The Psychology of Worth V: Raising Children/Engaging a Project

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> *We . . . need to protect, guide, and encourage our young people, helping them to build a society worthy of their great spiritual and cultural heritage. Specifically, we need to see each child as a gift to be welcomed, cherished, and protected. And we need to care for our young people, not allowing them to be robbed of hope and condemned to life on the streets. -- Pope Francis*

This heartfelt statement delivered by the recently deceased leader of the Roman Catholic church provides us with insights into an important source of Personal and Collective Worth. We provide care so that our children might remain hopeful and healthy. This deep caring enables us to feel worthy. We can contribute to the sustained welfare of our society—for this welfare resides ultimately in the life led by our children. In a comparable manner, we benefit our society by conducting successful projects that provide goods and services to members of our community. In caring about projects that are close to our heart, the opportunity opens up to feel better about ourselves and for members of our community to feel better about the community in which they live, given the availability of the goods and services we provide.

There is probably no source of Personal Worth that is more immediate and lingering than that related to the pride we take in our children and the accompanying sense of personal pride. Our chest swells up a bit and our heart beats a little faster when we witness our child receiving a certificate of completion from grammar school or a doctoral diploma from a university. Our daughter's first hit at the Little League baseball game or our son's first made basket at the high school basketball game fills us with a warm feeling of having done something "right" as a parent. We are "worthy" as parent because we not only encourage our child but also because we are there in-person to see them take on a challenging task and are there to acknowledge their accomplishments.

We also find gratification in starting a new business or working on a weekend project. While it is challenging to run a business, the sense of Personal Worth is there immediately with the first sales or first compliment from the customer being served pie, pizza or pickled herring. We manage a shoe store or a hair salon. There are difficult and even discouraging times, but also the opportunity to feel just as proud of our store or salon "parenting" as our parenting of the child running to first base. We might instead make our living working in a corporate office but find our Personal Worth in the canoe we built by hand during the summer or the women's support group we created last winter.

Sometimes we are blessed with the opportunity to combine both kinds of parenting. Our child joins us in running the new business or we partner with them in setting up a family counselling center. Joint creation of Personal Worth and a sense of joint Collective Worth is hard to beat—and might even be considered a "gift from the gods" or at least a very special opportunity for achieving worth within a family setting.

Parent/Project and Generativity

In his founding conception of generativity, Erik Erikson focused on the opportunities, challenges and gratifications associated with generativity (vs. stagnation) as it takes center stage during the middle years of our lives. Erickson (1963) did not consider child rearing to be a sign of generativity, and he did not focus on project building among young men and women. In some ways, therefore, we are going against Erikson in proposing child raising as the first generativity role that we often engage during our early adult years.

This is an important aspect of generativity because we experience deep caring when we raise our children. Our sense of Personal Worth is often fully invested in child raising. Deep caring is also felt in our Head and Heart when we initiate projects related to a set of values or goals that are particularly important for us. There is often a “double header” as we find Personal Worth in this project and as we witness increased Collective Worth in the community we are serving.

Generativity One activities make a further contribution to our sense of Worth. These early forms of mature caring have a lingering impact on our lives. Generativity One continues to be experienced when we interact with our grown children, when we become grandparents, and when we serve as guardians in passing the torch for projects and organizations about which we deeply care.

Generativity at this early stage holds another important implication. A decision *not* to have children can have a lingering impact on our lives. In addition, a Generativity One decision may involve setting aside our dream of initiating a project associated with a life vision. Or it might involve operating inside an existing organization rather than starting one's own organization. Such decisions not to engage actively or directly in Generativity One are just as important as decisions to engage in more typical Generativity One activities like parenting.

Generativity One and Leaving Something that Lingers

In his book on *The Active Life*, Parker Palmer (1999) employs a wonderful and quite poignant metaphor about dropping one pebble in a basin of water. At first, the water in the basin is impacted by the dropped pebble. The ripples in the water serve as clear evidence of the pebble's impact. However, the ripples soon die away, and the water no longer has any memory of the pebble's impact. As with the water, the collective memory of our impact on the world often seems to be fleeting. We wonder whether we have made any lasting difference in our life. Are we leaving a legacy? Does our world remember anything about our existence and the actions we have taken? If there is no lingering memory then, perhaps, we should ask ourselves: Am I Worth anything?

While Palmer has identified a profound existential issue that each of us must confront, I gently offer a slightly altered metaphor. We chose to replace the basin of water with a lake. The pebble is dropped in the water. The ripples spread across the lake, lapping on a distant shoreline. While the ripples soon die out, small indentations are usually made on the shoreline. This suggests that our own impact on the world might not be immediately observable, but somewhere on a distant shore, the impact can be found. We have made a difference. We are worthwhile.

Frequently, our impact is discovered many years later in the lives of our children, grandchildren, and perhaps even great-grandchildren. While the distant shore is not far away in term of space, it is often far away in terms of time. Similarly, the lingering impact of our work in life might be found in a project we have initiated as its influence cascades across many other segments of our society. Everything changes a little to accommodate the minor intrusion we have made on the fabric of our community, social system, nation or world. We tread on the earth and leave an imprint. This is what Generativity One is all about. This is a matter of legacy. Our Personal Worth is assured, and we find that Collective Worth has also increased (at least a small amount).

Early on, and certainly by the time we are young adults, we hope that something endures beyond our life. We hope there will be a remnant that endures. As Parker Palmer has noted, we don't want to believe that the water has no memory of the pebble. We give birth to children and begin a project during our young adulthood often in hopes of leaving a mark on a distant shoreline. Furthermore, we often need help in leaving this mark, especially if it involves giving birth to one or more children and raising them.

Thus, the first generativity role is often engaged in relationship with another person. There is *Collaborative Generativity*. While this form of generativity is to be found in Generativity Two, Three, and Four, it is particularly prevalent in Generativity One. We find in an enduring, intimate relationship the opportunity to bear and raise children. In this essay, I turn to stories of first order generativity told by couples about the challenges and gratifications that come from shared generativity. These stories were told during interviews that were conducted with couples who had lived together for many years (Bergquist, 2023).

Not all adults find generativity in the raising of children. Some find generativity in a special project they initiate while in young adulthood or even later in life (e.g., lobbying the state legislature for a special cause, staring a not-for-profit organization, planting an annual community vegetable garden). In many instances, we have found that these projects are also shared with a life partner.

In this essay, I weave together the narratives of child-raising with stories about conducting a mutual project because we believe these processes are often parallel. And for many of the people 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 the child-rearing process. We turn first to the central question in the engagement of first order generativity: should we raise a child or initiate a mutual project?

Should We Raise a Child?

Many of the people we interviewed early in their adulthood decided to have children, thereby replicating the standard family-oriented social structures of our society. In most cases, these men and women gave birth to one or more children through an intimate relationship with their life partner. Others decided to have children through adoption or *in-veto* fertilization; these people 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 careers to pursue or because they simply don’t want the awesome responsibility of raising children. In other cases,

young adults live in areas where it is very difficult or impossible to adopt children. Or they have decided that the available avenues for having children (adoption, surrogates, artificial insemination, etc.) are too problematic or emotionally disturbing to pursue.

Raising Children in a Changing World

The decision about having 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-veto* fertilization rules and regulations, gay and lesbian couples and heterosexual partners who are not married are not freed from the decision about whether to raise children.

Many young adults and couples also confront the issue as to whether they wish independently or jointly to conduct some long-term (even lifelong) project. This might be starting a business or participating extensively in an avocation, hobby, or recreational activity. In some of instances, the men and women we interviewed decided to begin a joint project in lieu of having children; In essence, they turned to "rearing" a mutual project and investing it with the emotional commitment and caring that is usually associated with child raising. In other cases, the decision to begin a project had little to do with the decision about raising children; these young adults either decided on a project in addition to raising children or started their project prior to child-rearing.

The decision of whether to have children often is complex. It is expensive to raise children, and couples having dual careers may have little time or energy for child-raising. Here is an example: 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 spent all their early married years living near their parents. In this respect, they are very traditional; one might almost call them "quaint." When it came to a decision about having children, however, Glenda and Kurt were much more closely attuned to contemporary values and concerns.

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 weighed the impact that children would have on their carefree and mutually gratifying lifestyle. They were married eleven years prior to having their first and only child. Glenda and Kurt's joint decision was also impacted by their observing the child-reading styles by other couples they knew. If they were going to have children, they wanted it to be different from other young parents who seemed to give up everything so that they might have children.

First order generativity is in part about “doing it better” than other parents, including one’s own parents.

Divorce and Second Marriage

The decision about whether to have children is moot in many instances among contemporary men and women. They are either now single parents, having never been married or divorced, or have joined together with another person who produced children from a previous relationship. The issue of Generativity One now carries over to responsibilities faced by the single parent or a new couple

relationship. Thus, the question becomes not whether to have children in their lives but, rather, the extent to which they choose to continue assuming responsibility for parenting these children. At the same time, the question might also concern the extent to which both parties of a new couple relationship are actively involved in rearing children who are already present, and whether the couple will have children of their own to raise along with those already present. As we all know, things can get quite complex.

This brief summary of the complex relationship between a divorced father and his children is replicated in the lives of many of today's men and women. The children stay with one parent and spend time with their other parent only on weekends or only a few times each year. It is often a devastating experience for both parents, and particularly for the parent who does not have primary custody of the children. The dream of Generativity One is often shattered because the aspiration of the parent to be with his or her children all the time while they are growing up is set aside. If the parent with custody moves away with the children, or if the parent without custody moves elsewhere, the separation generates difficult choices: should the parent without custody stay in the community where the children live or move to the same community as the parent with custody? How much sacrifice should the divorced parent make, especially given the anger and sense of betrayal that are often experienced by both parents?

There is another ingredient that plays out in the life of many divorced parents. After the divorce, one of the men we interviewed for the Sage project indicated that his children occasionally visited him when he lived in Chicago. Sometimes he visited them in Ohio. However, he never really had a full-time "home" with his children. This resulted in a *generativity gap*. Best understood, Generativity One is most often envisioned and enacted in a highly tangible manner: "I provide a home. I provide security. I am there to tuck them in bed every evening."

True, some degree of parenting security for children is provided through child support or regular alimony payments, but this is simply not the same thing as full-time Generativity One. As one of our other community Sage leaders noted, "It's not just a matter of providing a 'home' for my children; there is also the absence of a complete family." He reported that the children would stay at his home, but at the end of the day there was still someone "outside" his home--namely, his ex-wife. No matter how much he was enraged by his ex-spouse, her absence was "haunting"— at least until a second person in his life helped to care for his children. This is the topic to which we now turn.

Many 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. In some cases, we found that the young adults we interviewed didn't have to worry about fitting children into their busy work lives because they were unable to give birth to their own children. This inability to have children can often be a source of considerable stress and strain in a relationship, unless the young adult couple can direct their energy and desire to create something together toward another valued end.

Should We Start a Major Project?

Many of the people we interviewed for the enduring, intimate relationship project faced the issue of whether to have children, as well as beginning a project that represented something of great value to

one or both of them. Such projects can take many forms, ranging from raising animals to mounting a major corporate venture. Regardless of the breadth or depth of the commitment, a project becomes an important source of generativity for people and often helps to define the distinctive character of the individual. In addition. it provides the individual with something to hold on to when the going gets tough.

In some instances, a project overlaps with one or more of the other roles of generativity we have identified. It is not unusual for a project to be deeply embedded in the shared value system of a couple. Many partners mutually invest substantial time and money in political campaigns, public causes, or various public service activities. A church or synagogue or other type of religious institution plays a major role in the lives of many individuals. In some instances, a project overlaps with one or more of the other roles of generativity we have identified.

It is not unusual for a project to be deeply embedded in the shared value system of a couple. Many partners mutually invest substantial time and money in political campaigns, public causes, or various public service activities. A church or synagogue or other type of religious institution plays a major role in the lives of many individuals. 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. Generativity Four (and Generativity Three) are alive and well!

Is It Worthwhile? The Challenges and Benefits of Generativity One

Typically, two major questions face any person or couple when they have begun to raise children or begin a mutual project. The first of these concerns the amount of time and other resources that each person and the partners together devote to raising children or conducting their project. Chronic stress, due to shortages, rather than acute crises, often influences (and can even destroy) the health of an individual and the health of an intimate relationship. We must place child rearing and project management at the top of the list that demands scarce resources. The second question concerns the ways in which children will be raised and how the project will be managed. This can be just as stress-ridden and conflict-filled as the problem of scarce resources. We examine both of these stormy issues, then look at the unique manner in which couples address them when they bring children from a previous relationship, or a project from a prior time in their lives, to the relationship.

Engaging in Generativity One When Raising Children

Child-raising or attending a project is a major, energy-consuming part of an individual's or couple's life. When children are young or when a project is still in its fledgling state, most of Eric Erikson's other life stages take a backseat. Other ways to achieve Personal Worth are also likely to be set aside (at least temporarily). The Push and Pull of parenting were on clear display when the interviews were conducted with long-term enduring couples.

In assuming this traditional role in her family, Rebecca represented a minority voice among the women we interviewed. Most of the women who are less than fifty years old 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 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 flexible in assuming child-rearing responsibilities. At overwhelming moments, when they get angry at one another, they tend to use a variety of strategies for resolving their conflicts; they both realize that while child-raising is the source of many of their tensions, it is also the primary source of their joy.

Parenting is where Rebecca and Bill's sense of shared Personal Worth is to be achieved. They know that they love each other and that these tensions will soon pass, especially as the children grow older. Rebecca and Bill are fully committed to finding Personal Worth through their parenting—this commitment serves as a "glue" for their marriage. Other couples have devoted less time than Rebecca and Bill to being intimate. Differing interests leave many couples with no time set aside for talking about their relationship or their parenting. 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. Their searches for Personal Worth are not aligned. Rebecca and Bill care deeply about different things. Bill is looking to his career for a sense of Personal Worth, while Rebecca looks to her role as a devoted mother. Not surprisingly, many of these conflicts concern the time spent by Bill with their children.

When describing a significant change that occurred during the 23 years of their marriage, Jeannie told a story about their first son, Pete, who 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. During the interview, she described herself as being an "obsessive" mother. Her child came before anything else. Personal Worth was totally invested in her view of herself as a parent. 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 reported that he felt excluded from the bonding between Jeannie and his son. His own investment in childrearing and intimate adult relationships as sources of Personal Worth was being ignored by his wife. 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 their loss of time as a couple, and he did not like the child sleeping in their bed. He became increasingly fearful about being a capable parent and felt guilty about his own feelings of rivalry with his son. He found little of worth in his life as a spouse and parent.

Frequently, the issue of time spent doing something other than child-rearing is heightened because both partners work full-time, and late evenings are often filled with household chores that neither partner can do during the day. Many couples we interviewed reported very little time for talking or sex. They were left with an exhausted snuggle at the end of a 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. It is hard for them to set aside time for savoring a shared sense of Personal Worth as good parents.

Child-rearing is frequently the source of contentious arguments about both financial priorities and other areas of responsibility, at least for couples who have young children living at home. Many couples we interviewed pointed to the birth of their first or second child as a joyous event, but also the source of considerable strain in their relationship. In the midst of Generativity One and the opportunity for shared Personal Worth, they are often trying to discover new ways in which to structure their lives and the relationship with their life partner (including finances, attitudes about home and possessions, career, and values). This often happens while their children are also exploring new ways of relating to their parents, siblings, friends, and the world in general.

Even for those men and women who have grown children, the issue of child-rearing can raise its contentious head. As we have already suggested, Generativity One doesn't end after children leave home. A sense of parent-related Personal Worth is only sustained with continuation of deep caring relationships with our children. A “care-package” (shacks, healthy beverages, and a brief note expressing love and support) go a long way in sustaining a deep caring relationship with our daughter going away to college. A weekly phone call with son, daughter-in-law and grandkids makes sense as we grow older. Visits to the homes of our children during the summer help with sustained Personal Worth for both of us as aging parents.

In the case of projects, the issue of time is often compounded by a concern for the appropriate and feasible allocation of money. How much do we want to 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 to remodel our prized kitchen? To what extent is our Personal Worth invested in the project? Are we ignoring other sources of Personal Worth (especially shared Personal Worth) in our commitment of time and money to that special project?

Rules Governing Generativity One

What are the rules of the game when it comes to raising kids or starting a major project? And how do we set priorities and conduct ourselves? Rule-setting is particularly difficult and critical when the decision is jointly made by both members of a couple—as it often is with Generativity One and when both members of the couple are invested in a shared sense of Personal Worth. Even when a couple has arrived at a comfortable decision about the priority that they will assign in their lives to the raising of children, they still must find common ground on the rules of conduct and type and degree of discipline they will exert in raising their children or building a project together.

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 (e.g., politics, music, literature, recreation) 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 regarded as either a Nazi or an anarchist!) regarding the raising of children.

Many struggles in the lives of the men and women we have interviewed for all our projects have centered on Generativity One issues. This includes many disagreements among couples we interviewed for the Enduring, Intimate Relationship Project and community leaders we interviewed for the Sage Leadership project. Tensions concerned the raising of children, creating and maintaining a specific business or shared project, or engaging in a major community service project. These struggles and disagreements often concerned the identification of values and the differentiation between these values and those that were inherited from parents, community, church, or friends. At a deeper level, tensions are fostered in a circuitous journey to Personal Worth on which both partners are embarking. The journey for both members of the couple may be dictated by voices and pronouncements from the past, or by new opportunities and challenges. At times, their two journeys can be joined; at other times, they need to part ways.

The new opportunities and challenges often come to the fore in surprising ways. They can abruptly change our search for Personal Worth. Even after we have come to terms with the separation of our 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 they. We find ourselves using the same 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 then!

Children and mutual projects tend to draw in all Eriksonian stages. As a result, Generativity One is often the eye of the hurricane during stormy phases in the life of a person or couple. Images of alternative pathways to Personal Worth swirl around our head. Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, we end up crashing down in a foreign world where it is not clear how we get back home (Personal Worth). Consequently, child-rearing or project management was often identified as the central problem for a person or couple whom we interviewed. To use an expression of one man we interviewed, it is easy to feel “muddle-headed” about life priorities and sources of Personal Worth when bringing the first baby home or finishing the first year of a project.

Fortunately, for many people we have interviewed, the muddle-headedness eventually goes away. Bessy and Bart discovered that their life values began to settle securely in place in the early years of child rearing or building a shared project. Generativity One has a way of powerfully anchoring what is truly important in their lives. Typically, responsibilities are firmly and clearly assigned, whereas before the birth of a child or the initiation of a shared project, these responsibilities were more likely to be loosely framed, readily shifted, or even ignored. Like many couples, Bart and Bessy made the choice to identify an "equal and logical way" of distributing their time with their young daughter and of distributing household chores associated with child-rearing.

As in many heterosexual relationships, the woman tends to assign duties and responsibilities. In the case of Bessy and Bart, each partner had specific household chores that they had done for many years. Bessy

did the wash. Bart took the clothes out of the dryer and put them away. With the introduction of diapers and baby clothes into the equation, Bessy and Bart simply expanded their responsibilities in the same areas to accommodate the new demand. Bessy had more clothes to wash, and Bart had more clothes 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 require that they establish firmer boundaries and clearer expectations. Whether raising children or building a project, a couple is clearly in a "business" and must establish business-like rules or they risk destruction of their relationship.

There seemed to be three essential ingredients in Glenda and Kurt's relationship that enabled them to establish and maintain the role of Generativity One. First, they exhibited an accepting and generous attitude about competing relationships, possessiveness, and competition for attention when their child preferred the other parent in certain settings. Second, there was respect and affection about differences in their individual styles of childrearing. Third, there was a willingness on their part to perform non-traditional roles. We might all learn from the example set by Glenda and Kurt.

Surrogate Parenting: Generativity One Through Impacting the Lives of Children Outside One's Family

Sometimes we try to have it all: children, a paying job, and some valued project on the side. In other cases, we try to make our project into a paying job by starting a business, turning a hobby into a business, or making our job more meaningful and enjoyable. In other instances, we make the hard decision to forego child-raising and instead invest our time, energy, and generativity in a special project that directly benefits children who are not "our own." This apparently is the case with Oprah Winfrey, who made the difficult decision not to have children herself. Instead, as she has noted in many interviews, Oprah reframed her Generativity One pursuits by declaring that she would seek to care for all the children in the world rather than devote herself to raising her own biological children. Oprah Winfrey, of course, also has a huge project to run—namely her own massive media enterprise. That is enough to keep anyone fully occupied!

Then there are the less famous leaders in Nevada County, California, who participated in the Sage Leadership Project. They were all devoted to their community and many of them gained great generative satisfaction from working with children who were not their own. A second form of institution-based surrogate parenting is to be found in organizations that serve children who are struggling with the demands placed on them by society. This is the opposite of education. It is the side of isolation and, hopefully, remediation that unfortunately is often given more public attention than the preventive, educational side. Certainly, there are people who decide to engage in a project while also raising a family. These are the men and women who do try to have it all. The Emerging Sage leaders we interviewed often talked about the conflict and tensions inherent in their effort to be civically engaged while also raising children. We conclude this chapter by turning to these challenged men and women.

The Emerging leaders from our Sage Project (ages 25-55) often found it hard to establish the right balance between love and work in their own demanding mid-life world. For some of the Emerging Sage

leaders there is an option, but it is often painful. We see the struggle about work/life balance playing out in the decision that some sage leaders make to get "out of the rat race" of civic engagement and spend more time with their children and family. For these men and women, there was often no balance to be found between work or civic engagement and love (time with family). They had to choose one over the other.

If a Sage leader decides not to opt out of her civic commitments, and if she is equally committed to quality Generative One time with her family, what can be done to reconcile those sacrifices and trade-offs? We observed that they usually can do so in one of three ways. First, they might consider their project work to be a model for their children and hope that the children will be proud of their efforts and will emulate them during their own adult years. Second, some of our Emerging Sage leaders believed that their civic work would ultimately be of benefit to their children, thus making their outside caregiving simply an extension of their caregiving inside the family. Third, some of these leaders took a more tangible step; they immediately involved their children in their civic projects.

Many years ago, Sigmund Freud offered a simple but profound observation that the two ingredients of a happy and successful life are love and work (Smelser and Erikson, 1980). But Freud failed to mention that it isn't always easy to balance the demands inherent in both love and work, especially when love has to do with raising children while work has to do with finding time and energy to successfully engage in a project.

The Enduring Role of Generativity One

Up to this point, I have borrowed primarily from research conducted with men and women who were involved in long term, intimate relationships—though I also introduced some insights from our Sage leaders as we addressed the role of Generativity One in the creation and maintenance of lifelong projects. Now, I draw extensively on my work with coaching and consulting clients--men and women who were often experiencing the challenges of mid-life.

We Continue to Parent

Generativity One does not disappear as we grow older: That is one of the dominant themes in this book, and we believe it provides an important contribution to the literature on generativity. The first role of generativity not only doesn't go away; it provides many of us with an opportunity to "do it better" as we grow older. Many years ago, Barry Osherson (1986) wrote about the "wounded father" and poignantly described the difficult relationship that often exists between the father and his children during the early years of parenthood. He writes about the alienation that has existed with the father who worked a full day in a large factory and came home every evening and wanted to be "left alone" to recuperate.

This narrative seems embedded in the 20th Century account of "organization men" and "men in gray flannel suits", as well as the "working stiffs" who spent their lives on an assembly line. This storyline also seems relevant for working men and women of the 21st Century who are deeply engaged in their work— and who are impacted by the Internet and digital communication technologies. They often find no boundaries between their work life and home life. (Bergquist, 1993).

The later years in the lives of these "wounded" men and women can be "redemptive." As older adults, we can do a better job in relating to our children because we may now have more time to devote to them, and because we may have also transformed ourselves in terms of interpersonal sensitivity and orientation to the issues of control and authority. In some cases, the issue is not determining when and how we serve as parents to our grown children; rather, it's about the ongoing responsibilities we have as active parents to a child who is disabled, who faces profound emotional problems, who is struggling with addiction problems, or who has simply never left home and parental attachments ("failure to launch"). Unlike the temporary challenge of Generativity One parenting that faced Sally, we find other parents like these who must engage in an ongoing manner with their adult children.

Generativity One Lingers: Six Options

There are essentially six ways in which senior men and women address the issue of "retirement"; in our framework this involves finding how to engage or disengage from the major projects in our lives. Several books and articles have been written on this topic. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald Miller make profound observations about the process of moving from "age-ing" to "sage-ing" (Schachter-Shalomi and Miller, 1997), while Marc Freedman describes the "encore" careers in which mature men and women engage (Freedman, 2008).

We commend the inspiration and insights offered by these authors, but we propose there are more options than they identify—and that the decisions being made by mature adults are often much more complex and challenging than the processes they describe. We here briefly identify and analyze each of the six options and connect each to the challenges of shifting Generativity One roles.

Option One—Shifting Careers: This is the option being described by Schachter-Shalomi, Ronald Miller, and Marc Freedman. It involves shifting the skills and knowledge that one has acquired during their "working years" to a second career (often moving from a for-profit organization to a not-for-profit organization). This often involves a transition from Generativity One to Generativity Two, Three or Four.

Option Two—Remaining in Same Professional Career: This is the option chosen by many mature adults who operate within a specific profession. They continue to work as physicians, architects, psychologists, accountants, veterinarians, etc. It is in the professions that seniority is often viewed as an asset rather than a liability. The 60-year-old physician is seen by his patients as being "wiser" than the young doc straight out of medical school (think Dr. Welby), just as the 45-year-old man seeking a psychotherapist is much more likely to choose the 55-year-old shrink than her 32-year-old associate.

In a few professions in which technology plays a major role (engineering, architecture, geology), there may be a preference from the younger person; but even in these instances those who are new to the profession will seek out a mentor or, at the very least, want to associate with an older person who has gained a strong reputation and knows the professional landscape.

The key to being successful and satisfied with this career option is the challenge of finding a way to remain professionally vital, despite often doing the same kind of work and facing the same kind of problems each day. How does one avoid burnout as a college professor who has taught history for forty years and sat on every major university committee at least once or twice?

Option Three—Retiring from a Position of Formal Accountability: This is one of the two traditional options. The woman who has spent all of her life in a large corporate setting finally gets a chance to breathe fresh air. She does not want to spend any more time in a stress-filled environment. While she might want to do some volunteer work, she avoids taking on administrative responsibilities and sitting on interminable committees. Instead, she seeks active work with children or helps to build a home through Habitat for Humanity or sings in the local community chorus.

This career path is often associated with the experience of women hitting the "glass ceiling." They move up through an organization, being given career advancements because of their knowledge, skills and hard work. Then they hit the organization's ceiling with regard to the highest position that a woman is "allowed" to hold. This is an invisible ("glass") ceiling that can never be formally acknowledged, but the ambitious woman knows the ceiling when she hits it. It is not unusual at that point for the woman to leave her organization and formally retire (or start her own business -- Option One).

It is even more likely that the male retiree seeks something that requires no formal accountability. This is especially the case when a man has lived out a life fulfilling traditional societal expectations about the male as bread winner and "leader of the band." While there may not have been a glass ceiling awaiting this man as he moved up through the organization, there were often long days and nights of work, stressful meetings, and insensitive and often "stupid" bosses with whom he had to contend. Thank goodness for retirement!

Career Option Four—Avocational Dabbling: The ultimate escape from accountability is to become an avocational junky, doing a bit of everything "just for the hell of it!" We take up photography or act in a community play, not because we expect to be good at this work, but because it is a challenge and a joy. In official psychologize this is called "autotelic" (self-gratifying) behavior. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes this as the search for "flow" (the experience of being completely present in a moment that provides both challenge and support).

The original meaning of the word "amateur" was not about someone who is bad at performing some skilled task—instead, it was about deciding to engage in a particular activity as a pastime—just for the love of doing it (the word "amateur" being derived from the Latin word *amator* or "lover").

Career Option Five—Remaining in a Leadership Role: As in the case of career Option Two, the mature adult remains active in the role of Generativity Two. He continues to be an active leader in his organization. This leadership can take on many forms and may require a shift in the leader's functions. The leader might remain in an active management role, showing up to work each day and continuing to provide direct supervision and keeping "his hands in the business." Alternatively, he can move up to a position of "chair of the board" or an emeritus position that still allows the leader to influence policy and strategy without having to "roll up his sleeves" every day.

This second variation on career Option Five is strongly reinforced in many traditional Asian cultures. The mature male leader is expected to move outside the active role of manager when he has reached his fifties or at least his sixties. By that time, he is expected to have either retired (Option Three or Six) or become an advisor or overseer ("chairman of the board" or some comparable position). It is considered a sign of failure for an older male to remain actively involved as a manager in his own organization.

While the active leader may be discounted in some cultures, he is also the protagonists in some wonderfully touching novels and movies about the senior citizen who conducts his one last battle. Think of the final scene in Lerner and Lowe's *Camelot* or the near final scene in *Robin and Marion* when Sean Connery, as Robin Hood, and Robert Shaw, as the Sheriff of Nottingham, engage in their final battle. Or, for that matter, think of Sean Connery playing the aging Indiana Jones.

Career Option Six—Escaping from It All: Not all the men and women have chosen to remain active during their senior years. They have moved past the role of Generativity Two and have in many instances also decided not to engage actively in the roles of either Generativity Three or Four. Instead, they have decided to leave it all behind and to truly "retire." In some cases, Option Six isn't really a choice: there are medical issues to address or a disability that leaves them unable to actively engage the world. In other instances, it is a matter of social-economic class: these men and women simply do not have enough money to think of anything other than surviving from day to day on a meager income.

For those who are comfortably situated in life, it might be a matter of priorities: "I would just like to golf" or "I am delighted to spend my day with friends playing bridge." Or "I spend my time working in the garage on my old Buick", or "I don't know what happens to my day each day; it always seems to fill-up with something or other."

Sadly, in some cases it is a matter of burnout that has resulted from a stressful life and career. The outcome is stagnation rather than generativity of any sort. It is not uncommon for such mature adults to "hide out" in a retirement community that is "siloed" from any contact with younger people or people who are different from them in terms of race, culture, or socio-economic status. While this should not be taken as a generalized statement about all who live in these communities, it is important to recognize that the isolation which tends to occur can have a profound effect on the openness to various generativity roles. In short, these men and women are now "free" from the responsibilities of job, parenting, and civic responsibility; they have often not taken the next step, which has to do with "freedom to do something."

Generativity One: New Beginnings and Ends

Our life is often filled with twists and turns. We repeat previous stages and a current stage comes to an abrupt end. These stage shifts are often directly related to Generativity One. We repeat our caring activities by becoming a grandparent or by starting a new project. We experience a collapse in Generativity One gratification with the death of a child or collapse of a project. Each of these shifts impacts on our sense of Personal Worth.

Grand Parenting

Although we have known about its inherent joys for a long time, grandparenting apparently is "the new rage." (For example, watch a movie such as *The Princess Bride* where grandpa played by Peter Faulk gets to read an enchanting story to his grandson.) We have known for many years about the new ways in which we get to relate to children as grandparents and about the "second chance" that some of us get to be loving and playful caregivers. I observed in an earlier book focusing on men and women in their

50s (Bergquist, Greenberg and Klaum, 1993) that many mid-lifers, especially men, find they do a better job and gain more gratification in their role as grandparent than in their role as parent.

The “new rage” is based on an opportunity for a first or second chance at being a caring caregiver. And it is also grounded in a newly evolving opportunity to be a vital, healthy adult who is likely to live many years and savor numerous chances to be a high-quality grandparent and even great grandparent. Apparently, a new model is emerging based on the theme of vital grand parenting. An AARP Bulletin featured the actress, Jane Seymour, being a "glamourous 63-year-old who wears the label ‘grandmother’ proudly." (Graham, 2014, p. 10). In this article, the author declares that boomer women can redefine their role in contemporary society. We label this "rebooting" as the continuing role of Generativity One caregiving throughout our adult lives:

> It's a whole new form of grand parenting . . . thanks to the boomers. That 76 million-strong cohort has redefined just about everything it has touched, from childhood and adolescence to careerism and parenting—and, now, grand parenting as well. Boomer women in particular, who came of age during the feminist movement, have tended to shrug off traditional roles, opting instead to "have it all" – balancing jobs, hobbies and a supermom style of parenting that would have exhausted their own full-time mothers. So it's not surprising that as their children have kids, these new grandmas are remaking the role in ways that differ dramatically from the nanas, nonnas, bubbes, amas and abuelas of yesteryear. [Graham, 2014, p. 10]

Similar narratives have been offered by a diverse set of notable women, ranging from Hillary Clinton to Whoopi Goldberg and Leslie Stahl. These women serve as additional exemplars of the ways in which Generativity One operates throughout our adult lives. Generativity One continues to play an important role for many of us, even as we grow older and engage the other three roles of generativity. Our sense of Personal Worth is still attached to the role of parent.

Men also have the opportunity to "reboot" their role as grandparents, especially given the proclivity of mature men to become more interpersonally oriented during mid-life. One of the men we interviewed for the Sage project talked about the rebooting in his own life. As a former university president, he is now playing games with his grandkids. This is a lovely and loving experience for both grandpa and grandkids. And what a healing moment this is for the former university president. During the interview, he recounted that he never had the opportunity as a child to play with his own father. I suspect that he never had time to play with his own son, given his demanding role as a hard-working and accomplished leader of a large and very traditional organization.

We find that generative grand parenting is not just a source of renewal for the grandparent and a frequent source of great joy for the grandchild; it is also sometimes a source of much needed support for the parent who is in trouble, who is trying to hold down a job as a single parent, or who simply could use a healing hand in a world that makes many demands on a young parent's life. While in many societies the extended family is common, with grandparents living with or nearby their children and grandchildren, this kind of "automatic" and socially sanctioned support is much less common in contemporary Western societies. Family systems tend to be much more disengaged, and it is fortunate to even have two parents living together with their children. The assisting grandparent can be a real “godsend.”

Death of Child or End of Project

Before moving on to Generativity Two, we must briefly bring up the very difficult issue of loss. In most societies, it is assumed that the parent dies before the child dies. But what happens when the child dies first? The death is profound even when our child is a mature adult and we have been blessed with many years watching him or her mature. We grieve the lost years that were anticipated as the child would grow older and perhaps have children of their own. A colleague of ours studied the processes of grieving for parents who lived through the death of their child when she was eight-year-old. The grieving process is long-lasting. As one of the men who our colleague interviewed put it: "We bury our spouses in the ground but bury our children in our heart."

In many instances, of course, the grieving parent can turn to her other children who may remain in her life. Even with the continuing presence of other children, however, there is the abrupt end of one domain in the role of Generativity One for this parent. As we can all observe in the lives of grieving parents we know, and in the poignant portrayal of grieving parents and grieving siblings in movies such as *Ordinary People* and *Terms of Endearment*, the loss is always present and impacts the lives of all family members and others closely associated with the family.

Even though the death of a child is of much greater significance than the death of a project, the experience of loss in either case can be shattering to a person's sense of self and Personal Worth in the world. In the case of either the death of a child or the ending of a project, the Generativity One process is disrupted. One of the actors has had to leave the stage and those playing the roles of Generativity Two, Three and Four will forever miss this Generativity One actor.

All the other roles are impacted by this loss, and no one on stage will ever quite be the same. This, we believe, is one of the primary reasons for devoting time and attention to Generativity One. Without this first role, the other three roles lose some of their meaning and dynamics. Consequently, we will be referring back to Generativity One throughout our analysis of the other three roles.

Conclusions

Pope Francis spoke about caring for children so that they might find hope in their lives. I would suggest that we care for children and initiate an important project so that we might find hope in our own life. We hope for a sense of accomplishment in raising a child or managing a project. Underlying this commitment to Generativity One is an abiding hope that our life and work will be Worthwhile.

Many people put all of their eggs in the Generativity One basket. Their children or project is “everything” to them. Their sense of Personal Worth depends on their success in enacting Generativity One. Hope is focused (and restricted) when aspiring to make a difference in the world, leaving a legacy. Fortunately, there are other ways in which we can be generative. Deep caring can be expressed and engaged in multiple ways, as we will consider in the next three essays. We seem to have been “graced” with the opportunity to find generativity-based Worth by traveling down several different pathways. Furthermore, the additional pathways we will be considering are more expansive than Generativity One. They hold out hope for both Personal Worth and Collective Worth.

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