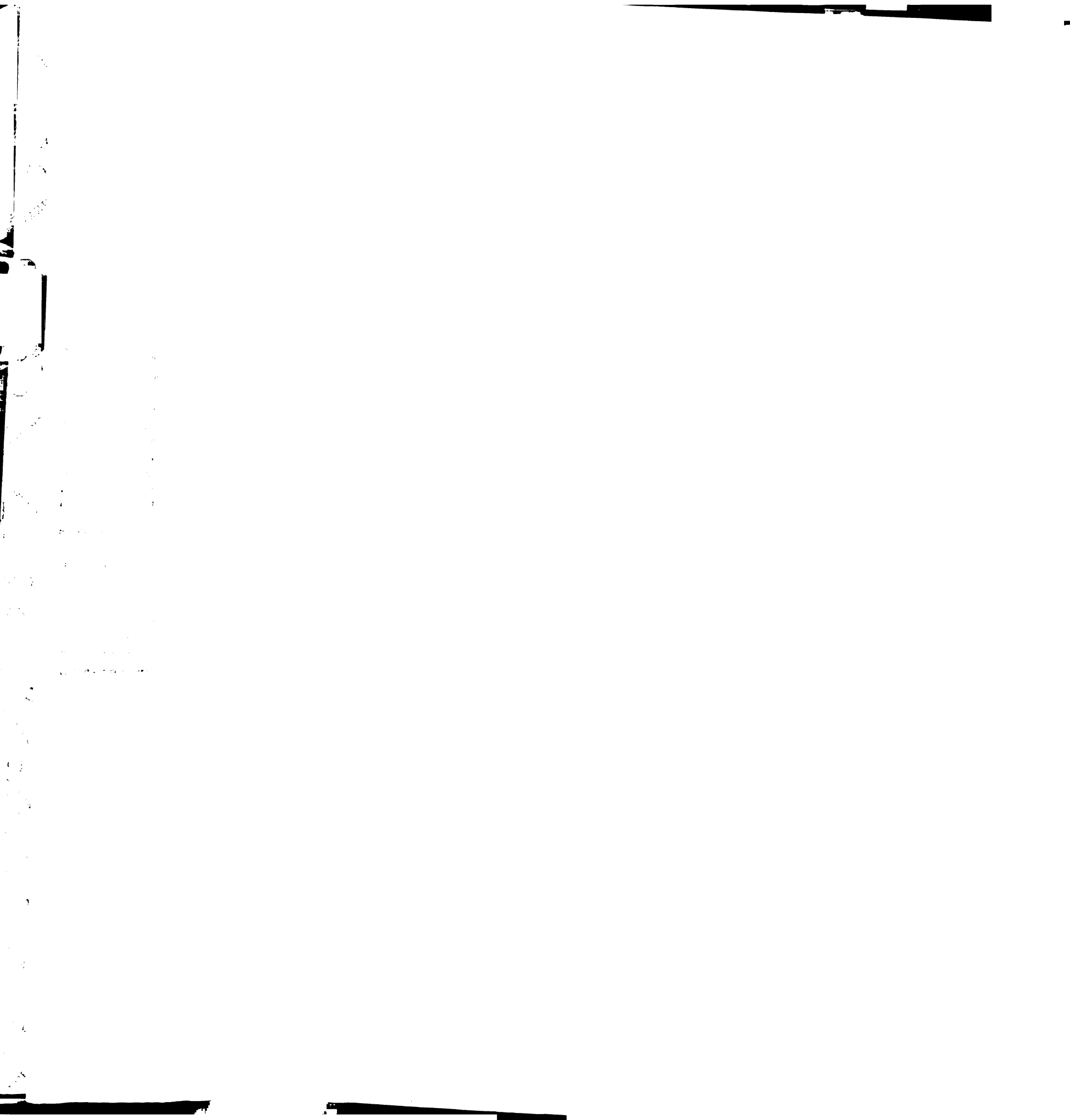


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