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Homecoming: The Self at Home

by

Cheryl Jackson Hall

**DISSERTATION**

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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in the

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of the

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

**San Francisco**



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by  
Cheryl Jackson Hall

**Dedicated to my homfolk and hometown:**

**Wesley L. Hall and Annabelle Hall**

**Ashfield, Massachusetts**

## PREFACE

My family home is a two-story clapboard house located in a quiet New England village. My parents lived in the house for the entire 40 years of their marriage, and it is where I spent the first 20 years of my life. I spent the next 20 years criss-crossing the nation, living in various houses, house-trailers, and apartments with a husband, as well as various lovers, roommates, dogs and cats. Every year I would return to my family home to visit my parents. After my mother died, and my father became ill, I returned to be his care-giver. I lived at home and then near-by for three years. After both parents passed away, I spent three of the last seven summers living in my family home including this summer. This study of the homecoming is as much my story as it is the story of the 30 women and men I have interviewed for it. Although the majority of us are members of the baby-boom generation and the professional middle class, I believe the story that we tell has broader social and sociological implications.

### Acknowledgements

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I am also indebted to the following current and former students in my graduate program who were members of my writers group. Together we learned how to offer each other positive scholarly criticism and advice. Thank you Theresa Montini, Sherry Fox, Petra Liljestrang and Lora Lempert. Members of the Qualitative Analysis Seminar, lead by Professor Anselm Strauss during the Winter Quarter of 1989, also deserve many thanks. Professor Strauss and the graduate students in the class provided me with valuable comments on my data and assisted me with analyzing various portions of it. Additional intellectual support was given by Michael Katovich at Texas Christian University who asked to read and comment on various papers I wrote in conjunction with this research.

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I also want to thank my colleagues in sociology at Western State College of Colorado for comisserating with me in the final stages of this work. Thank you Professors Jim Berry, Greg Haase and Greg Wiltfang. Members of the inter-



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Final thanks to my black Labrador Retriever, Valine, who is at my side whenever I am at my desk, and who makes sure I get my daily exercise.

I am grateful to you all.

# Homecoming: The Self at Home

By

Cheryl Jackson Hall

## ABSTRACT

In this study I apply and empirically build on concepts and theories of self and identity using "home" and the "homecoming" as contexts for exploration. Data collection and analysis were guided by the grounded theory method of qualitative analysis set forth by Strauss and associates (c.f. 1967, 1987, 1990). The primary source of data was from open-ended/focused interviews. Published autobiographies and journals which provided accounts of homecomings and/or images of home were also consulted.

This study extends the work of phenomenologist Alfred Schutz' in his essay "The Homecomer" (1945/1964), first by making the concept of the homecoming more inclusive. That is, though different in kind, temporary serial visits to one's home of origin also constitute homecomings. Next I argue that the definitive condition for a homecoming is neither the length of stay nor adaptation to the home setting, but whether or not the occasion has meaningful consequences for the homecomer's identity and/or relationships with homefolk. I also extend Schutz' theory by presenting an analysis of the "symbolic" homecoming.

The study also draws on and extends the work of Goffman (1959) by highlighting the temporal dimensions of self presentation and impression management. I extend the concept of impression management by focusing on strategies designed for self protection. The study also links Goffman's concepts with various aspects of identity development and transformation described by Strauss (1959).

I also discuss how the homecomers managed the tensions between normative expectations for the self and the value of becoming more authentic and expressive. In so doing I draw on and develop the concept of emotion work (Hochschild, 1983) and Turner's (1976) and Hochschild's ideas about "real" and "false" selves. In addition to the concept of emotion work, I also develop two concepts of my own. The concepts of relationship work and self work

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II: METHODS	5
A. Grounded Theory	5
1. Data Collection	5
2. Theoretical Sampling	7
3. Analysis of Data	10
B. Sources of Data	13
1. Informant Characteristics	13
2. The Interviews	14
3. Life History Documents	17
C. Constructing the Other and Producing the Account	25
CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	27
A. "The Homecomer"	27
1. Leaving Home	29
2. The Homecoming	30
3. The Homecomer	31
B. Discussion	33
C. Self and Identity	35
1. Classical Theories	35
2. Contemporary Theories	39
3. Identity	43
CHAPTER IV: DEFINITIONS OF HOME	51
A. Home and Identity of Place	51
1. Generational Continuity	54
2. Home and Community Identity	55
B. Home as a Way of Life	57

	Page
<b>CHAPTER IV: DEFINITIONS OF HOME [CONTINUED]</b>	
<b>C. Problematic Definitions of Home</b>	59
1. Geographic Mobility	59
2. Changes in Home Place	61
3. Alternate Definitions of Home	62
4. Consequences of Problematic Definitions	66
<b>CHAPTER V: CONDITIONS FOR COMING AND GOING HOME</b>	73
<b>A. Leaving Home</b>	73
<b>B. Homecoming Occasions</b>	75
1. Annual Visits	77
2. Special Occasions	78
3. Having an Agenda	80
<b>C. Homecoming: Duration or Transformation?</b>	81
<b>D. Homecomings: Actual and Symbolic</b>	86
<b>CHAPTER VI: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND THE PRESENTATION OF SELF</b>	95
<b>A. Identity Continuity</b>	97
<b>B. Managing Dual Identities</b>	99
<b>C. Presenting a New Identity</b>	102
<b>D. The Self at Home</b>	106
<b>E. The Protected Self</b>	109
1. Going Along versus Drawing the Line	112
2. Timing and Structuring Time	114
3. Maintaining Ties with Other Identities	117
<b>CHAPTER VII: EMOTION WORK AND RELATIONSHIP WORK</b>	120
<b>A. Indications of Acceptance and Feelings of Belonging</b>	120
1. Relationships with Homefolk	121
<b>B. Obligation and Guilt</b>	126

	Page
<b>CHAPTER VII: EMOTION WORK AND RELATIONSHIP WORK [CONTINUED]</b>	
C. Emotion Work	130
D. Relationship Work	135
E. Nostalgia, Sentimentality and the Homecoming	137
<b>CHAPTER VIII: SELF WORK</b>	146
A. Self Work	152
B. Reexperiencing the Past and Encountering Past Selves	156
1. Reestablishing a Sense of Community	156
C. The Real Self, The False Self and the Self at Home	161
D. Discussion	163
<b>CHAPTER IX: SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS</b>	172
A. Summary	172
B. Theoretical Implications	179
C. Suggestions for Further Research	184
D. Social Implications	185
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	188
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
A. Interview Schedule	195
B. Informant Characteristics	198
C. Life History Documents and Literary Sources of Data	199

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

There is a way in which the subjectively experienced past is never static. The act of remembrance brings the past into one's present to be reexperienced, reflected upon and interpreted, or reconstructed and thus transformed. The meaning of the past, one's version of it, and of oneself may endure or change over time with new experience and may vary in different social contexts. These processes can be studied through a number of topics; however, one that I find particularly evocative is the homecoming.

In "The Homecomer" Alfred Schutz (1945/1964) reminds us that home is a powerful and complex concept that has been addressed in literary classics from Homer's Odyssey to the novels and short stories of Thomas Wolfe. In contemporary pop music home is also a common theme, whether in nostalgic memories of "Penny Lane" [The Beatles] or longing to be "Homeward Bound" [Simon and Garfunkel].

Etymological dictionaries devote pages to the ways in which home has been defined. For example, home may refer to one's past or present dwelling place, neighborhood or community, state, region or native land. Home is also associated with people, particularly members of one's

household or family. It can also represent a way of life. Further home may signify an emotional state. In this sense home is where one belongs, is comfortable, or longs to be.

Schutz also points out that home has different meanings for those who never left it, those who live far from it, and those who return. Further, people may even return "home" to a place they have never been before, such as American Jews emigrating to Israel, among others whose racial/ethnic or cultural ties are strongly identified with another land.

People may return temporarily or for good. In addition, homecomings may be expected and anticipated or unexpected and dreaded. They may be undertaken out of a sense of obligation to others or to oneself. One may return triumphant or in shame or defeat. In the poem "The Death of the Hired Man" Robert Frost writes: "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, / They have to take you in." (1965:165)

Talk about home and homecomings are also natural topics of conversation. By this I mean that they occur in the world without any prompting by a social scientist. Through telling and sharing stories about one's homefolk, homelife,<sup>1</sup> and home place we become acquainted with others, and the

depth or detail of these accounts may be indicators of the intimacy of our relationships with them.

As these brief examples indicate, homecomings are ubiquitous social occasions which occur under a variety of different conditions, with various intentions, which may produce a number of consequences for self and others.

In "The Homecomer" Schutz presents home as a central theme around which identity and memories of the past are organized. In contrast, in Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia, Fred Davis (1979) suggests that home has become dissociated from place and no longer evokes memories or the past. Has home lost its significance as a symbol of self and social relationships in place and time? This is an important question when one considers those whose homes have been lost or destroyed as a consequence of imperialism, poverty, natural disaster, alienation or illness.

The purposes of this study were twofold: The first was to analyze the relationship between self and home. The second was to render the concept of "home" itself problematic in an attempt to understand the meaning of "home" as it is comprehended by people in everyday life. In the next chapter I review the methods I used in



collecting and analyzing the data I gathered for this study. In the third chapter I summarize and discuss Schutz' essay "The Homecomer" and the ways in which this study extends his work. I also provide a very brief historical overview of the literature on the concepts of self and identity. In Chapters 4 and 5, I analyze various definitions of home as well as conditions for coming and going home. I also discuss what constitutes the homecoming and ways in which they can be symbolically enacted.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 address the first objective of this study, which once again, was to analyze the relationship between self and home. Chapter 6 focuses on issues of identity construction, presentation and protection of self. Chapter 7 focuses on two types of "work" the homecomer engages in, specifically: emotion work and relationship work. Chapter 8 describes aspects of self work, and discusses the relationship between the real self, the false self and the self at home. Chapter 9, the final chapter, presents a brief summary and analyzes the theoretical implications of my analysis to theories of the self.

#### END NOTES

1

The expression "homefolk" is used by Michael A. Katovich (1989) in "Portraying the Reunion on Film: A Case Study of a Social Form."

## Chapter 2

### METHODS

This chapter begins with an explanation of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), the method of data collection and analysis used for this study. Next sources of data are described. These sources included interviews with informants, group sessions involving data gathering and analysis, life history documents, and other forms of biographical data.

#### Grounded Theory

##### Data Collection

Data collection for this study was guided by the principles of grounded theory. Grounded theory is the process of discovering theory from research data. Its major strategy is a systematic method of constant comparison.

Like experimental and statistical methods, comparative analysis is a general method. It can be used with large or small units of analysis. Comparative analysis can be used for purposes of replicating facts based on comparative evidence or for establishing their generalizability. It may

be used in specifying a concept by comparing its dimensions to other similar concepts or units (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Smelser, 1976).

Strauss and associates conceive theory as a way of handling research data so that it may be described and explained. Elements of a theory generated by comparative analysis are conceptual categories and their properties and generalized relationships among them. The concepts generated should be analytic and sensitizing (Blumer, 1969).

Both categories and their properties are indicated by the data but are not data themselves. Once conceptualized, constant comparison with other groups illuminates their similarities and differences. Although concepts may be borrowed from existing theory if they fit, those that emerge from the data are usually more relevant, richer and are not forced (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1983; Strauss, 1987; and Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Comparative analysis also generates relationships among categories. These hypotheses are aimed at generating rather than verifying theory (although verification is embedded in the analysis). As relationships among categories emerge and are integrated, they form the central theoretical framework of the study.

## Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is a process of jointly collecting, coding, and analyzing data with the emerging theory guiding what data to collect and where to find it. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to discover categories and their properties and to suggest relationships that will build a grounded theory. Statistical sampling, in contrast, is done to obtain "accurate evidence on people among categories" and used for purposes of description and/or verification (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

With theoretical sampling, initial decisions about what data to collect are based on the research topic or problem under investigation and may include tentative categories and "local concepts." However, after the initial steps, the basic question in theoretical sampling is "What groups or subgroups does one turn to next...and for what purpose? In short, how does the sociologist select multiple comparison groups?" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:47).

Comparison groups are selected on the basis of theoretical considerations rather than from structural circumstances. That is, the comparison groups are conceptual and theoretically relevant for furthering the

development of emerging categories and for generating their properties.

Minimizing and maximizing differences in comparison groups is one technique that may be used. Minimizing differences among comparison groups increases the possibility of collecting similar data on a given category and facilitates identifying important differences not already discovered. For example, in order to understand variations in duration, comparisons were made between permanent and temporary homecomings. Another comparison was between homecomings and high school reunions. Maximizing differences between comparison groups then may highlight strategic similarities as well as differences. Further, maximizing comparison groups

brings out the widest possible coverage on ranges, continua, degrees, types, uniformities, variations, causes, conditions, consequences, probabilities of relationships, strategies, processes, structural mechanisms, and so forth, all necessary for elaboration of the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:57).

According to Strauss and associates, the criteria for deciding when to stop sampling is the category's "theoretical saturation." That is, a category is saturated when no additional data are found to develop properties of the category. For example, a major category in this study

was "home." According to an etymological dictionary, its properties include aspects of place (i.e. hometown, homeland), relationships (one's homelife), and belonging. Schutz (1945) referred to these properties and also discussed the symbolic character of the concept. Additional properties of the concept developed through this study included analyzing the temporal features of home and conditions when definitions of home were problematic. When concrete indicators of these conceptual properties appeared in the data over and over again, and when no additional properties could be discovered, I became "empirically confident" that the category had been saturated (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

With respect to the depth of theoretical sampling, all categories are not of equal relevance to the emerging theory. Thus the amount of data to be collected on each category may vary. Initially, data on entire groups may be gathered as main categories begin to emerge. Then theoretical sampling requires that data collection focus on categories to generate properties and hypotheses. "Core theoretical categories," that is, those with the most explanatory power should also be thoroughly saturated. As the theory develops and becomes integrated, the researcher learns which categories require more saturation, which

require very little and which may be dropped (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:70).

Ordinarily data collection is emphasized during the beginning phase of the research process although preliminary coding and analysis also occur during this time. As time goes on, the balance gradually shifts and more emphasis is placed on analysis and less on collecting and coding data. Data collection, however, is usually not brought to a close until the final stages of theory development. During the final stages, specific data searches may need to be made in order to pinpoint information, for confirmation, or for elaboration but most data collection will have been completed by this time (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

### Analysis of Data

Comparative analysis of qualitative data begins with coding. Coding is an operation aimed at identifying as many tentative categories and their properties as possible. One may examine words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs of text (field notes, interview transcripts, documents), then compare them to other indicators in the data which display similarities or differences (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). As categories and

properties emerge, some will be constructed by the analyst while others will be abstracted from the text itself.

Coding notes and theoretical memos are written before proceeding to the next slice of data to be analyzed. As coding continues, the units of comparison may change, for example, from comparing categories with one another to developing the properties of a central category, or to identifying relationships among them. More coding notes and more extensive memos are prepared, as well as diagrams of relationships. In the process, the theory begins to develop and become integrated. As new questions arise and gaps open up, more data may be collected through theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Another stage in the analytic process consists of delimiting the theory. That is, as the theory develops fewer major modifications occur and those that do tend to be made in order to clarify its logic. Nonrelevant properties may be omitted while others are elaborated. By reduction Glaser and Strauss are referring to the discovery of underlying uniformities in the original set of categories or their properties that can be reformulated within a "smaller set of higher level concepts" (1967:107). The theory is further delimited in the process since the next analytic



sessions are still more select and focused. Coding, memo writing, and analysis proceed until core categories are saturated and a central theoretical framework, which forms a systematic substantive theory, has emerged.

In this study the continuous use of analytic diagrams (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) enabled me to elaborate and delimit the emergent theory. That is, in addition to making coding notes and writing memos, after each session I would construct diagrams which summarized my work. After I had drafted numerous diagrams, I decided to copy them all on to a sheet of poster paper according to what aspect of the coding paradigm (Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) they represented. That is, I categorized according to whether they could be identified as conditions, interactions among the actors, strategies and tactics, or consequences.

As I proceeded with my analysis, this "master diagram" enabled me to identify what aspects of the emerging conceptual scheme required more analytic depth, which categories had been analyzed sufficiently, and to visualize and draw additional relationships. Although this master diagram became quite detailed in the process, I discovered that as I wrote memos describing my analysis I could not proceed without repeatedly taking certain relationships into

account. As a consequence of following these procedures, home, time, and identity emerged as core categories which integrated my analysis and became the central theoretical framework for this study.

### Sources of Data

The primary source of data collected for this study were interviews with informants with recent homecoming experiences. Since homecomings are private events, interviews and other sources of biographical data were more appropriate than participant observation or other field techniques since access to these gatherings is limited to members and invited guests. Other sources of data included life history documents and literary sources which provided accounts of homecomings and images of home.

### Informant Characteristics

The informants were recruited from my occupational, academic, and social networks. Data was collected from a total of thirty different individuals. At the time of the interviews all but one person was living in the San Francisco Bay Area; however, their homes-of-origin included every region of the United States and two were citizens of Northern European countries.

Two informants were African Americans, while the others were Caucasian. Their ages ranged from 21 to 73 years old, although the majority of informants were in their thirties and early forties. Three informants were men.

The majority of the informants were college-educated. Only one person did not have a high school education. Two informants held doctoral degrees. With respect to social class background, the majority of informants identified their class-of-origin as either working or middle class. Two persons identified themselves as members of the upper class and one had been raised in poverty.

### The Interviews

The interviews took three different forms. Ten focused, conversational interviews were conducted. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. These interviews varied in length from approximately 45 minutes to 2 hours. They were arranged in advance and scheduled for a time which offered the least chance of interruption. The interviews were conducted in my home or the informants' homes, offices, or at a convenient quiet site. One informant was interviewed two years in a row, each time after a recent homecoming visit.

Questions for the focused, conversational interviews were open-ended in order to permit the informant to frame his or her own response. Like the standardized interview schedule used in survey research, focused interviews elicit certain information from each informant, but the phrasing and order of questioning are more flexible. Denzin (1978/1989), explains that the focused interview rests on two assumptions: First, the interview questions are formulated into words familiar to the respondent. This assumption recognizes the existence of different language communities and that their members have different ways of defining themselves and describing their social worlds. The second assumption is that questions and their sequencing are sensitive to the subject and his or her readiness or willingness to address various topics. Further, since questions were open-ended, they permitted respondents to raise important issues not on a standardized interview schedule. These issues or ideas may open up new avenues of inquiry that may be relevant to the emerging conceptual scheme (Denzin, 1978/1989).

Appendix A provides a copy of the interview guide that was used in conjunction with these interviews. Data were gathered in six general areas: (1) the informant's home of origin; (2) the process of leaving home; (3) preparations, expectations, and considerations about the homecoming; (4)

the homecoming experience; (5) the consequences of the homecoming for self and relationships with others; and (6) images and constructions of home.

Although this guide is constructed sequentially, the actual questions asked and their order were flexible for as Schatzman and Strauss observe:

After all, what does one do when the respondent, while answering the first question, fully answers the third and some of questions six and seven? (1973:73).

During the initial phases of data gathering, the interviews that were conducted (and the life history documents that were obtained), focused on obtaining detailed accounts of homecoming stories. However, as data accumulated and analysis proceeded, an additional interviewing strategy was utilized. This strategy involved asking questions based on the criteria of theoretical sampling. That is, they were aimed at making comparisons, checking hypotheses, and confirming interpretations (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

One opportunity to obtain this type of data arose in the winter of 1989 when I enrolled in a ten-week seminar on qualitative analysis. My research was selected to serve as

a case study for the class. As a consequence, I was able to direct questions to each seminar participant or address them to the entire group. Eleven graduate students representing three different academic disciplines were enrolled in the class.

A third source of interview data was my friends. Over the two year period in which I collected data for this study (from the fall of 1987 through the fall of 1989), I discussed my work-in-progress with friends. I would take notes on their responses to various questions I posed about their recent homecoming experiences. Various slices of data were obtained in this manner from nine different informants.

#### Life History Documents

Additional data was gathered using life history documents. In The Discovery of Grounded Theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe the advantages and disadvantages of using documentary materials as sources of data. One major advantage of these documents is their accessibility. That is, one can consult narratives from the past in historical material that would otherwise be unavailable; documents are conveniently organized and located in libraries; and data are available for follow-up or repeated consultation as needed.

Disadvantages of using extant materials are that there may not be much material available on certain topics, or if data are available, they may not be sufficiently detailed. Further, the information may be misleading. As Glaser and Strauss point out, however, probably no more so than in interview or field situations since all data need to be carefully scrutinized. The documents may also provide an inaccurate account of events. If the intent is to generate theory, however, this is not a critical problem. Glaser and Strauss quote Kenneth Boch in this regard. Boch states:

The belief that what men have observed and recorded about human social life is but a distorted, subjective reflection of what was really there is a debilitating assumption. This sort of skepticism jeopardizes the entire study of man, for not only does it deny us access to the great bulk of human experience, but it eventually casts doubt upon the reliability of all observation (1956:123).

Other disadvantages of life history documents are the narrow range of people represented by the published word. Further, what life history research that has been conducted and published has, until recently, been dominated by white male elites (Keller, 1985; Geiger, 1986; Warren, 1988; and Anderson, et. al., 1990).

## Methods of Selection

The life history documents read in conjunction with this study were published autobiographies, biographies, and journals that included homecoming narratives or images of home. Literary sources, including novels, short stories, and non-fiction were also consulted and viewed as data. These data were obtained by three different means. First, I was personally familiar with the work of several different authors (Angelou, 1986; Sarton, 1968 and 1973; and Wolfe, 1934 and 1935) and knew that they wrote about home or homecoming themes.

Academic advisors and colleagues suggested additional sources (specifically Mukherjee, 1973; Orwell, 1939; and Thurman, 1982). Finally, throughout 1988 I scanned The New York Times Review of Books for new work that had been published that dealt with home or homecoming issues. Four books were selected through this process (Berry, 1988; Edgerton, 1988; Redford, 1988; and Wegner, 1988). Each source is briefly described below and further summarized in Appendix C.



## Autobiographies and Biographies

Autobiographies and biographies constitute the principal sources of life history research conducted by anthropologists, sociologists and others. Autobiographies are personal narratives written by individuals about their own lives. They typically consist of descriptions of events that "made the person" who he or she is. That is, it is assumed that the experiences recorded in the autobiography strongly affected and transformed the author's sense of self (Langness and Frank, 1981:92). Like other life history documents, the autobiography may provide a complete life story or it may focus on certain periods or address topical aspects of the author's life.

In contrast, biographies are written by one person about the life of another. Langness and Frank (1981) note that writer and subject may have different interpretations of the same experience. Further, biographers generally find some pattern in the subject's life or develop a "vivid impression" of the person that they keep in mind while writing (Langness and Frank, 1981).

Both genres are expected to present a "unified life." That is, their descriptions are intended to reveal a unified self while at the same time demonstrating growth and change

(Langness and Frank, 1981). Writing the life story then, becomes a way of "creating coherence" and meaning.

Following Heidegger, Langness and Frank conclude that life histories address the problem of resolving contradictory themes in one's life. They write:

Perhaps our fascination with these subjects ... is that we can contemplate in their lives an apparent "being-as-a-whole" whether real or illusory. This possibility ... inspires us with the sense that our lives might be focused too, in this manner. Perhaps the recurring themes ... have hidden meaning, then: a desire for our lives to reveal a design that might release us from ambiguity and the painful wrestling with conventional values as we struggle to become whoever we may be (1981:116).

The autobiographies and biographies that were utilized as sources of data for this study included Maya Angelou's (1986) autobiographical account of the years she lived in Ghana during the early 1960s in All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes; May Sarton's (1968) autobiographical account of establishing her first adult home in Nelson, New Hampshire in Plant Dreaming Deep; and Judith Thurman's (1982) biography of Isak Dinesen in Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller.

#### Diaries and Journals

In contrast to the autobiography or biography which provide perspectives on someone's past, the diary or journal

provides a record of the near-past or past-present (Plummer, 1982). As such, diaries and journals may also chronicle ongoing public events and private experiences of significance to the author. Thus preexisting published and private diaries, journals and logs may also be useful for research.

For purposes of sociological research Denzin writes:

In the diary the author may express self-feelings he otherwise would never make public, and in its ideal form the diary is unsurpassed as a continuous record of the subjective side of a man's life (1978:228).

Denzin suggests that the long-term diary may surpass the autobiography since "ideas are set down, disappear (and reappear over time) with age, are replaced with new thoughts, new feelings, new experiences" (1978:228).

Furthermore, the "fallacy of motive attribution" typical in autobiographies or biographies, when the author constructs motives to explain past behavior or reinterpret experience, may not be prevalent since immediate experiences are recorded.

One journal read in conjunction with this study was May Sarton's (1973) Journal of a Solitude, an account of her daily life and work at her home in New Hampshire over the course of a year.

## Fiction and Non-Fiction

Novels, short stories, and non-fiction containing homecoming narratives were also consulted for this study. For example, Somerset Homecoming by Dorothy Spruill Redford (1988) chronicles her search for information on her slave ancestors. Her research involved drafting family histories of all the slaves of the former Somerset Plantation, and establishing a reunion of their descendants. It is also a book about the search for and discovery of one's historical identity and the expanded idea of what constitutes a family.

Seven novels and short stories were also read. Among them were Wendell Berry's (1988) autobiographical novel Remembering, a story about coming home to his family, the community where he was raised, and to rural farm life in Kentucky after a period of alienation and self-searching. Another novel was Clyde Edgerton's (1988) The Floatplane Notebooks, which chronicles 15 years in the lives of the Copelands of South Carolina, a family that reunited every year to clean the family cemetery. In Bharati Mukherjee's (1973) autobiographical novel, The Tiger's Daughter, she tells the story of coming home to Calcutta, India after having been sent away to college in America at the age of 15. She returns after 7 years, at a time of labor riots and political unrest and in process she witnesses the gradual

passing of way of the life of the former Indian ruling class.

George Orwell's (1939) Coming Up for Air is a homecoming of another sort. His character comes home to a village that has been swallowed up by industrialization after the First World War. It is also a story of reminiscence about childhood, family and daily life at home before the war. Similar to Orwell's book was Hart Wegner's (1988) series of short stories, Houses of Ivory, about the loss of country and culture in Germany after the Second World War. The first part of the book consists of stories about what once was, while the latter stories describe what had been lost. In it is a story of coming home when there is literally and figuratively nothing to return to for even the grave markers had been removed.

Thomas Wolfe's (1935) classic short story "The Return of the Prodigal" from The Hills Beyond present two contrasting visions of the homecoming. Finally, Wolfe's classic novel (1934) You Can't Go Home Again defines home and interprets the homecoming on a number of dimensions and levels of meaning.

### Constructing the Other and Producing the Account

Recent concerns about "constructing the other" and producing a written account articulated by Olesen (1989), Warren (1988), Finch and Mason (1990), and others engaged in ethnographic research are relevant for data gathered through interviewing as well. One issue has been how to write "a credible account faithful to and respectful of those who have participated in interactions in which data are created" (Olesen, 1989:4) while presenting the analysis constructed from this process.

The strategy I have used to address this issue here has been to use frequent quotations, not only for purposes of presenting evidence and to illustrate my analysis, but also to give the reader an impression of the informant and his or her personal experience and interpretation of the homecoming. At the same time I have tried to balance the use of quotations with the presentation of my findings, so that the reader does not lose the analytic thread and become lost in description.

Another issue focuses on levels of interpretation. Olesen refers to this as "triple mediation." The first level of interpretation is the informant's own historically and culturally situated rendering of his or her life world.

The second is the researcher's interpretive process, also mediated by his or her own historical and cultural location. The third layer of interpretation emerges when the researcher

translate[s] the respondents' understandings, the second order reflections presented to us, into either concepts emergent from the analysis or into those borrowed from social science. Herein lie tensions between emic and etic interpretations, for it is clear that there can not be a perfect fit between our participants' constructions and our conceptualizations. (Olesen, 1989:9)

One way in which the interpretive distance between the researcher and the informant is reduced in this study is by the historical and cultural ubiquitousness of the homecoming as a social form. Second is the researcher's biographical experience. I have been a homecomer and come home under a variety of different conditions during the past twenty years. The third layer of interpretation, however, remains problematic despite the grounded and self-reflexive nature of this research tradition. Other conceptual and interpretive schemes are possible, different categories and dimensions could have been emphasized, and certainly other conditions, interactions, and consequences of the homecoming could have been sampled. The central organizing theme of this analysis focuses on the relationship between self and home.

## Chapter 3

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter begins by describing the essay that inspired this study: Alfred Schutz' "The Homecomer" (1945/1964). It is followed by a preliminary discussion of Schutz' substantive theoretical ideas. Since this dissertation is focused on the study of self and identity, the remainder of the chapter briefly reviews major classical and contemporary symbolic interactionist theorizing on these concepts.

#### "The Homecomer"

Schutz distinguished between the concrete properties and the abstract, symbolic aspects of home. Home, as a concrete property, is the place of origin. It has a specific location. One's home can refer to one's country (or homeland), region, state, community, neighborhood, street, house or dwelling place (New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, 1901). Schutz differentiated between home and other places to live in the following way: "Where I happen to be is my 'abode'; where I intend to stay is my 'residence'; where I come from and whither I want to return is my 'home'" (1945/1964:107).



Home, however, is more than just one's house or town: it also represents a way of life. As a way of life, home is characterized by taken-for-granted routines and habitual modes of conduct. These routines, habits, and traditions are concerned with the proper way to conduct daily life. Another component of "homelife" is the way its members develop "schemes of expression and interpretation" which make present and future actions understandable and predictable. Finally, life at home represents social relationships.

In referring to the social relationships associated with home, Schutz elaborated on Cooley's concept of the primary group. Schutz distinguished between face-to-face relationships (the pure we-relation), and intimate relationships. While actors in the face-to-face relationship share a common space and time, they are differentially located along the dimension from anonymity to intimacy. Intimate relationships can be independent of face-to-face relationships, but they have a recurrent character. The social relationships of primary groups are stable, enabling interrupted relationships to be reestablished and continue where they are broken off. These relationships can also be taken-for-granted by the members of the home group. In sum, life at home means life in primary groups. To each member, "the Other's life becomes,

thus a part of his (sic) own autobiography, an element of his personal history" (1945/1964:111).

Symbolically, home is an emotionally evocative concept which elicits a variety of images. For example, to a departed member, home may represent one's native country, its language, customs, or food; a scenic view; friends or family members; even "songs my mother taught me" (Schutz, 1945/1964:108). The concept also symbolizes those traditions, routines, habits, familiar objects, and activities which were once a taken-for-granted part of daily life.

#### Leaving Home

To the departed member, home is no longer immediately accessible, and social relationships are no longer face-to-face, or experienced in the same physical space. As a consequence, homelife becomes experienced primarily through memory rather than in the vivid present. Even though communication may still be possible, unique personalities, relationships, and interactions can become typified since each has less reliable or intimate knowledge of the other (Schutz, 1945/1964).

Despite conditions of physical, social, and temporal distance, the departed member may assume that life at home will continue much as it did at the time of leaving. However, as Schutz points out, an absence can also alter what becomes important or relevant to both the person who leaves and the home group. The past may also be reevaluated and new experiences occur which can not be shared. Further, whatever changes which do occur will be experienced differently by the absent member and the home group. According to Schutz, these altered conditions set the stage for the homecoming.

### The Homecoming

According to Schutz the "success" or "failure" of the homecoming rests entirely upon the possibility of transforming disrupted social relationships into recurrent ones. What makes this process problematic are the different experiences the homcomer and home group has during the absence, the importance of those differences, and the way they are understood by each. Schutz noted, however, that even if such discrepancies in experience did not exist, the "complete solution of this problem would remain an unrealizable ideal" since it is impossible to repeat the past (1945/1964:114).

Although repeating the past might be "aimed at and longed for: what belongs to the past can never be reinstated in another present exactly as it was" (Schutz, 1945/1964:115). Schutz explained that as a consequence of aging and the passage of time itself, new experiences continually occur and previous ones are continually receiving additional interpretive meaning in light of the new experiences. This condition essentially changes one's "state of mind...and bar a recurrence of the same" (1945/1964:115).

#### The Homecomer

Schutz defined a homecomer as someone who permanently returns to his or her home of origin. Although he mentioned other kinds of homecomers, the case he analyzed in depth was that of the ex-soldier returning to his home town after a war.

Schutz compared the situation of the homecomer with that of the stranger. The initial experience of the homecomer is like that of the stranger because he or she believes, at least initially, that he or she is among strangers. The homecomer is unlike the stranger in that the stranger expects to find an unfamiliar world, while the homecomer expects to find a familiar one. The homecomer also returns to a home that is not the one he or she left,

remembered, or longed for during his or her absence. Even though the homcomer may have longed to return, he or she has had new experiences, selected new goals or changed in other ways. In fact, the time away from home may have marked a turning point in the departed member's life so that he or she has been transformed from the person he or she was upon departure. The homcomer may also believe that these new experiences can not be shared (Schutz, 1945/1964).

On the other hand, upon return, the homcomer may want to reveal, adopt, implement or enact these new experiences, skills, (or identities) in the home context. This ambition can be problematic because, Schutz explained, the home group may expect or assume the homcomer will resume his or her former "place:" that is, the roles he or she occupied prior to departure. What worked once, however, may not work again in the present or fit in to the home context. These conditions make the homecoming strange and problematic for the homcomer and homefolk.

Although Schutz' substantive theoretical ideas are analyzed in greater detail in the chapters that follow, an outline of this analysis is sketched in the discussion section which follows.

## Discussion

One of the limitations of Schutz' theory is his definition of home. Although he discusses various aspects of the definition (location, relationships, etc.), the home to which homecomers return is their home of origin. Chapter 4 considers other dimensions (for example, the question of access if one's home has been sold or destroyed), and other definitions of the term (i.e. alternative temporal and social constructions). It also discusses other conditions when conceptions of home become problematic.

A second limitation of Schutz' theory is that it is based on a narrow definition of the homecoming--its permanence. Not all homecomings are permanent, however, and not all homecomers return alone. Chapter 5 examines various conditions for coming home on a temporary, short-term basis. The chapter also discusses the meaning of the homecoming in terms of its relationship to transformations of identity (rather than considerations of duration), and introduces the concept of the symbolic homecoming.

Implicit in Schutz' exposition of the homecoming is the dialectic of continuity and change in self [and other(s)] over time and the consequences of self change for adopting or assuming former identities and roles upon return.

Chapter 6 focuses on the homecomer and makes these considerations explicit. The chapter illustrates varying conditions of identity continuity and change and discusses issues of presentation of self upon coming home. It also describes various strategies homecomers develop for protecting the self in problematic home contexts.

An underlying assumption of Schutz' theory is that the way of life home represents is missed by departed members and symbols of home evoke feelings of homesickness. These conditions, however, may not be the case. Thoughts of home may stir unhappy memories or evoke unpleasant emotions as well. Homecomers may not long for their place of origin or their families. Their reasons for coming home may be far more complex and varied. For example, homecomings may be undertaken out of a sense of obligation, and evoke feelings of fear or dread rather than desire. Chapter 7 discusses these and other emotional aspects of the homecoming and their consequences for relationships with the home group.

Finally, Chapter 8 analyzes various aspects of self work. In so doing, it goes beyond Schutz' focus on various readjustments or adaptations on the part of the homecomer and the home group as a consequence of self-change.

## Self and Identity

The concepts of self and identity are central concerns of sociologists, particularly symbolic interactionists. Before elaborating the relationship between home, homecoming, and identity, a central focus of this dissertation, I will review the sociological underpinnings of the concepts of self and identity. The section begins by briefly outlining theories of self developed by three scholars to whom the symbolic interactionists owe an intellectual debt: William James, George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley. Contemporary interactionist theories of the self are considered next. Following this brief review of classical and contemporary exemplars of sociological theories of the self is an overview of theories which focus on the concept of identity. These include the work of Strauss, Stone, and Goffman and the social constructionists Berger and Luckmann.

### Classical Symbolic Interactionist Theories

William James formed the foundation of the self which many since have built upon. He established its reflexive character as knower and known, subject and object, me and I (Martindale, 1980; Stone, 1981). The self-as-known is referred to as the "me" while the self-as-knower the "I."



The me is the empirical self, the self-conception, or the self-as-object. The me finds its reality in communication. James conceived three primary aspects of the me: the material, social and spiritual. The social me was the source of variability, for there could be "as many selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their minds" (James, as cited in Stone, 1981:175).

While the me represents the multifaceted aspects of self, the I is its source of continuity. Rosenberg (1981) notes that although James observed that the self was both stable and situationally variable, James emphasized its continuity. The I was the root of identity, present in the moment of consciousness, spontaneous, a cognitive process rather than a static state (Stone, 1981).

Cooley's conception of the self corresponds very closely to what James referred to as the social self (Martindale, 1980). Like James, Cooley was interested in consciousness; however, Cooley believed consciousness could not be separated from the social context and that it was shaped by social interaction. This position is exemplified by his famous conception of the looking-glass self.

The looking-glass self involves three phases: (1) the imagination of how self appears to others; (2) the imagina-

tion of how that appearance is evaluated (judged); and (3) the development of a self-feeling based on how the self perceives others evaluations (Cooley, 1902). This self, then, is not a literal looking glass, but an imagined or interpreted one.

The looking-glass or social self emerges in primary groups, the second basic concept Cooley contributed to sociological social psychology. Primary groups are intimate, face-to-face groups that, like the family or peer groups, linked the self to society and are responsible for socialization.

University of Chicago philosopher George Herbert Mead is the third major figure in the development of what would come to be known as symbolic interactionism. Mead drew on James and Dewey's pragmatism, Wundt's idealism, and Watson's behaviorism in his interpretation of the self (Martindale, 1980).

Mead's starting point was observable activity, the on-going social process and its elemental social acts, from which mind and society emerges (Martindale, 1980). The central objects of Mead's analysis were attitudes, which had the simultaneous quality of representing both introspective

states of consciousness and the starting point of the act.

Following Wundt, Mead took the gesture as the link between language and action. Gestures are symbols (which can be physical or linguistic), and as symbols gestures are constituted by meanings which can vary by context and its interpretation. Meaning and mind originate in the social act which is made possible through language (Ritzer, 1983; Martindale, 1980).

♦

Mead defined mind as "an internal conversation with one's self through the use of significant symbols" (Mead as cited in Ritzer, 1983:303). What is crucial in this process is the ability to take the role of the other. By so doing, it becomes possible to understand the meaning of the other's actions or words. This internal conversation is the essence of mind (Ritzer, 1983).

According to Mead, socialization and the acquisition of language are responsible for the development of the self. For example, during play children learn to take on roles of significant others, especially members of the family. However, integration of a coherent sense of self occurs in the game stage when children learn to adopt a more generalized view of self, others and the community (Ritzer, 1983).

Thus like James, Mead's self is reflexive. Dimensions of the self include:

(1) The ability to respond to one's self as others respond to it; (2) The ability to respond to one's self as the collectivity, the generalized other, responds to it; (3) The ability to take part in one's own conversation with others; and (4) The ability to be aware of what one is saying and to use that awareness to determine what one is going to do next" (Ritzer, 1983:305).

Mead also followed James' terminology with respect to the structure of the self. The "I" is the immediate response of the actor to the "me" as well as to the organized attitudes of the community as they appear in the individual's experience. In contrast, the "me" is self-aware. It represents the internalized attitudes of others, and as such, also the forces of conformity and social control (Ritzer, 1983:305).

#### Contemporary Symbolic Interactionist Theories

In the sociological approach to the self-concept (or the self-as-object), two different emphases are apparent. The view put forth by Kuhn and Rosenberg, for example, is structural and biographical, focusing on the self-concept as a "stable set of meanings attached to an object" (Stryker, 1981:11). The interactionist view as advanced by Blumer and

Goffman, focuses on the self's situatedness, the shifting process of self-presentation in social interaction (Rosenberg, 1981).

Blumer devoted little attention to the self. However, as Ritzer (1983) indicates, he extended Mead and Cooley's theories of the self by emphasizing the actor's choice. According to Blumer, the self means a person can be "an object of his (sic) own action... he acts toward himself and guides himself in his actions toward others on the basis of the kind of object he is to himself" (Blumer as cited in Ritzer, 1983:310).

In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Erving Goffman (1959) used drama as a metaphor for analyzing self and social life. Goffman's conception of the self focuses on the tension between its spontaneous and socially constrained aspects. Despite this tension, the actor is expected to present a stable self image which is accomplished through interaction, that is, the presentation of self before various social audiences.

Like other interactionists Goffman viewed the self as a social product rather than as a possession of the individual. In contrast, during a successful performance, however, the self appears to be an actor's possession.

During an unsuccessful performance the self as it is presented becomes problematic. Should the self as it is presented be unconvincing, various strategies and tactics are developed by the social actor in order to manage the audience's impression.

In addition to impression management, Goffman developed the concepts of front and back stage. Front stage is that part of a performance that serves to define the situation for those who are observing the actor's performance. Back stage the actor's social self can be prepared or repaired, and various social roles are relaxed or dropped entirely.

As a representative of the structural/biographical view, Morris Rosenberg attempts to understand how patterned features of society operate to shape various aspects of the self-concept. Although not an interactionist per se, Rosenberg has been influenced by the work of Mead and Cooley and his thoughts are, according to Ritzer, "compatible with and constitute an extension of" the symbolic interactionist orientation to the self.

According to Rosenberg, the self-concept is formed by social factors, achieving shape and form in a given culture, social structure and institutional milieu. The self-concept

is acted upon and acts upon society; hence it is a social product and social force (Rosenberg, 1981).

Rosenberg differentiates among the context, structure, and dimensions of the self-concept. The content of the self-concept includes social identities and dispositions, while the structure constitutes the relationships among them. Dimensions of the self-concept include attitudes and feelings about one's self which could vary in intensity, salience, consistency, stability, clarity, etc. (Ritzer, 1983).

Rosenberg distinguishes among what he terms the extant self, or our picture of what we are like; the desired self, a picture of what we would like to be like; and the presenting self, the way we present ourselves in a given situation (Ritzer, 1983). He also discusses motives. The two primary motives are self-esteem or "the wish to think well of one's self," and self-consistency or the "wish to protect the self-concept against change or to maintain one's self-picture" (Rosenberg, 1979:53).

In "The Real Self: From Institution to Impulse," Ralph Turner (1976) emphasizes the individual's perception of self as continuous or "really me" rather than as a situationally based appearance or performance. Turner assumes that each

person develops a vague idea of whether his or her feelings and actions are indicative of the real self. While there may be no objective self, there could be a subjectively true self.

Another way in which the self-as-object or self-conception has been conceptualized sociologically is in terms of identity. The emergence and various uses of this concept are considered next.

### Identity

The concept of the self is a precursor to the term identity. The concept of identity has been adopted by sociologists working in the traditions of symbolic interaction and others theoretically lodged in the social constructionist perspective, structural functionalism, and critical theory.

The term identity originates with Erik Erikson. Erikson distinguished between personal identity and ego-identity. Personal identity is a non-technical term which refers to the "normal way we are seen and interpreted by others," while ego-identity meant



the awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods and that these methods are effective in safeguarding the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others (Erikson, 1946/1959:23).

Weigert, Tietge and Tietge (1986), trace the diffusion of Erikson's concept of ego-identity to Nelson Foote (1951). In an article which appeared in the American Sociological Review, Foote interpreted human motivation as a consequence of identification with a group. This identification was conceptualized as

the appropriation of and commitment to a particular identity or series of identities. As a process it proceeds by naming: its products are ever-evolving self-conception ... (ratified) by others" (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986:9).

A major impetus for making identity a central concern of symbolic interaction is Strauss' (1959) publication of Mirrors and Masks. It is in Strauss' book that identity becomes a sociological term. Weigert, Tietge and Tietge write:

Strauss's incipient theory sees identity constituted by self-appraisals by self and others; by placements and evaluations of individuals; by names bestowed on persons; and by changes experienced and imposed over the course of a lifetime" (1986:11).

Other influential work on identity that appeared during this time includes Helen Merrill Lynd's On Shame (1958) and The Search for Identity (1961).

During the 1960s, a series of publications by symbolic interactionists utilized the concept of identity. In "Appearance and the Self" (1962), Gregory P. Stone articulated a concise definition of identity. Identity is a meaning that the self acquires when "situated--that is, cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his participation or membership in social relations" (1962: 93). Further, identity changes continuously since it is associated with social relationships. Stone's empirical contribution is grounded in his analysis of identity and appearance.

The relationship between appearance and identity is also the foundation of Goffman's work on Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity (1963). In Stigma, Goffman distinguished between three kinds of identity: social, personal and ego. Social identity is based on appearance, which enables observers to anticipate a person's category and attributes, while personal identity has a unique quality to it which is the result of a combination of bodily markers and biographical detail. Ego, or felt identity, refers to "the subjective sense of his (sic) own

situation," the sense of existential continuity which results from social experience (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986:15).

In 1966, Identities and Interactions was published by McCall and Simmons. These interactionists emphasized role identity: "the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position" (McCall and Simmons, 1966: 67). Other substantive studies of identity published in the 1960s included critiques of mass society and its impact on identity or the meaning of individuals' lives (Stein, et al., 1960): Klapp's Collective Search for Identity (1969) on youth and the loss of community and Lofland's (1969) Deviance and Identity to name but a few.

Functionalist theories of identity were also being developed during this time. For example, Parsons used the concept of identity in his analysis of society and religion and his theory of social action (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986). In The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Robert Bellah (1968) analyzed identity as a necessary and universal function of religion (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986).

Among the social constructionists, Peter Berger 's Invitation to Sociology (1963) introduced the relationship of biography and identity, and in 1964 Luckmann and Berger addressed the issue of personal identity construction and maintenance in relationship to social processes and the historical context of a "socially and psychologically mobile society in which identity becomes a problem for people on the move" (1964:16). In The Social Construction of Reality (1966), Berger and Luckmann conceive identity as a social meaning constructed like other meanings, but with the "uniquely existential dimension of being anchored in an individual's body" (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986:17). According to Berger and Luckmann:

There is a particularly human dialectic involved in the construction of identity--namely the dialectic of the individual's body and the social meanings existing outside that body. Historically available types of identity are purely social realities; indeed, they are nothing but social. Actual personal identity, on the other hand, is a social reality vivified in individual experience and anchored in individual bodies. There is a dual dialectic generating the complete reality of human identity: the total social reality of identity types dialectically related to unique personal identity; and, personal identity dialectically related to the irreducibly physical reality of the body (1966:50-51).

During the 1970s and 1980s the concept of identity has been utilized in micro/interactional studies as well as at the macro/institutional level of analysis. Among the more structurally-oriented interactionists are the work of Morris

Rosenberg and Peter Burke. For example, Rosenberg (1981) states that the major elements of social identity includes statuses, membership groups, and other categories to which members of society belong. Social statuses include gender, age, family status, occupation, and class. Membership groups include culture groups (such as racial/ethnic groups), interest groups (unions or other associations), and common belief systems (Catholic, Protestant, Democrat, Republican). Social labels are also elements of identity (alcoholic, criminal). Social types such as "the intellectual" are also elements of identity according to Rosenberg. Finally, personal identity rests on single case classifications such as name. These elements all shape the self-concept. In contrast, Weigert, Tietge and Tietge (1986) note that Burke conceives of identity as the subjective component of a role.

Among these structurally-oriented interactionists, interrelated multiple role identities constitute the self. As the example from Rosenberg suggests, the central empirical questions for these identity theorists involve issues of hierarchies of multiple identities, their relative salience within the hierarchies, the differential commitment of individuals to the variously ranked identities, and their relationship to situational behavior and social structure (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986).

Another way of structurally conceptualizing identity has been through the analysis of various institutional identities (occupational identity, family identity, political identity, etc.). Institutional identities link individual to social structures. At the macro/systemic level, critical theorist Jurgen Habermas views identity as evolving from its primitive, mythic and kinship foundations to contemporary rational-communicative forms. Synthesizing perspectives from sociology, developmental psychology and psychoanalysis, Habermas produces a normative argument for a sense of identity based on communicative competence, rationality and tolerance (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986). Lasch (1978) also linked psychoanalytic and historical work in order to understand contemporary society and the narcissistic self.

As Weigert, Tietge and Tietge observe, "Widespread acceptance of the concept of identity does not imply agreement on or even a clear understanding of its various meanings" (1986: 29). Further, according to Rosenberg and Turner (1981) and Weigert, Tietge and Tietge (1986), the concept of identity lacks adequate theoretical development. Weigert, Tietge and Tietge comment that there is a continual conceptual ambiguity in the use of self and identity in some analyses and no clear theoretical distinction between the

two. Lines of convergence, however, have been forged. Specifically, work published in the 1970s and 1980s has produced a set of dialectical relationships "tensely coexisting within the conceptualization of identity" (1986: 29). These dialectical relationships include the following: stability versus change; subjective, objective, and intersubjective; individual, group and sociocultural; cognitive, affective and behavioral; conscious and unconscious; continuous development and transformation versus discontinuous rupture and crisis; and situationally emergent or contextually determined (Weigert, Tietge and Tietge, 1986).

In this study I apply and empirically build on the concepts of self and identity using home and homecoming as the context for exploration. Received theories of self and identity are noted and incorporated into the text when appropriate or relevant to the emerging substantive theory.

## Chapter 4

### DEFINITIONS OF HOME

One of the objectives of this study was to render the concept of home problematic. That is, rather than accept the definitions of home described in etymological dictionaries (c.f. The New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, 1901) or discussed by Schutz (1945/1964), I gathered data on the meaning(s) of home as these meanings were constructed by people in the context of their daily lives and related to their personal biographies. In this chapter I present findings which focus on the home of origin and the various ways informants identified with it. Variations in definitions of home are also introduced and alternate constructions are analyzed particularly in terms of the relationship between home, time, and identity.

#### Home and Identity of Place

As a place, home refers to a specific location whether it is a house or apartment, neighborhood or community, state, region, or country. Place can also serve as a way to identify oneself. When traveling in another country, for example, people will identify themselves by their country of origin (as Americans, Russians, or South Africans, etc.). Strong regional identities are still common and people will



refer to themselves as Southern or New Englanders. One's home state also serves as a source for self-characterization. In the United States, for example, people hold popular images of what Texans or Californians are like. Still others find a locus for their identity in their city (New Yorkers, Parisians) or home town.

Identity of place was evident in the interviews that I conducted and people formed attachments to their homes of origin. One variation on the relationship between the concrete properties of one's home of origin and identity of place was found in terms of its natural features and physical geography. That is, informants identified with land formations, altitude, climate, and even the way a certain place smells. For example one informant remarked:

Certain things (are) really Arkansas. Smells different from any place I've ever been. Not that it smells bad. There is some kind of a mildewy or fungus smell, especially in hot weather. You know how odors really trigger things? I get off the plane [inhales], and its "Oh, hello" [said with recognition].

Although identifying with a particular geographic location was very common, continuity of identity of place could be problematic as a consequence of having left home. The informants had established residences in different locations and some had lived there for lengthy periods of

time. For example one informant pondered how to identify herself since she had not resided in her home state for ten years. She said:

My roots are in Texas, because I was raised in Texas. I don't know whether I would strictly call myself a Texan now because I have lived out here for so long. So I'm kind of on the line, not really knowing where I am. Am I a Texan or am I a Californian?

In addition to the uncertainty some informants described in ascertaining their identity of place as a consequence of changes in residence over time, other informants' identifications with and attachments to their home of origin were uneven. For example one informant's family home held special meaning, although her home town and state did not. She explained the source of her attachment to her family home partly arose as a consequence of the generational continuity it symbolized. That is, she grew up in the same house her mother had lived in since her mother was five years old. Her ambivalence about the house and the site is evident in the following quote:

The house means more to me than other things. I like the house, it's just that it's in Missouri! [laughs] I can't imagine [pauses], every now and then I think, "Maybe I could go back there and live one day?" But I don't see that happening, 'cause it's not a place a really want to live. And the memories, well, you can't go back to like it was. And so I don't want to go back, there is nothing there but the house. (her emphasis)

## Generational Continuity

Generational continuity was an aspect of another informant's identity of place as well. In referring to home place, most of the Americans that I interviewed took for granted that I was making a reference to the place where they were raised. However, a Swiss woman's identity of place extended to her commune of origin. Although the family commune was located in a completely different part of the country from where she was born and raised, and having never lived there, she indicated that she still identified with it. She explained:

It's interesting that I identify with that village. I've been there on vacation because there is still a little bit of family there, far out cousins of my father. And I do, I do much more identify with that canton than with any other except Berne where I'm from. And I don't speak the language, and I have no (immediate family) or friends there, but it's a part of what I am. And I think the closest (reason) I can come up with (for feeling this way) would be to identify with a piece of earth where the family came from. So it's a strong identification with family too I guess.

In addition to biographical, family, and generational continuities, identity and identification with a home place can also be associated with one's ancestral homeland. Although analyzed in detail in the context of the homecoming in the next chapter, an example of this case can be found in Maya Angelou's autobiography of the years she spent living

in Ghana in All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986). Angelou lived in Ghana during the early 1960's, a time when Prime Minister Kwame Nkruma extended an invitation to African Americans to return "home." Of this historic event, Angelou writes:

And now, less than one hundred years after slavery was abolished, some descendants of those early slaves taken from Africa, returned, weighted with a heavy hope, to a continent which they could not remember, to a home which held shamefully little memory of them (1986:20).

#### Home and Community Identity

In a study of the extent to which Americans identify with various forms of settlement (i.e., city person, country person, etc.) Hummon observes that one's residence "often serves as a significant locus of self and a sign of biographical, social, and temporal identities" (1986:3). He defines community identity as "an interpretation of self that uses community--specifically, a form of settlement--as a locus of attachment or an image for self-characterization" (1986:4). Hummon found that most people do form community identities. In particular, long-term residents of various communities strongly identified with their location since their sense of self was "biographically embedded" in that place.

Community, however, can be interpreted to mean more than a form of settlement. The term can also refer to a group of people living in a particular place that are linked by other characteristics or interests. These might include race/ethnicity, religious belief, or social class. Several of the people I interviewed still identified with their original experience of community despite the fact that they were no longer active members of these groups. For example, one informant explained:

I was raised a Black college girl. It [the college] was across the street from where I lived. My whole, everything, from as early as I can remember, had to do with that university and going to school. ...I didn't turn out that way, but that's my background. We were Black college-circuit folk (her emphasis).

As this quote illustrates, aspects of this woman's community identity were biographical and temporally lodged in the past; however, other aspects of her membership in the African American community were continuous. For example, when I asked her to describe the things about home that were still meaningful, she responded that she enjoyed listening to the old people tell stories. Through the stories they told she learned about their life and times including what it was like to grow up in the south during segregation. She went on to say:

I think about the people, not the place so much. There are a bunch of old people that I think about. I liked to listen to them talk. Sit and listen to them talk about growing up in the 1920's and 1930's. When I was little they were very important to me. And some are still there and some are gone. And that always makes it hard to go home because I used to look forward to seeing them.

### Home as a Way of Life

Closely related to the concept of community was the association of home with a certain way of life, consistent with Schutz (1945/1964). These ways of life were evident in stories the informants told about social occasions they attended during their homecomings as well as through their descriptions of private family scenes and conversations. In the following story, elements of class, gender, and regional character are also present in this informant's description of a luncheon held for her by a friend of her mother's. In attendance were her mother, her hostess, and three women the informant's age (early thirties). Two of these younger invited guests were single. The informant began by comparing the conversations they had with those she remembered having at the private women's college she attended ten years ago. She went on to explain:

[Everyone] was concerned because Suzie wasn't dating anybody and they needed to find her a man. And Martie [the other single guest] needed to find a man. And they were concerned about this and [the hostess] was concerned about it, and my mother was concerned about it. And thank god no one was asking me about it! And they were all excited because they [the young women] were volunteers at the art center and there was going to be a show. Like Junior Leaguers, except they were my age. And I didn't know any of this stuff happened anymore. It was like listening to a parody of Southern womanhood.

As this quotation also suggests, the informant no longer identified with this way of life although she had once been a part of the social world she describes.

Another informant, the daughter of an actively alcoholic father, described a "Sunday dinner" with her family upon her recent homecoming. For her, the quality of their interaction at dinnertime was symbolic of her homelife, past to present, and how little family conditions had changed since she was growing up. When I asked her what their conversations were like, she responded:

What conversations? We never did really talk much around meals. It was much easier to have the TV on, to have some kind of noise or something to occupy your attention than it was to try to relate to each other. They eat in silence. My father may not be there at the table half the time. When he is there, present in one sense, he may not be present in another and not eating much and picking at his food. And so it's just as well that you consider he's not really there. He doesn't relate to my brother and his family, he doesn't relate to my mother, he may say two words to me or he may not. So that was kind of "the meal."

Although both illustrations reveal the informants' alienation from the substantive features of their homelife, social and private, these quotations also expose continuities in the nature of their homelife over time.

### Problematic Definitions of Home

Despite postwar trends of increased geographic mobility, many Americans still hold a nostalgic, ideal-typical image of home and homelife. That is, one's home is presumed to be a single family dwelling located in a community where one was raised from childhood through adolescence. For many of the informants I interviewed, however, their definitions and experience of home contradicted these traditional images and associations. Various conditions which contributed to problematic definitions of home are considered next.

#### Geographic Mobility

For individuals whose early lives were characterized by a high degree of geographic mobility, home was associated with stability against a backdrop of frequent changes in residence. The key elements which gave the concept of home meaning were consistency, or a marked or regular place to return to, and duration or continuance in time. For



example, when I asked one informant, a woman with a residential history of moving every two-to-three years during her childhood and adolescence, if she had a "home town," she responded first by naming her current adult residence and then by naming her parents' family home. She explained:

Berkeley is the only place I have lived for more than four years because of my military background. I don't really have a home town in another sense. I hate to give an indirect answer to the question but I do consider [Berkeley] to be my home town and Hot Springs, Arkansas has been the consistent place all my life even though I don't really considered it my home town because I never really lived there. But Hot Springs has been the place I've always gone that's always been there.

Although this informant did not have a home in the traditional sense of the term, she identified her current residence (based on the dimension of duration) with home and she presented her parent's home as an alternate (based on the dimension of consistency).

Geographic mobility, however, was not the only troublesome feature of identifying with a home place. Rather, duration itself could also be problematic. Recall for example, the informant cited above whose identification as a Texan or Californian lacked certainty and clarity as a consequence of having lived away from her home state for a number of years. Neither informant was confident about

where to call home or how to characterize it because their assumption of continuity in place and time was at odds with their experience.

#### Changes in Home Place

Another condition which contributed to a problematic definitions were changes in the home place that occurred primarily after having left it. For example, one informant explained that due to work considerations, his father sold the large two story wooden house where he was raised and moved into a small apartment above his place of business. Although the informant could still identify Sedalia, Missouri as his home town, he no longer felt he had a family home since he did not associate it with the apartment where his father still lived.

While changes in small towns and rural areas do occur-- due to subdividing farm land and selling it for housing lots; as a consequence of strip mining; or natural disasters such as floods, tornados, or forest fires--no one I interviewed had lost their homes in this manner. In fact most informants discovered very few or observed only minor changes in their home towns or what they represented in terms of a way of life. Indeed, one woman I interviewed characterized her home town as "frozen in time." She

believed the community's unchanging nature and tempo of life was one of its endearing qualities. Another woman described the entire rural region of her home state as existing in a state of "suspended animation."

Physical changes in European cities (as a consequence of having been bombed during World War II) or in American cities involved in urban "renewal" and neighborhood gentrification, could also present some problems in identifying with one's home city. The consequences of these changes and others are discussed in the sections which follow and in Chapter 7.

#### Alternate Definitions of Home

When defining home became complicated or problematic, one solution the individuals I interviewed developed was to construct alternate ways to identify or define home. Some of definitions went beyond traditional images and associations of home with one's place and family of origin, while for others it was merely a matter of which aspect of the definition to emphasize. For example, one informant identified her "home" as the place where her family currently lived, wherever that may be. For the informant quoted above, the solution was a bit more complex: on the

one hand she designated her home as her current adult residence, while on the other, her parent's family home became her entire family's home base.

Three informants indicated they had multiple homes. One, a Swedish citizen in her 70's, considered Stockholm, the city where she was born and raised to be her "first home." Her "second home" was America. She had lived in America for over forty years, resided in three different regions of the country, married and raised three children in the U.S. The second informant also indicated she had two homes: one in Switzerland, her native country, and another in America where she had lived for several years on two separate occasions. As this informant went on to explain, however, having two homes could also be troublesome. That is, she experienced a lack of continuity between the two locations, particularly in terms of relationships and bridging the Other's understanding of her identity and way of life in the other "home." As she put it:

There is virtually nobody who knows me here in my Swiss life, and there is virtually nobody in Switzerland who knows me in my American life. So that's one of the things that I have found problematic. I can tell people in going home to Switzerland how it is here, but if they haven't lived here, or if it's only superficial travel, they don't know what it means to be here, to go to school here, to have friends here. So the whole fullness of life I cannot convey.

Developing multiple conceptions of home was not an exclusive practice of the Europeans I interviewed. The third informant, an American whose parents divorced when she was two years old, differentiated between the home where she had been raised by her mother and grandmother, and the home where she spent her summers living with her father and their large extended family. Also implicit in two of the examples cited above is but another way of designating home, that is, one based on stages in the lifecycle. One can distinguish between one's childhood home and one's adult home(s).

Throughout this discussion, time is also a salient dimension. Conceptions of home may be lodged in the past or exhibit continuity from past to present. Author and poet May Sarton has written extensively about the process of creating a home. In Plant Dreaming Deep (1968), she develops an autobiographical narrative of her first house in Nelson, New Hampshire, a place she acquired at forty-six years of age. In the following quotation she describes how she "lived her way into the house" and the symbolic meaning of objects from her former family home (such as the portrait of an ancestor). She writes:

I had lived my way into all this house is and holds for me years before I brought "the ancestor" home. As I stood on a stool and hammered in a hook strong enough to support the plain, heavy oak frame and the portrait itself, I knew I was performing a symbolic act, and this is the way it has been from the beginning. (1968:15)

In another passage she speaks of the ways in which past and present are integrated, again through objects from her home of origin and others she acquired as an adult:

I have brought all that I am and all that I came from here, and it is the marriage of all this with an old American house which gives the life here its quality for me. (1968:25)

Several informants were also in the process of creating homes of their own. By this I mean establishing a stable residence (which may or may not include the acquisition of property) and developing relationships with loved ones, friends, neighbors or other members of the community which are intended to be permanent. Creating a home, following Schutz (1945/1964), also involved building a way of life (and an identity) which orbited around this core location.

Once again, with respect to the temporal dimension, creating a home could also be something to strive for in the future if these conditions could not be met in the present.

For example, one informant described the home she hoped to be able to create someday in the following terms:

More and more I think of home as this mystical place. I envision this, this house of my own where people feel comfortable and loved. And it has very little to do with family. My vision of home is much more unorthodox I guess, (since) it has nothing to do with where one was raised, but as a warm place where people are welcomed and feel loved. Candles, baked bread and spaghetti, I don't know (pauses), you get my drift.

The future home this informant wished to create also conveyed a mood and feeling which included an atmosphere of comfort and feelings of warmth and love. As such, home itself was imagined in terms of approximating a romantic ideal, a vision which had nothing to do with one's place of origin or blood relatives.

#### Consequences of Problematic Definitions

In the study of community identity cited earlier in this chapter, Hummon (1986) found that although most people he interviewed identified with the type of community in which they currently resided, this was not always the case. That is, some people considered themselves to be a certain community type, yet for various reasons (work, school, marriage), they were living in another kind of residential

community. While some adapted to the new community type, others experienced conflict in their community identity.

According to Hummon:

This divided sense of belonging--of ties to two places--was most salient and problematic when an individual, having grown up in and formed attachments to one type of community, moved to a different type. ...Such persons can recount, with considerable emotion, their troubled, costly, and incomplete transition from (one community type to another). (1986:19 emphasis mine)

While a divided sense of belonging can arise as a consequence of moving from one type of residential community to another (for example, from the country to the city), conflict can also arise as a consequence of moving from one cultural context to another. Further, multiple migrations of this sort can also produce feelings of alienation, (i.e., of not belonging to either place). Nazario (1986) reports that this is the situation for many Puerto Ricans who have alternated living between Puerto Rico and New York City throughout their lives.

When I asked one informant to describe the consequences of her highly mobile way of life, she said it produced "a sense of being rootless, and that, I think, comes from moving every couple of years while I was growing up."



Geographic mobility also had consequences for her homelife. Specifically she said, "everything always had a sense of being temporary and likely to change at any minute." Furthermore, she believed her frequent moves had influenced her relationships with others. She reported she felt isolated from others, she did not experience a sense of continuity in relationships, and she did not expect friendships to last.

The same informant went on to describe strategies she developed to cope with frequent changes in residence during her childhood and adolescence. These included learning not to get attached to places and not to trust others or expect relationships to last. She also indicated that she withdrew and became "very religious" so that she had at least one "Friend" (God) who moved along with her. In addition, she rapidly learned how to fit in to the new place of residence. For example, she said, "Every time I would move, I would develop a new accent really quickly. I could drop them and gain them easily." Finally, she mentioned that she learned to like moving since as a youth she perceived each new move as a chance to start over again.

This informant whose father was a career Navy man, and another [a self-defined "Air Force Brat"], were able to

recite every place they had ever lived, in chronological order, since birth. Both also mentioned liking some places of residence more than others. Liking different places, however, is not the same as developing feelings of attachment or belonging that are synonymous with calling some place home. Implicit in the informants' statements [cited above], and evident in the emotional tone in which others I interviewed who described changes in their family home or home town were feelings of alienation, anger, and/or loss.

The informant whose father sold their family home and moved them in to a small apartment, for example, understood the practical and economic considerations which were at the base of his father's decision. At the same time, however, he also expressed mixed feelings of anger and loss since he had become attached to house he had lived in from the time he was eight years old through his junior year in high school and to all that it had come to represent to him. This informant, a man 57 years of age, could still remember how he "hated" the room he had in the apartment and the lack of privacy he felt there. In contrast, he "loved" his room in his family home because it was large and private, and because it had an adjoining second-story porch where he could sit and feel the cool evening breezes after a hot,

**humid** summer day. He concluded his story by stating that **when** his father sold the family home, he felt "homeless."

In contrast, the informant who had spent her youth **periodically** moving with her parents from one Navy town to **another** felt like an outsider despite the efforts she made **to** fit in. Also present in her uncertainty about where to **call** home and her account of the consequences of this mobile **way** of life was an awareness that this pattern of living **departed** from more traditional images of what constituted **home** and homelife. This awareness is consistent with the **work** of Cooper (1974). In her theoretical essay, "The House **as** Symbol of the Self," she explains most Americans do not **consider** rented apartments, mobile homes, houseboats, or **other** nonconventional dwellings to be "real" homes, and **further** they consider their inhabitants to be as unstable or **unconventional** as the structures they inhabit.

### Summary

In this chapter I have elaborated and extended the work of Schutz (1945/1964) and Hummon (1986). With respect to the dimension of location, I presented data which described the ways in which identifying with a home place went beyond the boundaries of one's home of origin, one's own biography

**and** lifetime. That is, the individuals I interviewed also **identified** with places where members of previous generations **and** distant ancestors lived. Further, the alternate ways in **which** informants defined, created, or envisioned home(s) **past**, present, and future also point to importance of time **in** understanding definitions of home and the relationship **between** home and identity.

I also found a relationship between identity and **community**--broadly defined. That is, these original **communities**, cultural contexts, and ways of life they **represent** could also be a source of identity and provide **continuity** from past or present, or they may signal changes.

Another finding discussed in this chapter was the ways **in** which identifying with home place could be problematic. **Problematic** identifications could arise as a consequence of **leaving** the family home and establishing a residence **elsewhere**. Identifying and defining home could also become **problematic** for those individuals whose way of life or **living** arrangements departed from the norm. Among this **group** were those individuals with histories of geographic **mobility** and other who experienced changes at home.

Geographic mobility and changes in home place could **also** produce feelings of anger and loss. Informants also **reported** feeling alienated, rootless, and homeless as a **consequence** of these conditions. These individuals could **not** share in a traditional experience of "home" and all it **symbolizes**, or those meanings and the feelings of belonging **they** also convey were disrupted or lost.

In the chapters on various facets the homecoming that **follow** I will draw on the dimensions and properties of home **I** have described here. These include aspects of location, **sociation** (from intimate family relationships and **interaction** to members of the community), ways of living (public and private, cultural and structural contexts), and **emotion** (particularly feelings of belonging). In the **process**, I will emphasize the relationship between home, **time** and identity.

Chapter 5  
CONDITIONS FOR COMING AND GOING HOME

This chapter begins with an overview of the typical conditions under which people initially leave home. Next, a variety of homecoming occasions are described. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Schutz' (1964) and Jones' (1984) analyses of homecoming and homecomer, and an explanation of analytic distinctions made in this study between actual and symbolic homecomings.

Leaving Home

While leaving home is not the primary focus of this study, it is a part of the homecomer's biographical and historical context. Furthermore, the conditions under which the homecomer initially departs from home may influence subsequent returns. This chapter begins with a brief description of the general conditions under which people initially leave home.

People leave home under a variety of different conditions and for a variety of reasons. Leaving home may occur gradually or all at once. Going to college and returning periodically for holiday visits and summer

**v**acations may be considered a gradual way of leaving home. **o**n the other hand, a family conflict may result in a sudden **o**r abrupt departure. Leaving home may also be voluntary or **i**nvoluntary as, for example, when a person is drafted. **F**urther, people may leave home under positive or negative **c**ircumstances, for acceptable or unacceptable reasons to **s**elf or significant others.

Specific reasons for leaving home may conceal deeper **o**nes. A person may accept a job in another community (an **a**ceptable reason to leave) in order to explore other ways **o**f living or adopt identities that would be difficult for **m**embers of the home group to accept. These examples also **i**mply that what constitutes a recognizable departure is **s**ubject to different interpretations by different parties. **C**hildren who leave for school or the military may think of **t**hemselves as gone for good, while parents may view the **s**ituation as temporary, and vice versa.

Leaving home can also evoke a variety of emotions. **U**pon a child's departure for college, parents and children **m**ay feel excited, proud, and relieved. All involved may **a**lso feel sad about the departure and the way relationships **w**ill change. One woman I interviewed, now in her early **f**orties, recalled the moment she left for college this way:

I got on the train and I can remember being so excited and saying to myself, "This is it! I'm gone!" I remember sitting on the train, and my mother was in tears, and I'm like "bye!" (laughs) I'll never forget that because it was such a contrast. . .

The examples provided above are all family centered and age related. In actuality, leaving home, like coming home, occurs throughout the life cycle, as for example, when a member of the family becomes chronically ill or elderly, persons leave their homes to become caregivers, while others may leave to enter caretaking institutions. Political conditions sometimes necessitate leaving one's home, as when people must flee their native country or face death. Other conditions, such as earthquakes or tornados, may result in entire communities being forced to leave their homes. Still others link environmental with political and economic conditions. These include the farm crisis, droughts and famines. Policy changes in the public and private sector may also result in individuals and families losing their homes and becoming homeless.

### Homecoming Occasions

People return home for a variety of reasons. Schutz (1964) identified the veteran returning from military



service, the traveler, and the emigrant returning to his or her native land. Those studying return migration (Brown, Schwarzweller and Mangalam, 1963; Campbell and Johnson, 1976; Schwarzweller, 1981; Stack, 1986; Walker, 1978; White, 1983; and Williams and Sofranko, 1979) have found that people return home because of close family ties, strong regional or community identifications, environmental push and pull factors, and fluctuations in labor market conditions. Other reasons for return migration to one's country or community of origin are political or religious ideology, cultural conflict, social unrest and social problems including racial prejudice (Toren, 1974 and Davison, 1968).

Still other reasons for returning to one's community or family of origin may be desperation, a perception that no other options are available. This category might include the experience of those recently paroled or deinstitutionalized. Adult children may return to their home of origin to serve as caregivers for aging or ailing parents, or they may be in transition (after a divorce, for example) and return until other living arrangements have been found. Other temporary visits can be made in response to crises of other kinds such as an accident or sudden death.

Although the reasons for returning to one's home of origin have not been exhausted here, those described above do point to the wide variation that is possible. Analysis of interview data obtained from informants yielded the following categories.

#### Annual Visits

The majority of informants discussed multiple reasons for returning to their home of origin. For some it was a matter of making an annual visit at a convenient time. Although annual visits would imply a desire to maintain or renew relationships with family members in person, for several informants annual visits were obligatory visits. For example, here is how one informant responded:

Family ties (pause), responsibility (pause), guilt at being far away. (pause) Feeling an obligation to go back once a year and make a connection above and beyond a telephone call.

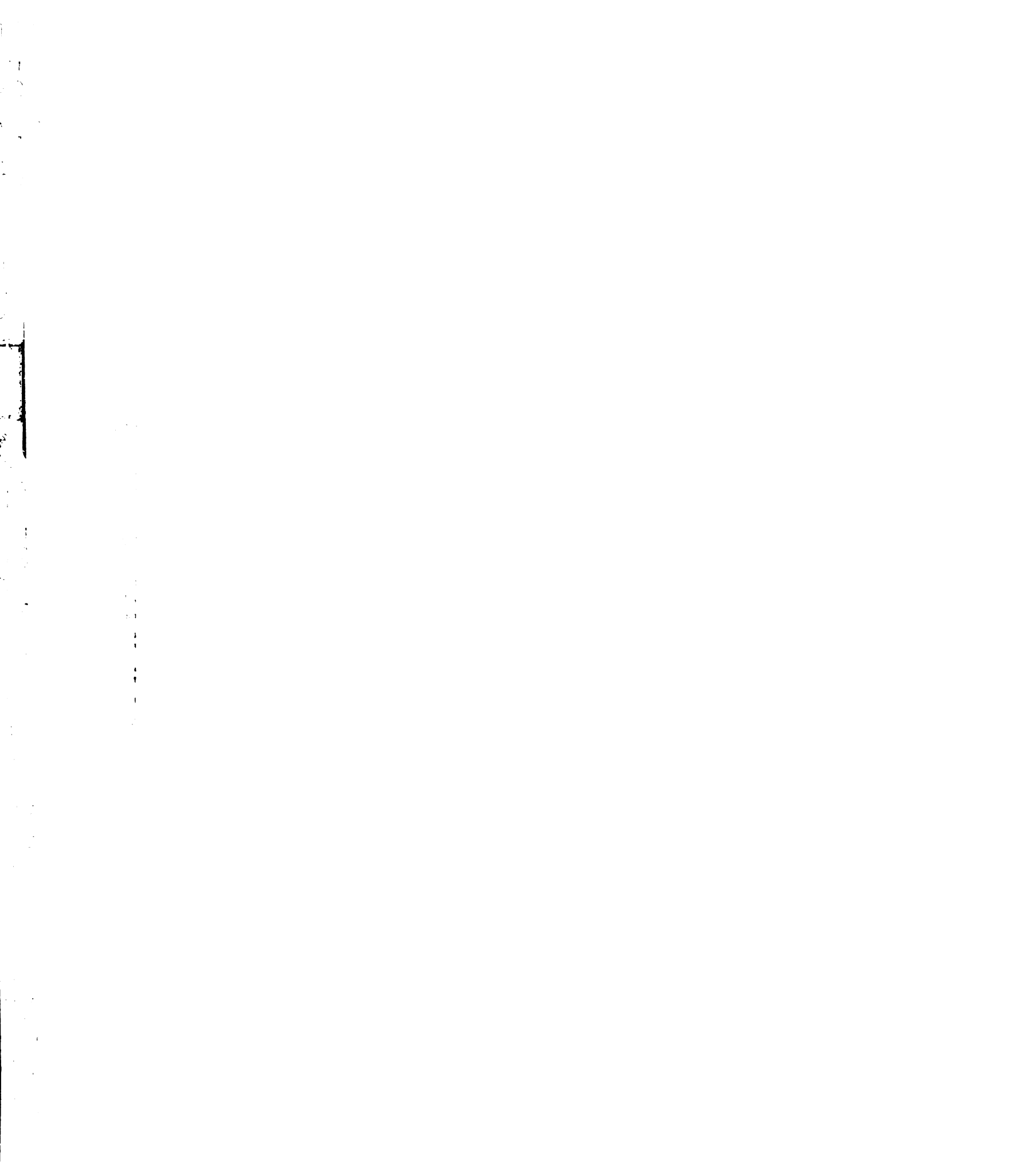
During annual visits several informants mentioned that they also took advantage of the opportunity they had when they were at home to visit with old friends or former classmates who had remained in the area.

### Special Occasions

Other reasons for returning to one's home of origin on a temporary basis may be to attend special events organized by the family, by school alumni, or by the community (Hall, 1982).

Family gatherings might include weddings, anniversaries, baptisms, bar and bat mitzvah. Cultural, religious, or national holidays also provide occasions for returning briefly to one's home of origin. Typical holiday occasions for family gatherings include Thanksgiving, Passover, and Christmas. These types of gatherings may be formal or informal affairs, loosely structured, or highly ritualized events.

Two informants returned home to attend high school reunions. Being able to visit with his brother and sister-in-law in his home community served as an extra incentive for one informant to attend his 50th year class reunion. Initially he said, "the visit with family was absolutely secondary," then he reconsidered. "I don't know, I'm thinking now, if I had no relatives would I have gone to the reunion? Maybe not." His sister-in-law, sensing his reluctance to attend, coaxed him to go despite his



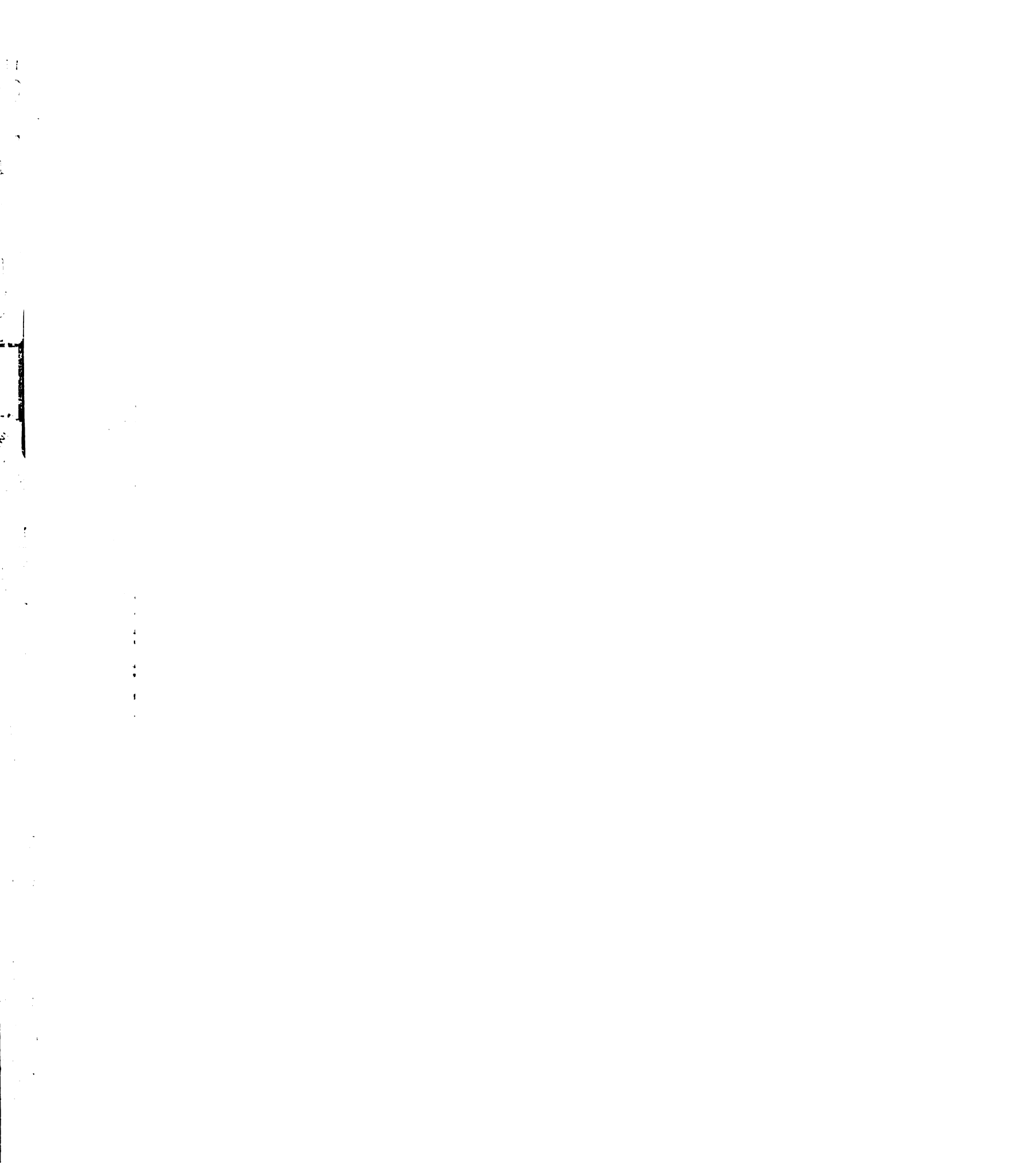
misgivings: "So I said, 'what the hell, I'll go!'" If the reunion was "boring" or a "disaster" he could always rationalize the experience this way:

I'll see my brother and sister-in-law, my brother is not well. I mean there was some positive consequences... And seeing my brother, I love him, he's a great guy, and he's been ill, and you know, he's 75 already, and uh, I ought to go see him anyway.

Temporary visits tend to be serial. That is, there is a first time, the last time, the most memorable time and so forth. Further, the consequences of previous visits to one's home of origin frequently become conditions or considerations for the next. For example, my analysis revealed that people returned home despite disappointing or unpleasant experiences on previous visits. To illustrate, one informant spoke about the way her return to Sweden to visit her family after four years:

Each time I go home I'm a little disappointed about my trip. So I was sort of thinking, "well, this will be my last trip." But then I go again, thinking what I missed last time, I might catch up with this time, you know?

When anger or relief accompanied an unhappy departure from home, over time these feelings may subside enough to



prompt a visit. The person would look forward to seeing their family again and then regret their decision as soon as they arrived. One informant put it this way:

Usually it's fun for a while (pauses), for maybe an hour (laughs). And then people start fighting and my Dad will start drinking, and it breaks down really fast.

These and other emotional aspects of the homecoming are the focus of Chapter 7.

#### Having an Agenda

Other reasons for returning to one's home of origin were to disclose important information about oneself, for example, to make a personal announcement of an engagement, pregnancy or other causes for celebration.

Other information the departed member may want to personally disclose may be difficult for the home group to understand. For example, one may return to disclose that one has a terminal illness such as cancer or AIDS.

One informant explained that her recent visit was the first since she came out to her parents as a lesbian a few

months before. She believed the visit would be a difficult one since the experience of coming out had not been very pleasant and because her parents kept telling her, "We'll discuss this when you are home."

Other topics informants wanted to discuss focused on family history or to learn more about oneself. These themes are developed in Chapter 8.

#### Homecoming: Duration or Transformation?

In the essay "The Homecomer," Schutz illustrated his analysis through examining the case example of the young man, an ex-soldier, returning to his homeland, home town, family and sweetheart after having been away at war. To Schutz, homecomings were permanent and homecomers came back for good. Jones (1984) also focused on the dimension of duration. She noted that permanent and temporary homecomings were not entirely separate categories. In her case study of return migration to Barbados, she developed a typology of three different kinds of homecomers: The vacationing homecomer returns to visit periodically, but has no intention of returning on a permanent basis. The potential homecomer, in contrast, may intend to return for good, but is waiting for comparable employment, educational



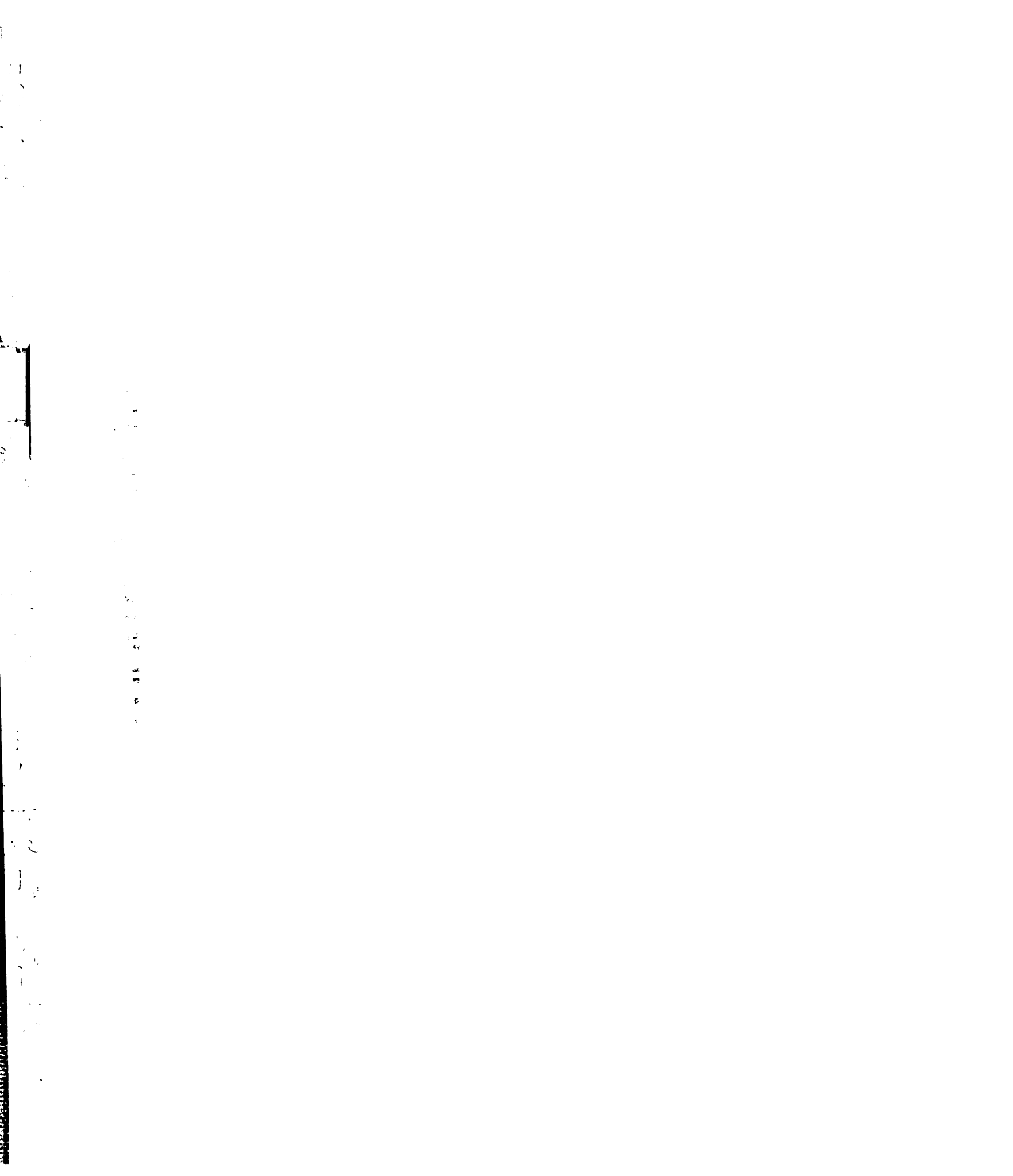
opportunities, friendship networks and the like. The potential homecomer returns periodically to assess the feasibility of a permanent return. The provisional homecomer is similar to the potential homecomer in intent and contact with the home group. However, the provisional homecomer actually returns on a trial basis for a period longer than a vacation. Jones focused her analysis on this third type and divided the provisional homecoming process into three stages.

The first is the preparatory stage when the homecomer readies himself or herself for departure. The second stage involves imagining what home will be like. These images may be idealized versions which may be extended through the initial period after arrival home. Upon arrival (the third stage), the provisional homecomer, like Schutz' returning veteran, is "confronted with the reality of absence." This includes the recognition of the acculturation which occurred while residing in another place, as well as other differences in self and others. It becomes clear, following Schutz, that the home one left is not the home to which one returns. At the same time, home is familiar and mundane, and one also experiences the sensation of having never left. In Jones's work, the provisional homecomer returns as a visitor, a stranger and a homecomer simultaneously.

Provisional homecomers enter an "indefinite stage of belonging" which may or may not culminate in coming home for good (1984:244).

To Schutz, the "success" of the homecoming depended on whether disrupted social relationships could be transformed into current ones. This assumption is also implicit in Jone's work when the provisional homecomer confronts the reality of absence--can relationships be resumed given changes in self and others? Neither Schutz nor Jones acknowledge that a homecoming need not be permanent in order for the homecomer to recognize the "reality of absence." Recognizing changes in self and others of the home group may occur before one returns to one's home of origin. Further, homecomings need not be permanent to confront the reality of absence; many visitors do so as well. Whether changes in self and others are recognized prior to departure or how long it takes for them to be recognized upon return are empirical questions upon which I elaborate elsewhere.

In both Schutz' and Jones' work the transformational potential of the homecoming rests on two related assumptions. The first concerns the dimension of duration. Permanent or provisional homecomers are confronted with transformative tasks while presumably those who return for



temporary visits are not. For example, in his essay Schutz defined the homecomer as one who "comes back for good to his home--not as one returning for a temporary stay, such as the soldier on a thirty-day leave or the college boy spending the Christmas vacation with his family" (1964:107).

The second assumption is that the only way in which relationships may be transformed are from interrupted to continuous ones in order for the homecoming to be successful. These assumptions limit the ways in which relationships can be transformed and the criteria for what constitutes a successful homecoming. Both Schutz' and Jones' definitions make permanence of duration (or intent) primary, while the transformational potential becomes a consequence (i.e., a successful or unsuccessful outcome) of the homecoming itself.

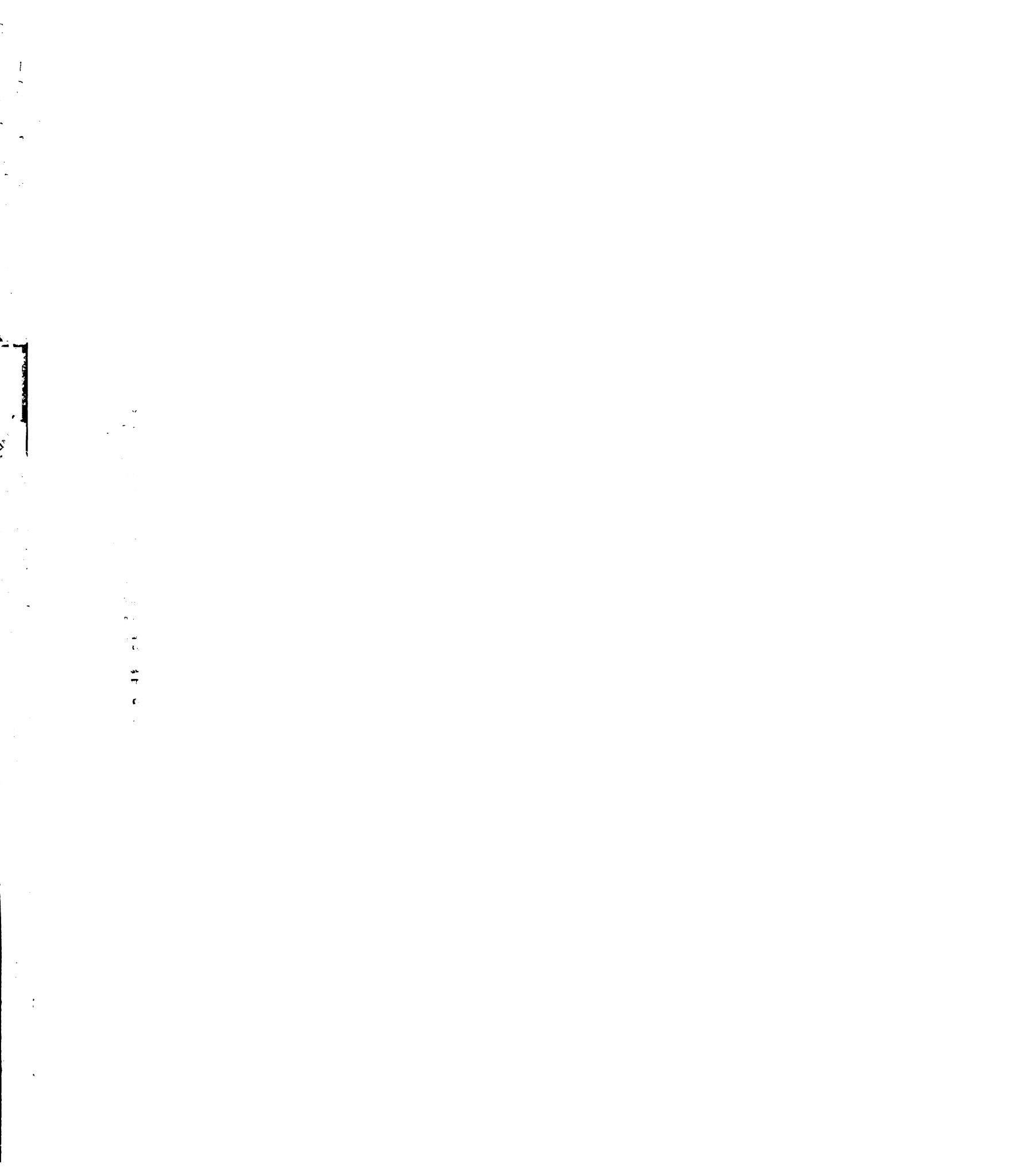
In contrast, in this study what makes returning to one's home of origin a homecoming is whether or not a transformation occurs, not the length of stay, or the success or failure of the outcome. An analytic distinction between "going home" and a "homecoming" may add clarification.

One may go home frequently for a routine, uneventful visit. Nothing of significance happens when one goes home.



In contrast, homecomings are eventful in ways that make the occasion meaningful. What distinguishes the two is whether or not the occasion becomes a transformative event, that is, an event that has consequences for the homecomer's identity or relationships with the home group.

One condition which distinguished between going home and a homecoming in the conceptual sense of the term was the distance involved in returning to one's self-defined home of origin which often limits the frequency of the occurrence. To illustrate, one informant told me that she used to go home quite frequently when she lived close to her family of origin in Tennessee. When she returns now, however, it has the quality of a homecoming. When I asked her if there was a turning point which marked the transition, she said it was a process which began five years ago when she moved far away. She had lived in California for three years before she returned to her home of origin for a temporary visit. She explained that she had been away from home long enough to observe changes in herself and others upon return. With respect to identity in particular, she remarked that visiting her home of origin was now like "taking a subtotal," that is, the context provided her with an opportunity for gauging ways in which she and others had changed and ways in which they had remained the same.

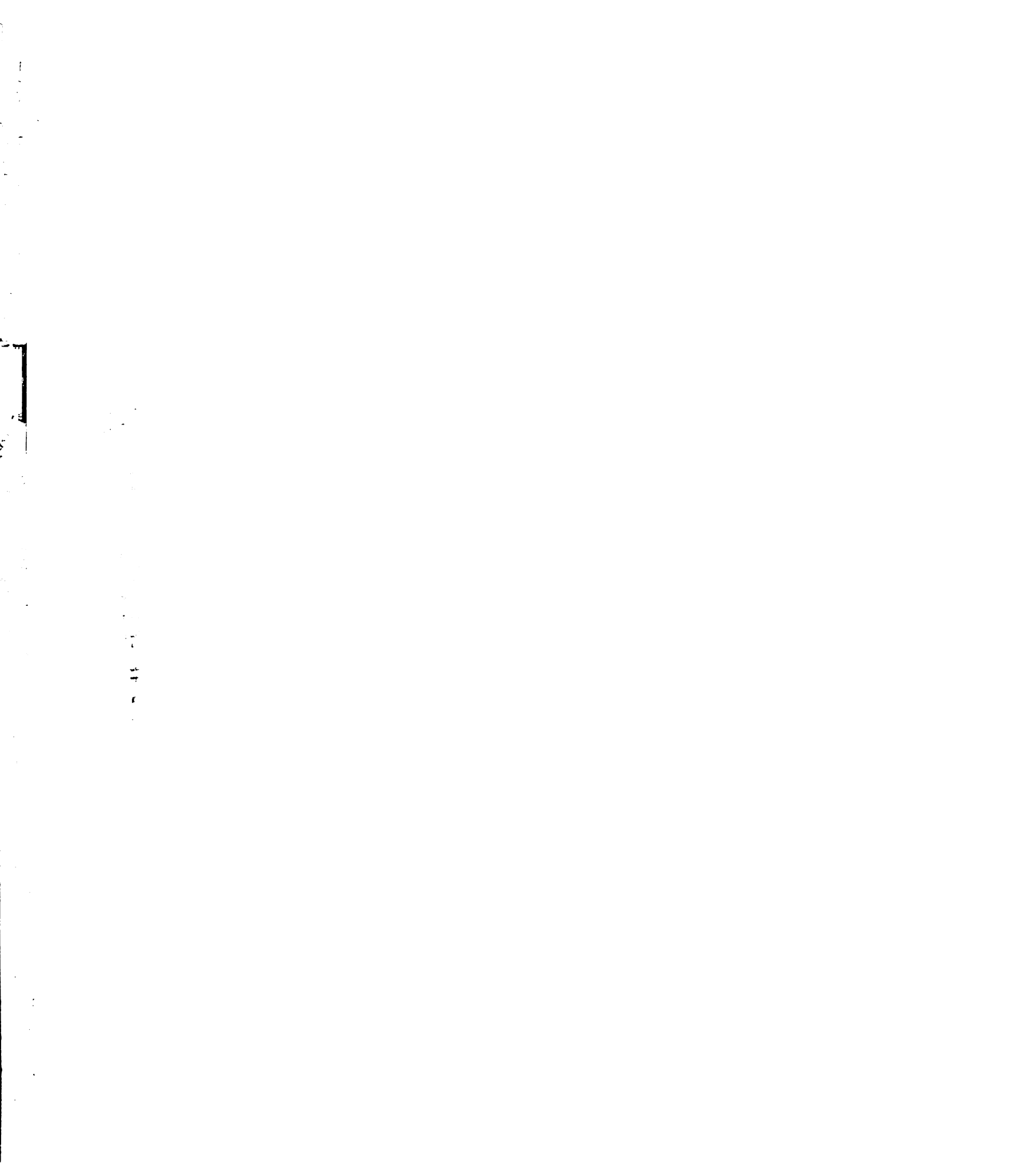


The distance involved and the infrequency of home visits are not the only conditions which vary between temporary visits and homecomings. One informant quite explicitly distinguished between going home for visits and homecomings in the conceptual sense of the term. He said that over the past fifty years he had gone home approximately every two years for "very brief little visits." However, his most recent experience had been planned as a homecoming and had a transformational quality for him. He returned to attend his 50th year high school reunion with his sister-in-law. She also organized a series of surprise gatherings with old friends and historical and biographical tours of their neighborhood. Indeed, he considered the experience to be "rather momentous" since "all the elements of (his) life coalesced in one week-end."

Homecomings: Actual and Symbolic

The distinctions between going home and homecomings point to different ways in which the term homecoming can be conceptualized. Frequent, relatively uneventful visits to one's home of origin are going home in the literal sense of the term. In contrast, homecomings convey a theoretical sense. That is, one's home of origin provides the context for transformations of identity to occur.





There are other ways in which homecomings can also be conceptualized. Two additional distinctions are between actual and symbolic homecomings. Whenever someone returned to their home of origin, I considered it to be an "actual" homecoming. Examples of actual homecomings then would include returning to one's parental home, community of origin, native country and so on. However, some people have lived in or frequented certain places that were especially important or meaningful though they were not their home of origin. Returning to places where one feels a strong sense of identification or belonging could also be considered a homecoming. Additionally, one may travel through time as well as space to come home. This occurs, for example, when one reexperiences the past through vivid memories or in interaction. These later examples were termed symbolic homecomings.

The following detailed example of a "symbolic homecoming," incorporating travel through time as well as through space, was taken from portions of the text of Maya Angelou's book, All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes.

Maya Angelou was born and raised in the United States. As an adult she also lived for a time in Ghana. At this time in history (1962), Ghana was an independent African

nation lead by President Kwame Nkrumah. As a matter of policy, Nkrumah had encouraged American Blacks to immigrate to the land from which their ancestors were abducted and nearly 200 had returned. Among them were a "cadre of political emigres" Ms. Angelou describes this way:

Its members were impassioned and volatile, dedicated to Africa, and Africans at home and abroad. We, for I counted myself in that company, felt that we would be the first accepted, and once taken in and truly adopted, we would hold the doors open until all Black Americans could step over our feet, enter through the hallowed portals and come home at last. (1987:23 emphasis mine)

After having lived in Accura for several months, Angelou travelled into the bush to Dunkwa. She arrived in the late afternoon and realized there were no hotel accommodations available. Explaining her situation to a passerby, she was lead to a member of the village council. The old man, Nkran, began studying her in a light-hearted attempt to identify her tribal identity. He said:

"You are not Ga." He was reading my features. I said, "No." "Aflao?" I said, "No. I am--." I meant to tell him the truth, but he said, "Don't tell me. I will soon know." He continued staring at me. "Speak more. I will know from your Fanti." "Well, I have come from Accra and I need to rent a room for the night. I told that woman that I was a stranger . . ." He laughed. "And you are. Now, I know. You are Bambara from

Liberia. It is clear you are Bambara." He laughed again. "I always can tell. I am not easily fooled." He shook my hand. "Yes, we will find you a place for the night. Come."

Angelou enters a parlor. Nkran's wife enters and begins the same game.

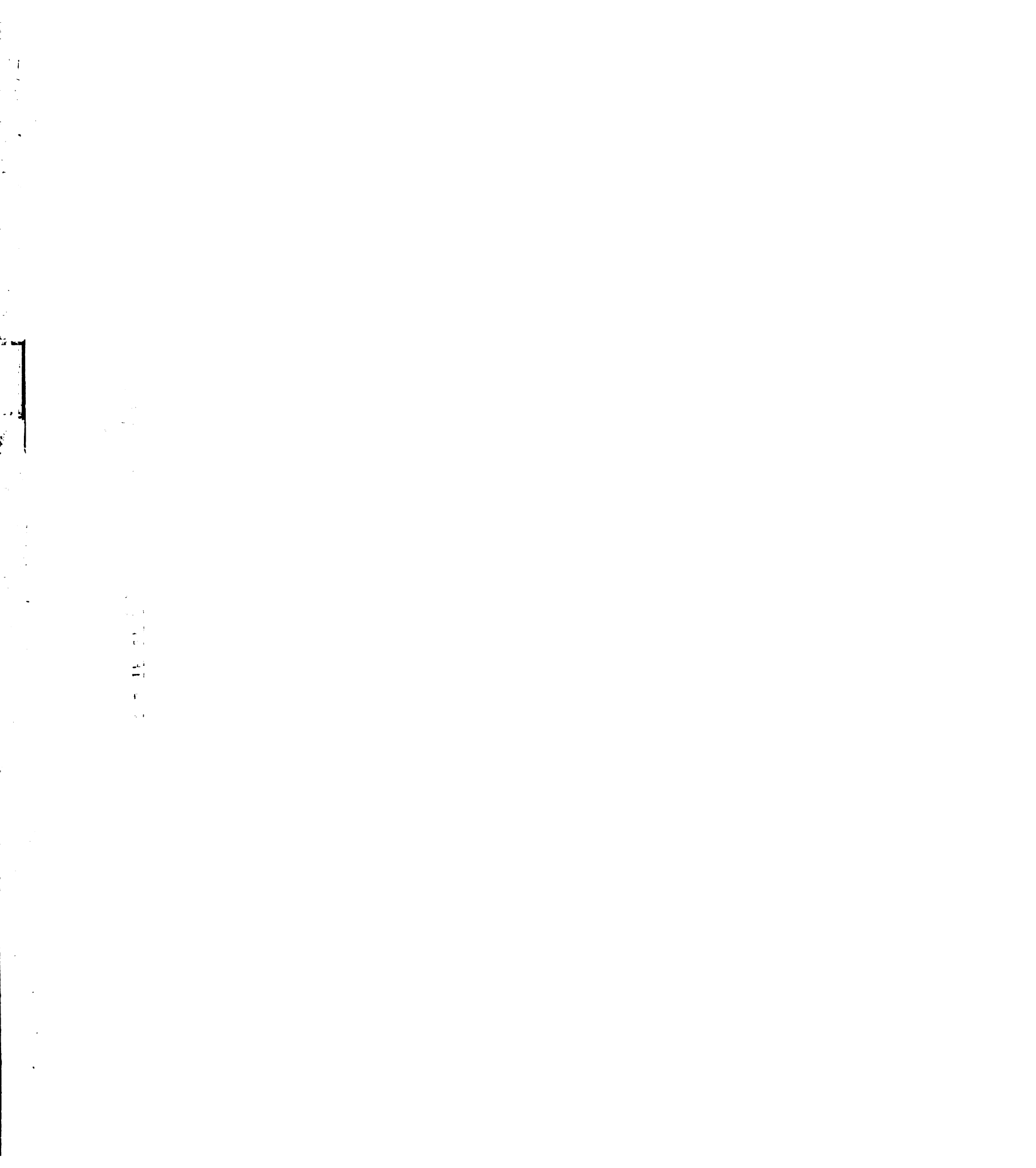
She laughed grandly. "She is Bambara. I could have told you when Abaa first brought her. She how tall she is? See her head? See her color?" ... I introduced myself, but because they had taken such relish in detecting my tribal origin I couldn't tell them that they were wrong. Or, less admirably, at that moment I didn't want to remember that I was an American. For the first time since my arrival, I was very nearly home. Not a Ghanaian, but at least accepted as African. The sensation was worth a lie. (1987:100-101 emphasis mine)

For Angelou, this recognition game was full of meaning.

That is, a sense of belonging was bestowed not just through a common yet distant African ancestry, but in the present as well.

Before leaving Africa, Maya Angelou also had an opportunity to visit Keta in Eastern Ghana. In the marketplace her attention was drawn to a voice:

I looked up to see an older woman, unusually tall, blotting out the light behind her. She spoke again and in a voice somewhat similar to my own, but I was unable to understand her.



I smiled and, using Fanti, said regretfully,  
"I am sorry, Auntie, but I don't speak Ewe."  
She put her hands on her wide hips, reared back  
and let loose into the dim close air around us  
a tirade of angry words. When she stopped, I  
offered, in French and in a self-deprecating tone,  
"I am sorry, Auntie, but I don't speak Ewe."

After another verbal assault, Mrs. Angelou tried speaking  
with her in English. As the woman exploded but again, her  
traveling companion approached them.

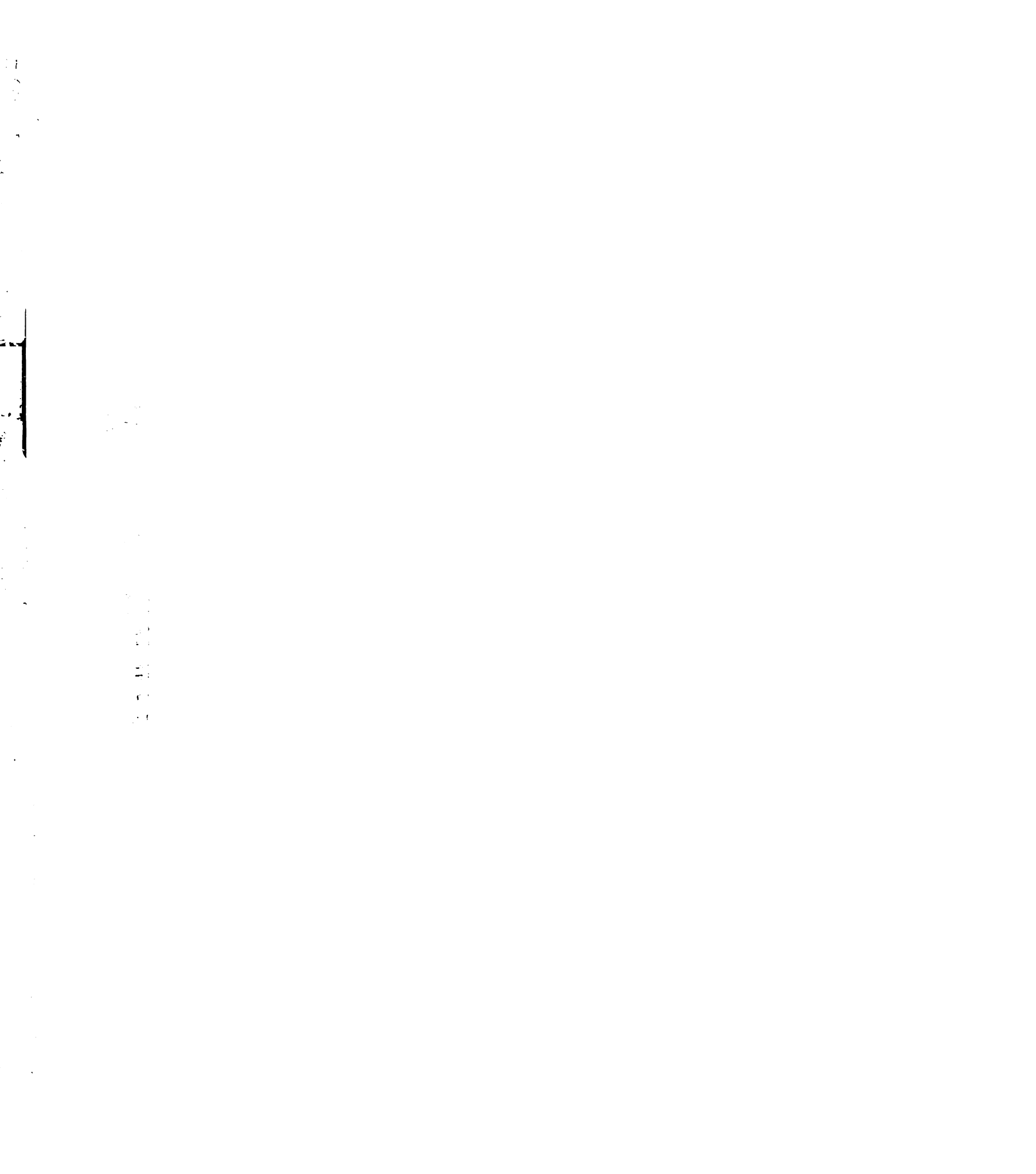
"Mr. Adadevo, would you please talk to this Auntie.  
I can't make her understand."

The woman fired another salvo, and Mr. Adadevo  
stepped up and placed himself between me and my  
assailant. He spoke softly in Ewe. I heard the  
word "American" while I was watching the woman's  
face. She shook her head in denial. My protector  
spoke again, still softly. I heard "American Negro."  
Still the woman's face showed disbelief.

Angelou then offered the woman her driver's license to  
examine as proof.

He handed the document to the woman who strained  
to see in the darkness. She turned and walked up  
the stairs into the light. ...

There, the woman, who was over six feet tall, stood  
peering at the flimsy piece of paper in her dark hand.  
When she raised her head, I nearly fell back down the  
steps: she had the wide face and slanted eyes of my  
grandmother. Her lips were large and beautifully  
shaped like my grandmother's, and her cheekbones were  
high like those of my grandmother. The woman solemnly  
returned the license to Mr. Adadevo, who gave it back



to me, then the woman reached out and touched my shoulder hesitantly. She softly patted my cheek a few times. Her face had changed. Outrage had given way to melancholia. After a few seconds of studying me, the woman clasped her hands and put them on the top of her head. She rocked a little from side to side and issued a pitiful little moan.

In Arkansas, when I was a child, if my brother or I put our hands on our heads as the woman before me was doing, my grandmother would stop in her work and come to remove our hands and warn us that the gesture brought bad luck.

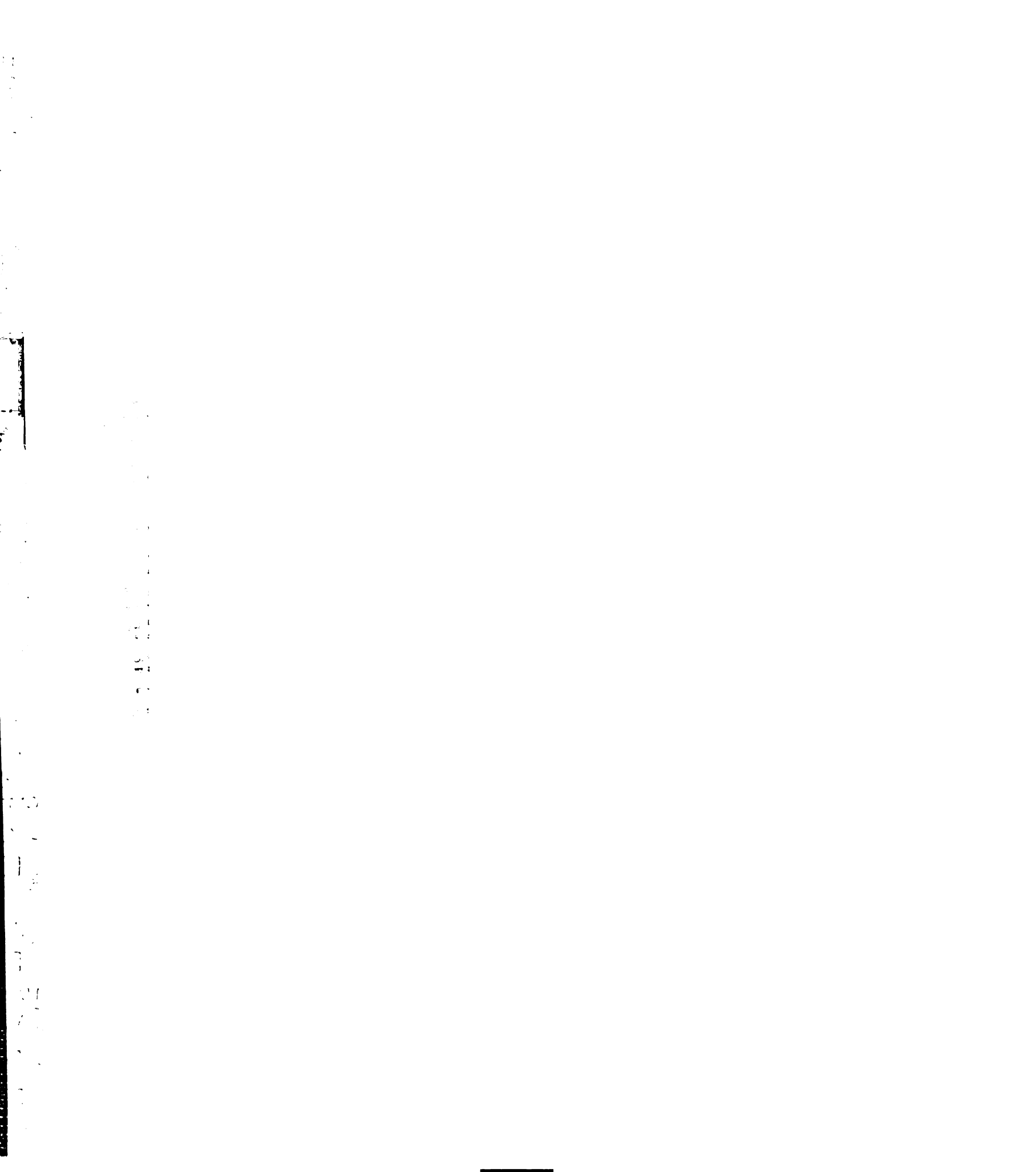
Mr. Adadveo spoke to me quietly, "That's the way we mourn."

Next the woman asked Angelou to follow her. As they went through the marketplace, stopping in one stall and describing the situation to another, she too stared in disbelief and then shook her head and placed her hands on her head and began rocking from side to side.

I turned to Mr. Adadveo and asked if they thought I looked like someone who had died. He answered and his voice was sad. "The first woman thought you were the daughter of a friend. But now you remind them of someone, but not anyone they knew personally."

When the same thing happened again, she asked him to explain.



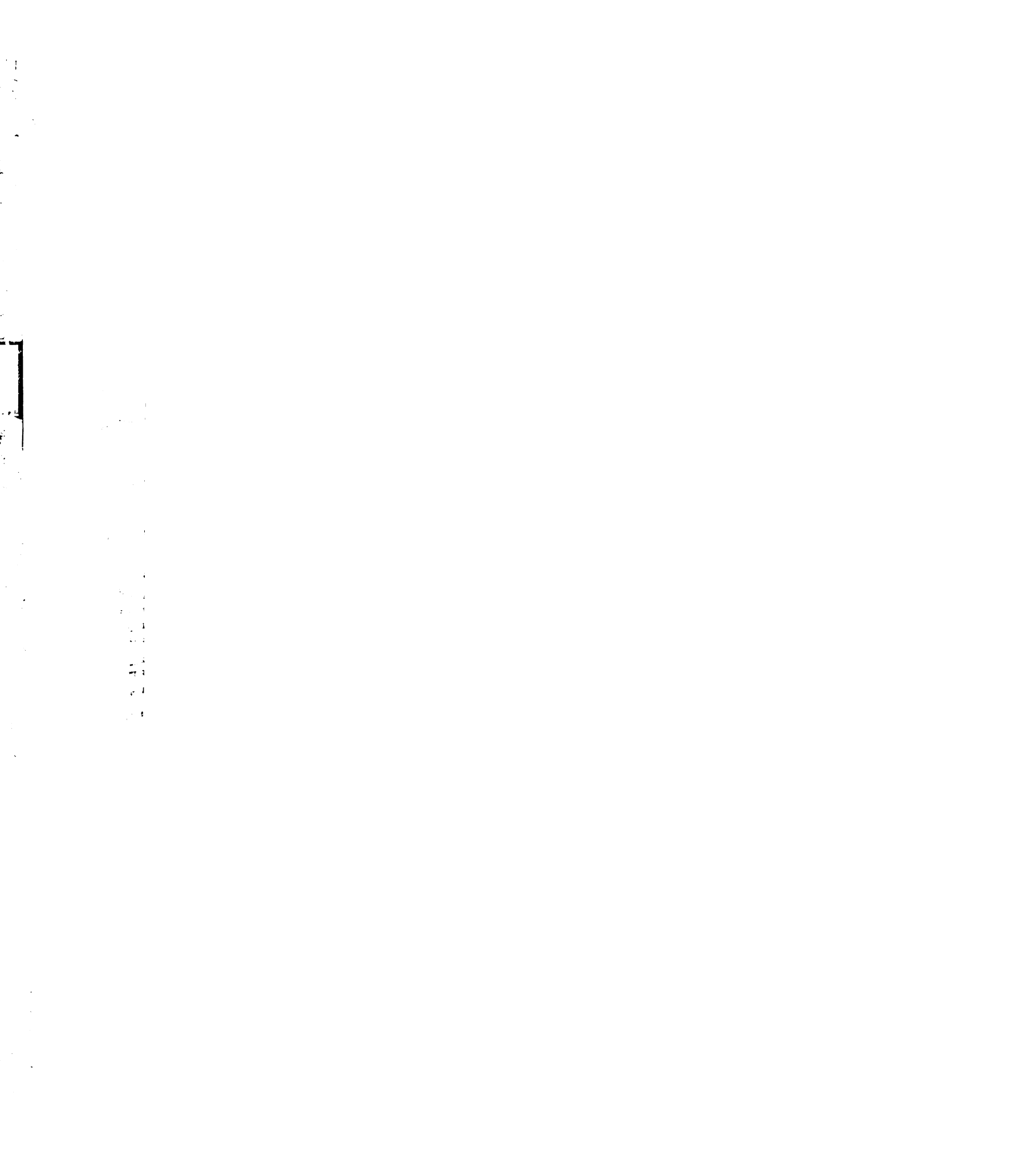


He said, "This is a very sad story and I can't tell it all or tell it well. ... During the slavery period Keta was a good sized village. It was hit very hard by the slave trade. Very hard. In fact, at one point every inhabitant was either killed or taken. The only escapees were children who ran away and hid in the bush. Many of them watched from their hiding places as their parents were beaten and put into chains. They saw the slaves set fire to the village. They saw mothers and fathers take infants by their feet and bash their heads against tree trunks rather than see them sold into slavery. What they saw they remembered and all that they remembered they told over and over."

"The children were taken in by nearby villagers and grew to maturity. They married and had children and rebuilt Keta. They told the tale to their offspring. These women are the descendants of those orphaned children. They have heard the stories often, and the deeds are still fresh as if they happened during their lifetimes. And you, Sister, you look so much like them, even the tone of your voice is like theirs. They are sure you are descended from those stolen mothers and fathers. That is why they mourn. Not for you but for their lost people."

A sadness descended on me, simultaneously somber and wonderful. I had not consciously come to Ghana to find the roots of my beginnings, but I had continually and accidentally tripped over them or fallen upon them in my everyday life. Once I had been taken for Bambara, and cared for by other Africans as they would care for a Bambara woman. Nana's family of Ahantas claimed me, crediting my resemblance to a relative as proof of my Ahanta background. And here in my last days in Africa, descendants of a pillaged past saw their history in my face and heard their ancestors speak through my voice.

The women wept and I wept. I too cried for the lost people, their ancestors and mine. But I was also weeping with a curious joy. ... There was much to cry for, much to mourn, but in my heart I felt exalted knowing there was much to celebrate. Although separated from our languages, our families and customs, we had dared to continue to live. ... Many years earlier I, or rather someone very like me and certainly related to me, had been taken from Africa by force. This second leave-taking would not be onerous, for now

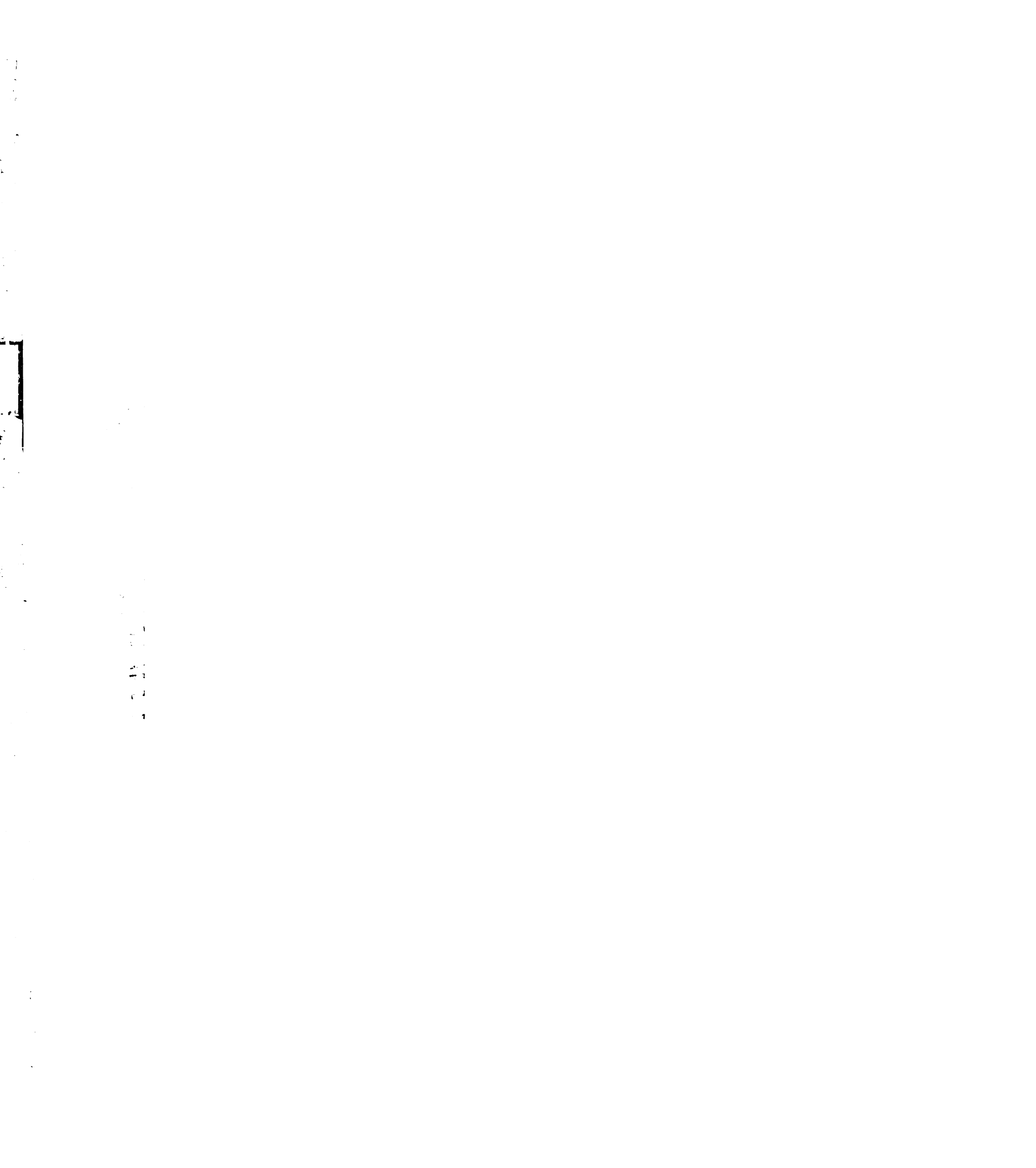


I knew my people had never completely left Africa.  
(1987:203-209)

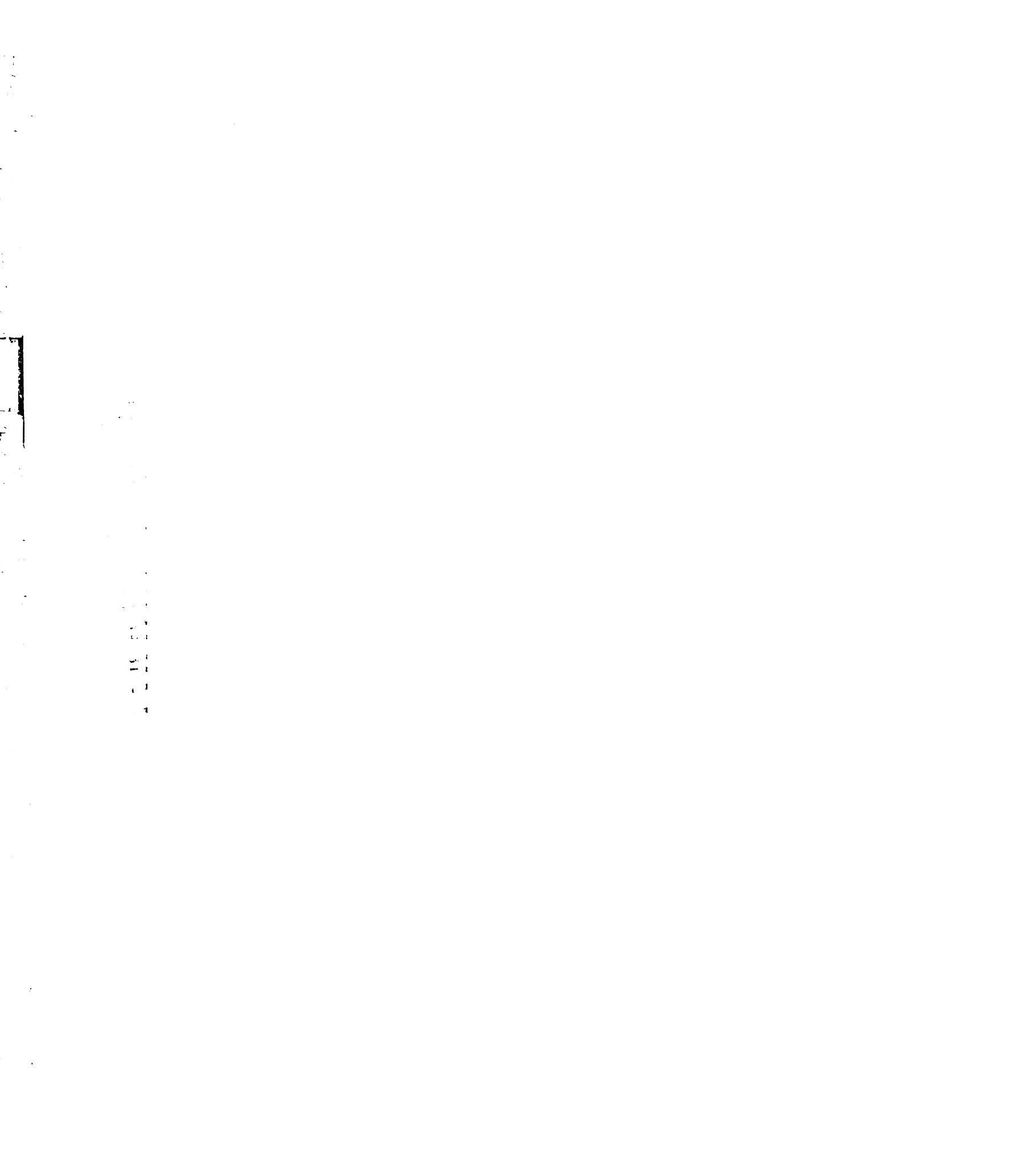
In sum, what differentiates the actual from a symbolic homecoming focuses on gestures of acceptance and feelings of belonging as well as the nature of the place itself. Although not her home of origin, Africa represented a special place to Maya Angelou. Africa was her historical homeland and Ghana a country with which she identified politically. A sense of belonging and acceptance from native Africans, however, were absent until she experienced events like the ones described above. It was through these encounters, when her sense of individual identification with Africa and Africans was transformed into a sense of membership and collective identity, that she had symbolically come home.

### Summary

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of various conditions under which people leave home, noting, for example, that leaving home, like coming home, may occur throughout one's lifetime. In the remainder of the chapter, I theoretically develop Schutz' (1945/1964) concept of the homecoming in three major ways: first by extending the



concept to include temporary, serial homecoming occasions. Next, I analyze the transformational potential of the homecoming. In so doing I critique Schutz' and Jones (1984) emphasis on the dimension of duration as the definitive condition for a homecoming to occur. Rather than focus on the length of the stay, or the success or failure of the homecomer's adaptation to the home context, I maintain that what constitutes a homecoming is the transformation itself, that is, an event which has meaningful consequences for the homecomer's identity and/or relationships with homefolk. The third major way in which my analysis extends Schutz work is through the distinctions I make between actual and symbolic homecomings, noting the importance of traversing time as well as space. This section also elaborates on themes developed in chapter 4 on definitions of home to include the importance of history (one's ancestral home), political identification with a racial/ethnic community, as well as the emotional aspects of the homecoming to be discussed in Chapter 7.



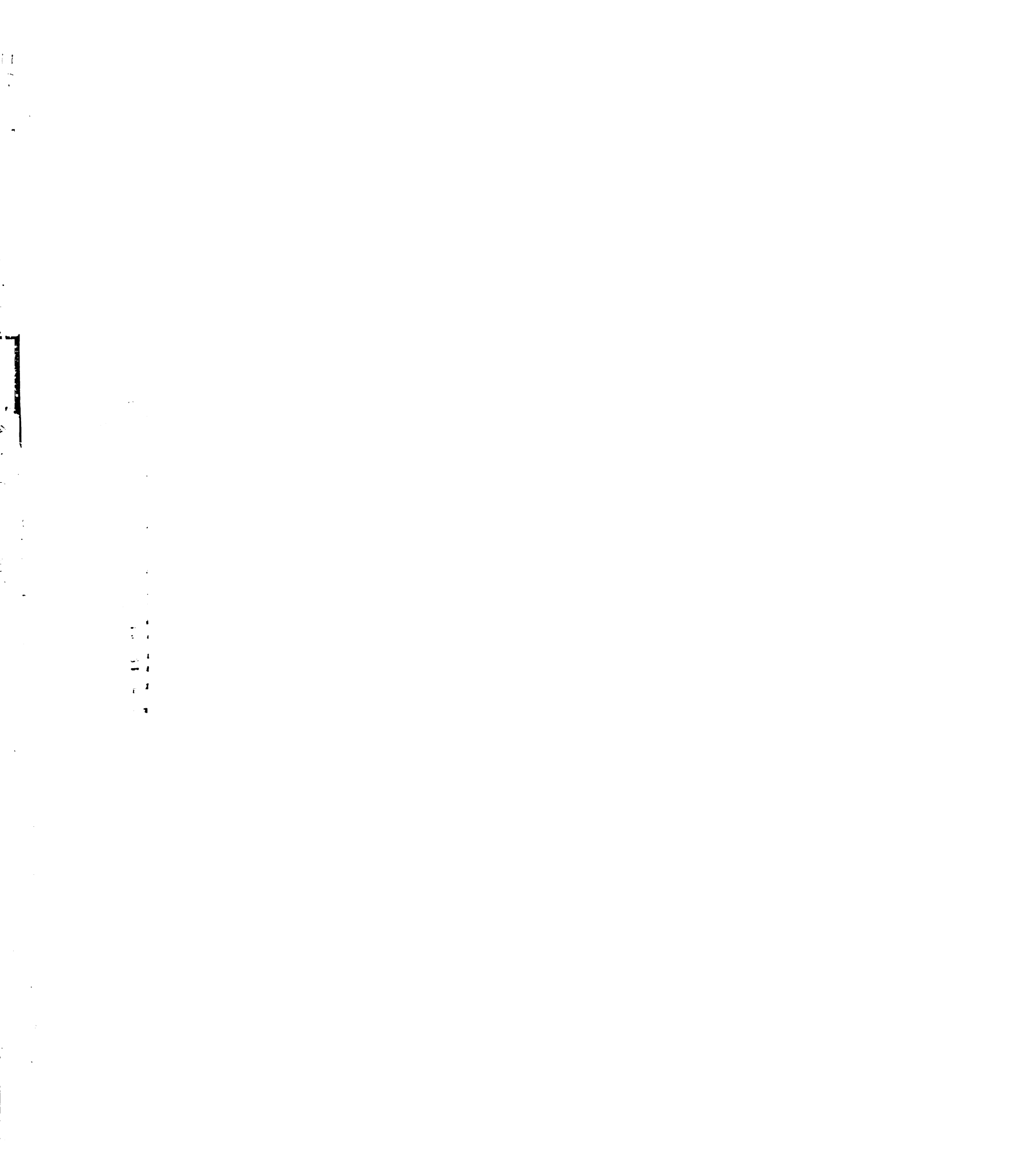
## Chapter 6

### IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND THE PRESENTATION OF SELF

Home is a site and symbol of one's biographical, social, and temporal identities (Hummon, 1986). That is, home represents a socially patterned, predictable way of life that develops over time through shared intimate daily living with family members (Schutz, 1964). Biographically, one's home of origin is the place where one's personal history actually began. Temporally, youth is usually inextricably linked with the home setting. Home and family life are central themes around which memories of the past are organized. As a site and symbol of the past, home is also associated with one's present sense of self, and may be the actual place where on-going and future relationships among family members are expected to continue. Thus home is associated with past, present, and future selves.

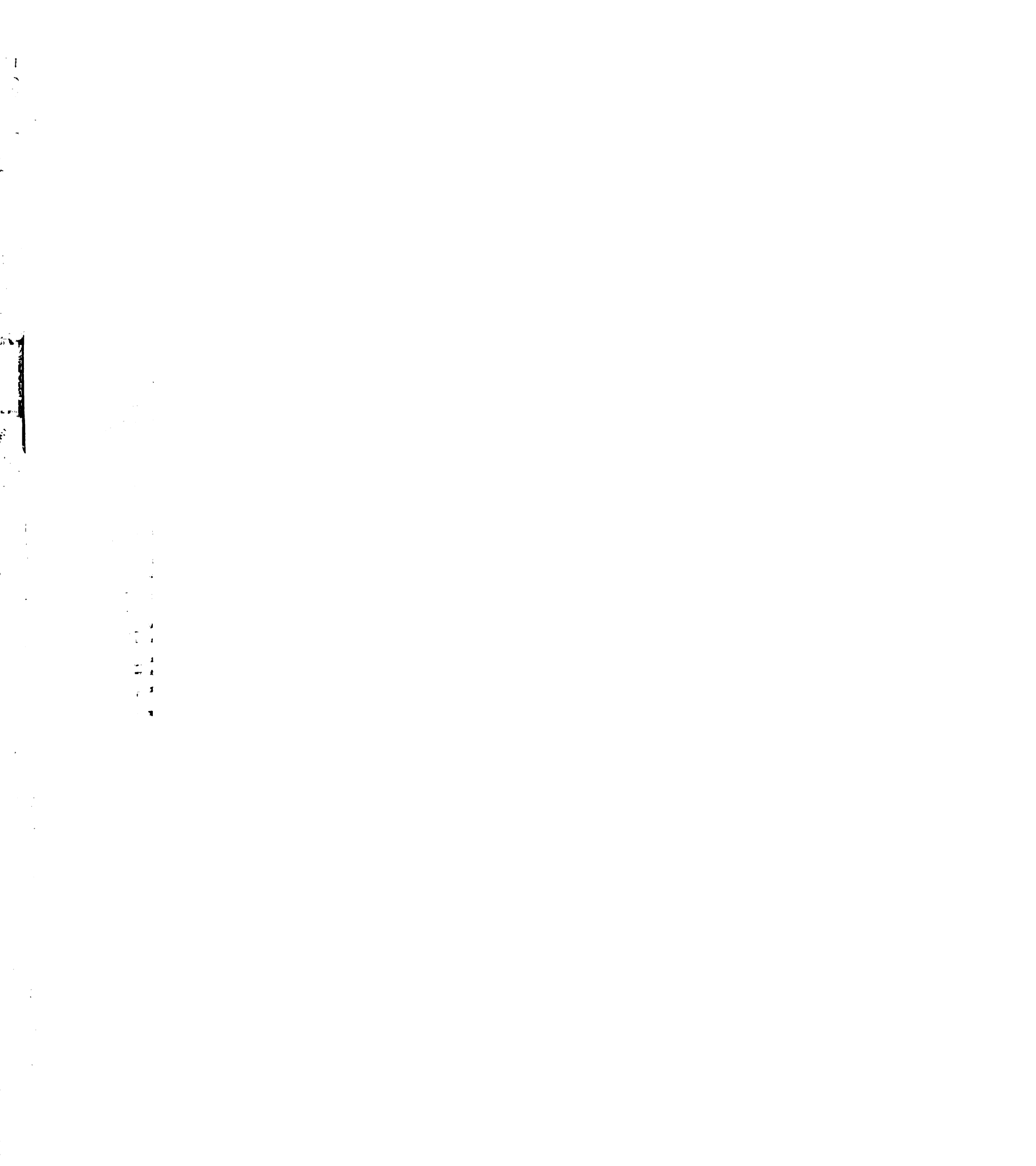
During the intervening time away from home, relationships may be partially or completely suspended. The on-going immediacy and mundanity of daily living with significant others is interrupted (Schutz, 1964). During these periods of absence, transformations of identity (Strauss, 1959) may occur so that the homecomer and homefolk develop new identities and perceive themselves differently than before. These changes in self and other may or may not





become problematic upon coming home. They have the potential of being problematic should the homecomer or homefolk change profoundly or if any new identity is stigmatized.

Gradually or all at once, self and others may recognize the changes time and different experiences have created. By so doing, they may discover that past relationships are not the same as they once were. If relationships are to continue, observed differences and difficulties between self and other as they were remembered and expected to be, and as they actually are, need to be renegotiated or reconciled, particularly if the homecoming is expected to be a lengthy one (Schutz, 1964). This process need not occur, however, during brief visits. Instead, the homecomer may develop various strategies to manage presentation of self, including reconstructing a former self, or suspending certain identities. Further, one may not recognize changes he or she has undergone until returning home when they become apparent or are pointed out by others. Another alternative is that one may not realize members of the home group have changed until those changes are recognized in person. Additionally, homecomings may occur when someone is in transition from one status to another. Finally, homecomings may also prompt transitions or catalyze transformations of identity, or they may assist in integrating changes which

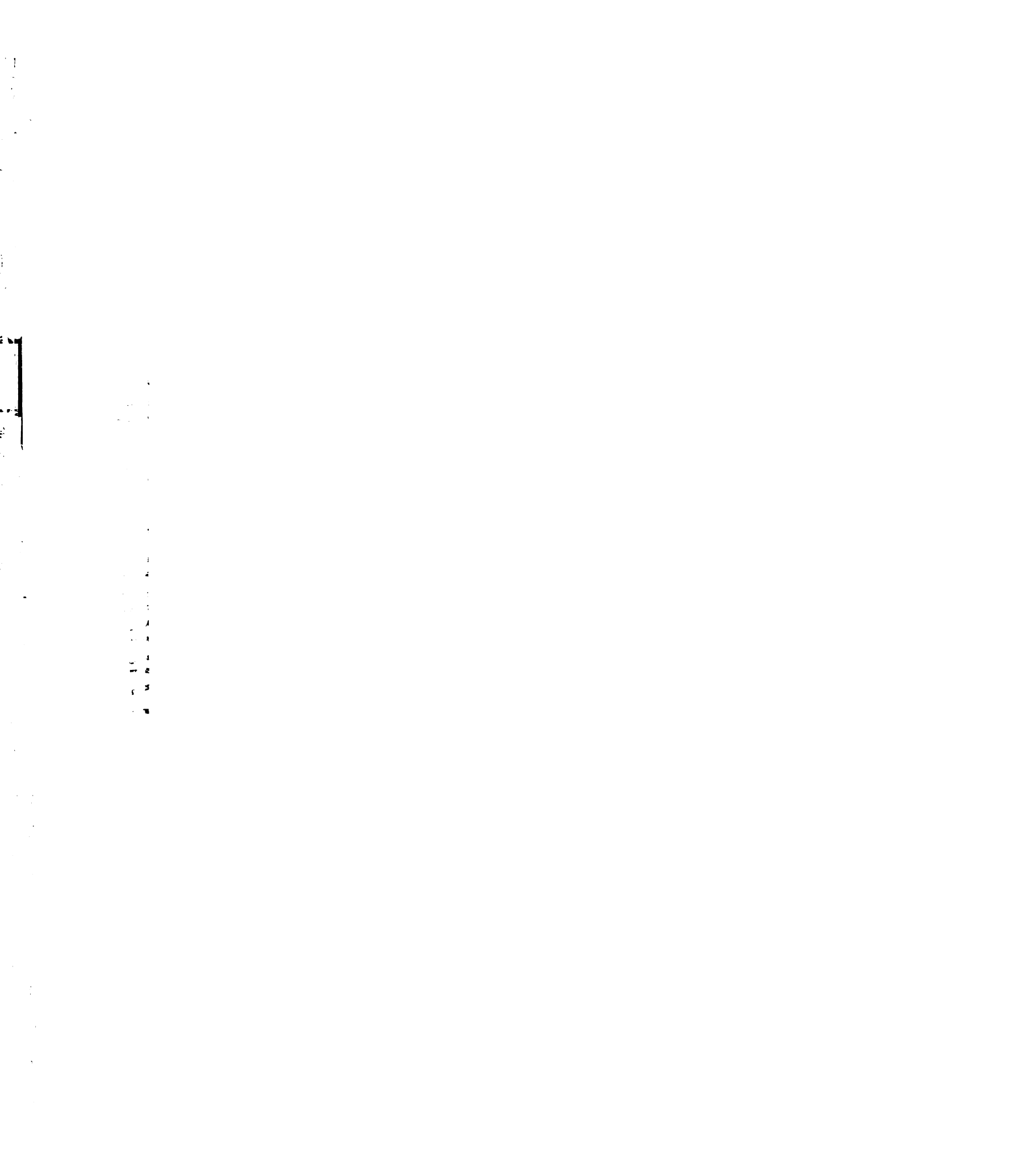


have occurred. In this section, I will compare various stages of identity development and discuss various strategies for the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) upon coming home.

### Identity Continuity

When continuity between one's former and present identity is perceived, presentation of self may not be problematic to the homecomer. Continuity of identity may be experienced due to stabilities in relationships with family members, similarities in lifestyles between the homecomer and the home group, and by the unchanging nature of the place.

When one comes home, biographical continuity between past and present is renewed through interaction, by participating in shared activities or time-honored traditions, as well as by the concrete properties of the place itself. These concrete properties, however, are also laden with symbolism. All these dimensions are evident in the following quotation, excerpted from an interview with a woman who had just returned from visiting her father and two aunts. These relatives still lived in the small southeastern Missouri town where she spent many of the summers of her youth. She said;



The thing about Poplar Bluff is that,  
 it's maybe why I like it still,  
 because it's almost like time stands still.  
 They didn't change the street,  
 everything in the house is the same.  
 Nothing has changed in that house since I was a baby.  
 The same furniture,  
 the kitchen is the same,  
 all the shit on the back porch is the same,  
 walking up the street is the same except it's paved,  
 finally.  
 The chairs on the porch are the same.  
 And I think that's what's so nice about it.  
 'Cause you can always go back and get that,  
 that feeling you had when you were little.  
 It's comfy.  
 And even through I wouldn't want to live there forever,  
 or any longer than I did,  
 it's nice to know that when you go back,  
 you know what it's going to be.  
 And Aunt Jennie and Aunt Leona are still carrying on  
 that same old banter--and they laugh!  
 And my father and his two sisters are really very  
 close.  
 And they sit and laugh and joke and  
 it's just like before,  
 except now we are all grown up  
 and they can't tell us to shut up!

Implicit in this quote is the meaning of the homecoming with respect to continuities in biographical identity. That is, her homecoming enabled this woman to reestablish feelings of comfort and belonging, to reexperience predictable modes of interaction, stabilities in relationships and personalities, and to recapture the past in the present, including the reproduction of childhood experiences as an adult.

Managing and presenting former identities may also create problems for the homecomer or the home group. For example, certain past identities may create tension or



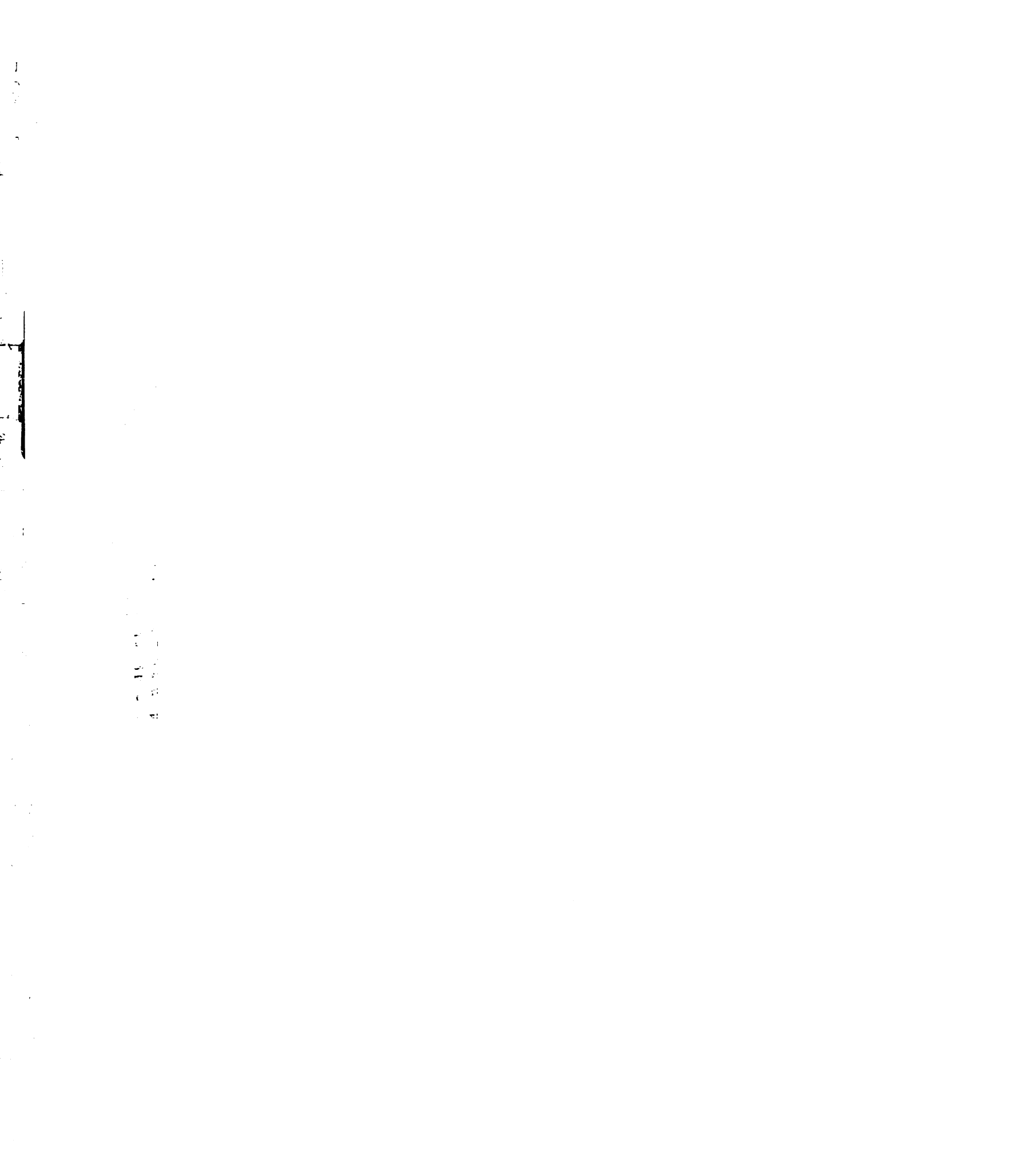
produce conflict between self and significant others. If the homecomer develops a deviant career as an adult, he or she may choose to "bear the stigma" (Goffman, 1963), decide to keep that identity separate, or attempt to hide it from the folks at home.

### Managing Dual Identities

One may experience oneself as continuous despite having dual identities and ways of life. For example, identity continuity from childhood through adulthood may be perceived, despite actual changes in identity as one grows up and grows away from home. Changes in identity as a consequence of development through the life cycle, or despite apparent differences in social worlds are integrated or bridged in order to maintain a unified construction of one's self over time. An instance of this latter case was provided by an informant who indicated having two homes, one in Switzerland, her native country, and another in the U.S.A., where she had lived for several years on two separate occasions. She explained:

When I go home now, it is like taking up my other life. And since I have lived in the U.S. now for my sixth year, not in a row, but for three years, then two years away, and then three years again; I do feel at home here in that way. But I feel at home, at home, as well. So I basically have two lives that are quite separate from each other, and there are not many interconnections.



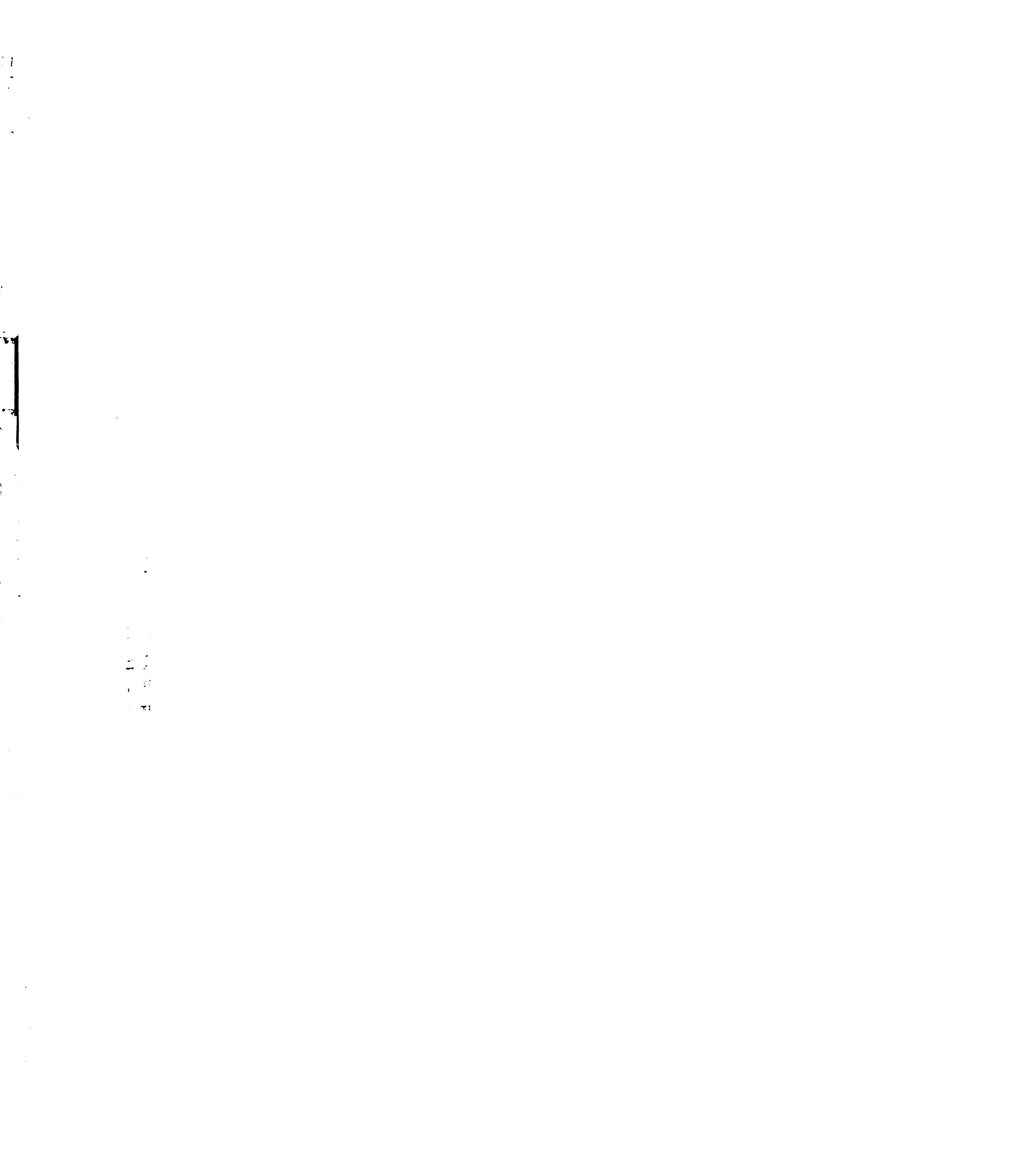


Her primary American identity was as a graduate student, while her Swiss identities centered around being a teacher and family member. Despite these multiple identities, this informant went on to say:

I basically think of my self as, as quite continuous. I am like those (countries) in Europe: you can stand at the border and you can have your foot in Switzerland and your foot in Italy. Um, that's how I perceive of myself. I live in two worlds, but it's me who lives in two worlds. One foot is there, and the other foot is there.

This woman's identities coexisted; some remained suspended while others were enacted. Which identity was to the fore was context specific.

Managing dual identities may become problematic, however, when they are perceived to be in conflict. One may even perceive a "loss of self" as a consequence of identity conflict. One example of this experience was provided by another informant who, upon returning to her parental home in Arkansas, witnessed her self dissolve as she "reverted" to an identity she currently despised. She characterized this experience as "schizophrenic," since in this instance, her highly valued present identity was widely divergent from her past identity.



Managing former and present identities could also become troublesome when they competed for dominance in a given context. To illustrate, another person I interviewed, a native San Franciscan who had just resettled in the Bay Area after having lived elsewhere for over six years, identified herself as a co-dependent. Whenever she interacted with her actively alcoholic father, she felt vulnerable to slipping into this identity, a process she attempted to resist. She said, "I flip into old patterns too quickly." She also observed herself adopt her former role as family caregiver upon coming home. This informant made continuous reference to her efforts to resist this process, remarking in one instance, "I have to really force myself not to be that way," and in another, "I'm always fighting with myself not to do that."

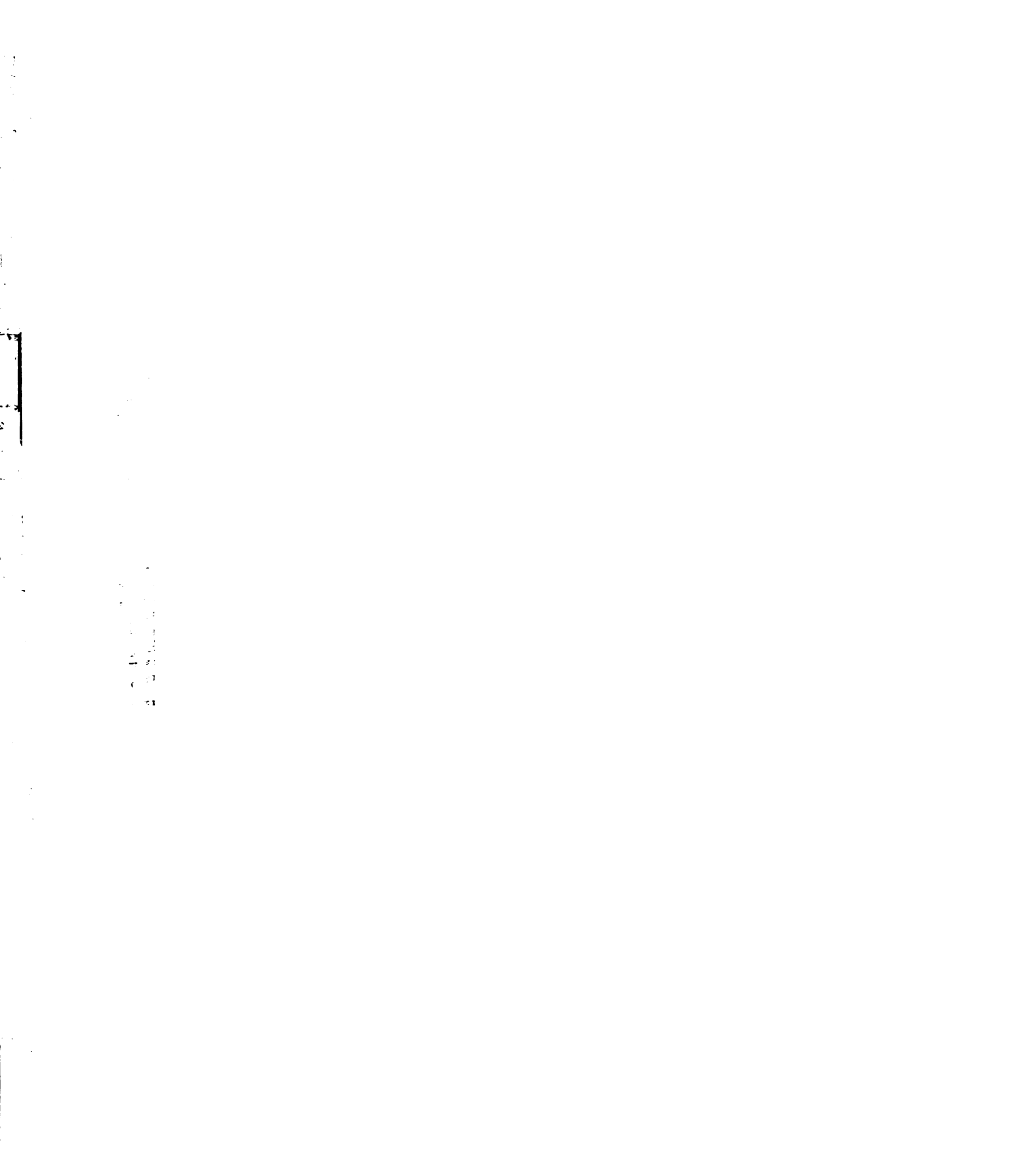
When former identities were problematic or interpreted as interfering with one's present self-concept or relationships with the home group, the homecomers developed various strategies to protect themselves from adopting former identities and social roles, particularly when the home context was difficult, threatening, or otherwise hard to endure. These strategies will be discussed at greater length below.



### Presenting a New Identity

New identities may be presented while they are still in the process of transformation, or they may be presented when fully developed. Presentation of a new identity upon coming home may also be undertaken gradually, through a series of interactions which occur over time, or presented all at once. Further, one may choose to present a new identity overtly and verbally, subtly through changes in conduct or appearance, or both. Finally, presenting a new identity upon coming home may be deliberately planned, emerge naturally, or unintentionally slip out.

In deciding to present a new identity upon coming home, the homecomer focuses the home group's attention on how he or she have changed rather than on what has remained the same. Presenting a new identity may or may not be problematic for the homecomer. One informant told an interesting story about the ways in which her parents responded to her new identity during her most recent visit. Their attention and interaction focused on her appearance rather than on discussing her new identity directly. This visit was her first since disclosing her Lesbian identity to them a few months prior to her return. She indicated that she expected it would be a difficult one since telephone conversations with her parents after her disclosure had been



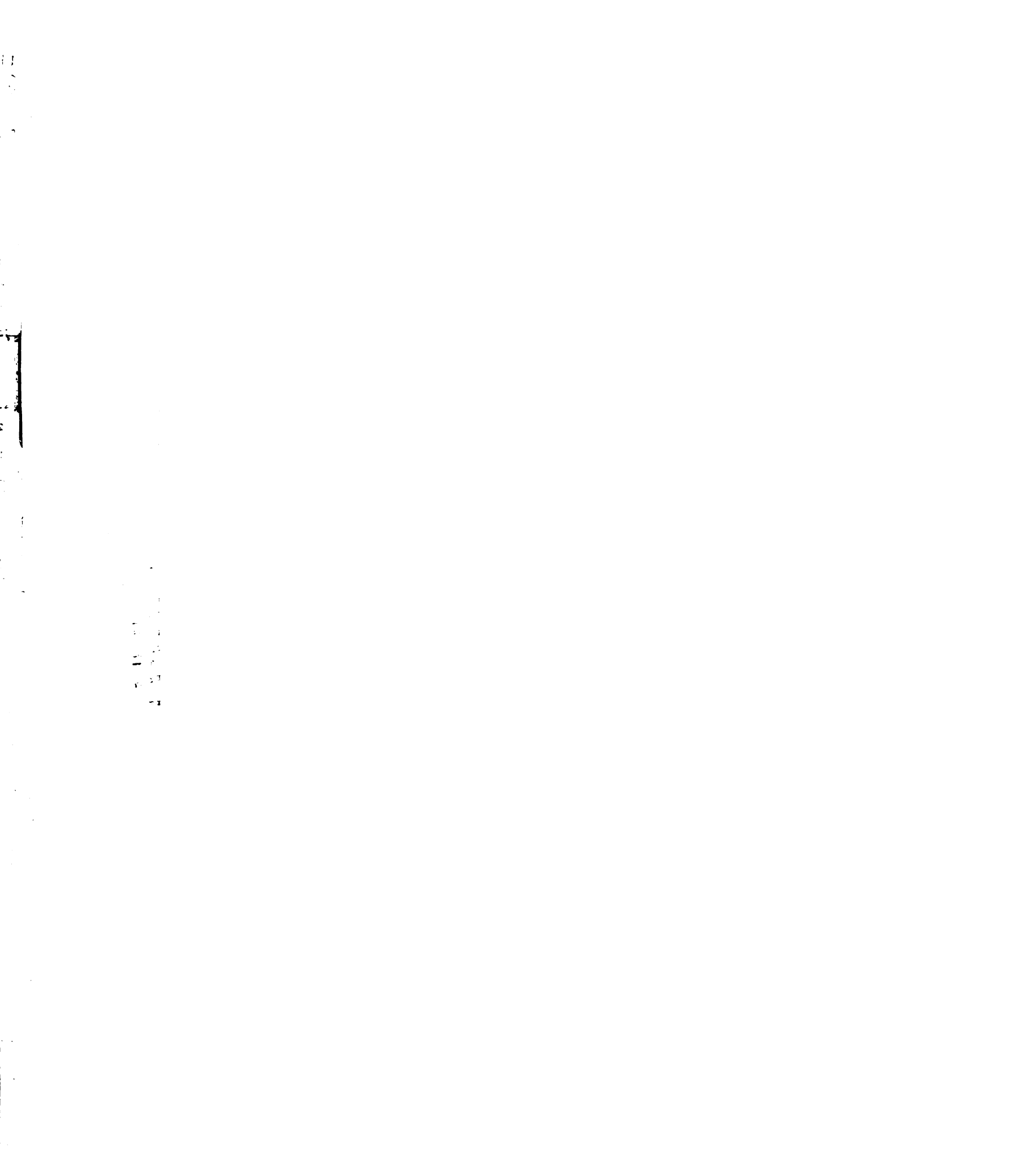
unpleasant. Further, they kept telling her, "We'll talk about this when you are home." She went on to say; "And so the whole time I was with them there was a sense of waiting to see how we were going to deal with all this stuff." As it turned out, her father was away on business the first four days of her stay and she was left alone with her mother. She was even more concerned about this turn of events since her mother had a great deal of difficulty accepting her news:

What happened when I was there was, we spent the first four days just doing what needed to get done in my mother's life and not talking about anything. And I tried to create the opportunity to have a conversation without forcing the issue. Without saying, "Well, why aren't we talking about..." And, um, she didn't pick up on any of it, so I assumed she chose not to. I mean I didn't force anything, and yet I wasn't so subtle that she wouldn't have picked it up.

Despite this unexpected turn of events her Lesbian identity was addressed indirectly through comments which focused on her hair style and other aspects of her appearance. She explained:

Every day that I was there we had discussions about real concrete things that had to do with the way I looked. With every new relative I saw we discussed how my hair was cut. Not so much my clothes, which to me, are the most outrageous thing about me. But my assumption was, anything that they could read as the least bit Lesbian, (pauses) like my mother would make comments that I didn't have lipstick on. As if anybody with as much make-up as I wear wouldn't wear lipstick? (laughs) The rings on my toes would come up, the way my hair was cut, and... it would come up again and again.

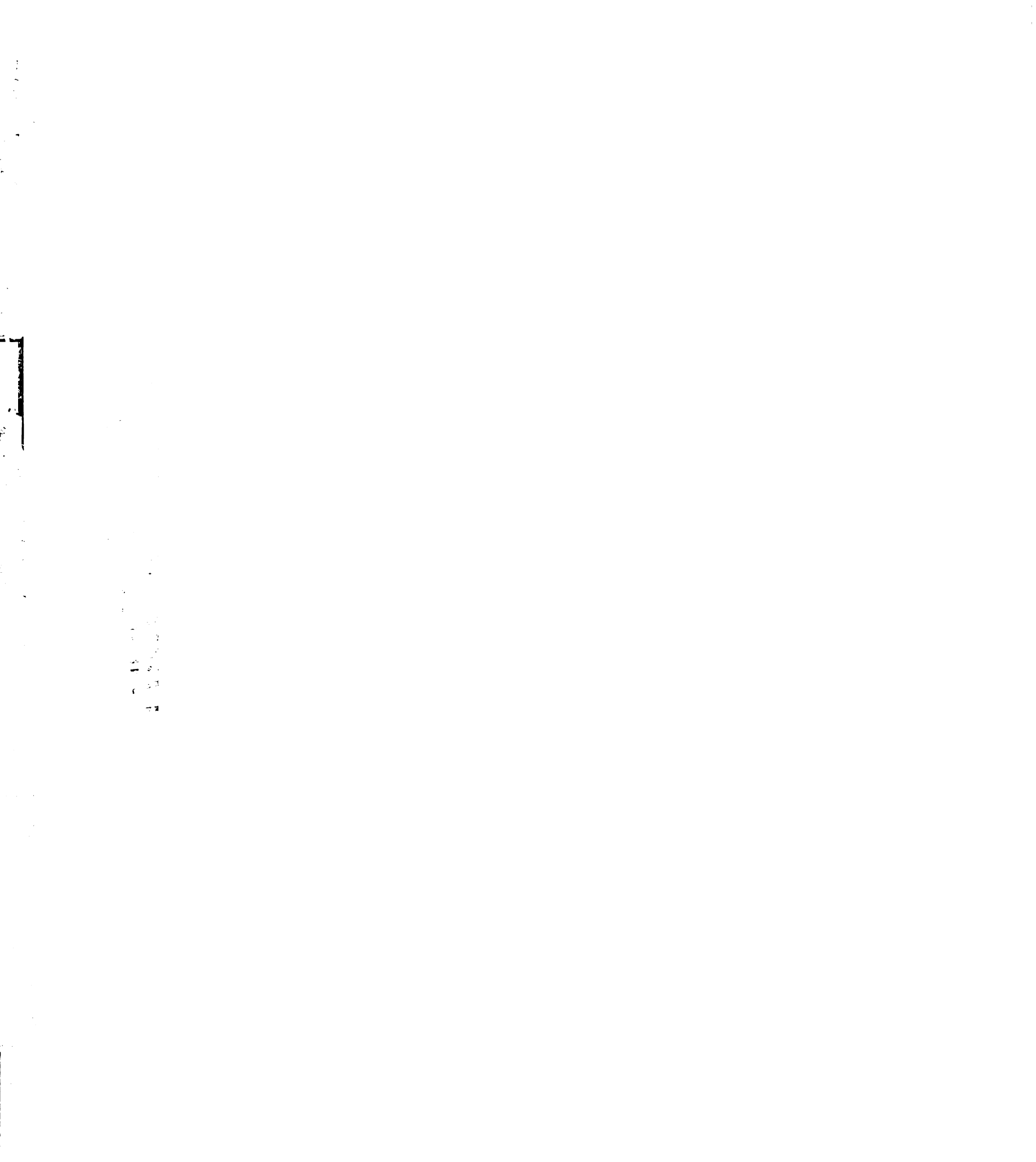




In an article entitled "Appearance and the Self," Stone observes; "By appearing, the person announces his identity, shows his value, expresses his mood, or proposes his attitude" (1981:193). As this example demonstrates, appraisals of identity can be made on the basis of hair style, make-up, and other forms of adornment as well as by the evaluation of clothing as Stone discussed.

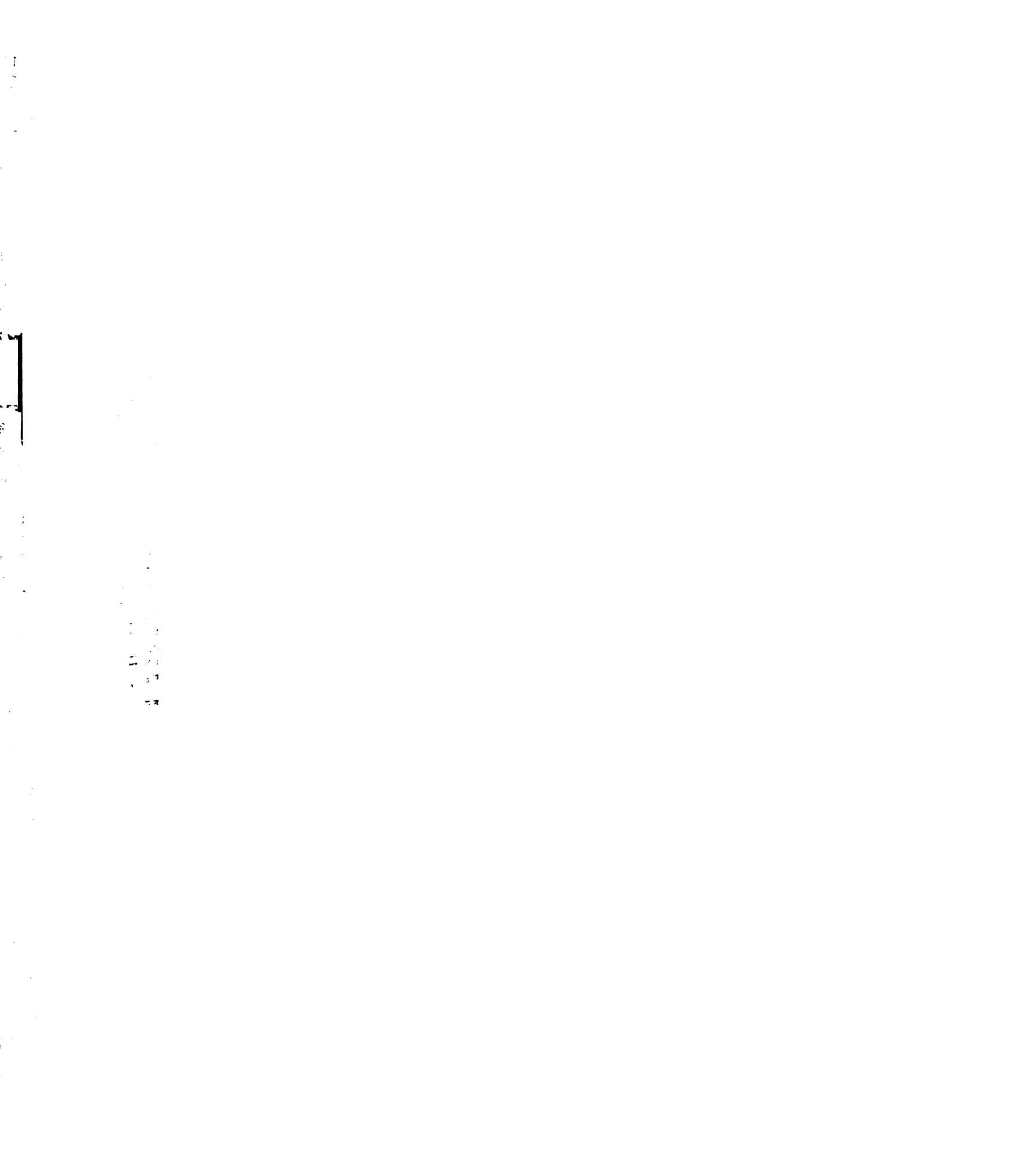
This informant believed that when her father returned, he would be willing to discuss the topic with her directly, as he had been more willing to do so initially. As it turned out, this was not the case. Her father, she concluded, had decided to "go along" with her mother. Meanwhile, they busied themselves with preparations for a family vacation. At this point she realized there would be no further possibility for discussion, since her parents had requested that she not tell her brother and his family that she was a Lesbian.

During the family vacation, she also had an opportunity to observe the differences in the way her parents interacted with her brother and his family, and the way they interacted with her now. She attributed the change in the nature of their interaction with her to her recent revelation. She explained that her parents conversations with her brother



and his family were animated and quite detailed. In contrast, her parents not longer asked her anything about her daily life as they had in the past. She believed that the details of her life has become "too dangerous" to discuss.

While some homecomers sought to minimize change, other informants worked to emphasize it. In this regard, it was interesting to note the way informants engaged in a process of analyzing their parents psychologically. That is, they described emphasizing changes in identity not as a confrontational tactic, but rather as a means of combatting what they perceived to be parental denial. For example, although the woman who came out to her parents as a Lesbian had worn hair in various short styles for nearly two years, the length of time she had been a Lesbian, her parents denied a relationship between her hair style and identity until it was no longer possible for them to do so. As she put it: "You can't escape it, it's right there on my head, right there in front of you." So although she did not deliberately cut her hair in a Lesbian-identified manner for her homecoming, her parents did not recognize its meaning until they had knowledge of her Lesbian identity. Despite the obvious differences her parents noticed and remarked about, on another level their strategy was to attempt to normalize the situation by acting as if nothing had changed.

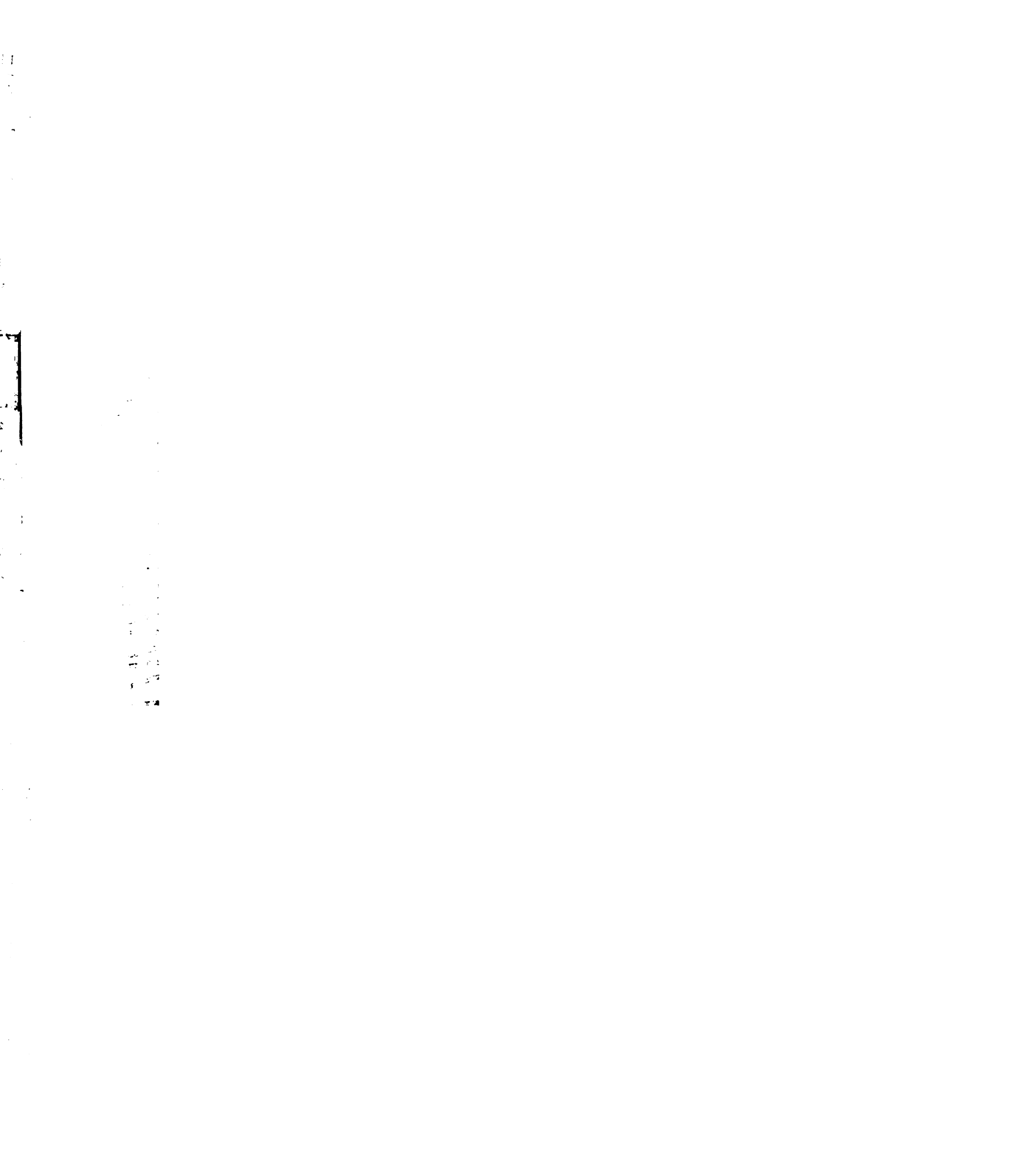


As this informant put it: "Superficially it was exactly like any other visit. Business as usual. Denial is a wonderful thing." Another informant, who had returned to Texas to visit his mother with the expressed purpose of coming out to her, indicated he had to stress repeatedly that he was gay. He told me he also found it necessary to bring up incidents and stories from the past in order to help make his point. For example, he would have her recall how during his adolescence and early adulthood he had never dated girls despite their interest in him.

### The Self at Home

One strategy for presentation of self upon a homecoming is to resurrect a former identity or what I have termed the "self at home." The self at home is not an exact replica of a former persona, but one that is reconstructed by the homecomer and members of the home group in interaction with each other, drawing on knowledge and memory of who the homecomer once was. As a strategy, constructing and presenting the self at home was one method for emphasizing continuity with the home group and down-playing changes which had occurred during the homecomer's absence.

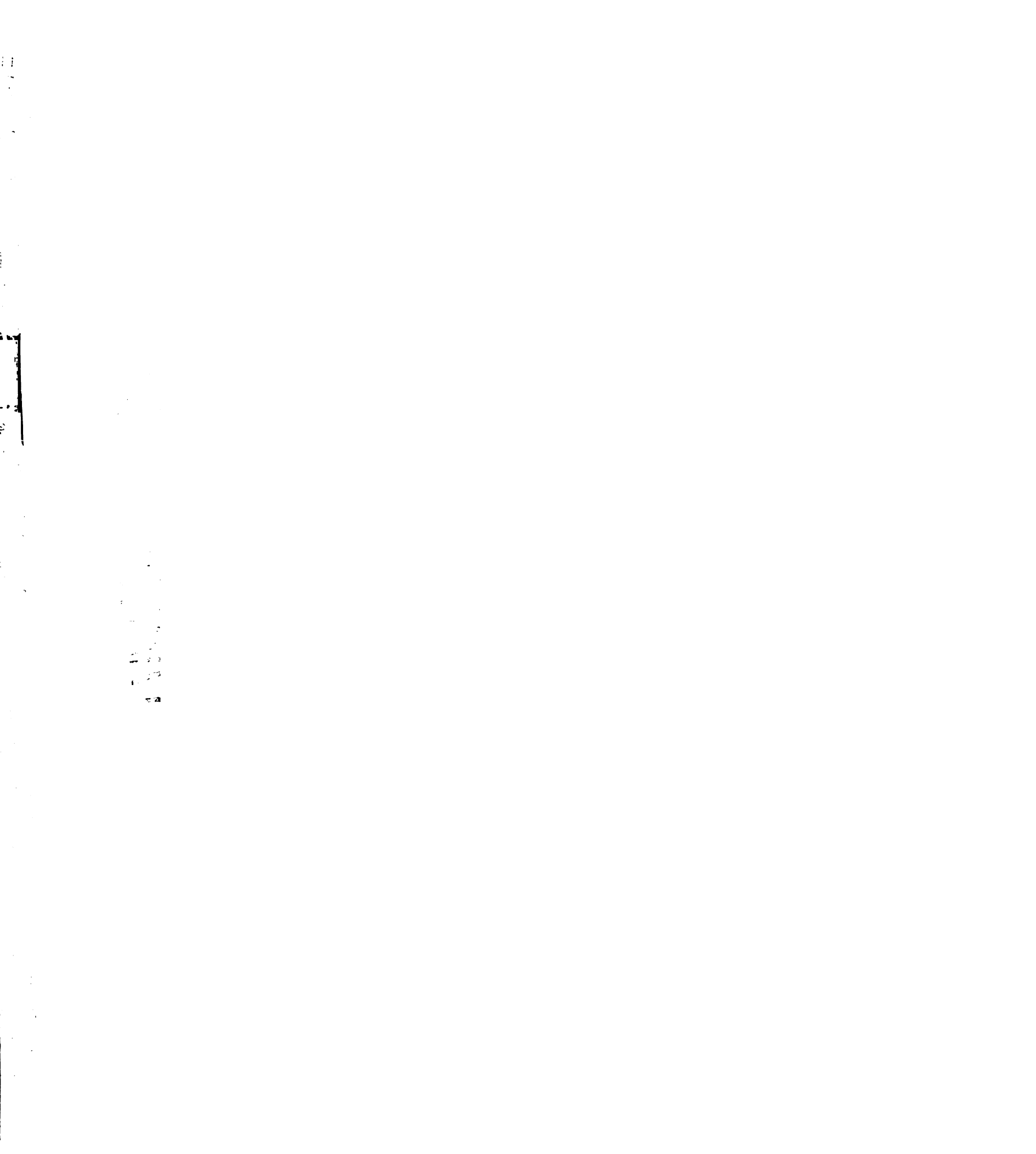
Alterations in physical appearance, including hairstyle and clothing selected to wear at home; taking up



former hobbies or other leisure activities; adopting "manners" or adapting other forms of social conduct; and altering conversational practices were among the tactics informants reported that they used to make themselves recognizable to the home group, to search for common ground, or to conform to the expectations of the homefolk. For example one informant, a Tennessean from a working class family, had been living in the San Francisco Bay Area and studying for a doctorate. She believed her family of origin had little interest or understanding of her present identity or way of life. In order to make herself recognizable to her family, she refreshed her Southern accent and resurrected her home vocabulary. Furthermore, she told me she selected topics for conversation which minimized or bridged the differences she perceived that had subsequently grown between herself and the home group.

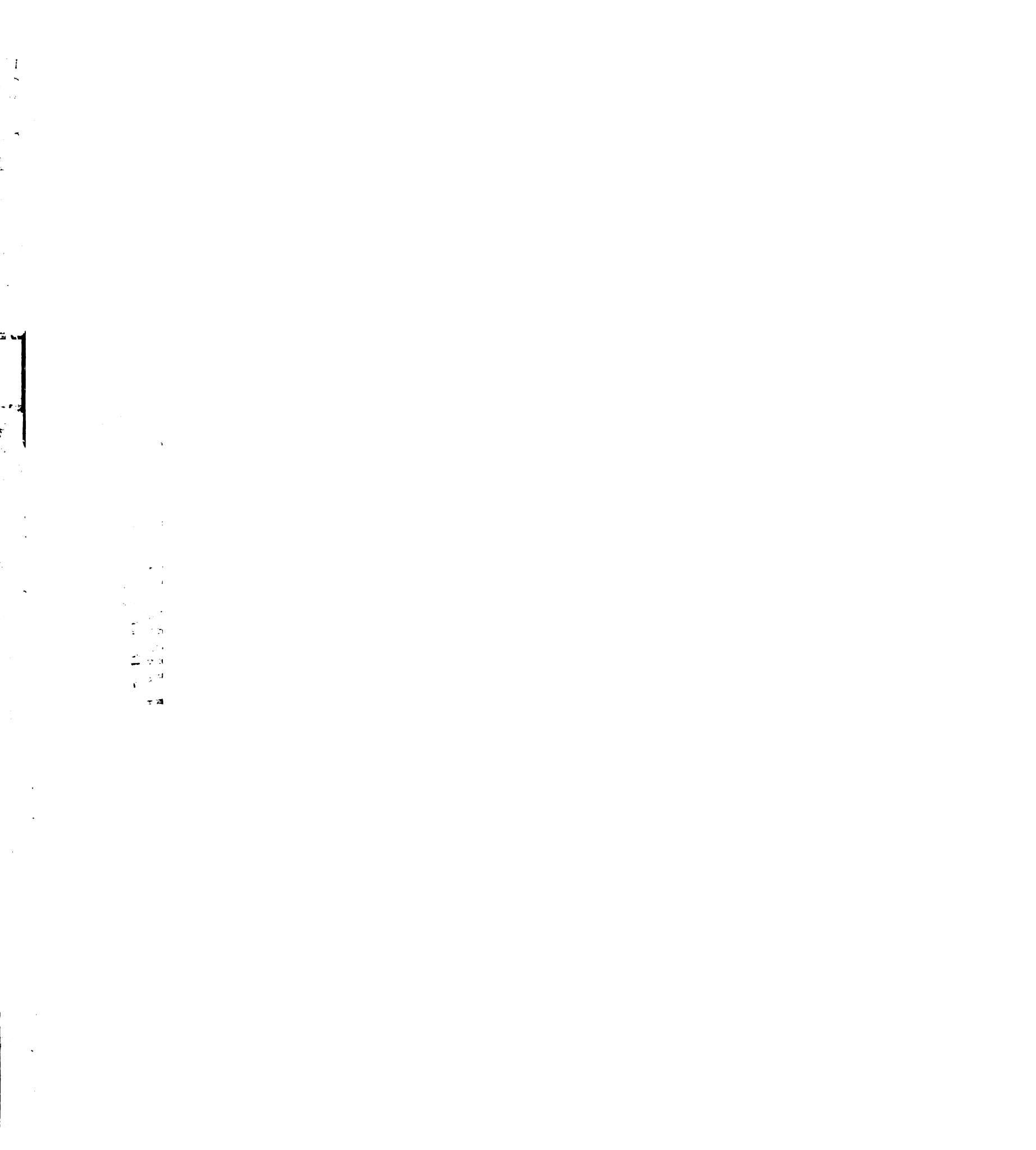
As this example also suggests, presenting the self at home may also be a way of protecting the home group from what they cannot accept or may not wish to comprehend about their departed member's identity or way of life. The interplay between "accommodating the home group" and protecting the self will be discussed at length in the next section.





As a strategy, reconstructing a former identity implies not only self-awareness, but some degree of intentionality. However, there were instances when the self at home was not deliberately adopted, but emerged as a consequence of the context itself. For example, upon arrival, the self at home may be assumed immediately, automatically, and with little effort, even "the minute you step off the plane." Another possibility is that the self at home emerges gradually over the course of hours or days spent interacting in old familiar ways in old familiar settings with parents, siblings, friends, or others with whom one has shared the past. This process of easing into a former identity has the quality of assuming a comfortable old persona, a self "at home."

As a strategy for presentation of self, the self at home was a reconstruction of a former identity located in time and place, and one that emphasized identity continuity rather than change. Although constructed with various degrees of intentionality, enacting the self at home was never described as a form of play-acting for if this was so, it would involve a degree of role distance (Goffman, 1961) the informants did not possess. On the contrary, several informants described a precarious interplay between the self at home with other contemporary identities. The ways in which present and past identities competed for dominance

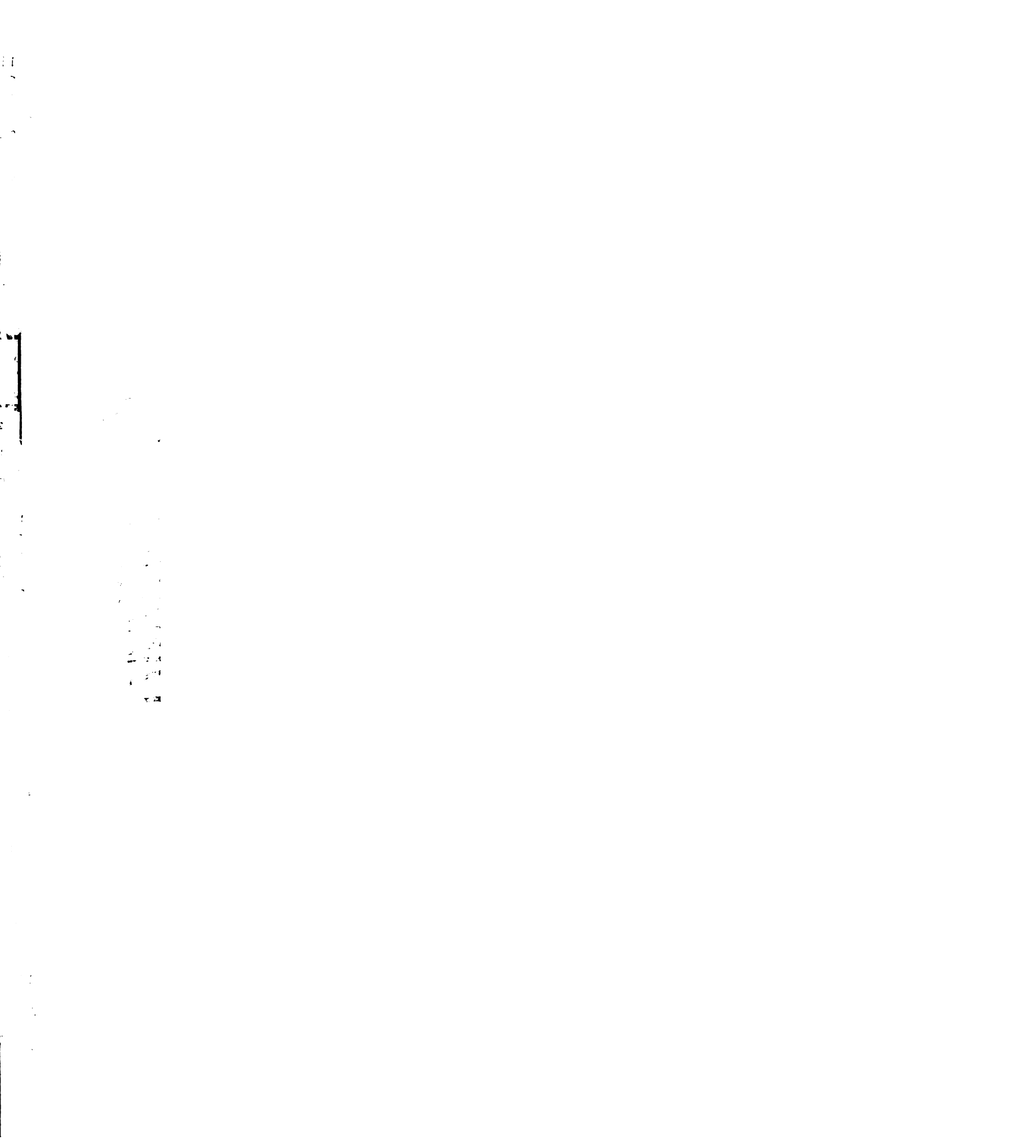


testified to the power the home context exerted on their sense of self.

Closely related to strategies for presentation of self upon the homecoming were strategies which were developed in order to protect the self. This lens for viewing the relationship between home, time, and identity and the frequently conflicting desire to protect the home group will be considered next.

#### Protecting the Self versus Accommodating the Homefolk

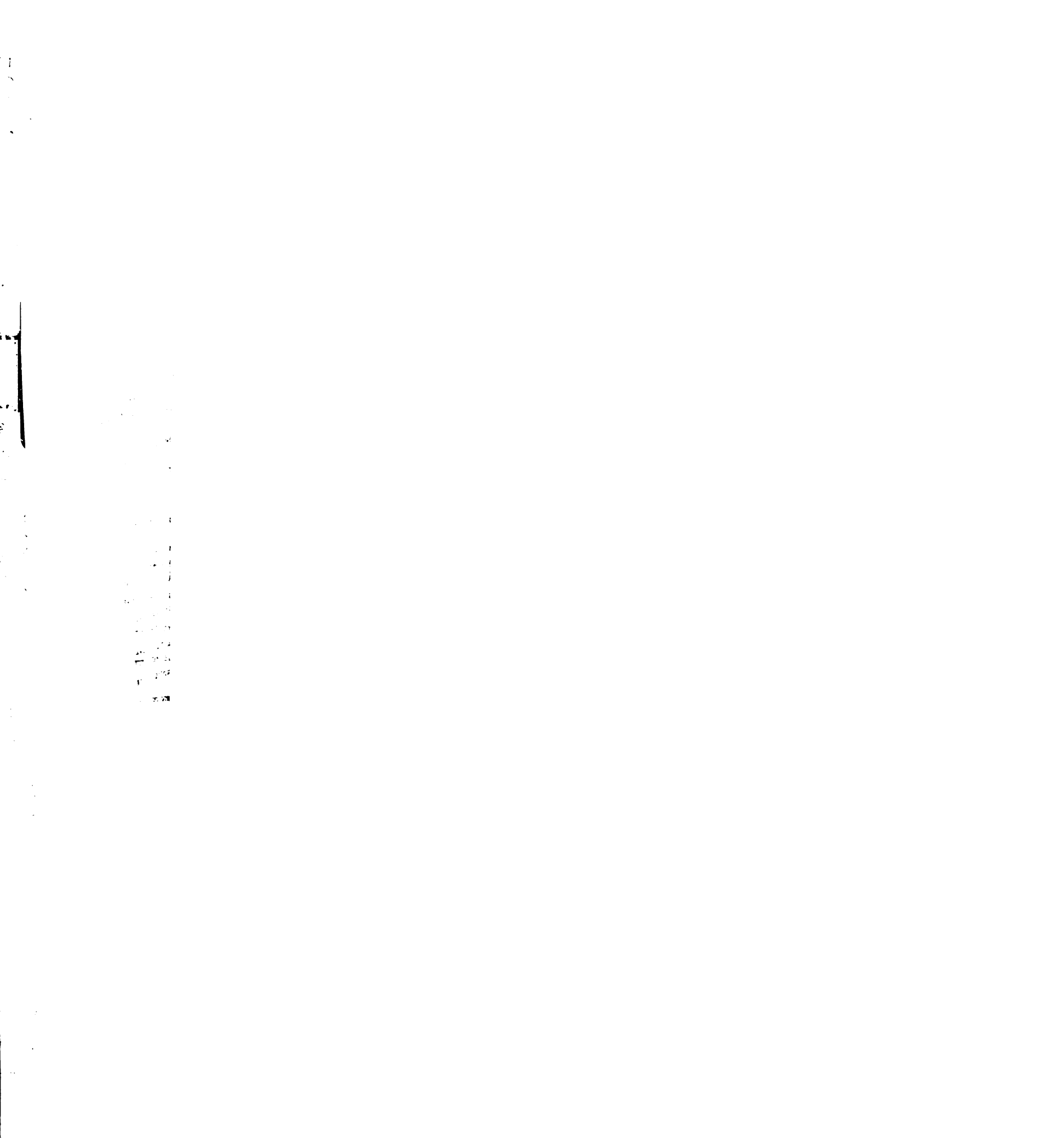
Homecomers developed various strategies for protecting themselves from problematic home contexts or problematic identities in the home setting. A problematic home context could be perceived to exist as a consequence of present or past conditions. For example, the homecomer may have experienced abusive or neglectful conditions as a child, or emotionally taxing homecomings in the past. Further, occasionally there were unpleasant situations that developed among family members during the most recent visit that resulted in the homecomer adopting various measures of self protection upon subsequent visits. Others believed it was necessary to develop ways to protect new identities or to prevent former ones from resurfacing.



Despite the various measures that informants took to protect themselves upon coming home, there was also a desire to conform to parental expectations or to protect the home group in various ways. For example one informant, a former debutante who had changed considerably since she was presented to society over twelve years ago, wanted to protect her parents from potentially embarrassing social situations. When I asked her why, she responded that she often felt on display when she was at home. She remarked that they would "trot me around" and she felt she would "embarrass them if I act like me" (emphasis mine). In this regard, it was interesting how informants contrasted the strategies they developed for protecting self or others with what Turner (1981) referred to as the "real self." According to Turner, by being able to take oneself as an object, the social actor is able to

distinguish among the various feelings and actions that emanate from my person. Some emanations I recognize as expressions of the real self; others seem foreign to me (1981:989).

In his 1981 AJS article, Turner also compares institutional and impulsive loci of the self. The former associates the real self with the pursuit of social imperatives, while the latter rejects them as artificial and externally imposed. Clearly homecomers who believed it was necessary to protect their homelike from their "real self"



were responding to institutional constraints by presenting a self they considered to be in some way a departure from who they really were.

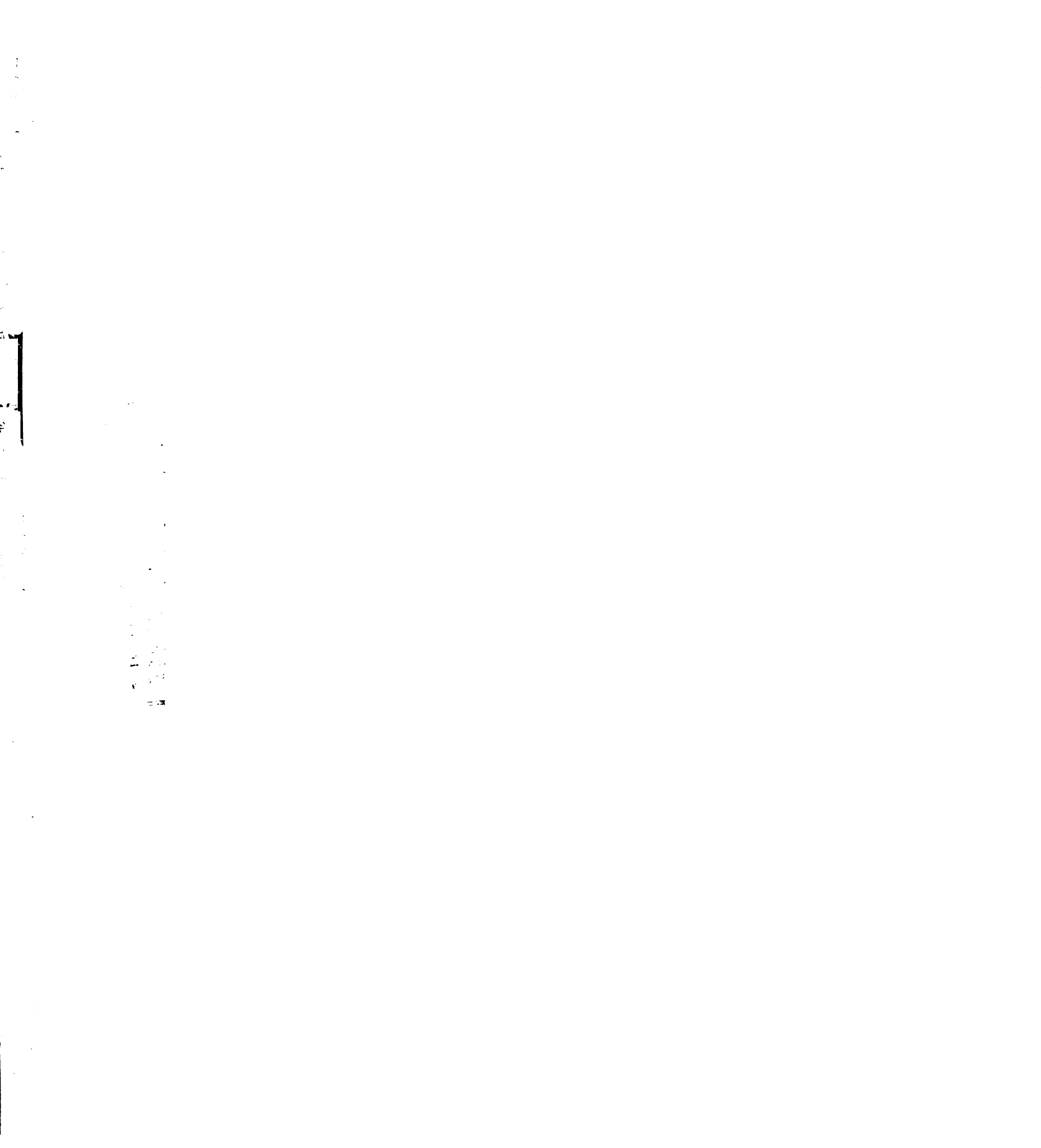
To return to the case example described in the paragraph above, this informant illustrated her point by telling the following story about attending a Christmas party with the son of a friend of her parents:

I went to a Christmas party with Tim. And I had known Tim for years. He is about my age and a real sweetheart. He is an architect in New York City and has always been "Mr. Straight Arrow." And he came to this party with his hair down to his shoulders and pulled back into a pony-tail. And that was the talk of the Christmas party. "Look at Tim," "look what's happened to him." You know? That was a big deal. And I could tell from my parents, that they felt sorry for his parents, because they had to be exposed like this by their son, coming back with a pony tail.

So it's really more protective of my parents. Not only how they would handle it (her "real self") in regard to me, but how they would look? They would lose face if there was anything strange about their daughter. There is really a lot of judgement about people based on their offspring.

Of course in many situations, it was in the informant's interest to conform to parental expectations since a consequence of non-conformity would be to risk their disapproval, anger, or rejection.





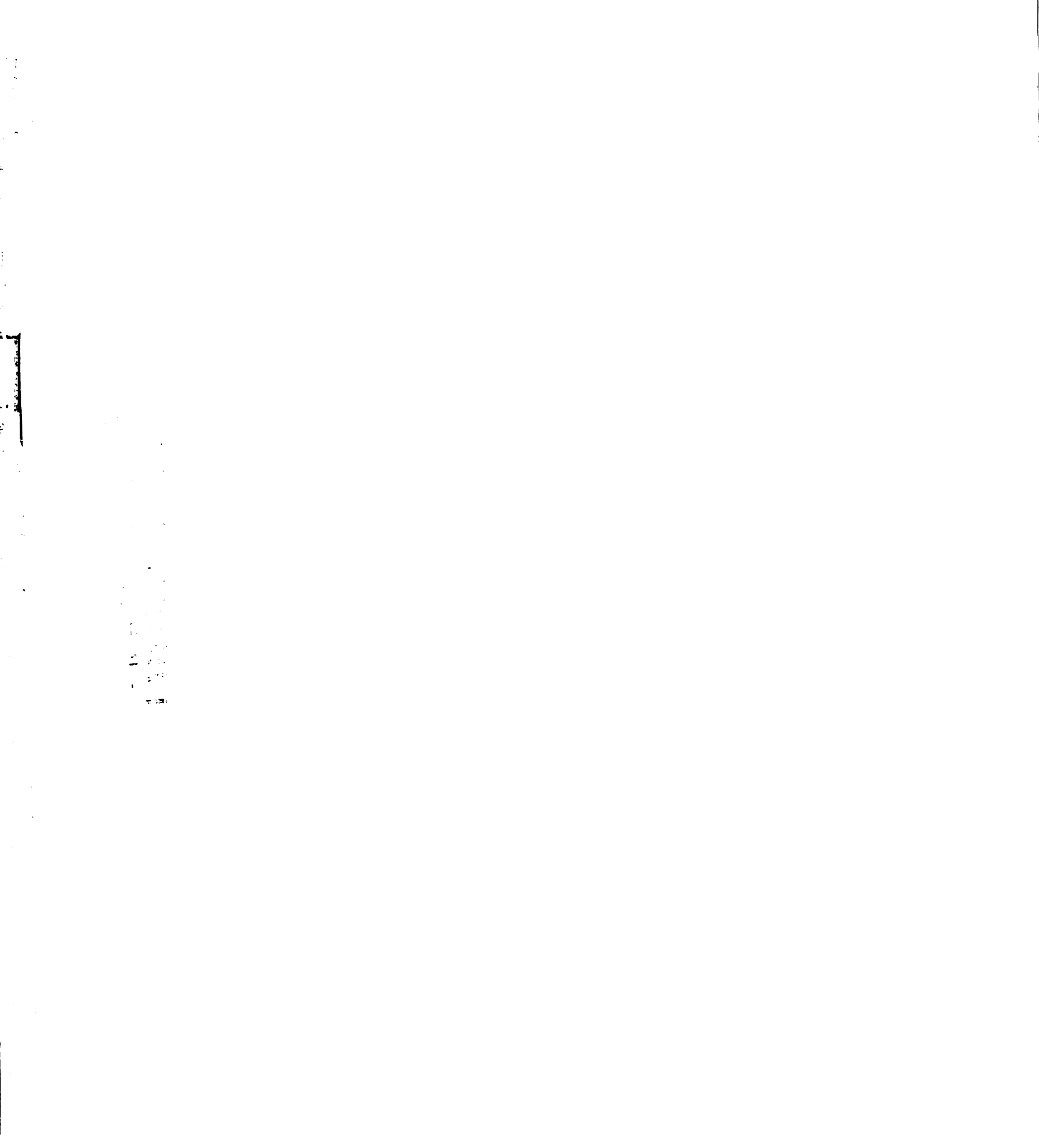
A wide variety of strategies and tactics were used to balance accommodating the family with various means of protecting the self. They are categorized below.

#### Going Along versus Drawing the Line

The homecomers did decide on the limits to which they were willing to go in accommodating the family, and where they would draw the line. For example, the informant who returned a Lesbian fell in to her mother's daily schedule and when her father returned from his trip, helped them prepare for their family vacation. Like her father, she seemingly went along with the family strategy of conducting "business as usual" by not talking about her new identity. On one hand, she was not forcing the issue and believed she was giving her parents, her mother particularly, "time to adjust." In fact, she commented at one point that this strategy may have backfired. She said;

I was doing what my mother asked me to, and I'm going along with giving her time and space, although it seems less of a brilliant idea as time goes by, because I was thinking that I was giving her time to adjust to it, and I think she was thinking that time was going to make me change my mind instead (her emphasis).

On the other hand, this informant had drawn the line in terms of how far she was willing to accommodate her family. That is, she decided she would no longer alter her



appearance upon returning home or remain closeted in other ways.

Another informant, the daughter of an actively alcoholic father and codependent mother (her terms), mentioned that in the past she had "colluded" with her parents in various ways. She remarked,

When I have gone home in the past, I got involved with their problems with their relationship--talk to my father about his drinking--and my mother always wants to talk about it, confide in me about their relationship.

During her most recent homecoming, she did "go along" by engaging in mutual interaction strategies, including the practice of "keeping secrets" and not discussing any matters of substance. She did, however, "draw the line" by refusing to go to bars and drink with her father. Although she was no longer willing to become involved in these dynamics, this strained and limited her interaction with her parents even more.

Finally, another informant whose father was physically abusive and an active alcoholic, indicated that although she still felt she would "go along" by gathering with her family periodically, she "drew the line" by not tolerating any form of violent behavior whether it was directed at her or toward

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her two brothers. As soon as the situation inevitably developed, she would leave. Her current strategy, however, was not return at all.

#### Timing and Structuring Time

The issue of social-psychological protection, the need to guard or shield one self from potential harm or injury, was perceived prior to the actual visit. One strategy that was mentioned by several was timing. That is, informants indicated planning their visits at opportune times. For example, one informant always returned during the Christmas holiday knowing that would be a time when siblings and other relatives would be coming and going. The presence of others, as well as the preparation for and participation in rituals associated with the occasion, served as a buffer between the homecomer and her mother and to reduce the amount of attention she would receive--attention which she wished to avoid. Another reported timing her visit to coincide with her high school reunion. As a consequence, the primary focus of her visit would be on the reunion, and less time would be allotted to her family. Still another informant planned her visit so that half the time would be spent at her family home and the other half would involve accompanying her parents on a family vacation with her brother and his family. She said, "My hope was that by



spending half the time in one locale, and half the time in the other, it would break up the tension of being home for that long."

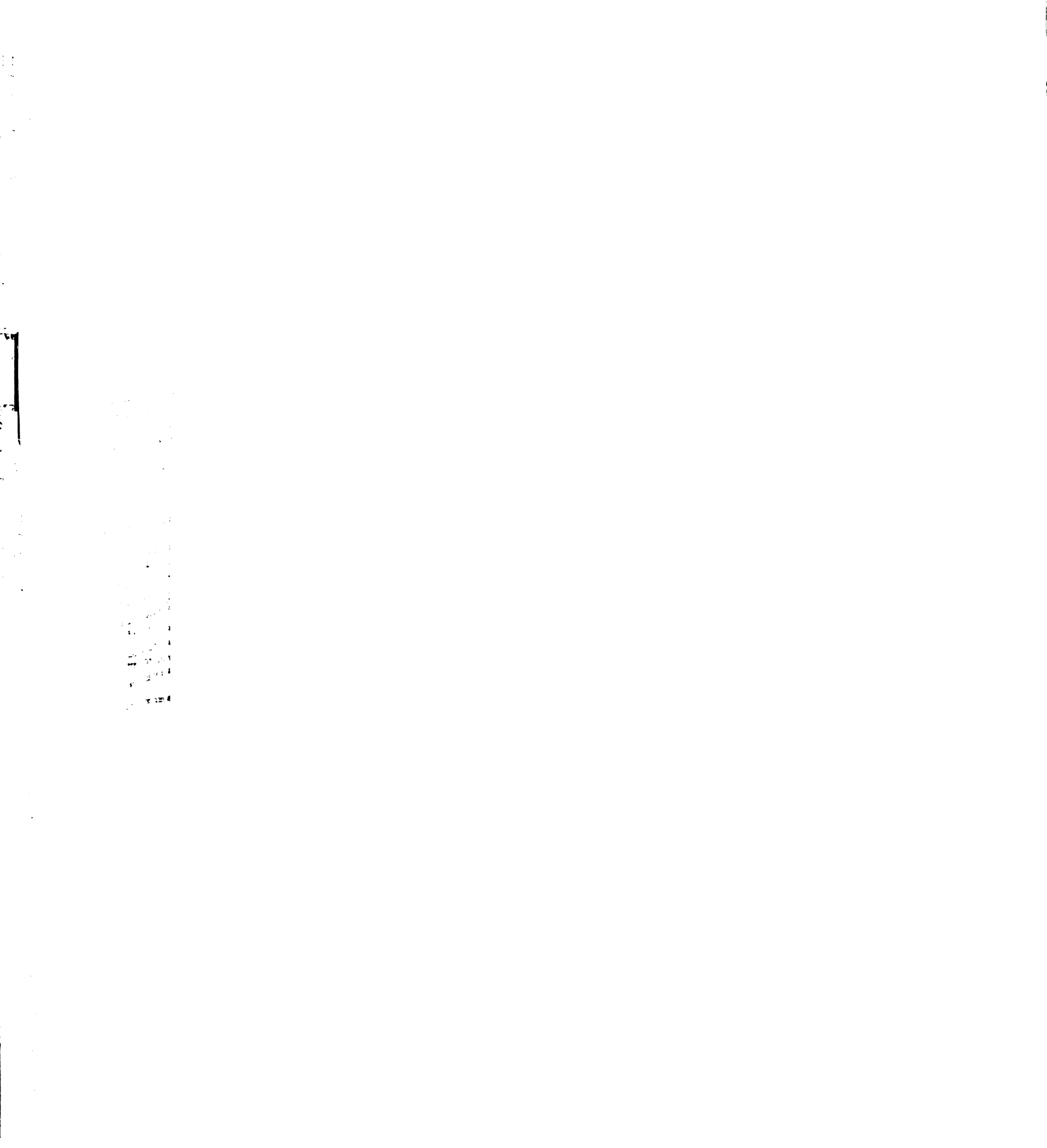
Closely related to timing was the desire to control the structure of one's time. Structuring one's time was accomplished in a variety of ways. They included "being on the go," that is, visiting relatives or friends who had remained in the area or inviting them for a visit. One informant sought refuge at the home of a friend for an afternoon to escape the irritation she was feeling with her parents, the fatigue of being constantly on the go, and the Texas heat. She said:

I stayed at Steve's house and he had a pool. And I was in that pool I think for 4 hours, doing laps or lying on my back, or anything just to work it out. I wanted to feel like I could just "veg out" and let it all go.

When I asked her how she felt about needing to structure her time, she responded;

Well it's a real shame. I mean I regret that that has to happen. It feels uncomfortable for me to know that that's what is happening, you know? That I feel that need. It's not that I want to give it up and see how it's going to be if we relate, 'cause I don't know that we can really do that very well. But I also feel a real pressure to try to do that gradually, because I'm tired of playing games, and I'm tired of hiding things, and of not being able to be who I am at home. That doesn't mean I can do it. I mean I'm tired of having to do it.

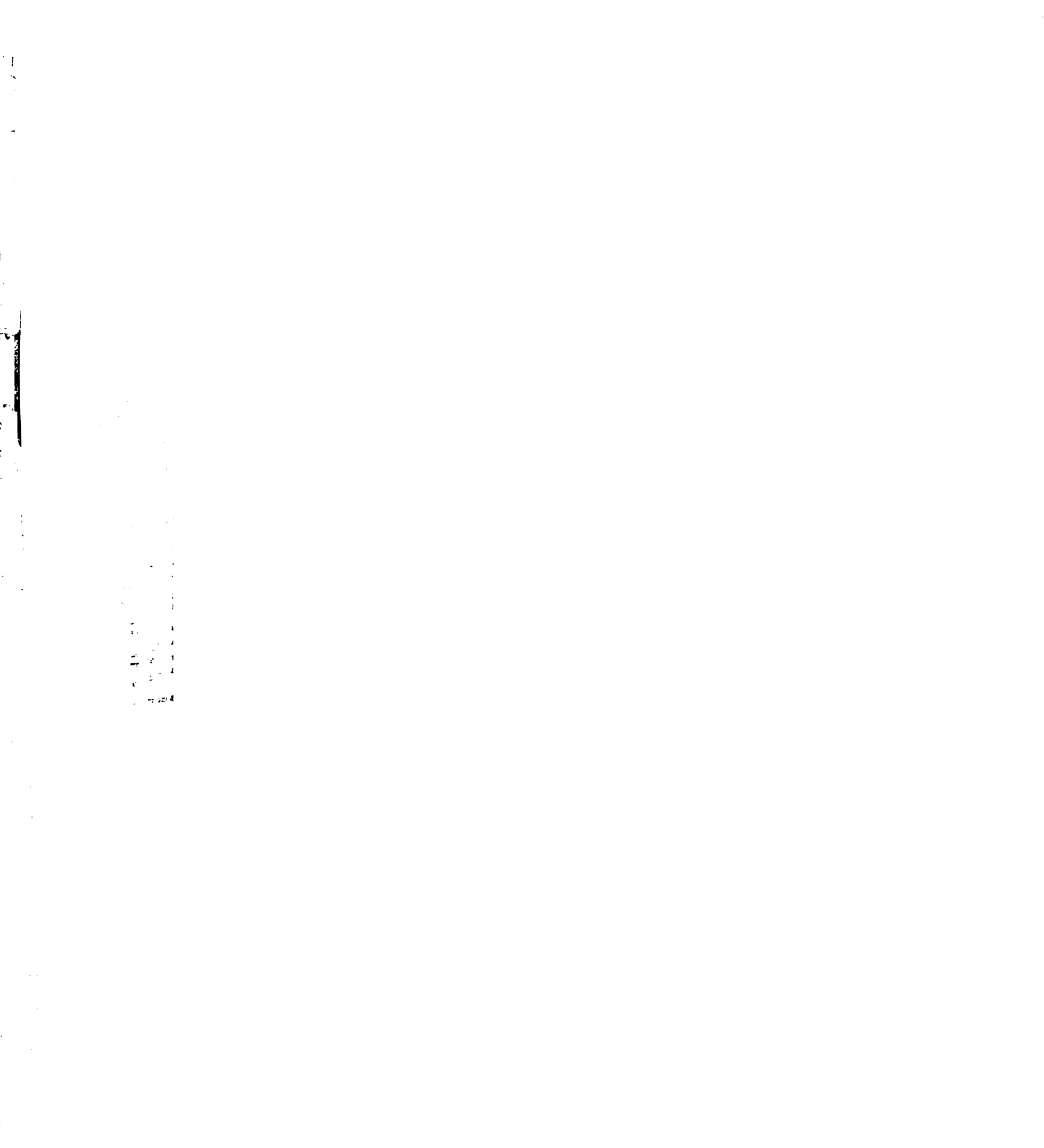




Multiple strategies were, of course, developed. For example, the informant cited above also described participating in an activity with her mother that did not require an intimate level of interaction. Shopping was a diversion and something they could do together. She discussed this strategy in response to a question I asked her about whether her parents showed any interest in her life. She answered this way:

Not that much. They never really have that much. My mother brought up something once about my job, and it's the first time I remember in 7 1/2 years (of employment) I've heard her ask me anything about what I do. You know, how it is for me, what do I feel working with inmates in jails (where she is a social worker). We don't talk about those things. We shop. (laughs) Seriously, my mother and I shop. There are malls everywhere, and we have always done that. And I was trying to figure out why we do that and realized for the first time that it is more comfortable to shop with her because we don't have to deal with anything. All we deal with is shopping. The most serious problems we have are what department store to go in next, what looks good, and what doesn't look good. Shit like that. It's just a way to divert our attention. And I noticed when I was with her for too long, and we weren't shopping, I got real anxious and I wanted to go shopping! (laughs) I didn't need anything. I just wanted to go shopping because it was something to do, you know? Rather than sit there and twiddle our thumbs, or heaven forbid, we should talk.

Thus, although timing one's visits when others would be present, structuring time by visiting friends and other relatives, and participating in activities such as shopping



served other functions, they were also strategies which helped homecomers preserve harmonious relationships with family members and pass over potentially difficult situations they wished to avoid.

#### Maintaining Ties With Other Identities

Strategies to protect or fortify the self included bringing home various objects which served as symbols of other identities and ways of life. These items included, for example, articles of clothing and jewelry, books, and music. One informant took all her women's music tapes home with her. She laughed as she told me, "I would run around with my earphones on, getting my dose!" When I asked her to explain why she brought objects home with her, she responded that during the past several visits it had been important for her to take "a piece of who I am with me." She went on to say:

So I always have my little magic collection of things that remind me of who I am when I'm in danger of losing it. 'Cause I do feel in danger of, my family is so good at making me disappear that I start to disappear to myself too. So I take things along that remind me of who I am and who is important to me. ...just little objects remind me of who I am and that people care about me as I am, not as this other person my parents conjure up.

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Two women brought their personal diaries so they could make entries when they were home. These entries served not only to record feelings, experiences and various impressions of home, but also to connect or engage in symbolic interaction with one's real self.

Another way to maintain ties with another identity was by telephoning friends associated with their current residence and way of life. The informants also mentioned strategies for protecting the self which involved various emotional maneuvers. These are discussed in the section on "emotion work" in Chapter 7.

### Summary

This chapter has analyzed the relationship between home, time and identity with specific reference to constructing, presenting, and protecting the self upon the occasion of returning to one's home of origin. In it various stages of identity development were considered and whether or not they were problematic in the home context. If former or present identities were perceived to be a problem, various strategies were discussed in terms of self presentation and self protection. Strategies and tactics designed to protect the self were contrasted with various measures informants took to accommodate the homefolk. In so



doing, homecomers also attempted to remain true to what they considered to be their "real self." An analysis of the real self and the self at home is presented in Chapter 8.



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## Chapter 7

### EMOTION WORK AND RELATIONSHIP WORK

#### Indications of Acceptance and Feelings of Belonging

In this section I examine various conditions through which feelings of belonging are created, sustained, or rendered problematic in the context of the homecoming. In Chapter 5, I used excerpts from Maya Angelou's All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1986) as a case example of the symbolic homecoming. On one level, establishing residence in Africa could have been considered a homecoming since the continent was Angelou's historic homeland. However, Angelou did not feel accepted by native Africans and it was not until she experienced a series of mistaken identities that her feelings were transformed and she felt as if she had indeed come home. The critical events involved in this transformation were gestures of recognition as an African tribeswoman, indications of acceptance by native Africans, and the feelings of belonging these encounters produced.

Under certain conditions, one's home of origin is associated feelings of belonging to certain groups (the family, neighborhood, or community) and an association with a specific place. Under other conditions feelings of

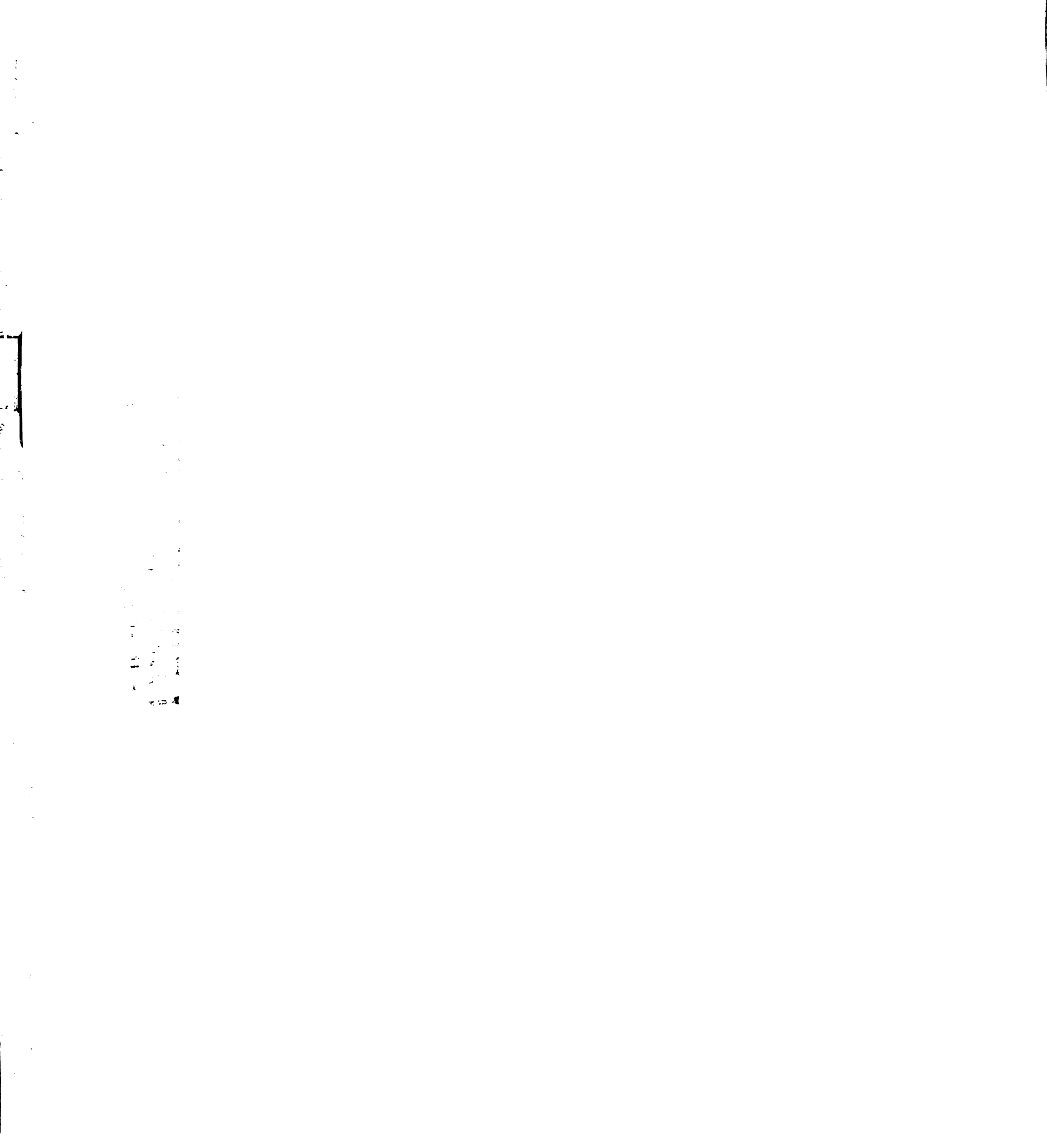
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belonging may be mixed or problematic. For example, homecomers may feel they still are a part of the racial/ethnic community within which they were raised, but not experience the same connection in their relationships with family members. The neighborhood or community in which one was raised may have changed beyond recognition, so that feelings of attachment to place may be strained, tenuous, or abandoned. Still another possibility is that some people may have never felt they belonged to a particular place or a bond with members of their family, past or present.

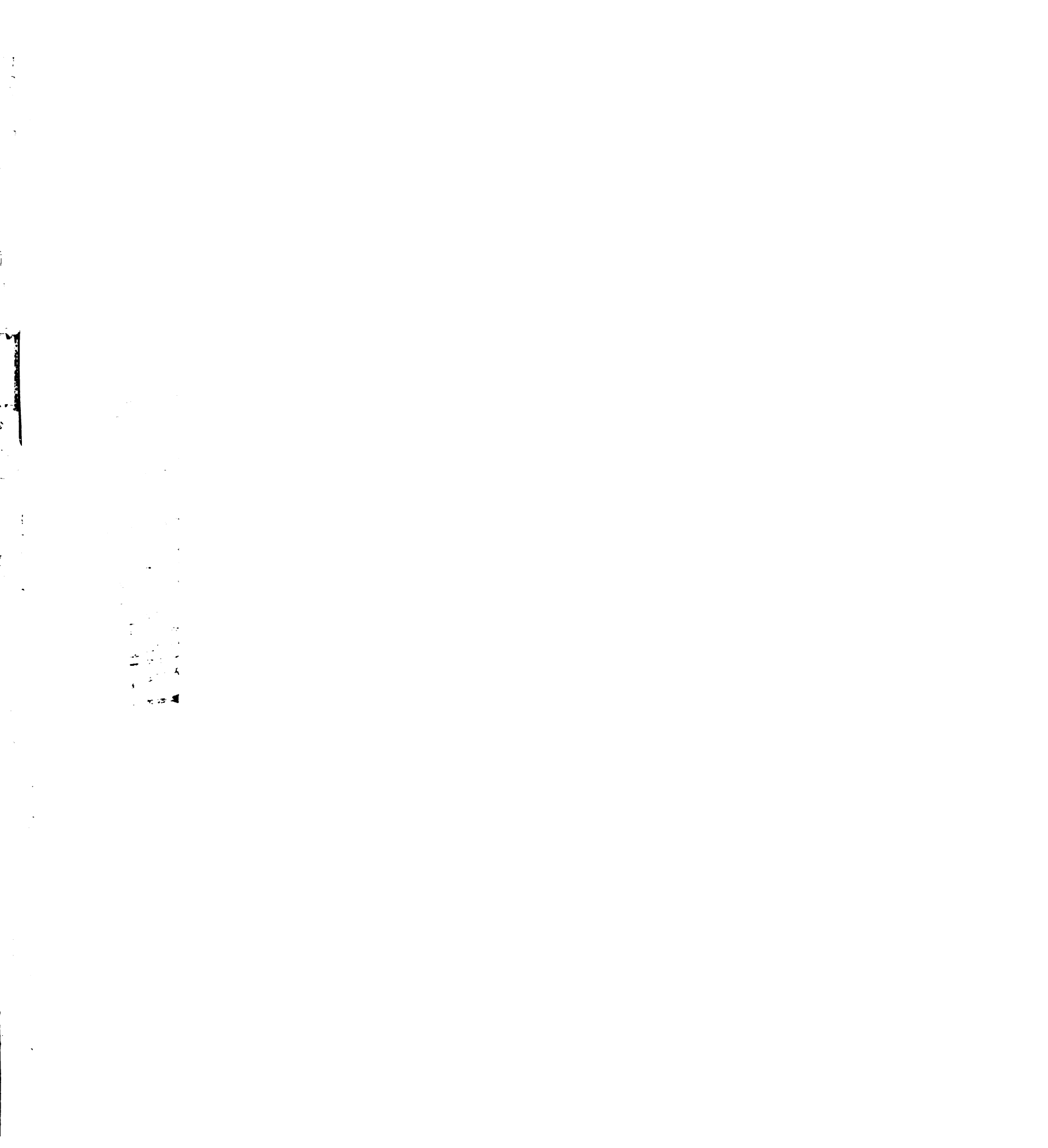
#### Relationships with Homefolk

Upon coming home, one may seek to renew family ties and reexperience feelings of belonging may be sought or expected, granted or withheld, received or rejected. An interview with a woman in her early forties provided an illustration of coming home when acceptance and belonging are expected, granted, and embraced. The occasion for her return was a large family gathering that was planned to coincide with the community's annual homecoming celebration. An aunt and uncle's wedding anniversary party had also been scheduled when everyone would be present. This informant was excited about returning to Poplar Bluff since she had spent many summers there as a child living with her father's family.



When I asked her about the nature of her connection to Poplar Bluff, she responded by describing her relationships with members of her family, past and present, and her desire to renew the bonds of love she felt for them. She also mentioned meaningful conversations she had with members of her family and discovering new facets of their personalities. Furthermore, she liked to listen to her relatives and neighbors reminisce about growing up in the 1920s and 1930s and what their lives were like then. Under conditions such as this, the informant recreated feelings of closeness among family members in the present through the interactions she described and the ways in which she talked about her homecoming.

An example of gestures extended and rejected was provided by the same informant. She explained that her mother no longer felt like she was a member of her father's family despite their reassurance and repeated attempts to include her in family gatherings. Her mother had divorced her father when she was a little girl. He had since remarried and divorced. Although the informant's mother had continued to have contact with her ex-husband and former in-laws over the years, and despite the best efforts of his family, she could not share the feeling of belonging of a homecomer.



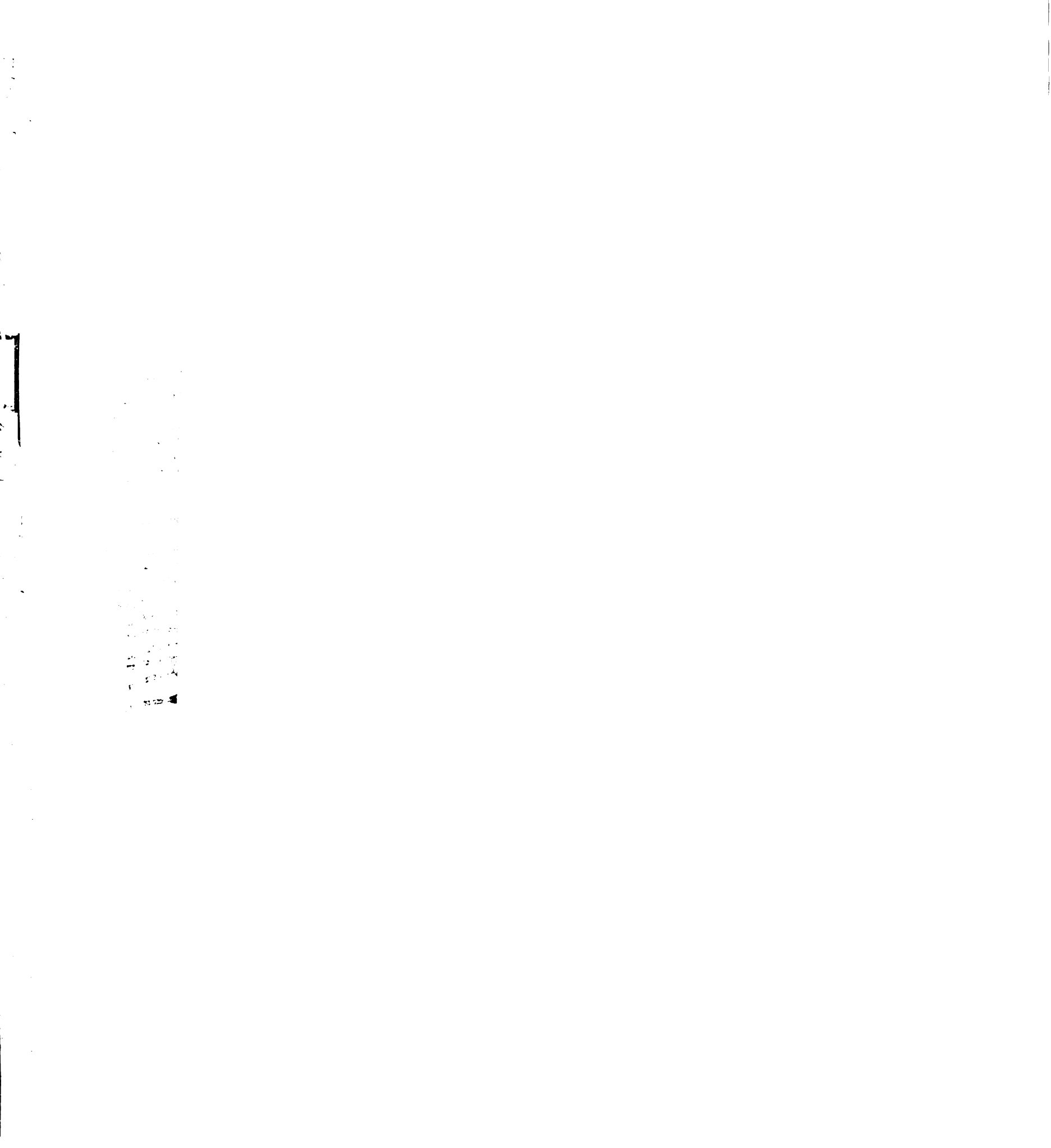
In contrast, an example of acceptance sought and denied was provided by a woman, now in her early seventies, who returned to Sweden to see her brother and other relatives. Although she had not seen him in four years her brother was important to her for she considered him to be the only living link with their deceased parents. In the interview, the informant repeatedly emphasized her disappointment with her brother and their relationship. One issue focused on being treated like a guest instead of a member of the family. She said,

Well, I think the main thing was that they are treating me like a guest. I want to be part of the family. I want to help with the dishes, I want to go with them to the store, and I want to sit down and talk about old times when I go home. And none of this is done. It's just like I would be royalty when I come home. And I've talked to them about that before, that I would like to be more included in the family and everything, but they still treat me like a guest.

This informant's interpretation of her brother's efforts to make her feel special, particularly after she had asked him not to be treated her in this manner, made her feel like an outsider instead of a family member.

Two other informants also had similar experiences. One remarked that she often felt "on display" whenever she returned home. All three informants also observed that a variety of social activities were often scheduled whenever they returned. They believed that one consequence of these





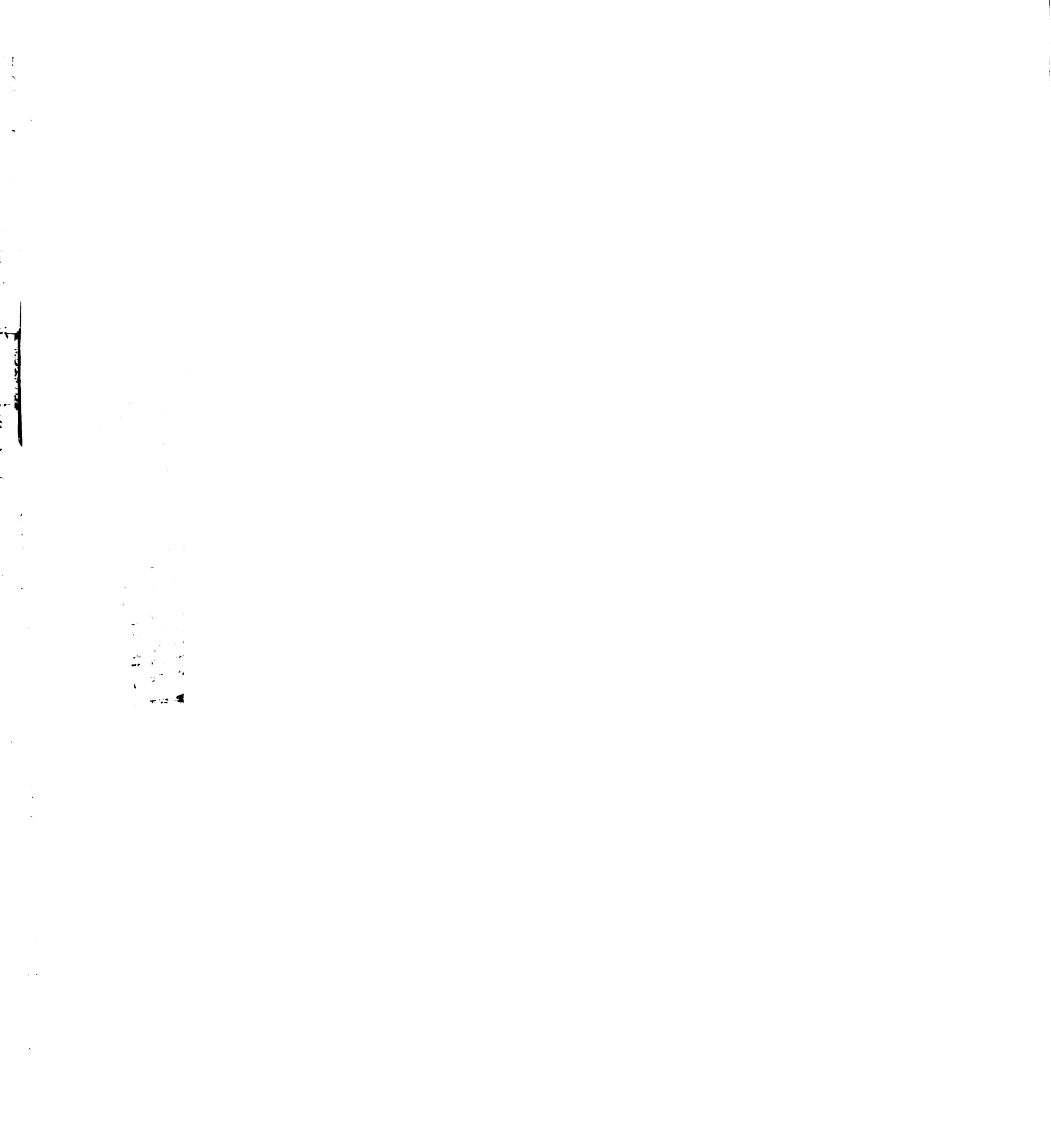
efforts was to create or sustain an emotional distance which prevented them from restoring intimacy.

These forms of emotional distancing had always been the case for some, but not for others. Like the women quoted in the previous chapter who were not asked questions about their daily lives, the Swedish woman reported that her brother did not inquire about her life, her recent travels, or other things that were important to her. Rather, the conversation was superficial and focused on local matters. For this informant, however, these forms of emotional distancing had not always been the norm. Rather she believed her brother had withdrawn from her:

My brother and I used to be so close, even though there are six years between us. We used to be able to take a boat trip or go sailing and talk. And um, so we have grown apart. And that disappoints me, because I don't feel that I have grown apart (her emphasis).

Acceptance may also be superficial and conditional. For example, another informant, a woman in her thirties, explained that her family continually gave her mixed messages and no one really said that they were thinking. She said:

So verbally you are going to get, "You're wonderful and we love you just like you are," and "You can be anything that you want and we will always love you." And the nonverbal message you are getting is, "You better tow the line." (emphasis mine)

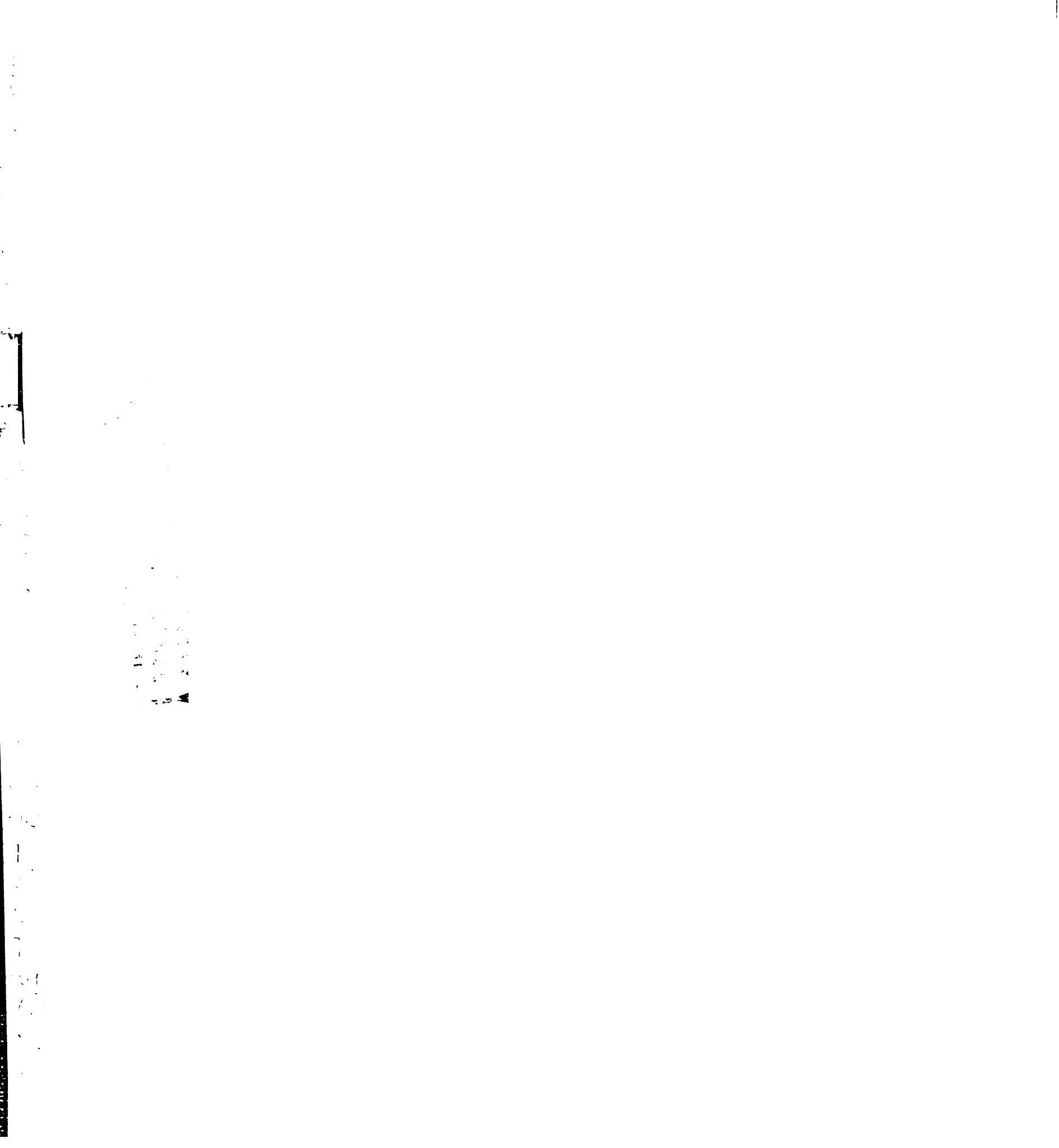


This sort of interaction pattern had several consequences. Among them were conforming to family members' expectations in order to feel accepted, even though doing so produced inner conflict. She also said she would vacillate between disbelieving what was being said, and when she did detect some sincerity on their part, she would begin to doubt her own perceptions and become thoroughly confused.

In a paper on "Evocative Transactions and Social Order," Couch (1990) states that relationships need to be reaffirmed from time to time if they are to endure. For example, if people engaged in friendship or romantic relationships do not periodically reconvene, the continuation of the relationship is jeopardized. Further, these relationships and others are constituted by evocative transactions. Although he does not define the concept of evocative transactions per se, Couch states (1990:3),

When human beings interact they do not merely discourse, they also display and note affect. Communications in all face-to-face encounters is multilayered; it is evocative and discursive.

The homecoming is an event of periodic affirmation, an occasion for the social production of evocative transactions among friends and family members who have been separated for a time. The interaction described above, which varies

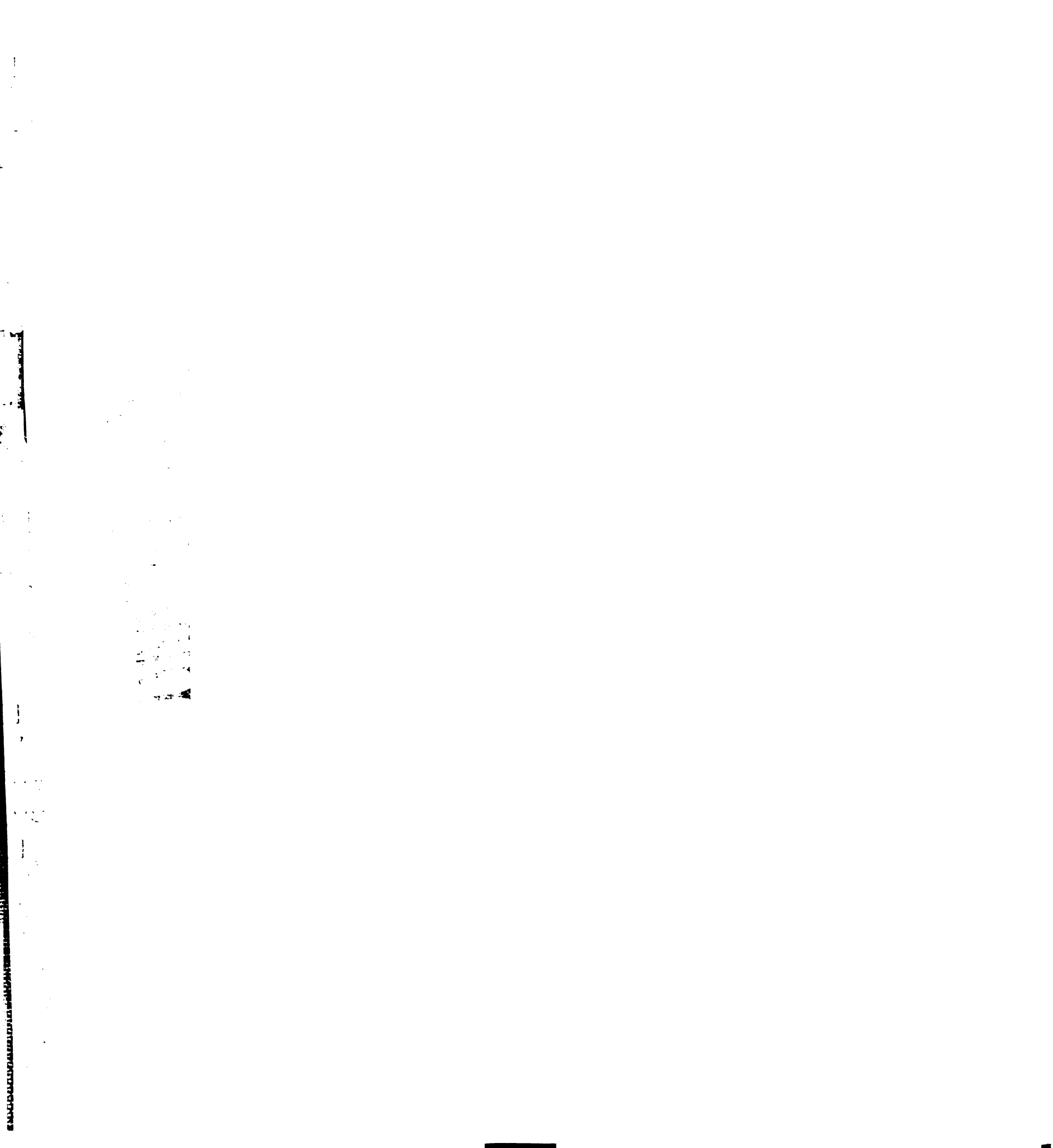


conditions of acceptance and subsequent feelings of belonging, are evocative as well as discursive. These transactions affirmed family relationships or rendered them tenuous. The precarious nature of these relationships may prompt one to ask, "If this is the case, then why come home at all?"

### Obligation and Guilt

Homecomings evoke a variety of affective states and feelings can range along a continuum from mild to strong and positive to negative. These feelings may be associated with events which occurred in the past, that are on-going, or created in the present. As illustrated above, the interactions among family members may affirm a sense of belonging, evoke discomfort or pain. Nevertheless, these latter conditions were insufficient reasons for discontinuing the homecoming for almost all of the people I interviewed.

One explanation for continuing to return home that was given by several informants was out of a sense of obligation. That is, they felt duty bound to visit their parents periodically in order to conform to parental (and cultural) expectations. Further, when visits were irregular or delayed, the homecomers also experienced feelings of

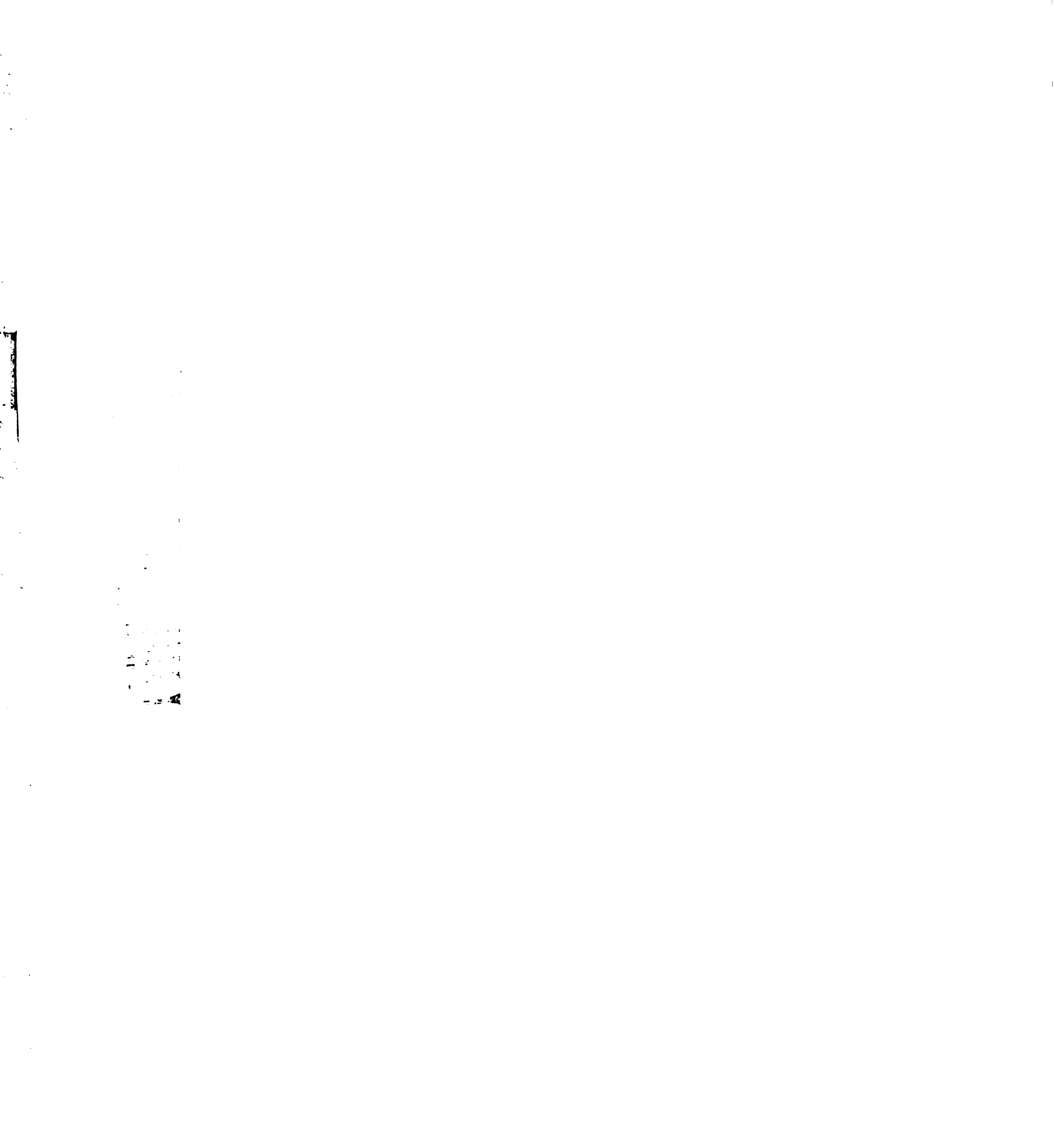


guilt. For example, when I asked one informant to explain the nature of the obligation she felt, she spoke for many when she said, "I know this is what my mother expects and I feel guilty if I don't go home. (pauses) For three whole days--that's it. I just can't stand it [her emphasis]."

These feelings exist within a larger demographic and cultural context. That is, geographic mobility is a prominent feature of life in late twentieth century America. In addition, there are a multitude of events and activities that compete for adult leisure time. These social forces may conflict with the cultural expectation to maintain close ties among family members through regular, periodic visits to one's family home, particularly when relationships between homecomer and homefolk are not close. In fact, the main source of the guilt they expressed may be found in their analysis of their relationship with their families of origin. According to my informants, these relationships were not characterized by intimacy or emotional closeness although they recognized their parents may have described them as such.

When the informant I quote above was asked to elaborate on the guilt she felt, she indicated it was related to the lack of closeness that had always existed between her mother and herself, her failure to live up to her mother's





expectations of her, and the recognition that her mother was growing old. She said,

Well, my mother and I aren't real close. We are not distant, but there is not a real strong bond. And I'm an only child. She is an only child. So I'm the only family she has. I'm sure she has cousins... but she never kept in touch with (them). I'm it. I'm it. (her emphasis)

How does the guilt come in?

I know there are certain expectations (she has) of me which I haven't met, and I don't know if I ever will. I'm not trying to. But it's difficult because I [pausing], she is getting older, so I think I should see her more, or spend more time with her, and there is always tension between us unless there is somebody else around.

Several informants mentioned their concern about their parents aging. This concern, and their awareness of their duty as children to care for aging parents, appeared to intensify their guilt.

These issues were stated in slightly different terms by another informant. When I asked her if she had a good trip home, she said,

I hated it! (laughs) I know why I only do it once a year. My mother said, "You don't get home often enough." And I said, "You know, Steve is going home for Christmas for the first time in 7 years. I get home a lot more often than a lot of people do." My mother said, "Well, Steve must not be as close to his family as you are to yours."



At another point in the interview the same informant observed she believed her mother equated physical proximity with emotional closeness. She went on to say:

If we were an emotionally close family, it wouldn't matter if I lived in Timbuktu, and if we weren't it wouldn't matter if I lived in Hot Springs (her parent's home). But she doesn't see that and I think she feels she is much closer to my brother and his wife because they live closer--three hours away.

These remarks appear to get at the heart of the matter. That is, while these homecomers believed they should return home, their relationships with family members made them reluctant to do so.

Despite their reluctance to return, feelings of disappointment, or unpleasant experiences associated with previous visits, several informants reported they went home with the hope that this time things would be different (that is, that their interactions would be pleasant or benign), although they did not really expect things to have changed. Thus while some expressed this form of sentimentality, very few people engaged in a nostalgic, rose-colored reconstruction of the past or expressed a preoccupation with it (See pages 137-143 and Davis, 1979). For many informants, the memories they associated with their homelife and past visits were still painful to recall. It did appear that as time went on, however, feelings of anger, sadness,

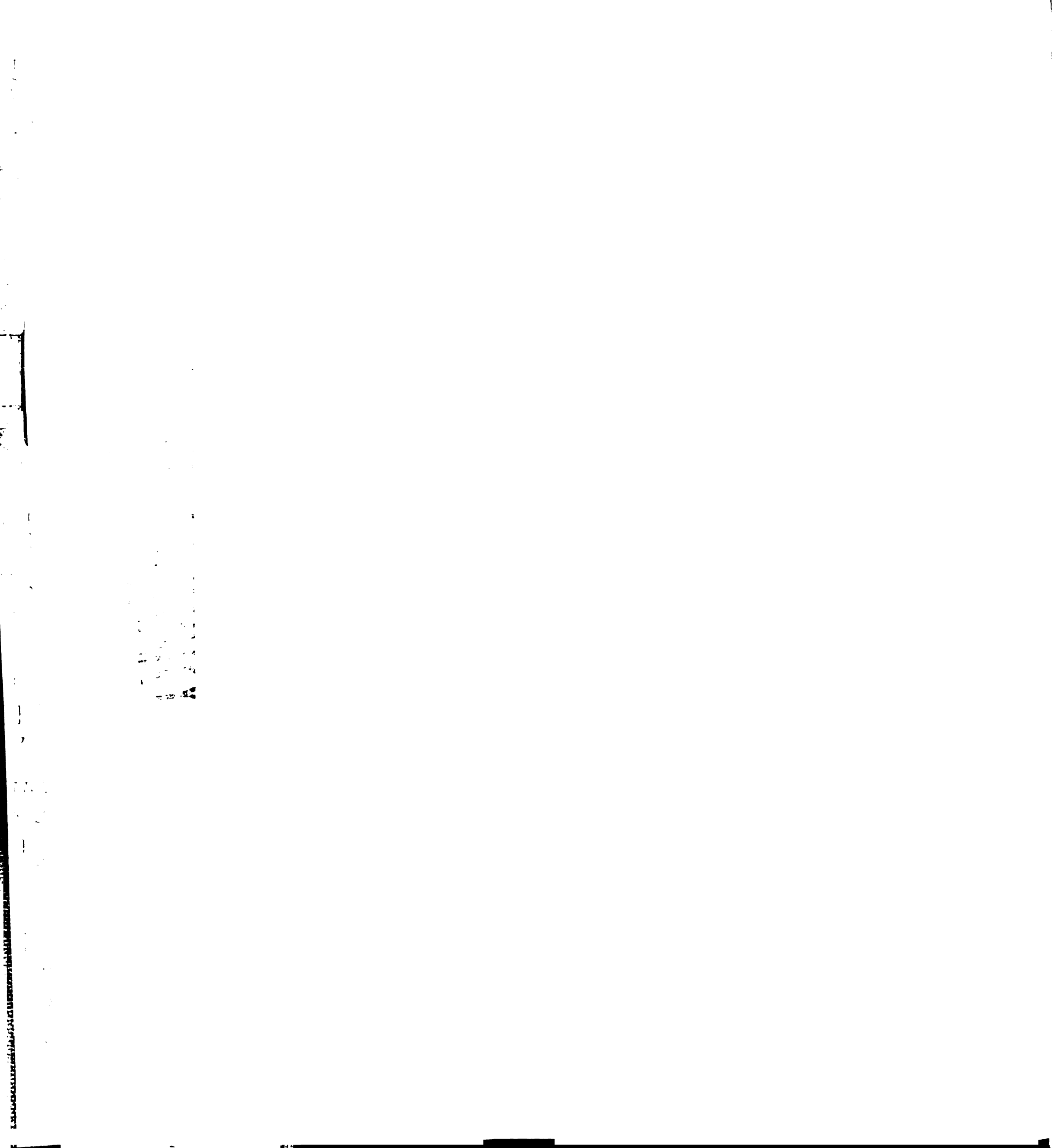
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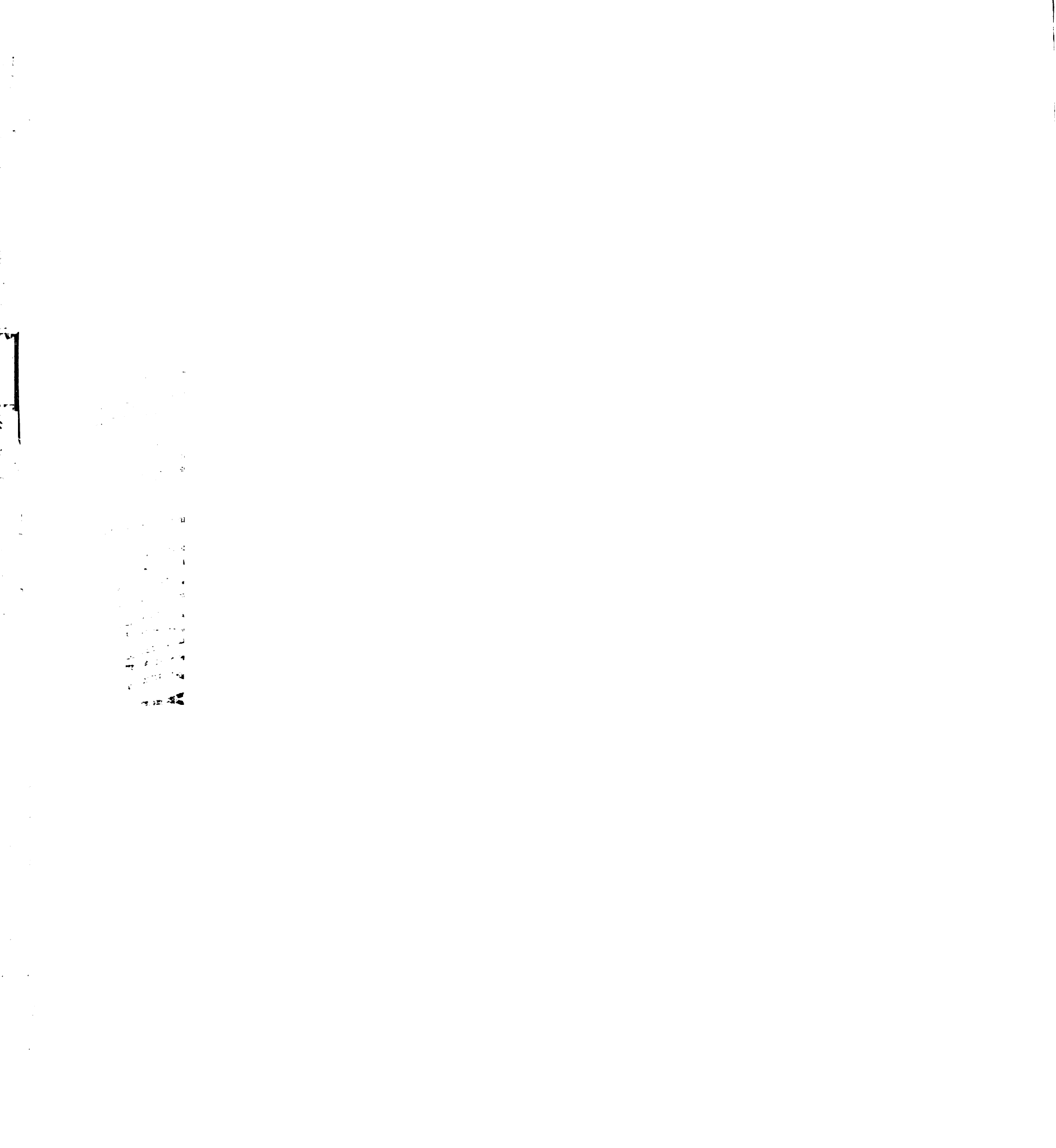
or loss would fade somewhat, and/or feelings of guilt at remaining away for an extended period would increase to the point where guilt overcame their reluctance to return.

### Emotion Work

In the process of conducting interviews on the homecoming, informants volunteered varying amounts of background information on the nature of their homelife while they were growing up. Several informants provided lengthy accounts of their childhood biographies.

Some informants had experienced a number of tragic events in the past and/or on-going family problems as adults. These included a mother's suicide, physical violence, neglect, parental alcoholism, and inappropriate sexual conduct. Another informant described a childhood that was characterized by emotional distance and veiled rejection. Furthermore, past homecomings were reported to have been unpleasant or otherwise difficult to endure. For many informants, these conditions set the stage for their recent homecoming and necessitated the development of strategies for self-protection (see Chapter 6). Further some went home with a desire to repair problematic relationships. I use the concept of "emotion work" developed by Hochschild (1983) to convey the ways homecomers managed





their feelings and/or the feelings of others upon coming home.

One form of emotion work was to generate feelings of detachment--the process of emotionally separating oneself from others though engaged in interaction with them. For example, one informant told me she deliberately adopted and maintained a detached perspective toward her parents in order to avoid feeling "torn apart," and to minimize the vulnerability she felt when she came home. Through constructing this emotional state, or what Hochschild would refer to as "everyday deep acting" (1983:42), she was able to attain the distance she required when interacting with either parent. She said,

This time I tried to maintain a pretty low profile and to keep out of their business. And I was not sure that was really an appropriate thing to do, but it felt very good because at least I wasn't getting caught up in what was going on (emphasis mine).

She paused, then continued:

I allowed myself to be more detached this time, whereas when I have gone home in the past, I got involved with their problems. And this time ... I didn't want to get involved, and I didn't get involved (her emphasis).

As the above quotation implies, detachment was also associated with establishing boundaries and developing new

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interaction rules. However, in so doing, the informant questions whether her actions breach what Hochschild calls "feeling rules."

According to Hochschild, feeling rules are "rules or norms according to which feelings may be judged appropriate to accompanying events" (1983:59). In the quotation above, for example, this informant is not sure it is acceptable to maintain a detached attitude when conventional wisdom would dictate that daughters should actively assist their parents in resolving family problems. As she indicates, however, her past efforts to help them created a great deal of emotional turmoil. Detachment then became an emotional safeguard to over-involvement.

In contrast to employing new interaction rules, another way emotion work was translated into self-conduct involved relying on old patterns of behavior. For example, although one informant had only recently acknowledged her outsider status within her family, this knowledge was not reflected in any notable changes in her behavior or her method of self-protection. When I asked this informant how she managed her relationship with her parents once her suspicions were confirmed, she responded:

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I did what I always do, pretty much, externally, you know. I went along with them. And on the inside I felt differently, but on the outside I did pretty much my normal thing, which is [said in a soft voice as if thinking out loud]: "Stay very still, and smile, and maybe you won't get hurt." From their point of view I would be seen as pretty much the same, although for me it felt sort of different. (emphasis mine)

In the past, willing herself to "stay very still and smile" had functioned as a way of protecting herself during family interaction. The same behavior, however, was no longer in the service of accommodating her family. This account provides an interesting twist on Hochschild's (and Stanislavski's) use of the term surface acting. That is, rather than try to change her outward conduct, she retained it as a mask to cover inner feelings and understandings.

Exercising restraint was another form of emotion work. In the following quotation, the same informant illustrates the restraint she garnered as she tried to help her mother understand what she was trying to convey to her in the midst of an important, heart-to-heart talk. Her emotional control was evident in the caring way she framed her responses to her mother's questions. That is, she said,

She really tried and was missing the boat entirely. And that was difficult for me because she kept saying, "Explain more of this," and "explain more of that." And it was real hard for me to do that without being hurtful--which I didn't think was productive--I really didn't.

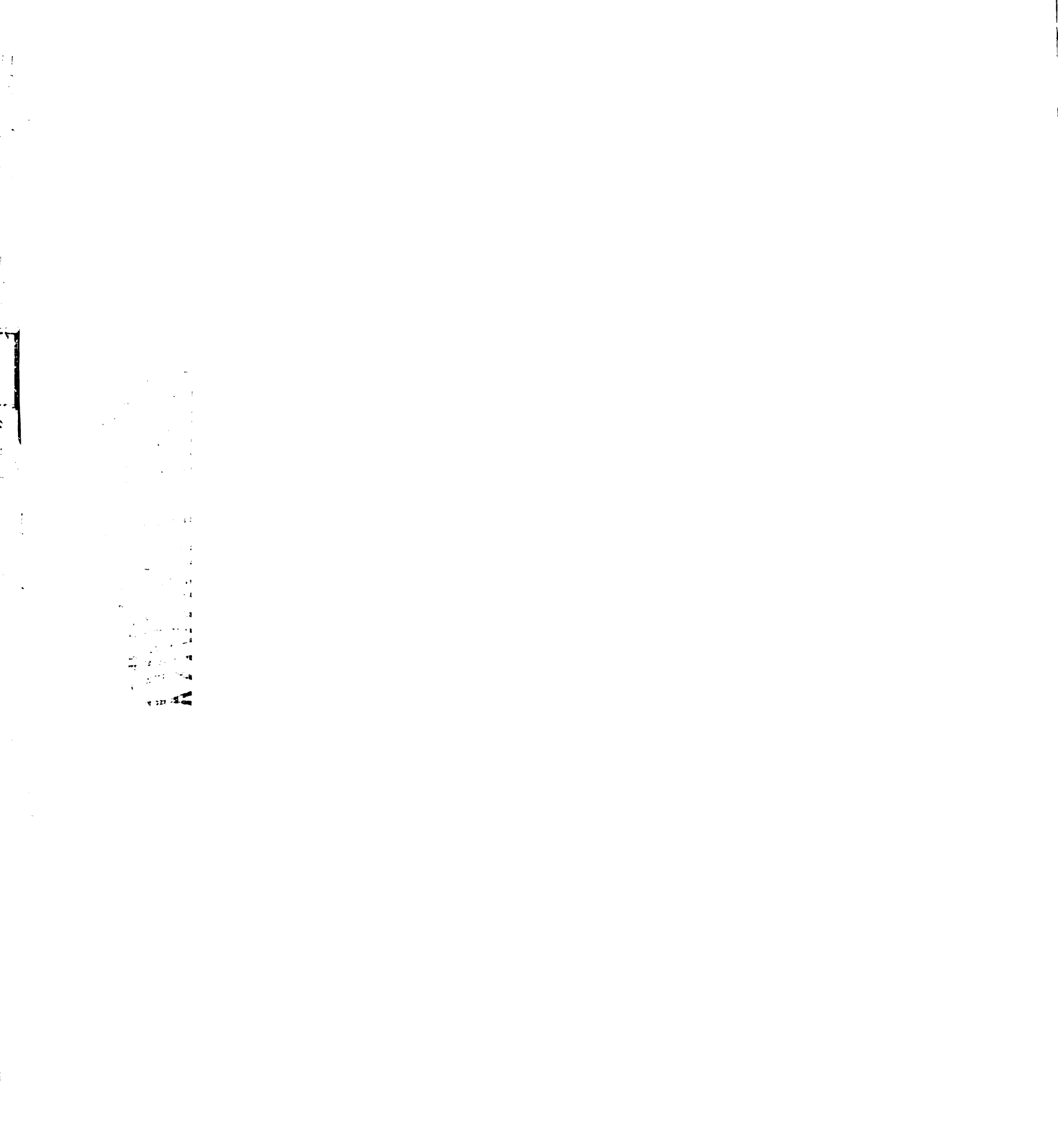
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The concept of emotion work implies some degree of intentional self control. However, one informant's efforts at adopting various measures of self protection and the concomitant emotion work involved failed. She explained that her family's interactional tactics often involved two levels of meaning--what was said directly and what was indirectly implied. Further, these levels of meaning could be contradictory. She recognized and adopted various measures to protect herself from becoming confused when this would occur, since without them she would begin to doubt her perceptual abilities and experience a great deal of inner turmoil. After reaching a certain threshold, however, her attempts at self-control would break down and she indicated that she would eventually "go numb."

Emotional numbness is one of the psychological costs of emotion work Hochschild describes. She associates it with the type of worker who is unable to depersonalize the service she offers others (adopting a "false self"). Instead she stops caring. Hochschild explains:

This sense of emotional numbness reduces stress by reducing access to feelings through which stress introduces itself. It provides an exit from overwhelming distress that allows a person to remain physically present on the job. Burnout spares the person in the short term, but it may have serious long-term cost. ...when we lose access to feeling, we lose a central means of interpreting the world around us (1983:188).





### Relationship Work

Several informants mentioned that during previous or recent visits, they attempted to implement changes in their relationships with members of the home group. Some informants were modestly or partially successful, and others failed.

Successful encounters were described in terms of scenes or conversations that held special meaning. One person appreciated moments of "normalcy," as for example, when she would accompany her father to the garden in the evening and pick okra. Another reported an important conversation she had with her mother in which she felt her mother finally took her seriously.

The major way in which changes in relationships between homecomer and homefolk were attempted was through talk. As the example above indicates, a common type of change that informants desired was to establish greater intimacy through the process of self disclosure. Through self disclosure, homecomers believed the folks at home would come to know them better as adults.

Some informants kept trying to implement changes in their relationships with homefolk despite encountering

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resistance or failing in the past. As a consequence of their on-going efforts, some informants were able to bring about change in small, successive increments. However, these people also indicated that from time to time they would become angry or frustrated, particularly when change did not occur at the desired pace or in the desired direction. Furthermore, the informants would become impatient when they realized that they were the ones that did all the initiating. For example, one informant who returned to her home of origin with the expressed purpose of discussing her Lesbian identity after having come out to her parents a few months before, said they had agreed to talk about it when she returned. She continued:

I spent a lot of time, wasted as it turns out, thinking about how I was going to handle these presumed conversations that never happened. It really pisses me off, because I really thought it was something I really needed to do. We needed to have these conversations and get them out of the way. And those conversations are still hanging over my head. And I'm sure if I don't bring them up, they'll never happen. (emphasis hers)

This quote also illustrates the links between emotion work and relationship work. In this case, the informant's emotion work began prior to her departure and included preparing for conversations she expected to have with her parents.

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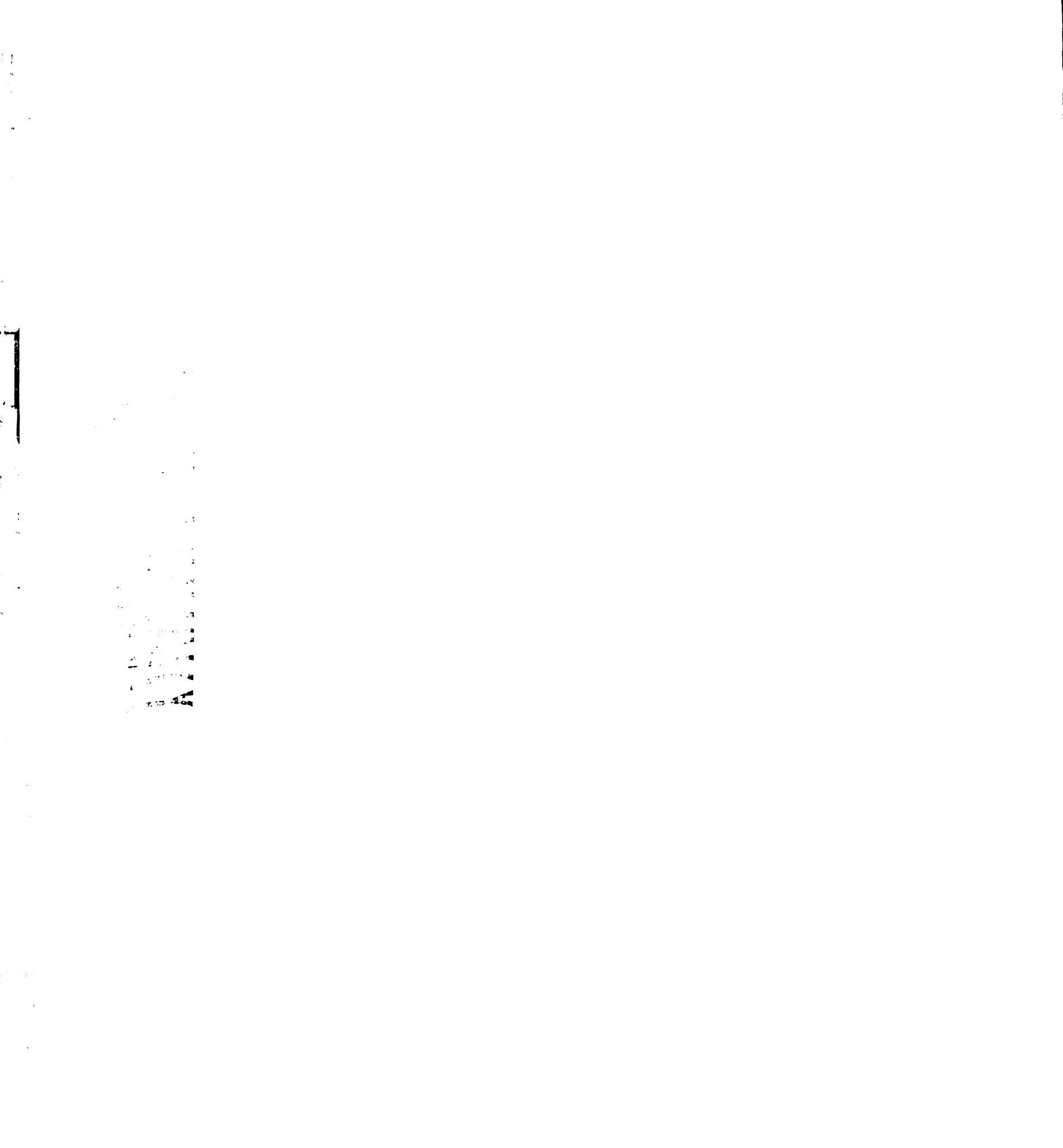
Still other informants gave up trying to change their relationships with members of the home group. Although they continued to return for periodic visits, they had lowered their expectations significantly or focused on other aspects of the trip--such as seeing old friends or keeping busy with activities such as seasonal recreation. Under conditions when no relationship work was taking place the informants became resigned to returning, and the homecoming took on the quality of an emotional endurance test.

While some informants developed fatalistic attitudes about the unchanging nature of their relationships with homefolk and believed the past could not be changed, the action they could and many did take was to use the homecoming as an opportunity to "work on" themselves ("self work" will be discussed in the next chapter).

### Nostalgia, Sentimentality, and the Homecoming

I would like to conclude this chapter by making some remarks about the relationship between nostalgia and sentimentality as they apply to the homecoming.

Davis (1979) indicates that the word nostalgia is derived from the Greek nostos (to return home) and algia (a painful condition). It was coined in the 17th Century by a



Swiss physician to describe a medical condition. Since then the term has been transformed from medical, to military, to psychological usage and today "nostalgia" has become a part of popular speech (Davis, 1979). Further, one contemporary English dictionary I consulted equates nostalgia with homesickness (c.f. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1973: ).

In Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia, Fred Davis maintains that nostalgia's core referent to homesickness is not as appropriate as it once was due to the "diminished existential salience of 'home' in its concrete locational sense" (1979:6). According to Davis, "home" has become dissociated from a specific place, location, or region and no longer evokes memories of the past. Nevertheless, a "body of sentiments and images remain" and are still capable of being felt. The term "nostalgia" conveys this emotional experience.

Central to Davis' theory is the position that almost anything from the past can emerge as an object of nostalgia provided it can be viewed in a pleasant light. Davis further differentiates nostalgia from other subjective states associated with the past such as remembrance or reminiscence by proposing that nostalgic feeling is "infused with imputations of past beauty, pleasure, joy, happiness"





and other "positive affects of being" (1979:14). In addition, the nostalgic mood is capable of encasing what might have once been painful into a "kind of fuzzy, redeemingly benign aura" (1979:14).

Perhaps, as Davis suggests, the meaning of home in its concrete, locational sense has diminished (primarily as a consequence of geographic mobility), so that many people no longer develop or sustain a strong identity of place. Indeed, when this is the case, the term "home" may not evoke memories of the past and nostalgia is the appropriate referent for this emotional condition. However, in searching one's memory for persons or places associated with the past, I see no reason to exclude home from this process. Additionally, unpleasant memories may also be called forth in the service of understanding the past or bestowing meaning to the present, although this experience would not be considered nostalgic. In sum, Davis' work does not substantially address those unpleasant or painful aspects of the past except as they are reconstructed and transformed.

Upon undertaking this study, one question that I had was whether or not, or to what degree, nostalgia was related to the homecoming experience. It is possible that a relationship exists between nostalgia and the homecoming;

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however, I was unable to find only minimal empirical support for a relationship from the interview data I gathered. For example, some support could be found in the remarks of the Swedish informant, a woman in her seventies (page 124), as displaying nostalgic feeling about her brother and their former relationship. Furthermore, on page 123 of this chapter she is quoted as saying, "I want to sit down and talk about old times when I go home." However, when queried about the substance of the conversations she wished to have with him, the motive could not be construed as nostalgic. She remarked:

I would have liked to take the whole family apart because every family has skeletons in the closet. And I think some of my brother's loss of his humor is something from way back that he is thinking about now as an older man.

She went on to explain:

He was never very close to my father and I was. And I think there has been a little jealousy there. And they were not very good friends in my father's old age. [The father] tried to live with them for a while and it didn't work out, so he bought himself into an old age home in Stockholm. And my brother didn't visit him very often.

Switching her tone to a whisper, she continues:

And he's not going to talk about some of those things... because they are too sensitive to touch.

Additionally, the African American woman's feelings about her relatives on her father's side of the family and his



family home in southeastern Missouri where she had lived intermittently as a child [described in Chapter 4, pages 53 and 57], could also be interpreted as displaying nostalgic feeling were it not for the fact that the place and relationships were not merely memories from the past for they continued in the present as well. She does, however, display some wistfulness when she recalls the "old folks" she used to enjoy listening to as they reminisced about growing up in the 1920s and 1930s in the segregated south.

Although imputing nostalgia to these examples is debatable, it is clear that my informants were sentimental about various aspects of their home of origin. Let me clarify the difference. As the title of Davis' book indicates, by definition nostalgia involves yearning for yesterday or a wistful longing for the past. Like nostalgia, sentimentality is a form of emotional expression. Further, both terms are associated with the notion of "excess." Although sentimentality may have a temporal dimension, it is not necessarily associated with the past. It is in this regard that the difference between nostalgia and sentimentality becomes clear with respect to the homecoming. That is, some informants wished to return to the places and people associated with their homes of origin, and desired to engage in acts of remembrance and reminiscence, both of which involve bringing the past to

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consciousness. Yet despite their wish to revisit the places associated with their youth or to reunite with homefolk with whom they have been separated for a long time, no one wanted to dwell on the past or linger there too long. Still others were not sentimental about the past at all, nor were they interested in recollecting it for its own sake. Rather they wished to minimize or control the affective states they experienced when the past was evoked, since they were painful and difficult to endure.

Distinctions can also be made between the emotional idealism that characterizes nostalgia and sentimentality. That is, nostalgia refers to idealism about the past. It presumes that past days were better days, or if not, they have been reconstructed as such. In general, my informants lacked such feelings about the past, nor had they idealistically reconstructed it. Indeed some were trying to deconstruct family fictions about the past and to confront what they believed to be family dysfunction. In this regard, it is interesting to note that if they were sentimental, the temporal direction of their emotional idealism was more oriented toward the present and future than to the past. This phenomenon could be detected, for example, in the effort they put into relationship work with members of the home group. This is, by working on their relationships with their homefolk, the homecomers hoped that





it was possible to establish alternate and improved interactions and patterns of relations at some future date.

### Summary

In "The Homecomer," Schutz (1945/65) refers to the symbolic as well as the concrete meanings of home. He observes that it has a particularly wide variety of symbolic referents when one is far away from home. The example he uses to illustrate this point is that of the American soldier stationed in the South Pacific during World War II. For the soldier, home represented the things he missed most such as lettuce and tomato sandwiches, cold milk, the morning paper, the scent of a drugstore, and the sound of a train's whistle. This aspect of the meaning of home resembles Davis' (1979) description of nostalgia briefly described in the previous section of this chapter and it is as far as Schutz goes in his analysis of the emotions evoked by the term.

The data presented in this chapter, however, point to a different spectrum of emotional states. For example, when my informants returned to their homes of origin in order to accommodate members of their family, they did so not because they were homesick, but out of a sense of obligation, or to curb feelings of guilt produced by remaining away. For

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some, the homecoming became a tedious chore that required varying forms of emotion work to keep their feelings under control in the process.

My analysis also departs from Schutz' theory in another major way. That is, while Schutz discussed the problems that absence creates for reestablishing interrupted relationships with members of the home group, he focused on the differences that time, distance, and different experiences produce. He did not take their prior relationship into account. The data I used to illustrate my analysis throughout this chapter point out how important assessments of prior and on-going relationships were to informants as they anticipated their homecoming and in the emotion work and relationship work they engaged in at home. One consequence of the homecomer's perception of problematic relationships with homefolk was a desire to improve on them. These encounters, and the effort they required to initiate and nurture them, could also produce feelings of anger, frustration, and despair.

In this chapter I have also extended Schutz' theory by addressing the issue of belonging implicit in his essay. A sense of belonging was by no means automatic, nor was it continuous from past to present. Rather it was something that homecomers were able to create or recreate in

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interaction with homefolk. Reestablishing a sense of belonging, like improving relationships with homefolk, met with varying degrees of success or failure.

This chapter also drew on Hochschild's (1983) concepts of emotion work, deep and surface acting, and feeling rules, employing them in the context of differing modes of interaction upon the homecoming. Two tactics informants employed in managing their emotions were adopting a detached perspective and exercising restraint.

I conclude this chapter with a critique of Davis' theory of nostalgia and analyze the relationship between sentimentality and nostalgia. Although some of the homecomers could be described as somewhat nostalgic, no one I interviewed indicated feeling homesick. Rather, they returned home with all kinds of work to do: to analyze relationships past and present and attempt to improve them, or as I explain in the following chapter, to use the occasion to work on themselves.

## Chapter 8

### SELF WORK

In previous chapters I have discussed various conditions which produced problematic definitions of home. That is, while some homecomers had a strong identity of place and associated feelings of attachment to their home, others experienced a sense of rootlessness and felt disconnected. I also described the varying conditions that facilitated or hindered feelings of belonging between the homecomer and homefolk. When the homecoming became a social and emotional ordeal, undertaken out of a sense of obligation or feelings of guilt, the homecomers I interviewed searched for various ways to salvage the experience. One way of making the most of their homecoming was to reconceptualize it as an occasion to facilitate self-growth. As a consequence of viewing the homecoming through this lens, problematic relationships and emotions were viewed as sources for self-discovery and a means for estimating or gauging self-change.

#### Self Work

When viewed as a vehicle for "self-work," one informant considered her homecoming to be a challenge. That is, she used it as was an opportunity to learn new things about

herself, despite or as a consequence of whatever memories resurfaced or what emotions the experience evoked. In this regard, she made the following remark:

I feel like it's a test for me most of the time.  
Yeah, I feel like there are things to learn.  
I don't mind when things come up, even though  
they might be uncomfortable, that's okay.

New information could also be gained by observing oneself in interaction with members of the home group and attending to the feelings that accompanied such transactions. This informant went on to say:

This time it was all new things. It wasn't anything I was expecting. New feelings and new issues that I hadn't been aware of before. It's a chance for me to see how well I deal with them, to see how open I can let myself be, to see how comfortable I can be. And my goal is that I can be myself when I go back there. May happen someday! (emphasis mine)

Statements like this also reflect a prevalent theme in the interviews that were conducted with informants: that is, many hoped to be able to present the "real self" (Turner, 1981) one day. Recall, in Chapter 6 on Identity Construction and Presentation of Self, one informant I cited expressed the concern that were she to act like herself, she would be a social embarrassment to her parents. In the home setting, this informant responded to the contextual constraints which demanded conformity to conventional codes



of middle class conduct (pages 113-114). However, in the section on Timing and Structuring Time in the same chapter, another informant expressed her frustration with various strategies to protect herself or others when she stated: "I'm tired of playing games, and I'm tired of hiding things and of not being able to be who I am at home" [emphasis mine].

Although the informant cited in the previous paragraph also utilized various strategies for self protection, in the context of self work, there were also times when she allowed herself to be "open" in her interactions with members of the home group and granted herself access to whatever feelings she might have as a consequence. This informant appeared optimistic that one day she would be able to be more herself upon coming home. In the context of self-work then, following Turner's (1981) typology, the self is impulsive rather than institutionally grounded. In other words, the self is immediate, spontaneous, and involved in the process of self-discovery rather than guarded and constrained.

Substantively, the informants learned many things about themselves as a consequence of coming home. For example, one informant realized that she did not feel apologetic about her new Lesbian identity and that she actually liked that aspect of herself. With a touch of irony, she said,

I don't feel apologetic and, in fact, I like those parts of myself that they [her parents] find so objectionable. There are other parts of me that I'm not too crazy about, which are mostly the ones they like. (emphasis mine)

This quote and the one above it also point to another aspect of self work, that is, its temporal dimension. By returning to their home of origin, the informants were able to reconstruct and reexperience former identities, they were able to collect information in the present that served as data for evaluating self change, and they held the expectation that working on the self was an on-going process that would continue in the future. Further, the "data" that they collected upon coming home would become incorporated into the next phase of this process. One informant summed this up when she said,

I guess I'm hoping to find out more about myself. I'm going back a little bit of a different person every time I go back. [pauses] I feel by going back and looking at the whole thing from a different perspective each time, helps give me a better perspective. So I guess I try to find out more about myself when I go back and that's what I look for. And I can find out about that by going back to the family. How do we relate as a unit? How do I relate to them as individuals? Then my brother, I mean it all feeds into it. It's all part of the past. (emphasis mine)

There is a way in which the self work described in this section parallels a therapeutic ideology in that the idea of using the homecoming as a vehicle for self growth can be

found in the literature of psychotherapy. Theoretically, one therapeutic approach advocates balancing old and new "family systems." By coming to terms with the relationships established with one's family of origin and mourning what the family could not provide, present relationships are liberated from this legacy of the past. For example, Bowen (cited by Framo, 1976) sent his clients on home visits in order to have them observe themselves and their families in action. These visits could accomplish several objectives. First, they could enable clients to raise issues about their relationships with their families that may have troubled them for years. Second, they could serve as a "corrective experience." That is, by discovering information about the family that had not been known before, "old misunderstandings and misinterpretations based on childhood perceptions" may be clarified (1976:200). As a consequence of this process an "emotional redefinition of memories" was possible (1976:202). Third, those who had been alienated from each other may be able to make peace. Despite the fear and anxiety such encounters may produce, Framo points out that the approach addresses a "universal human need, pushed to some extent by nostalgic memories, to reconnect with one's estranged family" (1976:209). Furthermore, he believed people long to "find lost pieces of themselves in the roots of the past" (1976:209).

While this research was not undertaken in order to test any hypotheses, some comparison is possible. One similarity between the objectives outlined by Bowen and my analysis of the homecoming data is that some informants hoped to raise issues having to do with family history. In addition, there was a desire to repair relationships with members of the home group (the relationship work described in Chapter 7). Both objectives were also accompanied by various affective states, including some measure of fear or anxiety. Only one informant I interviewed, however, made "peace with the past" as a consequence of his homecoming and experienced a final resolution. Furthermore, this final resolution occurred as a consequence of attending his 50th year high school class reunion as well as other reunion experiences he had during his homecoming. [1] In contrast to this "momentous experience," relationship work and self work were generally on-going and processual rather than characterized by turning points or a dramatic emotional catharsis. The temporal quality of self work and the relationship work it necessitated also helped explain why homecomers continued to return to their home of origin periodically.

In both Bowen's work on the therapeutic possibilities of the homecoming and Davis' theory of nostalgia there are references to a "lost self." This idea will be considered next.

Reexperiencing the Past and Encountering Past Selves

There is a way in which reminiscing enables one to recapture aspects of the past which can then be reexperienced, particularly when done in the presence of others who shared the past (homefolk), or when it occurs in the same physical location, namely one's home (Hall, 1980). For example, one informant referred to this process of rediscovery when he told the story of being taken on a "tour" of the old neighborhood by his brother during his most recent visit. This experience evoked long forgotten images of his youth. Even though the neighborhood in which he had been raised had physically changed, his brother was able to provide an account of the way it had looked in the past. He said his brother kept saying:

"Remember this?" and "remember that?" "So and so lived there. ...We were both born in that building." So we were going up and down the street ...and we did a lot of reminiscing. And we went into this building that my father had built in 1926 in which he had a store. And who owns it--it was bought by a man from my father and now his daughter owns it. ...And she took me on a tour of the backyard and so on, and I say: "The backyard! My god, just like I remember it!" And then by chance I looked up at the ceiling of this store and the ceiling was the same. Now I would have never been able to tell you what the ceiling was like in that store until I looked up and suddenly I remembered it all, you see? And my brother, he is a terrific tour guide, the building could be completely changed over and he says, "that's where so and so had his optometry shop. Don't you remember?" Sure I remember. (his emphasis)

This evocative experience, which involved actively recreating the past in the present, provides an interesting contrast to the experience of the Swedish informant whose sense of continuity was based on her attachment to the Swedish countryside. She said, "I feel very Swedish as far as nature is concerned, and I'm very attached to that..." She also mentioned that if it were not for her longing to see Sweden again, she would not return.

The woman's feeling for her native land also had biographical and temporal dimensions. For example, when I asked her to tell me what she considered to be the highlight of her most recent visit, she immediately responded that it was "hiking in the woods." She went on to say that whenever she visited her niece and nephew in the northern countryside, she "could not wait" to put on her hiking boots and take off for a day's hike. When I asked why this was a highlight of her homecoming, she explained: "Because I used to do a lot of that when I lived at home... So that's maybe most of it--what I go home for."

In contrast, witnessing physical changes in her home city were quite painful, since those changes threatened to disconnect her from that part of the past as well. As she said:

They have really made a facelift in Stockholm. They have done a good job with it. But to come back and not even be able to find your old street, where I used to work or know somebody living, or where I used to go to walk a lot--it can be very painful. They are gone. I can't even find the street address (her emphasis).

Thus, while physical changes in her home city of Stockholm threatened the biographical and temporal continuity between herself and her home of origin, physical changes in the previous informant's old neighborhood provided no such threat to his self or his attachment to home place.

In addition to allowing homecomers to reexperience aspects of the past in the present and to retrieve images long lost to memory, the homecoming enabled some informants to reencounter former selves. Further, reencountering former selves could occur despite first hand knowledge of the physical context. For example, the informant who had toured his old neighborhood with his brother (described above), also told me his sister-in-law had escorted him on another "tour" of the upper middle class part of his home town the previous day, a part of the city with which he had only passing familiarity. As they cruised by houses on various streets she would point out family names of people that lived there that he would recognize. The tour also included a stop at the Jewish community center that had

recently been built. He said that although he had never been there before

it was not strange, it was not something new, because in a peculiar sense it was part of my life and I knitted it all together. So we go in there ...and she announced "this is Jack's brother." "Oh Jack's brother," so they gathered around. "We know you, we knew your father," and that kind of stuff. So already it was home.

When I asked this informant why he found this experience significant, he responded that it was related to his "semi-lost ethnicity." He explained that since he had reached adulthood his ethnic identity was not a primary feature of his daily life. His home-of-origin, a city located in the northeast, however, had remained "relatively intact" ethnically. He explained that the first generation, his parent's generation, were Eastern European immigrants who had settled in one section of town and established small businesses there. Although his generation, the second, had left home for the military and/or gone to college, many returned and settled in the same area. As a consequence, his homecoming was in a sense a coming home to his ethnic identity as well. He emphasized this point when he commented:

You also have to understand this too, which is critical. We are dealing with everything through ethnic eyes. 'Cause every time I go back home, even on brief visits, only ethnicity is real, the rest is just background.



These quotes also imply that it was not just the past and the physical context that enabled the informants to reexperience the past, to reencounter former selves, or inactive aspects of their identity; the homecoming also fostered and reestablished a sense of community.

#### Reestablishing a Sense of Community

When a sense of community was absent from one's daily life, or present in a different form, aspects of one's original community could also evoke sentimental feelings and renew bonds of group membership.

A sense of community, in this case of racial solidarity, was an important part of another informant's homecoming as well. Race became the topic of an extended conversation that was taken up time and again by this informant and the members of her family over a period of several days. In this regard, recollecting and reminiscing about the past served not only as a means of reestablishing feelings of belonging and group membership, it also became a way of helping one member understand himself and situations he had been experiencing.

The informant explained that her cousin, a young man in his early twenties, had been having a very difficult time

accepting the racial discrimination and prejudice suffered by African Americans and that for whatever he would accomplish in his life, his race would always be perceived as his master status. She said:

There was nothing you could say to him to make him understand. And I think all of us went through what he was going through, but because it's twenty years later and he never experienced segregation, it makes even less sense to him than it did to us. ...He kept saying, "But this is 1989?"

She explained that as a consequence of her family's light skin and middle class status, they had all experienced being told by Whites that they were "different" or "not like other Blacks." She said the problem was that her cousin believed it. That is, he held stereotypic ideas about Black people and had dichotomized social conduct into "acting Black" and "acting White." His family was quite upset by his ideas and his disclosure that he had passed for being White. They spent a great deal of time trying to convince him that he, and they, were not different from other Blacks. As a consequence, this informant, her immediate family, and other relatives also spent a lot of time recounting their own experiences in southeastern Missouri and elsewhere before and after segregation. She indicated that those conversations and the stories her family told about the past had been the highlight of her homecoming.



Other informants could no longer sustain a sense of identity and community in the present as a consequence of changes they had undergone. For example, several informants were sensitive to and aware of differences in social class between themselves and members of the home group. Three informants reported that they had been raised in blue collar or working class families; however, they had graduated from college, were obtaining advanced degrees, or assumed professional careers as adults. These experiences not only created changes in class status, but gradually produced changes in identity as well. Although some of the informants still felt loyal to their class of origin and were able to "fit in" (Goffman, 1963) for a time upon coming home, they were also aware that this was the case. That is, that they were merely "fitting in" and they no longer felt an authentic sense of belonging.

An example of this situation was provided by one woman who explained that she had been proud that she was still able to accompany her father to the local tavern, sit at the bar, and talk and joke with him and the other "regulars" whenever she returned home. However, as time went on she grew more and more uncomfortable with this annual ritual and finally stopped going with him. In addition to emergent class differences, she could no longer tolerate what she described as their racist and sexist humor. Conversely, she

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said her father did not understand what her graduate education entailed, had only minimal comprehension of what people in her profession did, and no interest in finding out. As a consequence she was unable to present or discuss a significant part of herself and her daily life with members of her family, and she was painfully aware of how what they had in common had diminished over time.

Although these informants had changed in many ways since leaving their homes of origin, sometimes profoundly, many still identified at least partially and temporally with home, homefolk, and various communities of origin. Parts of the self were sentimentally lodged in the past and in the home context despite the differences time and different life experiences had created. Conversely, others were unable and/or unwilling to bridge these differences. For example, one informant's appearance came to symbolize the differences she and others observed between herself and the Arkansas community that had served as her home base during a very geographically mobile childhood. She told the following story about a recent visit:

I went to a clothing shop where mother and I had done some shopping, ...she had bought some stuff and decided to return it. So the day that my Dad and I were running errands I went in... The owner of the store was out front of this old victorian house, she was standing on the front porch as I walked up with this bag of clothes. And she puts both hands on her hips and she looks at me and says, "Who are you?"



Not in a negative way, but just kind of like "Who are you?" And I started laughing... And so I said, "I'm Agnes \_\_\_\_\_'s daughter, and Agnes \_\_\_\_\_'s granddaughter." I just didn't know how to identify myself. And she said, "Oh yes, you're not from around here are you?" And I said, "No-o-o-o," and I started laughing. She said she really liked the way I was dressed and the way I looked, but it obviously wasn't local. ...That's kind of how I felt the entire two weeks, either negatively or positively it was like, "Who are you?" [her emphasis]

She paused and went on to say:

You know, some people were Okay about it and some people weren't, but it was a constant. It was like I always felt I was justifying my existence. "Yeah, I know I'm not local and this is how we dress out there (California), this is how we look," or "No, I don't think like the rest of this family, and I'm so sorry that I can't." Ya know? [my emphasis]

In this chapter I conceptualized self work as a process through which homecomers used memory, place, and interaction with homefolk, and the immediate and subsequent thoughts and feelings these experiences generated as sources for gaining greater self knowledge and understanding. Through self work some, though not all, informants were able to gain new insights, rediscover former selves and momentarily reexperience the past in the present, and reintegrate themselves into various communities of origin. The implications of self work and its relationship to others theories of self are discussed next.



## The Real Self, The False Self, and the Self at Home

In this section I discuss the relationship of the self at home to others' theories, specifically those of Ralph Turner and Arlie Hochschild. First, I review Turner's (1981) and Hochschild's (1983) concepts of the real self and the false self.

Turner stresses that "there is no objectively, but only a subjectively, true self" (1981:1012). The real self, however, is perceived or experienced as one's "true self, good or bad" (1981:989). Turner's formulation, originally presented in 1971, focused on aspects of self and social change. In it Turner argues that a shift had occurred from an institutional to an impulsive basis for the self. Whether this observation is still applicable twenty years later is not at issue. What continues to be relevant, however, is the dialectic he poses between normative expectations for the self and its impulsive enactment.

Hochschild, in contrast, emphasizes the idea of the false self: "a disbelieved, unclaimed self, a part of 'me' that is not 'really me'" (1983:194). What distinguishes the false from the true self is whether the actor claims his or her thoughts, feelings, and conduct as "their own." Hochschild goes on to say that the false self is "healthy"

in so far as it enables us to be discreet, kind and generous and able participate in the social order. In the context of emotion work, the not me or false self produces a healthy estrangement, that is, a separation of self from role (1983:188). This separation enables workers, for example, to differentiate when they are acting from when they are not, or discern under what conditions the individual's deep or surface acting is the company's or their own. Although the service workers she describes may risk feeling "phony," this serves as a way to prevent emotional numbness or burnout.

Similar to Turner's institutionally based self, Hochschild draws on psychoanalytic theory in her view of the false self as having internalized early parental requirements that we act so as to please others at the expense of our own needs and desires. This "other-directed self comes to live a separate existence from the self we claim" (1983:194). The danger, according to Hochschild, is that the false self may become so dominant that it becomes the real self, or enables the true self to remain hidden except under conditions in which it is not in danger of being used.

## Discussion

Several chapters of this text have been devoted to analyzing various aspects of self and identity. In Chapter 6, I presented my analysis of various stages of identity development and discussed various strategies for self-presentation and protection upon coming home. For those informants who experienced continuity of identity, past to present, concern about real or false selves was not an issue. Concern for false or real selves was not an issue for those informants who presented new identities as well, since new identities are an important part of the real self. Even dual or multiple identities were unproblematic when they were integrated, suspended, or bridged in various ways in the home setting.

The issue of the false self or "not me", however, was a concern when present or former identities were viewed as being in conflict, competing for dominance, or not under the homercomer's conscious control. Turner reminds us of what is at issue here when he states, "Self-Conception refers to the continuity--however imperfect--of an individual's experience of himself in a variety of situations" (1981:990). Under conditions such as these, then, the self itself is threatened with discontinuity and cast in doubt. These issues are evident in the remarks of one informant who

told me she would almost forget who she is, her friends, or "that I have a different life" when she returns home. She went on to compare the experience to being drunk:

You know when you have had too much to drink? There is a little voice in the back of your head that is saying "I'm not doing things right," or "I'm not talking right, I'm not acting right." There is part of you that knows that the rest of you is not right. Well that's how I get when I go home. There is a part of me that knows that the rest of me is not right, but doesn't have any control over what the rest of me is doing.

One route to self-discovery Turner associates with the impulsive self is through "expressing potentially tabooed feelings to other persons and thereby attain(ing) a state of interpersonal intimacy that transcends the normal barriers between people" (1981:995). This idea can be brought to bear on the analysis of relationship work discussed in Chapter 7. I used the concept of relationship work to describe the efforts homecomers and homefolk made, which were aimed at establishing greater intimacy between them or otherwise attempting to improve their relationship. An additional example to illustrate this connection is provided by the Lesbian informant. In exasperation she said,

I mean the whole bloody thing of me coming out to my parents was in response to this letter from my mother, saying "I don't know enough about you, I want to know more about your life, I wish we were closer," (and so on). That's where I was coming from when I came out to them [a bitter laugh]. Now she wishes she didn't know as much about my life than before! (her emphasis)

This quotation, however, also suggests that the goal of establishing greater interpersonal intimacy is not necessarily associated with the impulsive pole of the real self Turner describes. Further, self-disclosure involves expressing potentially hidden identities as well as feelings.

There is also a relationship between self work and issues concerning the presentation of the real self. Earlier in this chapter, I quote an informant whose self work not only involved learning more about herself in the home context, but also to "see how open I can let myself be, to see how comfortable I can be. And my goal is that I can be myself when I go back there." These remarks reflect, in part, the value placed on "spontaneous 'natural' feeling" and authenticity Hochschild discusses as the cultural response to a commercialized world characterized by the managed heart (1983:190). Further, Hochschild refers to the popularity of psychological therapies such as Gestalt, transactional analysis, EST, and encounter groups which use a variety of techniques as a means of gaining access to, or reclaiming unmanaged feelings. This idea is similar to the therapeutic ideology some informants adopted, that is, to use the homecoming as a vehicle for self growth. Like Turner's impulsive self, Hochschild stresses the spontaneous

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quality of expressive transactions in the service of the real self. In this context, however, expressive and discursive encounters with homefolk appeared to be a form of strategic interaction and a part of the homecomers' vocabulary of motives or rationale for returning to their homes of origin.

The separation of self and role or "healthy estrangement" of the false self that Hochschild describes is interesting in the context of the homecoming data I collected. At first glance one could consider the emotion work described in Chapter 7 as forms of healthy estrangement, since detachment involved the separation of self and emotions. Restraint was another tactic informants developed to keep themselves in check. Scrutiny of the data, however, suggests another interpretation since no one I interviewed associated these forms of emotional labor with the not-me.

The emotional labor informants engaged in upon coming home (and the efforts they made to repair or improve their relationships with homefolk), could also be interpreted as forms of self work which is performed in service of the real self, when the goal is to achieve greater understanding and self-growth as a consequence of the homecoming experience. Recall, for example, the women quoted in Chapter 7 who were

concerned about the appropriateness of their interaction with their parents and established ways of relating to them which avoided being hurtful. Through monitoring their emotions and responses, these informants were able to assess their progress toward achieving greater maturity.

The issue of authenticity, however, did arise in the context of strategies developed for self-protection. While some informants realized they could not present what they perceived to be the real self in toto, it was possible for them to be more fully themselves than they has been in the past. In other words, they wanted to present as much of the real self as they possibly could, given or within certain parameters relating to their relationships with homefolk or other contextual boundaries.

When the homecomers conceived of their homecomings as occasions for self work, the protected self could be viewed as either hindering or providing relief from the process of self growth. While one requires what could be collectively referred to as a guarded stance, the other involved getting in touch with oneself/feelings and an openness to others which require greater vulnerability. One could dispense with "protection work," the emotional labor and self-monitoring involved in constructing and maintaining a guarded stance in interaction with others, in order to



achieve the vulnerability necessary to have access to one's feelings and to engage in self work. Conversely, one could adopt the protected self when it became necessary to shield oneself emotionally from the consequences of these interactions. It should be noted, however, that this shifting process was not entirely under voluntary control. When flooded with feelings or overwhelmed by material for the self to work on, some respondents reported involuntarily adopting the guarded stance of the protected self, which in extreme form produced the sensation of being emotionally numb. The successful construction of a protected self could also conflict with self work when the individual was unable to yield to a self at work.

An apparent contradiction facing homecomers focused on their willingness to accommodate or please family members in various ways, while at the same time attempting to implement change (relationship work and self work). Accommodating the family can be viewed as actions and interactions conducted for the sake of establishing or preserving family harmony. Implementing change by presenting new identities or engaging in relationship work and self work, however, introduced the possibility of emotional discomfort and social discord. Under these conditions the homecomers faced conflicting demands: on the one hand they attempted to respond to institutional expectations; on the other they attempted to

satisfy their own desire for greater self-expression (Turner, 1981).

Fashioning strategies for self protection and creating opportunities for self growth, managing stable relations with homefolk while attempting to repair or improve them, all point to the complex dynamics of the homecoming. Clues to why homecomers would engage in these interrelated forms of emotion work, relationship work, and self work are considered next.

In Chapter 7 I described various ways in which feelings of belonging were recreated or rendered problematic upon coming home. In fact the issue of belonging, to establish, sustain, or foster ties with homefolk and home place, is a central feature of the occasion. It is central since feelings of belonging are the basis for affirming group membership in various social units, including one's family and/or community of origin. Geographic mobility and other demands of modern life, as well as on-going or past relationships with the family, threaten to detach us from these basic social ties. The homecoming is an occasion for renewing or affirming what ties do exist however flawed or imperfect they may be. It may also contribute to our need to repair or improve them so that they more closely resemble personal and cultural ideals.

These conditions, then, may be the basis for the social-psychological work and the costs that accompanied such efforts. That is to say that homecomers could experience emotional distance as they pursued greater intimacy, risk rejection as they strove for acceptance, or reluctantly conform to the demands and expectations of homefolk while attempting to be and present more of themselves.

Earlier in this chapter I conceptualized self work as the efforts homecomers made to estimate or gage self change and pursue goals of greater self understanding or growth. Through the use of memory, which involved comparing and contrasting past to present, the concrete and symbolic aspects of place, and by interacting with homefolk, self work implicitly resembled (or explicitly involved) the adoption of various therapeutic or self-help ideologies and strategies. In this regard, I believe that self work has implications that go beyond concern for being one's true or real self. While the concept of the real self addresses the issue of authenticity, the concern for self growth or improvement also implies a moral dimension, that is to say the homecomers not only wanted to be real but better selves. Recall, for example, the homecomers' concern for expressing appropriate feelings and the context for their display. The homecomers also monitored their conduct and assessed whether

or not it was appropriate in a given context. Further, they were careful not make statements which could hurt their homefolk as they attempted to improve relations with them. These concerns suggest a desire to be a better self, better than before, perhaps even better than even one's real self.

This discussion and the various aspects of the self at home analyzed in previous chapters indicate how fertile the homecoming is as a topic for conducting research aimed at understanding the self at work.

#### End Notes

1. Temporal differences may also partially account for this experience. That is, although some high school reunions are annual events, most occur at intervals of 5 or more years. The passage of a substantial period of time lends greater intensity to the interactions and expressive possibilities of the reunion of a graduating class. In contrast, these informants were returning for annual or periodic visits. Further, contact had been fairly continuous and included communications by letter and telephone. For a discussion of the ways high school reunions offer resolution of past issues and foster reconstructions of the past and past selves, see Hall, 1980.

## Chapter 9

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was two-fold: one was to render the concepts of home and homecoming problematic, the second was to use the homecoming as a context for analyzing the self at home. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 primarily focus on the first objective, while Chapter 6, 7 and 8 focus on the second. Before discussing my findings and their social and sociological implications, each chapter is briefly summarized below.

#### Summary

In this study I apply and empirically build on the concepts of self and identity using home and homecoming as the context for exploration. In Chapter 3, I briefly describe the essay which inspired this study, Alfred Schutz' "The Homecomer" (1945/1964). I also discuss the limitations of Schutz' work and the ways in which this study will extend his original formulation (see pages 34-35). This chapter then sets the stage for the analysis which follows.

In the second part of Chapter 3, I present a brief historical overview of the major theories of self and identity associated with the symbolic interactionist

tradition of sociological thought. This theoretical tradition directly and indirectly informs the analysis which follows.

In Chapter 4, I present data which supports and extends taken-for-granted definitions of home. That is, while home remains a referent for one's place of origin, personal biography, and lifespan, home was also identified with generational continuity and one's ancestral homeland. The temporal dimension of home was also embedded in the alternate ways in which informants defined, created or imagined homes past, present and future. In addition, home was also used to refer to one's community of origin (i.e., the racial/ethnic or cultural contexts and the ways of life they represented). Home as "community" could also provide a sense of continuity past to present, or symbolize changes in self and/or home.

In contrast, other findings discussed in Chapter 4 included the ways in which definitions of home were problematic. Problematic definitions arose as a consequence of leaving home in the literal sense, or figuratively as for example, when one's adult way of life departed from traditional definitions or from homes past. Furthermore, histories of geographical mobility could also make definitions of home uncertain or difficult since these

individuals did not share in traditional meanings. Consequences of problematic definitions of home could produce feelings of rootlessness, impermanence, and loss rather than typical associations of stability and belonging.

Chapter 5 begins with an analysis of the various conditions under which people leave home, noting that leaving home, like coming home, may occur throughout one's lifetime. Next I describe the typical conditions (e.g., family centered and age related), under which people initially leave home. A variety of homecoming occasions are also described. Although a wide variety of homecoming occasions are reviewed, the chapter focuses on annual visits, special occasions, and homecomings intended to disclose, discuss, or discover important information about self or significant others.

In Chapter 5, I also extend Schutz' (1945/1964) conception of the homecoming in several different ways, first by making it more inclusive by arguing that though different in kind, temporary/serial visits also constitute homecomings. Next, I analyze what I call the "transformational potential" of the homecoming. In so doing, I critique Schutz and Jones' (1984) emphasis on duration as the definitive condition for a homecoming to occur. Instead of focusing on the length of stay or the

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success or failure of the homcomer's adaptation to the home context, I maintain that what constitutes a homecoming rests on other criteria: specifically, whether or not the occasion has meaningful consequences for the homcomer's identity and/or relationships with homefolk.

The third way I extend Schutz' theory of the homecoming is through the distinctions I make between actual and symbolic homecomings. I use portions of Maya Angelou's book All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes (1962) to illustrate the analysis I present (see pages 87-93). I conclude that what differentiates actual from symbolic homecomings involve gestures of acceptance and feelings of belonging as well as aspects of place, since these conditions convey a sense of membership and collective identity.

In Chapter 6, I analyze the relationship between home, time and identity with specific reference to constructing, presenting, and protecting the self upon returning to one's home of origin. During the time spent away from home, relationships with homefolk may be partially or completely suspended. Furthermore, transformations of identity may occur so that homcomer or homefolk perceive themselves differently than before. If relationships are to continue, observed differences and difficulties between self and other as they were remembered and expected to be, and as they

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actually are, need to be renegotiated or reconciled, particularly if the homecoming is expected to be a lengthy one (Schutz, 1945/1964). This process, however, need not occur during brief visits. Instead the homcomer may develop various strategies to manage presentation and protection of the self. Chapter 6 varies different stages of identity development and discusses the strategies and tactics informants developed in order to manage the occasion. Strategies and tactics designed to present or protect the self upon coming home are then contrasted with the homcomers' desire to conform to parental expectations, while remaining true to what they consider to be their "real self" (Turner, 1981).

Chapter 7 begins with an analysis of the various conditions through which feelings of belonging are created, sustained, or rendered problematic in relationships with homefolk. The homecoming evoked a variety of affective states including feelings of obligation and guilt, particularly when relationships among homcomer and homefolk departed from cultural expectations of family closeness or intimacy.

Chapter 7 also discusses various aspects of emotion work (Hochschild, 1983), that is, the ways in which homcomers managed their feelings and/or the feelings of

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others upon coming home. Common forms of emotion work involved generating feelings of detachment, establishing boundaries between self and other, developing new interaction rules, and exercising emotional restraint.

Next, I discuss the concept of relationship work-- the homecomers' attempts to alter their relationships with members of the home group in various ways: specifically, through attempts at self-disclosure, the homecomers hoped to establish greater intimacy between themselves and their family members.

Chapter 7 concludes with an analysis of the relationship between nostalgia and sentimentality as they relate to the homecoming. In this regard, I discuss Schutz' description of homesickness and Davis' (1979) ideas about the nostalgic experience. I maintain that neither Schutz nor Davis address the unpleasant memories associated with home and homefolk which are also called into service in order to understand the past or give meaning to the present.

In Chapter 8, I discuss self work. By self work I mean the ways in which homecomers utilized their homecoming experiences as material to facilitate self growth. As a consequence of adopting this perspective on the homecoming,



problematic relationships and unpleasant emotions could be reconceptualized as data for self analysis and a means for assessing self change. One of the goals of self work was to be able to eventually present more and more of what they conceived to be the "real self" at home.

Self work was viewed as an on-going process. As the homecomers learned more about themselves and their relationships with homefolk, this information would be incorporated into their stock of knowledge about themselves and their families. Self work and the emotion work and relationship work it necessitated also explained why the individuals I interviewed continued to return to their homes of origin despite the frustration and disappointment that they often experienced upon coming home.

In Chapter 8 I also discuss the ways in which the homecoming enabled the homecomers to reexperience the past in the present and encounter past selves, including long forgotten images of one's youth, former ethnic communities, and shared racial bonds. Interacting with homefolk and the memories that were evoked, however, could be bittersweet. That is, it could remind homecomers of what could not be recaptured or shared, and of what was only fiction.

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In the last section of Chapter 8, I analyze the relationship between Turner's (1981) and Hochschild's (1983) concepts of the real self and the false self with my concept of the self at home. In particular, I note the conflicting demands and contradictions involved in conforming to parental expectations while at the same time engaging in emotion work and relationship work that fosters not only a sense of authenticity but also self growth and betterment.

#### Theoretical Implications

In the summary presented above, I discuss how my study of the homecoming extends the work of Schutz (1945/1964) and Davis (1979). In this section I will discuss the ways in which it sustains or extends the work of other self theorists working within the symbolic interactionist tradition.

In Chapter 6 on "Identity Construction and Presentation of Self," I draw on Goffman's (1959) concept of self presentation. The chapter highlights the temporal dimension of self presentation by focusing on ways individuals draw on past biographies and definitions of the situation in constructing or reconstructing the self they present in recurring contexts of social interaction. It also links

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presentation of self with various aspects of identity development and transformation (Strauss, 1959).

Another concept from Goffman's work is impression management. According to Goffman, techniques of impression management seek to avoid various types of "performance disruptions" in order to successfully stage a character while engaged in interaction (1959:208). Techniques of impression management are also designed to protect the actor and/or his or her audience from potential embarrassment or humiliation (1959:210-211). The measures Goffman describes, however, focus on avoiding performance disruptions while engaged in interaction, rather than on the self itself. In contrast, in Chapter 6, I focus on strategies designed for self protection. In addition, these strategies arose as a consequence of past as well as present conditions. For example, in order to protect others as well as to protect themselves, some homecomers constructed and presented the self at home [although the self at home could be contextually emergent rather than a strategic construction]. Other homecomers presented partial selves--censored, modified, or incomplete versions of who they believed they really were. The context could also be used to protect self and significant others. That is, by manipulating the setting and/or time in various ways, homecomers could avoid

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closer scrutiny while at the same time shielding others from potentially awkward or difficult encounters.

Goffman's view of the self, as well as those of other symbolic interactionists, have been criticized for presenting a highly rational view (c.f., recent publications by Baldwin, 1988 and Ellis, 1991). The analysis I present, however, portrays a self that is both rational and emotional. It is rational in the way it fashions strategies and tactics for self presentation and protection, and emotional in its regard for the conditions and consequences of interacting with homefolk. By the latter I mean the self's desire to establish or reestablish feelings of belonging and intimacy and to risk the anger, frustration, and possible rejection involved in relationship work and making oneself emotionally accessible. Nevertheless, the overall tone of the material analyzed presents a self striving for self-control including conditions when emotional expression is or is not safe or permissible.

The strategies that were developed for self presentation or self protection were also a response to cultural contingencies. In Chapter 8, I discussed how homecomers managed the tension between normative expectations and the value of becoming more authentic and expressive. These tensions were related to Turner's

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institutional and impulsive bases of the self. While the concept of self-work includes the desire to present the "real self" upon coming home, it goes beyond the impulsive pole of Turner's typology for self work is not only concerned with authenticity but also betterment. The desire and effort extended in order to improve relations with homefolk (relationship work) and/or to achieve greater self understanding and self growth (self work) is similar to Rosenberg's (1979) conception of the desired self (i.e., an image of what the self would like to be like). Unlike Rosenberg's concept, however, self work is not a static structure but a process. It is a process of becoming the self one wants to be through on-going effort with homefolk and/or home place. Furthermore, the concept of self work implies a temporal dimension. Although self work occurs in the present, in the context of the homecoming, it draws on biography and past relations. On this occasion, self work involves interaction--discursive and expressive transactions with significant others (homefolk) who have shared that past and with whom homecomers expect to continue relationships into the future. Finally, self work occurs with an eye to the future: the purpose of self work is to successively approximate and eventually become the desired self.

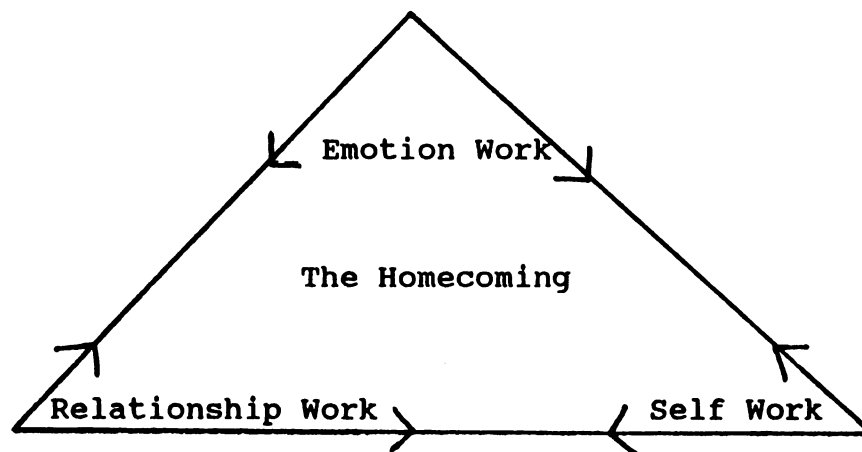
In this study I have also developed a model of the self upon the homecoming that incorporates Hochschild's concept

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of emotion work (1983) with two additional concepts of my own, specifically relationship work and self work. The interaction of emotion work, relationship work, and self work in the home setting is a dynamic model of ongoing self construction and presentation: which self is to the fore is based on a variety of variables including context and self monitoring. Further, interaction with the self-qua-self, and self and others is sensitive to the vicissitudes of time, biography, culture and social structure. The interdependence of these concepts can be summarized in the following analytic diagram:



To summarize, the homecoming provides an extremely useful context for studying aspects of identity and self mentioned by Tietge and Tietge (1986) in the review of the literature. That is, in this study I have addressed issues of temporality (aspects of historical, generational and biographical identity); individual and collective identity;

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identity stability and change; and selves that are situationally emergent and contextually constrained. Further, the topic addresses rational and emotional dimensions of the self, interactions with significant others, and the importance of identity of place.

### Suggestions for Further Research

The individuals interviewed for this study were primarily well educated, middle-class, white women. One of the first things I would do if I were to develop this study further would be to sample more men as well as members of other social classes and racial backgrounds in order to discover how this data would add to my analysis. Another prospect would be to build on the role of the homecoming as a part of self-therapy and/or psychotherapy.

If additional research were to be undertaken, there are several other possibilities that could contribute to theory development. One avenue would be to introduce greater variation in the conditions for the homecoming. For example, the meaning of home and the homecoming experience may differ for individuals with terminal illnesses who are able to return home to spend their remaining days or to say goodbye to homefolk and/or home place. This condition for the homecoming would also alter the temporal dimension since



the future would be limited or precarious. Research in this area would no doubt also shed more light on aspects of emotion work, relationship work, and self work that were not considered in this study. Additional research could also be conducted on the experiences of people who can not go home again for various reasons, such as those living in exile or without permanent shelter (the homeless). I would suspect that Schutz' (1945/64) and Davis' (1979) ideas about homesickness and nostalgia would be more applicable in these latter examples as well.

A different approach would be to compare aspects of emotion work and the concepts of relationship work and self work developed in this study to another context, such as commuter marriages, domestic partnerships, or other forms of romantic alliances. By introducing variations such as these, one would be able to achieve greater theoretical density or extend range of application of these concepts.

### Social Implications

Current interest in the contemporary meaning of home can be found in recent scholarly and non-academic publications. For example, the Spring, 1991 issue of Social Research is devoted to the topic as is the May/June, 1990 issue of The Utne Reader. Although the issues of The Utne

ADAM SMITH

Reader is entitled "Roots: A Place to Call Home," all of the articles featured focus on aspects of rootlessness and the search for home. Perhaps the substance of these articles provide a clue to the current interest in the topic of home. That is, since "The Homecomer" was first published in 1945, Americans have experienced a tremendous amount of geographic mobility as children and adults. For members of The Baby Boom Generation in particular, being "on the road" is an evocative expression that captures this phenomenon. Even though many individuals have settled in various communities, few have made commitments indicative of permanent settlement (The Utne Reader, 1990). What remains missing in their lives is a place to call home.

America at the beginning of the 20th Century was still predominantly rural. Ties to family members, neighbors, the church, and other traditional symbols of community were more apparent. These relationships were not, of course, as ideal as recent bucolic, retrospective images of home and family would suggest. Nevertheless, feelings of belonging existed in ways that seemed more stable than they are at the century's end. For the uprooted members of my generation, home may mean all the variations and problematic definitions that Chapter 4 presents.





I believe that homecomings are also a part of the quest for meaning and membership--the search for a sense of belonging some place. By coming home to one's homefolk and home place, that meaning may be found, however fleeting, incomplete or imperfect the form.

ADDITIONAL

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APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Background Information

This information will be kept completely anonymous, will only be presented in aggregate form, and will not be associated with you personally nor your interview information in any way.

1. Gender:        \_\_\_ woman        \_\_\_ man
2. Age:            \_\_\_
3. Which categories describe you best?  

___ Black/African American	___ Hispanic
___ Chinese American	___ Native American
___ Filipino American	___ White
___ Japanese American	___ Other
___ Other Asian	
4. What is the highest level of school you completed?
5. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the total income of all related people living in your household, including yourself?  

___ under \$10,000	___ \$30,000-\$39,000
___ \$10,000-\$14,999	___ \$40,000-\$49,999
___ \$15,000-\$19,999	___ \$50,000-\$59,999
___ \$20,000-\$24,999	___ \$60,000 or more
___ \$25,000-\$29,999	
7. How many people are supported by this income?

Thank you very much. Please return this questionnaire in the attached stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Cheryl Hall, Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences, N-631, University of California, San Francisco, California 94143.

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## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Hometown

1. What place do you call your hometown?
2. Describe it briefly (size, region, etc.)?
3. Is it where you were born?
4. How long did you live there?
5. Have you lived anywhere else?
6. Do you still have relatives or friends living there?
7. Do you ever visit them?
8. Does your hometown hold any special meaning to you?
9. Did your hometown hold special meaning for you in the past?

Leaving Home

10. How old were you when you left home the first time?
11. What were the reasons?
12. What was it like?
13. Have you ever moved back to your parental home?
14. What were the circumstances if so?
15. Have you moved back more than once?

Homecoming

16. When was the last time you were home?
17. What was the reason for your homecoming?
18. How long did you stay?
19. Where did you stay?
20. Were you alone or did someone accompany you?
21. Tell me about your homecoming?
22. What were the most important things that happened while you were there?
23. Was this homecoming different from other times you have been home?
24. Did you feel like you belonged there?
25. What adjustments, if any, did you make?

Preparations

26. Did you make any specific plans before your recent homecoming?
27. Was there someone or someplace in particular you wanted to see?
28. What kinds of things did you think about before you left?
29. How did you feel as your homecoming approached?

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30. Did thinking about your homecoming stir any old memories?
31. Did those old memories influence your eagerness or reluctance to return?
32. Was there anything about yourself that you did not want people to know about you?
33. Was there anything about yourself that you especially did want people to know?
34. Did you anticipate any specific situations that might occur while you were home?
35. Did you imagine how you would respond if they did?

### Consequences

36. Did your homecoming make you notice anything about yourself that had changed?
37. Did your homecoming highlight anything about yourself that has remained the same?
38. Did your homecoming influence the way you think or feel, or the way you will relate to any of your family members or other relatives?
39. Did your homecoming influence the way you think or feel, or the way you will relate to any of your friends?
40. Did your homecoming influence the way you think or feel about your hometown?
41. Did your homecoming influence the way you think or feel about the past?
42. Did your homecoming influence how often you will return home or who you will or will not see when you do?
43. Did your homecoming influence how often you will stay in contact with people in the meantime or who you will stay in touch with?
44. Have you ever thought about resettling in the area someday?
45. Have you ever felt ties to more than one place or consider yourself has having more than one home?

### Home

46. What was your most memorable homecoming?
47. Do you think home means something different to a person who never left it than it does to someone who left home like you did?
48. Do you refer to your current residence as home?
49. In what ways does your current residence seem like home?
50. What is your idea of what "home" is? What should it be like?

1957

## Appendix B

## INFORMANT CHARACTERISTICS

Table 1. Gender

Men	3
Women	27
Total	30

Table 2. Race

African American	2
Caucasian	28
Total	30

Table 3. Age  
Citizenship

20-29	4
30-39	11
40-49	8
50-59	1
60-69	1
70 and over	2
unknown	3
Total	30

Table 4.

United States	28
Northern Europe	2
Total	30

Note: Other descriptive data, including information on educational background and social class, were not obtained for each informant. Home of origin was not included since, for some informants, this was problematic.

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## Appendix C

## LIFE HISTORY AND LITERARY SOURCES OF DATA

Autobiographies and Biographies

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Sarton, May. 1968. Plant Dreaming Deep. New York: W.W. Norton.

Thurman, Judith. 1982. Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Diaries and Journals

Sarton, May. 1973. Journal of a Solitude. New York: W.W. Norton.

Fiction: Novels and Short Stories

Berry, Wendell. 1988. Remembering. San Francisco: North Point Press.

Edgerton, Clyde. 1988. The Floatplane Notebooks. North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Mukherjee, Bharati. 1973. The Tiger's Daughter. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Orwell, George. 1939. Coming Up For Air. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

Wegner, Hart. 1988. Houses of Ivory. New York: Soho Press.

Wolfe, Thomas. 1934. You Can't Go Home Again. New York: Harper and Row.

Wolfe, Thomas. 1935. "The Return of the Prodigal" Pp. 108-141 in Thomas Wolfe's The Hills Beyond. New York: Harper and Row.

Non-Fiction

Redford, Dorothy Sprull. 1988. Somerset Homecoming. New York: Doubleday.

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