

LOVE LINGERS HERE: INTIMATE ENDURING RELATIONSHIPS

XVII. PLATE FOUR: CREATING A LEGACY (RAISING CHILDREN OR CONDUCTING PROJECTS)

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Love is always a *ménage a trois*—a triangulation between two lovers and the love relationship itself. The couple, itself, is always the third entity in an intimate relationship. The third entity, in turn, is often tangibly manifest in something that both partners deeply love and care for, such as a child or a mutually supported and rewarding project. This developmental plate need not be a distraction from love. Rather it is a plate in which this love can often be most clearly see, understood and nurtured.

In this chapter, we turn to the stories that our couples told us about the challenges and gratifications that come from this fourth plate. We have woven together the narratives of child-raising with those of conducting a mutual project because we believe that these processes are often parallel and that for many of the couples we interviewed, a shared project is their "baby" and should in no way be diminished by being relegated to some secondary role or defined as a "surrogate" for or "sublimation" of the child-rearing process. We turn first to the central question in the forming of this plate: should we or should we not raise a child or start a mutual project?

Forming: Should We Raise a Child/Start a Project Together?

Many of the couples we interviewed early in their relationship to have children, thereby replicating the standard family-oriented social structures of our society. Other couples either had children from a previous relationship or decided to have children through adoption or *in-vitro* fertilization. These couples clearly moved outside the standard social norms and structures. In some instances, couples cannot give birth to children themselves. Others decide not to have children, either because they have their own individual careers to pursue and wish to avoid any major time-consuming commitments to child-rearing, or because they simply didn't want to take

on the awesome responsibility of raising children.

In other cases, couples either live in areas where it is very difficult or impossible to adopt children, or have decided that the available avenues for having children (adoption, surrogates, artificial insemination and so forth) are too problematic or emotionally disturbing to pursue. The decision whether or not to have a child is often of central concern to contemporary couples, for child-rearing is no longer an automatic requirement of marriage or other long-term relationships. Given the liberalization of adoption and *in-vitro* fertilization rules and regulations, gay and lesbian couples, as well as heterosexual partners who are not married, are not freed from the decision of whether or not to raise children.

Many couples also confront the issue as to whether or not they want to join together in conducting some long-term (even lifelong) project, such as starting a business together, participating extensively in a mutual avocation, hobby or recreational activity, working together on a voluntary project of shared concern, or making their home into a very special showcase of their taste and artistic endeavors. In some of these instances, the couples we interviewed decided to focus on something other than a child and began their project together in lieu of children. In essence, they have turned to "rearing" a mutual project and investing it with the emotional commitment and caring that is usually associated with the raising of children. In other cases, the decision to begin a joint project had little to do with the decision about raising children. They either decided on a joint project in addition to raising children, or started their project together prior to (or instead of) any consideration of child-rearing.

The decision regarding having or not having children often becomes very complex in contemporary times. It is very expensive to raise children; furthermore, with dual career couples the problem of finding time to raise one or more children is often severe. Like the fabled couples of old, Glenda and Kurt were "childhood sweethearts" who came together as a couple when they were both fifteen years old. They have spent all of their early years together as a couple living in close proximity to their parents. In these respects, they are very traditional. One might almost call them "quaint." When it comes to the decision regarding having children, however, Glenda and Kurt are much more closely attuned to contemporary values and concerns. They were

married eleven years prior to having their first (and only) child. They spent a considerable amount of time deciding whether or not to have children. Like many young couples who -are faced with major financial challenges (for example, the high cost of home ownership), Glenda and Kurt were ambivalent about having children, and they weighted the impact children would have on their carefree and mutually gratifying lifestyle.

Glenda and Kurt's decision were also impacted by their observation of the styles adopted by other couples they knew in rearing children. If they were going to have children, then they wanted to be different from other young parents who seem to give up everything to have children. Glenda and Kurt wanted to retain at least part of their old life if they were to have children. Glenda indicated that:

. . . part of what kept us from having kids for so many years was that Kurt's side of the family, well, his one brother has three kids, and his mom was into having grandkids, and it was real important in that family to have kids. And I think that we were kind of saying, well, I was saying: "No, I don't want to do that. I want to play and be a kid myself!"

Living so close to their own families of origin, being without children themselves and holding down excellent, well-paying jobs, Glenda and Kurt had been able to remain "kids" themselves. As Kurt indicated, they "really liked the lack of having responsibility" that comes with childrearing.

Kurt suggests that their decision to have a child was vaguely formed and never really definitive.

As with many couples, the ultimate decision was based on biology rather than economics.

Glenda became pregnant. Kurt describes the process:

We never specifically said "Let's have a baby." We talked about and we said: "Yeah, we could maybe -- we're in a position where we could have a child now," but then neither of us really wanted to commit to that. We looked at it realistically as far as what it would mean to our lifestyle, we know. No more just spur of the moment going out with fri-6n_ds or that kind of stuff. We really thought about that, and that made us hesitate. And then, when it happened, it was just lust! [laughs]

At this point, Glenda chimes in: "Like, whoops! [laughs] That was convenient! . . . I think we

were getting more and more lax on birth control. We didn't feel it would be so devastating in our lives if we had a kid."

It seems that Glenda and Kurt did make a decision, but never fully acknowledged that they did, allowing the relaxation of birth control procedures to determine their future life. Kurt and Glenda did engage in important discussions regarding childrearing prior to the conception of their child. While many other couples used the same strategy of relaxing birth control rather than making a definitive decision, Kurt and Glenda were distinctive in having talked about the issue extensively prior to Glenda's pregnancy. They were thus prepared for the birth of their child, even though they had not specifically planned to have a baby. They were very thoughtful about reforming their relationship to accommodate a child, and what appears to be an impulsive act ("whoops") on the surface, was actually long-considered.

The decision about whether or not to have children is moot in many instances among contemporary couples. They come together from previous relationships that produced children. Thus, the question becomes not one of whether or not to have children in their life, but rather one of deciding the extent to which the couple is actively involved in the rearing of the children that are already present and whether or not the couple will have their own children to raise along with those already present in the relationship.

Many contemporary couples involved in second marriages decide not to have any more children. Sometimes this decision is relatively easy for the couple to make. At other times it is quite difficult and often remains an unresolved tension within the second marriage. According to Hillary, she and James decided not to have children not only because Hillary has her own grown children to care for from her first marriage, but also because they wanted to begin saving for their retirement (even though both of them are only in their 40s). James nodded his head in agreement. He then frowned and began to crush the soda can he was holding between his hands.

Hillary didn't seem to notice his reaction and continued smiling and talking about how wonderful it was to be a parent. She had to keep raising her voice as James continued to make more and more noise crushing the can. James then jumped up, reminding Hillary and the interviewer that

he had to get ready for a hunting trip, excused himself and left the room. The interviewer's immediate impression was that the subject of child rearing was uncomfortable and possibly painful for James and that it may have been a great loss to him not having had his own children. It may have been particularly painful for James, given that Hillary gave rather spurious financial reasons for not having children with James.

James and Hillary were not alone in facing (or not facing) this dilemma. One of the partners has already been through the child-rearing experience and looks forward to years of freedom and time to concentrate on their new love. The other partner has looked forward to raising his or her own children, rather than just being step-parents to children that may already be living outside the home. Alternatively, the other partner looks forward to the intimacy and intensity that is possible in a child-free relationship.

Kathy and Dave also decided not to have children together. However, unlike James and Hillary, they seem to both agree that this is the best course to take. Dave has children from his previous marriage and although Kathy has never had children does not wish to have any. Both feel that having a child would not only be unfair to themselves, but to the child as well. As Dave explains, since he is fifty years old now, he would not look forward to spending the next twenty, perhaps his last living years, raising a child. Furthermore, he feels it unfortunate for any child to have an older father only able to participate in his life and activities for a limited period of time. Since Dave has six grandchildren now, he cherishes his role as a grandfather and the fact he has been able to enjoy his children through to their adulthood. Although she is only thirty-eight years old and capable of child bearing, Kathy has chosen likewise not to have any children. Both feel they sacrificed themselves in their previous, abusive marriages—Dave to his wife and children, and Kathy to her demanding husband. Both remain cautious about letting anything come between their love for one another.

As in the case of many couples who are in second major relationships, the problem of child-rearing for Kathy and Dave did not go away with their mutual decision not to have children. Kathy and Dave began living together in Dave's house shortly after they met and prior to their marriage. Dave and his first wife had been separated and she had moved into her own place prior

to the filing of divorce papers and the subsequent final divorce. Dave retained custody of his two teenage children (his first wife having been very neglectful of both children) Neither Dave nor Kathy anticipated difficulties which arose following Kathy's entrance into his home. Both were caught up in their new-found love and had not looked realistically at the process of moving in together. Dave's children presented the first major obstacle in their establishing a home together. As is frequently the case, Dave and Kathy's major problem at this early stage in their relationship involved the interplay between two or more developmental plates, in this case, establishing a home and child-rearing.

Kathy was not well received by Dave's two children. They challenged her as a potential mother figure. Dave felt he was not prepared to mediate between Kathy and his children. As a father, he felt a strong obligation to his children. Like many men of his generation, Dave assumed Kathy would adapt easily to the role of mother. Kathy never anticipated the duties of being a mother and resented Dave for imposing this function on her. As a result, Kathy moved out of Dave's house into her own apartment for a while, precipitating a remarriage and a renegotiated marital contract.

Dave agreed to make other living arrangements for his two children. His son, recently graduated from high school, enlisted in the Navy. His daughter went to live with her mother for her last year of high school. Kathy and Dave could for the first time live alone together. Problems still existed, however, for Kathy and Dave, even though the children were now living elsewhere. The remaining problems concerned finances (as is often the case for couples with children from previous relationships). Kathy believes that Dave's children are demanding too much money from Dave. They are capable of working for extra money like many teenagers their age. In addition, while Dave is working his late shift as a truck driver, Kathy claims his children spend many late evening hours out partying with the money their father provides them.

Dave listens patiently to Kathy when she expresses her fears that the money is being used for alcohol and drugs. His children, however, claim that Kathy is just trying to ensure that their father keeps all his money for her, and, contrary to her allegations, they are riot spending money on alcohol and drugs. Dave finds himself again caught between his children and wife. A second

recontracting and remarriage takes place. Kathy and Dave decide that Dave's daughter would continue to receive money, however at a fraction of the original amount that Dave provided. Since his son enlisted in the Navy, Kathy believed that he no longer needed financial support from his father. Dave agreed. In addition, Kathy and Dave decided to pool their incomes during this time to pay jointly for the mortgage on the house (which Dave had previously owned with his first wife) and any other expenditures.

Unfortunately, since this time, Kathy began to grow very dissatisfied with her work environment. She left her job and soon found that she had become quite isolated, not having found another job and having remained at home. Dave now provided all of the income for both of them. Thus, while Kathy and Dave's child-rearing and related financial issues were resolved for a short period of time, they soon faced new challenges regarding the financial (socio-economic) plate which may, in turn, unravel their resolution of issues associated with the child-rearing plate as well.

Child rearing obviously becomes even more complex when one or both of the partners already have children through a previous relationship., Dottie already had two children, and did not want to have any more, despite being pregnant with Ricardo's child. Her teenage son and daughter were "terrible." Her daughter was still living with her and hated Ricardo. Her son had just run away, first to live with his father and then to join the Army. Her pregnancy was a loaded event for Dottie. Her second marriage had been to a man who wanted children, although Dottie felt she could not handle more than the two children she already had. Her second husband had initially seemed willing to give up having his own children, but ultimately, he left Dottie for a younger woman.

When Dottie became pregnant with Ricardo's child, she knew she wanted to have an abortion, but she needed a lot of support from Ricardo about this decision. Ricardo, however, was unable to discuss the issue with Dottie. He "didn't want to influence her decision;" he "couldn't talk about it;" "she had to decide for herself." Dottie pleaded with him to "let me know how you feel." Still stung by the rejection of her second husband, it was very difficult for Dottie to make the decision to have an abortion without Ricardo's support. Ricardo, however, became very angry when Dottie kept pushing him to discuss his feelings, and he decided to move out. Dottie

begged him to get into bed with her before he left that night. She wanted them to just "hold each other," even if they couldn't talk. At least they could have a sense of mutual support and acceptance.

This incident led to a remarriage. They separated for a short period of time—then decided to make a new start. They made a firm commitment to one another (having not been married at the point when Dottie became pregnant). They learned how to relate more openly with one another and came to recognize the ways in which they were repeating the patterns of their own parents in terms of Ricardo's tendency to withdraw when he felt highly emotional, and Dottie's need for excessive reassurance when she is frightened. They exhibited very little understanding or sensitivity in making their decision not to have the child, but they did learn from this experience and recreated a life together than benefited from this learning.

Margie and Gene started living together at Margie's residence within a few months after they first met. They chose to live in Margie's house in large part because she was the primary parent for an 8-year-old boy and ten-year-old girl. Gene had been married twice before himself, but had no children. Four years after they began living together, Margie and Gene decided to get married. While they raised Margie's two children together, very little was said about these two children during the interview. Perhaps this was because they did not consider these children (now in their teens) to be a part of their own identity as a couple, being instead part of Margie's individual identity and her past life. We have found many, often painful examples in our interviews of children that seem to be caught in limbo existing between several different relationships, rather than being identified as a central, even defining product of any one, existing relationship. One wonders about Margie's children. With what set of adults do they relate as their parents? Is there a couple that calls them its own?

Margie and Gene focus most of their attention on the decision to have their own child. Margie had made it clear to Gene before they made a commitment to one another that she did not want any more children. However, six years ago while on a long business trip in Europe together she shifted from that position and decided that having a child would be a good idea. Apparently, the decision regarding giving birth to children was left in the hands of Margie. Perhaps, this also

occurred in Margie's first marriage, given that her first husband seems to have taken little interest in his children after his divorce from Margie. Many men (and some woman) unfortunately, seem to limit their sense of responsibility for a child to the confines of their relationship with the other parent of this child. When the relationship ends so does their child-rearing commitment.

A year after Margie changed her mind, Gene and Margie stopped using birth control, and she got pregnant very soon thereafter. This decision had some unexpected costs associated with it. Most of Margie and Gene's friends at the time were single. They report that they lost some of their single friends when they decided to have a child, and it was a hurtful experience. They also lost some of their free time together and some spontaneity. On the other hand, it was quite clear during the interview that their four-year-old daughter plays a very powerful role in their relationship. According to these-doting parents, their little daughter "runs the show." Margie even feels that Gene devotes too much time to their daughter, and that they don't go out enough as a couple or take trips the way they did before she came along. They spend time together on hikes or going out and about but always with their daughter.

Margie is clearly a good and loving mother (at least to her new daughter), but she is feeling sorely neglected. This is Gene's first child (of his own) and is a "cherished dream come true." It would seem, however, that while Gene is in his dream state, Margie is in the midst of a mid-life struggle with having had one family, as well as a career in a helping profession. She now wonders what it's all about. She is not content to return to the totally child-centered mode of her earlier life, yet wants to support Gene in his new-found love, and appreciates the attention he shows their daughter. Like many dual-family couples, Margie and Gene are at different individual stages of interest in their own child-rearing careers and must find an appropriate and mutually-satisfying compromise with regard to their joint-childrearing career as a couple.

In other cases, we found that couples we interviewed don't have to worry about fitting children into their busy work lives, for they cannot give birth to their own children or have as yet been unsuccessful in having children. This inability to have children can often be a source of considerable stress and strain in the relationship, unless the couple is able to direct their energy (and desire to create something together) toward another valued end. Ted and Velia, for instance,

have been trying to have a baby for five years. According to Velia "trying to get pregnant put a strain on our relationship for about a year." Furthermore, she believes that the strain could reappear again in the near future, if they continue to be unsuccessful in their efforts to have a child.

Fortunately, Ted and Velia have other projects that provide meaning. In particular, they both thoroughly enjoy renovating their cabin in Wyoming. Ted indicates that when Velia moved into his Wyoming retreat ten years ago, he knew they had become a couple, for no other woman had ever stayed for more than a day at this retreat. So, this place represents the heart of Ted and Velia's relationship. They "feel like a couple" when working on the cabin and buying furniture for it. While, Velia must travel elsewhere to attend graduate school, she returns as often as possible to Wyoming and their reunion is always particularly special because of the romantic and central role played by the Wyoming retreat in their life together.

Many of the couples we interviewed have faced the issue of not only whether or not to have children, but also whether or not to begin a project together that represents something of great value to both partners (thereby often bringing in the third plate). This mutual project can take on many forms, ranging from raising animals (cats, dogs, horses, gerbils, tropical fish, *ad infinitum*) to mounting a major corporate venture. Regardless of the breadth or depth of the commitment, this mutual project becomes an important developmental plate for these couples and often helps to define the distinctive character of the couple. It provides the couple with something to hold on to when the going gets tough in their relationship.

In some instances, the mutual project overlaps several of the developmental plates we have identified. It is not unusual, for instance, for the mutual project to be deeply embedded in the shared value system of the couple. Many partners mutually invest substantial time and money in political campaigns, public causes or various public service activities. Go ##### the church or synagogue or other type of religious institution plays a major role in the life of many couples. We also found several instances where the establishment of a home went well beyond the normal level of concern for a couple and became the couple's special, mutually-shared project.

Larry and Harold exemplify this heightened commitment to building a home. A couple for six-and one-half years, Larry and Harold have similar careers that lead directly into their mutual project. Larry is a thirty-four-year-old architect, while Harold is thirty-one years old and a successful retail designer/architect. The commitment of Larry and Harold to building a beautiful home was widely-known and admired in their local community. The interviewer was looking forward to finally seeing the house about which he had heard so much. The house that Larry and Harold built exceeded even the interviewer's inflated expectations. It is not only a spectacular home in terms of both design and detail, it contains the backbone of the rich story of Larry and Harold's relationship from its earliest development.

In arriving at their home, the interviewer walked through the corridor of a large apartment building and into a garden. Tucked away behind a cluster of tall apartment houses, Larry and Harold's cottage stood out in stark contrast against its urban environment. The interviewer was greeted by Harold at the door with warm hospitality. Their house was immaculate and finely detailed. As their story unfolded, it was clear that the detailing was a blend of both their personalities and characters.

Harold's diverse art work, which ranged from oil paintings to ceramic sculptures was displayed in the living room. The clean, sharp detail of the structure and the modern leather sofa was a touch of Larry. The old, stuffed chairs sharply contrasted with the newness of the sofa and were indicative of Harold. Downstairs there were two bedrooms with a veranda connecting them. A hot tub was hidden in the corner, overlooking the garden in back. Beyond the garden, the cityscape rose in full view. The second floor consisted of a carefully designed kitchen, with a dining area connecting to it. Behind this was a large, yet cozy, living room, with a fireplace and high ceiling. The art of both Larry and Harold was displayed in this room. On the bookshelves were photos and books, representing their separate lives and their life together as a couple.

Larry greeted the interviewer, sight unseen, from the small loft above the kitchen space. This was their shared office. Harold was cooking and asked the interviewer to join them for dinner. As Harold prepared the meal, Larry hollered down to watch the pasta. Harold assured Larry that everything was under control. He worked with ease in the kitchen, stirring the sauce, watching

the pasta and eventually pulling a freshly-baked sheet of cookies out of the oven. Harold told Larry that dinner would be ready any minute. Larry came down from the loft, said hello to the interviewer again, and briskly walked into the kitchen to determine if indeed all was well. He insisted that the pasta was ready. Harold reassured him that it needed to boil just a few more minutes. The give and take of this couple was readily apparent. Finally, dinner was served, the wine poured and the interview begun.

In this brief vignette, the interviewer had insightfully captured the essence of this couple. They loved to host other people and demonstrate their shared commitment to and expertise in providing a richly sensuous environment in which to live and work. They have created "the good life" for themselves by surrounding themselves with their own products (art work, architectural design, meals) and by creating an environment that reflects their common tastes as well as the individual tastes of each member of the couple. Visitors are warmly welcomed and invited to fully partake of environment.

Much as a shared interest in architecture, design and visual beauty provided the base for and helped animate Larry and Harold's mutual project and love, music and a love of Poland have kept Mick and Sheila's relationship alive during the past twenty years. As a defector from Poland during the late nineteen seventies, Mick has a deep, abiding interest in the culture and political liberation of Poland. Sheila shares this interest, having been raised by first generation Polish parents. Sheila and Mick met as performers at a House of Poland social gathering. They still play together at House of Poland events, and sing together in the evenings in their home (where Mick has built a recording studio).

Mick and Sheila have produced their own recording which they give out or sell at their performances. Their songs are all written by Mick, while Sheila assists with the vocal arrangements. They love being able to perform in their own home studio, because their home itself has taken on special significance for them. They bought this home five years ago. It was in miserable condition. They renovated the house themselves and built their studio into their home. Their interviewer noted that every detail of their home reflects their unique tastes and their love for one another and their music. Clearly, for Mick and Sheila, Poland, music and home are the

three children they have raised and are still nurturing. Each of these children has required considerable effort and one of them (Poland) went through its own adolescence during the last decades of the 20th Century. They worry a great deal about its future prospects and hope someday soon to be able to travel back to their beloved Poland.

Storming: How Much and In What Ways Do We Nurture This Child/Project?

Typically, there are two major questions that face any couple when they have begun to raise children or begin a mutual project. The first of these questions concern the amount of time and other resources (money, space and so forth) that each partner, individually, and the two partners together devote to raising children or conducting their project. As we noted earlier in this book, chronic stress (due to shortages) rather than acute crises often tear down and even destroy intimate relationships. We certainly would have to place child rearing and mutual project management at the top of list regarding demand for scarce resources. The second central question concerns the ways in which children will be raised and project managed. This can be just as conflictual as the problem of scarce resources.

In this section of the chapter we examine both of these stormy issues, then look at the unique manner in which couples must address these issues when they bring children from a previous relationship or a project from a previous time in their life to the relationship. Finally, we look at the unique interplay that often seems to take between this plate and the other developmental plates during this period of storming about raising children or managing mutual projects.

Typically, child raising or attending to a joint project is a major all-energy-consuming component in a couple's life. When children are young or when a project is still in its fledgling state, most of the other plates take a backseat. Rebecca, for instance, describes a typical day in the lives that she and Bill lead:

Calvin (three years old) gets up about 5:30 or 6:00 and wants to watch cartoons.

Bill gets up with the kids and I sleep until 7:30 or 8:00. We are trying to encourage Natalie (four months) to take a bottle. I am usually up with her one or two times in the night. When I get up, we mutually get the kids dressed and fed and take turns getting them to their appointed places: schools. Bill goes to work and comes home

around 6:00. I have Natalie most all the time and my days are focused on the household and the children. By 9 pm the children are in bed. We read, we talk, we have sex, Bill watches T.V. We go to sleep.

This couple finds late night time for their own life together. The rest of their time together is devoted to raising their children.

Rebecca's description of their typical day together revolves around their children, Bill's job and the household. In assuming this traditional role in her family, Rebecca represents a minority voice among the women we interviewed. Most of the women who are less than fifty years of age are working outside the home, even if they have young children. Rebecca and Bill's focus is on raising their children in as nurturing and trouble-free a manner as possible. They try to "stay afloat" while managing this very difficult process. Many of their fights are precipitated by their fatigue and the feeling that there is no way out.

Fortunately, they have built a solid relationship and are quite flexible in assuming child-rearing responsibilities. Rebecca tends to her daughter during the night, and Bill gets up first in the morning with all the children so that Rebecca can sleep. At overwhelming moments, when they do get angry at one another, they tend to use a variety of strategies for the resolution of their conflicts. They both realize that while child-raising is the source of many of their tension (child-raising) it is also the primary source of their joy. They know that they love each other and that these tensions will soon pass, especially as the children grow older.

Other couples have even less time than Rebecca and Bill for intimacy, talking or simply enjoying each other's company. Frequently, one of the partners (often the male) feels left out and ignored by the doting parent/partner. When describing a significant change that has occurred during the twenty-three years of their marriage, Jeannie immediately told the story of the birth of their first son, Pete. He was born ten days before their first anniversary. Jeannie was ecstatic about the pregnancy since both she and Bob had thought that Bob was sterile. Jeannie did not even see a doctor until she was five months pregnant because she thought it was impossible. When Pete was born, Jeannie's whole world became her child. She shut Bob out. The couple had little time together and she later described herself as being an "obsessive" mother. Her child came before

anything else. After fifteen months of considering only her child and lavishing him with all her love and devotion, her relationship with Bob showed signs of disrepair. They fought more often and communicated less frequently and less clearly with one another. Bob also began drinking more heavily.

Bob reports that he felt excluded from the bonding between Jeannie and his son. Having been neglected himself as a child, Bob became jealous of the attention Jeannie was giving their son. Once again, he was being left out) now as husband and father rather than son. Bob resented the loss of time as a couple, and did not like their child sleeping in their bed. He became increasingly fearful about being a capable parent, felt guilty about his own feelings of rivalry with his son. His "insecurities kicked in" and Bob tried to escape through alcohol and drugs.

Frequently, the issue of time spent in doing something other than child-rearing is heightened because both of the partners work full-time and late evenings are often filled with completing the household chores that neither partner can do during the day. Many couples we interviewed reported very little time for talking or sex. They are left with an exhausted snuggle at the end of a very long day. Many couples also do not enjoy Rebecca and Bill's capacity to look beyond their immediate child-rearing problems to the gratification that they are receiving from this complex and demanding process. In the midst of hurt feelings about attention being devoted exclusively to a child or conflicts regarding who should change the diapers, it is often difficult for a couple to share a moment of mutual admiration for the important job they are doing in bringing a child into the world.

Child-rearing is often the source of contentious arguments regarding financial priorities and areas of responsibility, at least for couples who have young children living at home. Many couples we interviewed pointed to birth of their first or second child as a joyous event, but also the source of considerable strain in their relationship. The remarriage process is particularly common among couples with children who are trying to discover new ways in which to structure their relationship (including finances, attitudes about home and possessions, career, and values)—often while their children are also exploring new ways of relating to their parents, siblings, friends and the world in general.

Remarriage was certainly apparent in the life of Lawrence and Tina. With the birth of her first child, Tina experienced postpartum depression. She also found herself performing most of the household chores where they had been equally shared before the birth of their child. As in the case of many women we interviewed, the period of pregnancy and childbirth seems to bring out the traditional masculine role(s) in Tina's husband. Men who have been very actively engaged in household chores before the child is born often seem to abandon this role precisely at the time when their partner needs the greatest amount of assistance. Tina had taken a maternity leave from her health management position. As a result, she was spending 24 hours a day with the baby. The caregiver responsibilities were left exclusively in her hands.

Lawrence was having some problems of his own. He resented Tina's "nagging" and started spending more time at work and riding his bicycle precisely because he wanted to get away from her. He was drinking more wine with dinner than was his custom, and many arguments ensued, with Tina finding little ways to "get even." Their relationship became rocky and it was obvious to both of them that they would have to take some steps to recover their marriage. They decided to see a counselor.

When asked "can you identify a time when you were particularly open with one another and what made it easy to be open at that particular time," they both agreed that it was during their visits with the marriage counselor. This was a classic remarriage scenario. Lawrence was able to express how he felt about an abortion that they had decided to have earlier in their marriage and about Tina's unilateral decision to give birth to their second child. Up to this time, they had not discussed his feelings regarding these matters. Both Lawrence and Tina agreed that they were able to be so open because it was safe. They had a referee! They continue to seek help when either one feels the need.

Even for couples who have grown children, the issue of child rearing rears its contentious head. When John and Nancy were asked to identify areas in which they differ regarding values, Nancy immediately replied, almost dryly, "The time I spend with the children." John agreed and explained that one area where this showed up was in long distance phone calls. John complained

that Nancy would spend an hour talking to one of their distressed children about their life in general. John thought that was an expense they couldn't afford, especially since she wasn't offering counsel about a specific problem.

Nancy soon turned the conversation from finances to the issue of responsibility for child-rearing. Nancy often goes to help her children during times of great need. To her, as well as her children, this is an expected task. However, according to Nancy, "John doesn't like me to be gone for more than two days at a time." John acknowledged that this was so. But he defended himself by asserting that Nancy usually goes to such events as the births of grandchildren. Then she'd come home and have to work 52 hours a week to make it up financially: "I'm afraid she'll kill herself, so I try to keep things from getting out of hand in this way."

Even though this was still an area of contention for the two of them, John felt that they had come a long way in learning to work these conflicts out. "Now we have a lot more give and--take," according to John: "If we talk about it, and still don't agree, we give it time and we pray about it. Circumstances will usually direct us, without our having to force things. It's almost exciting to see how it works out."

For John and Nancy, a third entity (prayer, God) is brought into the picture to help mediate the conflict. They step away from their set positions during an argument, talk a bit, cool off and wait for this third, intermediary (circumstances, God's intervention) to provide an answer. Many of the couples we interviewed a third entity as very helpful in their resolution of difficult conflicts. The third entity might be a person (friend, relative, counselor) or a transpersonal force (God, fate, some unforeseen event, horoscope and so forth).

In the case of mutual projects, the issue of time is often compounded by the concern for appropriate and feasible allocation of money. How much do we invest in this new business? How much can we afford in terms of veterinary and boarding costs for our cherished dog or horse? Where do we find the money for the remodeling of our prized kitchen? In the case of Larry and Harold, the remodeling of their home required the entangling of finances for the first time in their relationship. The financing of their home was, according to Harold, "like our marriage." He

went on later to point out that: “our relationship has evolved into that of a married couple. We're comfortable . . . much more domesticated. The house is indicative of our lives Its a blend of both of us. I like garage sales for clothes and furniture. Larry likes nice things.”

They have found ways in which to overcome their differences in taste regarding their home, but the process was not easy. As Larry notes:

. . . two architects together with different tastes can be a problem. . . . Well, the house kept us moving forward. It preoccupied all of our time. It fell during the renovation. It was a major disaster. We had to get another contractor to fix the problem. It was a lot of work and was very stressful. I became extremely focused. Harold was all over the place.

Harold acknowledged that Larry was much more competent than he at this point of the renovation process. Whereas Larry usually is the cautious member of the pair, at this moment he became much more "adventurous" with their money:

We had bills coming in for thousands of dollars. Harold panicked. We needed to stay focused and that is my forte'. It was a time when we couldn't afford to lose sight of our goal and therefore had to pay attention to the survival of our project.

It's this that has kept us together through difficult times.

Harold reflected on this shift in Larry's attitude about money and concluded that "we learned a lot . . . Larry taught me that life isn't worth living, if you don't take risks." However, Harold, not Larry, was able to obtain the assistance of friends during this difficult period. While Larry remained focused on the home, Harold reached out to other people.

Larry and Harold have been successful in building their joint project (home and lifestyle) largely because they have been able to honor and make use of their individual differences. Larry is the "financial caretaker," "the designated driver," "the vacation planner." Conversely, Harold is the "navigator, cook, buys groceries and cleans." Harold is also the "spokesman and the social planner." Larry is more "assertive," whereas Harold is "the more verbal one." They move eloquently together, allowing each other to take the lead at various points in their relationship, particularly with reference to their prized goal: a beautiful home.

Norming: How Do We Raise Our Children and/or Conduct Our Project?

Even when a couple has arrived at a comfortable decision regarding the priority, they will assign in their life to the raising of children, they still must agree (or agree to disagree) on the rules of conduct and type and degree of discipline they will exert in raising their children. Frequently, voices from previous points in their lives (typically, their own childhood) come to the fore. Grown men and women hear themselves mouth the words and warnings they heard from their parent when young.

Words and warnings, they once vowed never to use themselves! Men and women who find themselves agreeing on most issues in their lives (politics, music, literature, recreation and so forth) suddenly find themselves on opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to raising children. More often, partners know that they have some differences of opinion about raising children, having come from very different families; however, they often don't realize how deeply engrained these patterns of behavior are and how frustrating it can be to raise children with another person who is absolutely "nuts" (usually either a Nazi or an anarchist!) regarding the raising of children.

Bea certainly was aware that Donald came from a tight-knit Sicilian family, and Donald knew that Bea came from a cold, authoritarian family of German descent. They knew this because they shared a common interest in escaping from these repressive backgrounds and because Bea had already struggled with a mother-in-law who tells her how to cook, do the laundry, and arrange the furniture. Bea's in-laws in fact had bought the furniture for their new home and had it delivered as a surprise. However, neither Bea nor Donald were prepared for the impact of four children, born about a year apart. They strongly disagreed on how to raise their four girls. Donald tended to be very demonstrative and permissive (like his Sicilian parents) whereas Bea tended to be a disciplinarian. They soon learned, despite their deepest intentions, that they were repeating the same child-rearing patterns as their parents.

This became a critical moment in the relationship between Bea and Donald. They had to create new values regarding child-raising that worked for both of them, independent of their own

experiences as children. They also faced several other related crises. Bea became very depressed during the early years of her children and was at times suicidal. At the same time, Donald was trying to pass a licensing exam for his profession, but was unable to study with all of the chaos at home. Bea received little help from outside her home. She rejected her mother-in-law's offer of assistance, and her own mother moved far away soon after their children were born. Donald did help out at home, but it was a very traditional division of labor. Donald took care of the car and yard, while Bea did the cooking, laundry and house cleaning. Both cared for the children.

A crisis occurred in their life when their third daughter was about ten years old, that brought about a remarriage and at least a partial resolution of their child-rearing conflicts. Their daughter was diagnosed as having bone cancer. An enormous conflict ensued in which Bea accepted the medical advice she had received and believed they should leave the decision up to the experts. An additional biopsy was recommended, but Donald would not allow it to occur and pulled their daughter out of all treatment programs. Within a year, the lesion had disappeared completely, without treatment. Bea, who is the traditionally practical one, believes that it was a miracle and has become quite religious as a result. Donald, the expressive, emotional member of the couple, is more skeptical and speaks of errors in diagnosis and the possibility of recurrence. Donald and Bea tell this story with great relief as though a shadow passed over. They tell this story with deep respect for each other. They mention that the support they received from friends and family was what held the marriage and family together.

We suspect that another key ingredient was the change this crisis precipitated in both Donald and Bea. After the "miracle" Donald became more practical and realistic (in contrast to his Sicilian upbringing), having been successful in standing up in an impassioned and "unrealistic" (but very loving) way for his daughter. By contrast, Bea has become more idealistic and religious, as well as more open to support' from other people, thereby breaking away from her traditional German upbringing. Both of these partners have changed. They now more fully appreciate and complement one another. One does wonder, however, what would have happened if their daughter had not successfully recovered?

Many disagreements among couples we interviewed center on the raising of children or creating

and maintaining a specific business, project or production process. These disagreements often concern the identification of one's own values and differentiation between these values and those that are inherited from our parents, our community, our church, our friends and so forth. Even after we have come to terms with the separation of our own personal values from those of our parents, something dramatic and often disturbing occurs when we have our first children or start our first mutual project. The voices of our mother or father suddenly come back to haunt us again. We tell our son not to play with that stick or "you'll poke your eye out" and realize that we are using the same intonations of voice that our parents used and are basing our predictions and in junctures on the same faulty logic as our parents. We find ourselves using the same old outmoded assumptions about how to motivate workers or how to sell products as our father or mother used thirty or forty years ago. These assumptions were out-of-date even back in those days!

Disagreements regarding rules of conduct and discipline often center on the issue of leniency when applied to the raising of children. One of the partners is "too strict" and the other "too easy" on the children. Caroline has no problem letting Sam (or anyone else, for that matter!) know that she believes he is entirely too harsh with the kids. According to Caroline, Sam speaks to them from a dominant, authoritative stance and they seem to react to that tone out of fear rather than respect. Sam disagrees with this assessment. He believes that they need strict discipline in their lives at this point in order to grow up to be loving, productive adults. In fact, Sam feels that Caroline is too permissive with the kids. Sadly, Sam's own childhood was filled with violence and unpredictability, his father having been an alcoholic. While he tries to provide a home environment that is conducive to the love and respect that he never received, his own parenting behavior is undoubtedly modeled after that provided by his father -- the only male parental role model he probably ever observed first hand.

Caroline and Sam tend to deal with these differences of opinion regarding child-rearing in a rather ineffective manner. Caroline's comments about Sam's relationship with his children were met by clear rejection on Sam's part. She had no trouble at all saying that she felt Sam's approach was the "wrong" one. On the other hand, Sam seemed to have no problem in ignoring what Caroline said. He waited quietly while she said what was wrong with his approach then took up

the conversation by directing his comments solely to the interviewer. Caroline might as well not have been in the room.

Caroline and Sam both agreed that the children had brought them closer together and had at times been the "glue" that held them together through times of high stress between them as a couple; however, this doesn't seem to match very well with their differences of opinion. While the two shared their individual perceptions about the other in relationship to the kids, there was clearly a distancing between them when they spoke of these differences. Caroline wasn't afraid to acknowledge that they disagreed. Sam refused to acknowledge the differences. Yet, they both seemed impervious to these differences when they talked about what the children meant in their lives. Their comments here almost read like: "these are the things parents are supposed to feel about their kids." There seemed to be a pseudo agreement between them that their kids would be the glue that held them together. As long as they didn't argue with each other about their disagreements regarding discipline, they wouldn't have to face the fact that they don't agree with each other and that their children are pulling them apart as well as holding them together.

Tally and Kesha also struggled with the issue of discipline, but came to a much more satisfying solution than did Caroline and Sam. They both came from a very traditional culture (India) and found that a focal point of their relationship and their shared values was a struggle with old parental values. When first married, Tally and Kesha had quite different views on parenting. Tally was very reluctant to discipline their children in any way. He traced this back to his strong reactions against the domineering and abusive parenting that he experienced. Kesha claimed he was afraid to touch the children at all. He would sit and "reason" with them for hours, while she became more and more frustrated.

The key for them was to find a way of blending Tally's distaste for coercive control with Kesha's concern that their children receive a clear message from their parents regarding boundaries and acceptable behavior. Kesha and Tally now have weekly family meetings with their children where they encourage trust and honesty in each other. They negotiate disagreements with their children, rather than forcing them to accept parental authority. At the end of these meeting, however, there are clear resolutions, and expectations regarding what the children will do during

the coming week. Love is mixed with clarity and communication.

It was this new focus that helped Tally and Kesha look at themselves in action. Gradually their work on parenting moved to marriage counseling and some effective new ways of living their lives together. The end result of their disagreements regarding child-raising was not only a rather innovative style of family decision-making, but also the creation of a new focal point for their marriage that eventually helped them through several difficult times in their marriage. Since they began their new approach, Tally and Kesha have constructed a new life style which involves their own children, their work with others in parenting, their work with other married couples, their church, and many other shared activities. They now teach the parenting class which had been so helpful for them and they are team leaders in the Marriage Encounter movement.

For this couple, disagreements about child rearing led to a new focal point in their relationship, blending two of the developmental plates: values and child-rearing. Throughout the interviews we conducted it became clear that whenever two or more developmental plates are blended (especially if the blending occurs following a major conflict and remarriage) the relationship is likely to become truly remarkable. Tally and Kesha are just such a couple. They have overcome one of the partner's abusive childhood, the transition to a very different culture and struggles regarding old and new values in their lives to create a vital and enduring relationship. At the end of the interview, Kesha indicated that she most appreciated Tally's openness to new experiences: "he is open to anything which will help him grow." The same can be said about their relationship.

Children (or a project) from previous relationships pose a unique challenge for many couples in 21st Century societies. As in the case of many couples who have previously been committed to other relationships, Dean and Kent faced the problem of moving into another person's life, complete with previously incurred obligations and possessions. Dean and Kent come from quite different backgrounds. Dean is an African-American from a small town in Tennessee. He was 42 years old when the interview took place and has been in several long-term relationships, dating back to his high school days. Each lasted about three years. Kent, who is ten years older than Dean is a European -American from Ohio. His longest lasting relationship prior to being with

Dean was for thirteen years. This was with a woman, with whom he had two children. The children are now grown. Tina is twenty-one and David is twenty-five. When they first met, Dean was twenty-five and Kent was thirty-five.

The key issue for the two of them has not been race, but rather Kent's family obligations. Dean tells this part of the story: "On the second day [Kent and I were together], the kids came running in." Kent had said nothing to Dean up to that point about an ex-wife or children. Tina was five and-a-half at the time and she came running in screaming, "Daddy, Daddy." Dean was sitting on the couch watching television at the time. Then David, who was about ten came in, then Kent's ex-wife, Patricia. Dean said he panicked and thought: "Oh shit, he's married. There is going to be a huge fight." But he said he managed to keep his cool.

Tina came over to the sofa and sat next to Dean. Kent came into the room and introduced Dean to his ex-wife. Then Tina turned to Dean and said: "I don't know you very well, but if you hurt my father in any way, I will get you." Five minutes later they were all wrestling around. A remarkable story of one man being accepted into the life and home of another man and his children (and ex-wife!) This immediate acceptance, however, does not mean that a relationship has been formed or that the marker event has occurred which establishes the two partners as a couple, ready to establish a home together.

Kent and Dean dated each other for ten months before moving in together. Kent kept pressing Dean to move in, but Dean said "no" because they were both recovering from previous relationships, and they needed to get beyond these relationships first. The logistics were also a problem, as they are with many contemporary couples who are attempting to establish a home together. Kent lived in an urban area and Dean in a suburban community about forty miles away. They both were working as teachers in public school systems and had other jobs on the side. It was not easy for either of them to pull up stakes. Finally, Dean announced that he was moving in. He did, and they have lived together for the past fifteen years.

Ironically, while the issue of children and Kent's established home were initially a potential problem for this couple, these commitments have turned out to be one of the strengths in their

relationship. They are both very proud of the two children, and in particular their independence and individual accomplishments. When Kent divorced Patricia, the children chose to stay with him. They have maintained a close relationship with Patricia over the years and have lived with her on several occasions. Yet, their primary commitment during their childhood was to their father, Kent, and their second father, Dean.

Dean and Kent talk about the challenge of raising two children during the 1980s and 1990s when there were few role models for same-sex partners with regard to the raising of children. They found that with the children as a focus in their relationship, they had to assume roles that were more often patterned after heterosexual roles. Kent, for instance, is very conscious of Mother's Day. He feels that he assumed that role in his children's upbringing and is adamant that this role be celebrated despite the fact that he is the biological father.

Children or mutual projects tend to draw in all of the other plates. As a result, this plate is often the eye of the hurricane during stormy phases in the life of a -couple. Consequently, child-rearing or joint project management is often identified as the central problem area for a couple. This is certainly the case with Caroline and Sam. They both indicated during their interview that their most intensive "serious talks together" have recently centered on family and child-rearing issues. About six weeks prior to the interview, Caroline had become very angry about Sam's new job (church promotional director). It was taking Sam away from their family more than she felt was necessary.

She confronted him with her frustrations, citing what she termed his "lack of interest" in assuming "his share of the responsibility around the house and with the kids." She indicated that these problems needed to be fixed immediately or she was considering leaving him. Sam agreed that things had gotten out of hand, but noted that he had recently begun to structure time with the kids and with Caroline. He listed the tasks he had recently assumed as his to equalize the responsibilities in their home, but didn't seem to have a clear picture of what all that left for Caroline to do. She declined to comment further. They were both uncomfortable at this point. Clearly, they had work to do on this difficult issue.

As with many couples, Caroline and Sam are caught up in a very difficult conflict that draws in the socio-economic viability and values plates, along with child-rearing. Sam has to make a living, but he must also spend time with the children. With a higher-paying job, Sam would not have to work so hard by assuming extra work, and could therefore devote more time to his family. Yet, Sam finds his work with the church to be personally gratifying and of great value and does not want to shift to a higher paying but less valued career. What should be done? Caroline indicates that she wishes Sam would separate more from the Church and value time with her and the kids more. She seemed almost on the edge of suggesting that she and the kids take "second place" to the Church in Sam's mind.

However, Caroline did not actually come out and say this. Sam wishes that Caroline were "less compulsive." He describes her as going at life at 100 miles per hour. He sees her as given to instant problem-solving, and worrying about problems long before they actually become problems. He doesn't necessarily see her as impulsive, but just wishes that she would learn to relax more. He uses himself as an example of how that should be done and indicates that in the evenings, he has the ability to come home, enjoy a nice dinner and then sit in peace and quiet with a glass of wine and just "forget that the rest of the world exists." He seems pleased with his ability to just wipe cares and concerns out of his mind with little or no effort.

Caroline is neither smiling or frowning at this point in the interview, but rather drily adds that it is hard to do that when the kids need attention: meals, baths, bedtime. All of this has to be done by Caroline, for Sam is often out of the house at business appointments (frequently at night) or at the Church for meetings. Sam is quick to add here that "he has responsibility for the kids in the morning since she has to leave so early for work (6:00 a.m.) and he doesn't. She has the kids in the evening since his job often requires him to work into the evenings." Caroline looks at the floor and does not comment.

Asking them to describe a typical day with their parents, family and friends did little to ease the tension accumulated at this point. Sam took the lead by describing Thanksgiving Day. Caroline refused to drive about forty miles to spend the day with Sam's mother. There had been arguments between his mother and Caroline regarding Christmas presents for the kids. Caroline had

"become tired" of dealing with Sam's mother and refused to spend the day with her. She was perfectly content for Sam to take the kids and leave her to herself for the day. It was agreed that they would tell Sam's mother that Caroline was well. Caroline added at this point that they knew this was classic cover-up and denial, but seemed not to be concerned in the least about how Sam's mother would react to this fib.

Caroline and Sam certainly are faced with a difficult problem. There are no easy solutions, though one cannot help but wonder if Sam is as sensitive as he could be to Caroline's predicaments during the evening or if Caroline is really as supportive as she could be of Sam's commitment to a career in the church. Just when they reach out for a solution to this child-rearing problem (such as Sam dropping back on his workload or taking on a higher-paying job) Caroline and Sam bump up against another critical issue (financial security, meaningfulness of job) which keeps them in conflict.

Their church certainly plays a central role in both the continuation of and the potential solution to their ongoing problems. On the one hand, the church has provided them with support, friendships, and a sense of purpose in life. Their children have benefited greatly from the community and education they have received from this congregation. Yet, the sum total of their time outside of work and family is consumed in church activities. Sam has his music programs, while Caroline teaches Sunday School. She is less committed than Sam to volunteering her time to the Church. She seems resentful that their social life has never moved beyond the church.

Clearly, the church isn't meeting all of Caroline's needs; however, since it is such a strong focus in Sam's life, there are no questions asked on this score (this is one of those "nondiscussable issues" that we described in an earlier chapter). Sam has everything invested in the church. If Caroline wants to remain with Sam then she must continue to be actively involved in the church. This point is not discussable, nor can this couple talk about the fact that they can't discuss this issue. Thus, a central issue in the child-rearing plate for Caroline and Sam's relationship is self-sealed and subject to considerable distortion and resentment by both partners. Caroline and Sam are at a crossroad in their relationship. Caroline is threatening to move out. They eventually face either a divorce or or-remarriage that profoundly alters their way of relating to and living with

one another. Professional counseling would seem to be warranted at this point, if they are committed to saving and improving their relationship and resolving these tightly interlocked, multi-plate problems.

To what extent is the couple dependent upon their children or their joint project for their own collective or individual identity? In the case of Bill and Fay, their professional lives and personal lives are closely intertwined and both of them seem to be pleased with this condition. As in the case of many traditional couples, Bill occupies the role of professional (in his case, lawyer), while Fay operates as the office manager and legal secretary in their small firm. A similar pattern of roles and shared responsibilities is to be found among many lawyers, dentists, architects, accountants and (until the recent changes in health care) physicians throughout the United States. According to Fay: "most days we work together in Bill's law office, so we're together almost twenty-four hours a day." Bill notes with pride: "Fay developed a law office system for the personal computer, so we don't need a legal secretary. We've sold that system to a few other law offices." Fay adds to Bill's statement: "Bill used to work for a large firm, but we're both a lot happier in a small practice."

Whereas many couples report that they find it impossible to be together twenty-four hours per day, Bill and Fay seem to enjoy their extensive interactions. Furthermore, Bill values Fay's work and there seems to be very little sense of hierarchy. This mutual respect may be reinforced by Fay's occasional work as a systems analyst and consultant outside their law practice. Their shared commitment to their law practice resides at the heart of the matter, as it does for many parents. Bill and Key are working together on something that is of importance to both of them. They chose to start their own small law firm precisely because it would give them an opportunity to work together. In virtually all other aspects of their lives they make adjustments to ensure that they have substantial time together and that their daily routine is maintained. This is an enmeshed couple, yet their enmeshment was freely chosen and is working effectively for both of them.

Earlier, the phenomenon of enmeshment and the balance between enmeshment and disengagement were discussed—this balance must be struck when two people first fall in love.

An appropriate balance must once again be found when a couple is raising children or conducting a mutual project. This is the critical normative issue that a couple must address with regard to this developmental plate. This issue builds directly on one of the two issues of the storming stage: who is responsible for what (given the amount of time and attention each partner will devote to child rearing or the project)? A deeper issue is really at the heart of the matter with regard to this development plate. It concerns the role that the child (children) or project will play in the ongoing relationship between the partners. As a tangible manifestation of the two partner's love for one another, how can the child (children) or project help the relationship stay together and hopefully become an even more abundant source of joy and growth for each partner?

Many couples, such as Bessy and Bill discover that their life values as a couple begin to settle securely in place with the beginning years of child rearing or building a shared project. Typically, responsibilities are firmly and clearly assigned, whereas before the birth of a child or the initiation of a major shared project, these responsibilities are more likely to be loosely framed, readily shifted or even ignored. Bill and Bessy made the choice like many couples to identify an "equal and logical way" of distributing their time with their daughter (when she was very young) and of distributing the new household chores associated with child--rearing.

As in many heterosexual relationships, the woman (in this case, Bessy) does the assigning of duties and responsibilities. In the case of Bessy and Bill, each partner has particular household chores that they had done for many years. Bessy does the wash and Bill takes the clothes out of the dryer and puts them away. With the introduction of diapers and baby cloth into the equation, Bessy and Bill simply expanded their responsibilities in the same areas to accommodate the new demand. Bessy has more clothes to wash and Bill has more to dry and fold. As their daughter, Trudy, grew older, she was also assigned chores.

Other couples are not so sanguine about the assignment of duties and responsibilities; yet, if a couple is to establish viable norms for child-rearing or project-building, the increased pressures and work demands inside the relationship typically requires that they establish firmer boundaries and clearer expectations. Whether raising children or building a project, a couple in this developmental plate is clearly in a "business" and must establish "business-like" rules or they

risk destruction of the relationship. There is, of course, a much more positive way of defining the need to establish norms regarding child-rearing and project-building. These norms can provide the glue for a relationship. They can give the couple a sustaining meaning and purposefulness that helps both partners weather many domestic storms and life intrusions.

On the other hand, an enduring couple should never be totally dependent on their children or their shared project as a way of keeping themselves together. Typically, when this is the case the parents are lousy parents and the children are left with a legacy of guilt and resentment, or the partners are lousy business people who soon burn out or use the project to enact (though rarely resolve) their own domestic problems. Nevertheless, the children or project can be a wonderful focal point for the shared aspirations and values of a couple.

Bessy and Bill keep bringing up words like protection, safety, security, responsibility and pride in their child-rearing when talking about their relationship. They have created a life that embodies all of these values, specifically with regard to their role as parents. Bessy's interest in and connection to child rearing provides continuity in their relationship. The interviewer suggested that Bessy and Bill's own personal need for protection, safety, security and shared responsibility is the key to their mutual interest in these values. In seeking security and safety for their own children, Bessy and Bill are creating a home that is safe and secure for themselves.

The problem that Bessy and Bill must face in a few years concerns the termination of their primary role as parents. Their children will be leaving home and they must directly address the issue of safety and security, rather than working on it indirectly through their children. Bessy and Bill have already begun to take constructive steps. Bessy has begun to meet regularly with a group of women friends, and Bill has a sailboat to which he devotes an increasing amount of time. They are both quite involved in their work outside the home as well, though there is not a very good match in this regard. At this point, Bessy is looking forward to having more time to put into her job and Bill is hoping for early retirement.

Bessy talked a bit about other people, suggesting there is something "weird" about Bill having a boat which is not a part of her life. Then Bill said, "My Dad had a shop. He'd go out and work in

the shop. My Mother never entered that shop." What will become of this couple after their child leaves home? What will be their common, shared purpose? When asked about their hopes and dreams for the future, when their child is gone, Bessy spoke of having the opportunity to work fifty to sixty hours a week if she wants 50, while Bill wonders how to incorporate sailing and traveling with Bessy (who gets sea sick). As they both spoke about their different ideas for the future, they showed little concern for any problems of working out a life that could be increasingly separate.

When asked what was the glue that has held their relationship together for twenty years, Bill said "valuing our differences." Bessy agreed with him. This does seem to be important to them at the present time and possibly in the future, for if they did not value their differences, their relationship could be heading for a crisis. Earlier in the interview they spoke of not having disagreements. Now they have spoken of valuing their differences.

Clearly, their sense of unity was built on a shared purpose, raising their daughter." They held very few differences of opinion in this realm, having both affirmed the traditional values and beliefs transferred from their own parents about raising children. Now, they either must find a new purpose and shared meaning or go their separate ways in a very disengaged -relationship. At the present time, they seem to have chosen the latter route. Yet, one wonders as they grow older if they will learn to not just value their differences but also learn from each other and grow closer together again under the auspices of some new shared vision.

Performing: How Do We Savor the Fruits of Our Mutual Labor?

Glenda and Kurt offer a superb example of the movement of a young couple through the difficult early stages of child-rearing to a balanced and gratifying performing stage. Their life story also illustrates the difficulty inherent in the initiation of this newly emerging developmental plate in the life of a couple. The two of them had been a couple since they were each fifteen years old (both now being 33 years of age) and were married eleven years prior to the birth of their daughter, Trisha. They still live within a few miles of their parents and the homes they grew up. For most of their early years together, Glenda and Kent lived simple and carefree lives, receiving substantial assistance from both families. In essence, the two of them never had to grow up, but

could remain as "adult children, living in the shadow of their original homes and families. As we noted earlier in this chapter, their decision to have a child came very slowly. When they finally did decide to have a child, they suddenly had to grow up individually and as a couple.

During their two-hour interview, Glenda and Kurt talked about what is most important for other people to know about them as a couple. With Trisha taking a nap in the other room, they identified child-raising as the central theme in their current life and spoke of the contrast with their past life, when they were free of most responsibilities. Glenda observes that "lately we're very busy, you know, it's hectic with Trisha on the scene." Kurt also includes work on the list of emerging pressures. Glenda agrees: "Yeah, well the thing of both of us working and having a kid, pursuing the "American dream" sort of lifestyle . . . [laughs]. So as far as being a couple or even thinking about each other, it's sort of hard sometimes."

Kurt and Glenda don't have much time together alone any more, what with Trisha, their dual career, and family commitments. While both love their child, Kurt and Glenda also refer to former areas of mutual enjoyment, now largely forfeited, new complex responsibilities within their relationship, and even an inconvenient change in residence they thought necessary because of their child. Trisha's arrival when they were living in their former home convinced them that they were now too large a family for its confines, and they moved to their current, larger residence. Now, because of the proximity of their house to a busy highway, they are concerned about Trisha's safety. They are again looking for a different rental with a larger, fenced yard in which their toddler can play.

Glenda and Kurt had anticipated that Trisha's birth was going to require changes in their comfortable life style, and they prepared for these changes: "When Trisha was first born I [Kurt] took about six weeks off work and Glenda took four months off. So, we were together a lot right in the beginning." This period appears to have provided Glenda and Kurt with an opportunity to "re-calibrate" calibrate" (Watzlawick, et al., 1967, p.147) the style of their relationship and, in essence, to become remarried and initiate a new cycle of forming, storming, norming and performing regarding the roles each of them would play in taking care of Trisha while caring for their own relationship.

Following an initial period of testing and turmoil, Kurt and Glenda began "performing" their roles and newly established routines with a high degree of mutual confidence in their performance:

Glenda: Yeah, Rishi [Trisha's nickname] really loves her Daddy. It's gotten where she doesn't want me to give her a bath. She wants Kurt to give her a bath, because I'm less patient. It's like I say "Ok, you got to get a bath and then it's time for bed," and Kurt, he just hangs out with her and they make bubbles in the water. (laughs]

Kurt: I like to play with her.

Glenda: And she likes that.

Kurt: Oh, yeah.

Glenda: But also, a lot of that is we kind of decided on routines, so I'm the one that gives her a bath at night, well usually, and so when I give her a bath, she just expects that.

Whereas some mothers might resent the preference of their daughter for father's attention, Glenda views this preference with considerable fondness (and perhaps some relief). She delights in the affection expressed by Trisha and Kurt for one another and values the differences between herself and Kurt.

Kurt also frequently performs "single parent" responsibilities because Glenda' job requires her to travel for as long as a week at a time. Kurt indicates that:

. . . it's hard for me to be a single parent, going to work and taking Trisha to day care and doing meals and it's hard to catch up on what you need to do until she's in bed . . . I look at the up side of that, though, in that there's time when it's just me and Trisha, and she's entirely dependent on me. Solely. And that has helped me bond with Trisha a lot, and helped our relationship.

These seems to be three essential ingredients in Glenda and Kurt's relationship that has enabled them to establish and maintain the performing functions of this development plate. First, they exhibit an accepting and generous attitude regarding competing relationships among other members of the family, as opposed to resentment, possessiveness or competition for attention when a child prefers the other parent in certain settings. Second, there is respect and affection regarding differences between styles of childrearing. Third, there is a willingness on the part of both partners to perform nontraditional roles (for example, Kurt serving as primary parent when Glenda is traveling) Other couples might learn from the example set by Glenda and Kurt

KEY CHAPTER POINTS - PLATE FOUR: CHILDREARING / SHARED PROJECTS

Enduring couples:

- Engage in extensive discussions about how their relationship may accommodate a child (or children).
- Negotiate childrearing and project management responsibilities with each other.
- Devote time, energy and dollars to mutual projects instead of focusing exclusively on childrearing.
- Share moments of mutual admiration for the important job they are doing in bringing up a child or successfully engaging a project in this complex world.
- "Remarry" repeated times as they find new ways to structure their relationship as it is tested throughout the life of the project or the duration of childrearing.
- Seek a third entity to help resolve conflicts: either a person (counselor, relative, friend) or a transpersonal entity (God, fate, psychic, horoscope).