Clinical Sociology Review

1-1-1992

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Phillip D. Robinette
Southern California College

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Phillip D. Robinette
Southern California College

ABSTRACT

Variables borrowed from the literature analyzing the middle years of American adults are used to pose questions and suggest answers regarding the mid-life organizational stage of development of sociological practice (applied and clinical) as a professional subspecialization within the discipline Comparisons are made. Issues are raised which require a response and a resolution if sociological practice is both to survive and surpass the potential pitfalls of its organizational mid-life crisis.

Introduction

In my private sociological practice of nearly two decades, I have encountered several clients who were coping with problems centered on mid-life issues. On the organizational level was a religious denomination of local churches, which, as it moved upward on the church-sect continuum, struggled to retain the sense of mission which brought it into existence in the first place. Another case was that of an affiliation of private colleges trying to maintain their unique organizational identities while experiencing differential survival rates within a competitive and ever-changing environment.

On the group level were several marital dyads grappling with what to do after the partners had fallen out of love. In another case, a subgroup within a voluntary organization was told to increase its membership and productivity or face extinction. Examples from the individual members of the group level include angry spouses of clergy members, who attempted to blackmail their partners into abusing their professional roles, and an upwardly mobile educator who labored hard for years to attain the highest possible social position, only to quit and take a job not requiring even a graduate education.

Examples of organizations experiencing mid-life difficulties occasionally appear in the popular press. PC WEEK, the National Newspaper of Corporate Computing, in its 6 May 1991 issue featured a headline article entitled, "Once-Invincible Compaq Beset by Midlife Crisis." It reported:

> Compaq Computer Corporation has lost its midas touch. The nine-year-old Houston company, in a midlife crisis, is being squeezed by cloners swarming over its traditional market and by workstation vendors moving onto its turf. Wall Street is not happy. Compaq is looking at its first down year in company history. Stock brokers recommend that shareholders sell their stock. Can Compaq prove the skeptics wrong? It may be months before a new strategy pays off.

The mid-life period is often marked by reappraisal of personal and organizational missions. Notably, this is the rationale given by Rebach and Bruhn (1991) in their preface to the new Handbook on Clinical Sociology:

> This book is an outgrowth of the reemergence of clinical sociology as a formally organized subdiscipline. In the late 1970's, a group of sociologists met and formed the Clinical Sociology Association. This organization was formed outside the mainstream of sociology, largely because these individuals were actively engaged in intervention and social change but did not find mainstream sociology supportive of their efforts. However, these individuals felt the need to establish a community of interest and share information. They also felt that, by organizing, they could increase awareness of sociological practice and be a catalyst for further developing the discipline. . . . We feel that, after a decade, it is appropriate to assess our present status and suggest directions for its further development and encourage sociologists and allied disciplines to join in the

progress of clinical sociology and sociological practice. Therefore, we submit this book.

Albert Gollin (1983), also commented on the mid-life-like status of applied sociology:

> The workshop on applied sociology that led to this book is only the most recent of a series of attempts to confront the persistent tensions—between knowledge and action, between theory and practice, and, more generally, between academic and applied aspects of the discipline—that have characterized American sociologists since its inception. The inclusion of 'practical sociologists' as members was a question debated—- and answered affirmatively—at the 1905 organizational meeting of the American Sociological Society. . . . But the legitimacy of applied sociology and its practitioners has remained a contested issue.

Howard Aldrich's (1979) definition of an organization seems to fit particularly well as a conceptual basis for examining the Sociological Practice Association's reaction to its mid-life crisis. He posits that organizations are goal-oriented, boundary-maintaining, activity systems. It is within these domains that all organizations must maintain diligence to continue to viably exist.

Descriptions of Mid-life

Developmental Transition

The mid-life period represents a "turning point or boundary region between two periods of greater stability" (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1979, pp. 288, 289). This conceptualization is fundamentally encouraging because it suggests that a temporary lull in developmental progress is only a prerequisite to further accomplishments. The lesson here is to avoid the temptation for pessimism or fatalism while traveling in the valley between a rich past and a promising future.

Identity (Self/Social)

Niederhoffer (1967, pp. 18,19) suggests criteria that define a profession. These could be used to aid in the ongoing decision-making process as an orga-

nization through the arduous procedure of identity adaptation. The elements of professionalism are:

(1) High standards of admission
(2) Special body of knowledge and theory
(3) Code of Ethics
(4) Altruism and dedication to a service ideal
(5) Lengthy training period for candidates
(6) Licensing (certifying) of members
(7) Autonomous control
(8) Pride of the members in their profession
(9) Publicly recognized status and prestige

Risk (Change)

At last year's (1990) annual meeting in Providence, RI, Bob Harris and I (Robinette & Harris, 1990) conducted a workshop on computerized decision-making models at which one of our attending colleagues agreed to serve as the illustratory "guinea-pig" for the true-to-life test of the model's interventionary capabilities. The problem presented was a critical decision centering on whether or not to risk leaving a tenured academic position to engage in an unpredictable private practice. This is apparently a common dilemma among persons attempting the transition into sociological practice positions.

Alfred Lee (1984) identifies two trends providing expanding opportunities within the sociological practice sector. They are the proliferation of specialties within sociology and the fragmentation of sociological organizations. Although these factors may open new doors for individual sociologists, they may also add to the developmental stress of sociological organizations undergoing organizational metamorphoses brought on by mid-life crises.

Powell and Driscoll (1979) shed some light into the emotional cost to professionals when such transitions from bureaucratic continuity to a professional sociological practice end in failure. They identify four stages of personal response in their study of middle-class professionals facing unemployment:

Stage 1: Period of relaxation and relief
Stage 2: Period of concerted effort
Stage 3: Period of vacillation and doubt
Stage 4: Period of malaise and cynicism

Cost/Benefit Analysis of Previous Choices/Decisions

Persons/organizations going through a mid-life period often begin to second-guess previous decisions. Instead of confidently building on the foundations of

previous decisions, people/organizations facing such a crisis are often plagued with doubts about the wisdom and viability of past decisions, resulting in a temporary state of progressional paralysis.

A frequent concomitant of this reassessment process is an attempt to determine the closeness-of-fit of the self with the various social structures with which it is associated. Questions like, "Do I like who I have become?" and "Am I happy with my current repertoire of roles?" are frequently raised. These same questions may be posed by organizational leaders regarding the structure and functions of their professional associations.

John Glass (1985, p. 81) reinforces this point when stating that work (in this case professional practice or organizational activity) is the "proving ground against which we define and value ourselves as adults." This is not an automatic process to be taken for granted. As Glassner and Freedman (1979, p. 345) observe:

> Organizations are compromises. They meet no individual's needs fully. Even the person at the top usually feels frustration. Organizations can be efficient, but usually cannot maintain a high level of efficiency over a long period. Organizations can be quite understanding of the human condition, but usually they fall far short of reflecting human concerns.

Bodily Decline

One issue frequently associated with mid-life crises is bodily decline. This may be in the form of personal/organizational health, stamina, energy, or appearance, and may be either perceived or actual. Organizationally, it may be measured along a continuum ranging from vitality to stagnation. It may be an issue of virility (attractiveness, competitiveness, and marketability). When these aspects are viewed as deteriorating this view becomes a symptom of mid-life crisis.

Sense of Mortality

Sooner or later it dawns on people/organizations that the wave of growth and progress they are experiencing will not continue indefinitely. As we watch the circulation of individuals occupying organizational roles, we may erroneously conclude that organizational members change but that the organizations themselves live on forever. However, as growth and progress begin to slow, the stark reality of the possibility of organizational death becomes an increasingly

dominant idea and possibility. It can even lead some into the panic reaction of prematurely attempting to abandon a sinking ship that may not, in fact, even be in serious jeopardy.

Organizational members may suffer from a version of the "empty nest syndrome" as they are continuously required to adjust to modifications in organizational configurations. These modifications involve a wide range of interpersonal relationships within the organizations all the way from the loss of friendships to alterations in power relationships and the tenuousness of prestige level maintenance. Saying goodbye to proteges and professional colleagues is often difficult. However, the prospect of facing the cessation/extinction of a longtime association with a professional organization is, to many, a frightening and insurmountable prospect.

Causes of Mid-life Crises

Goal-Gap

Goal attainment is a prerequisite to organizational perpetuity. A sociological practice organization's goals may be to attract into membership the majority of the practice community; to have a surplus supply of volunteer leader candidates; to significantly influence the character and direction of its academic and professional root discipline; to receive maximum acceptance for the scholarship of its publications; to attain a large market niche for its practicing membership; and to achieve widespread public acknowledgement of its societal contribution. When such goals are not achieved, organizational disappointment, discontent, and internal crises can emerge.

At least part of this gap between an organization's goals and actual achievements can be explained by the tension existing between professional and bureaucratic forms of organizational structures. Along the axis of loyalty, bureaucrats tend towards selling their soul to the company store, whereas professionals tend to identify first with their professional fellows. Professionals then are most often occupants of staff rather than management. This is an asset for issues of autonomy and objectivity but often a liability in terms of positional authority and direct influence on consequential decision-making.

Rubin (1983, p. 35) discusses organizational constraints which hamper applied social research. He points out:

> In bringing research data to the decision maker, the applied
> social researcher is bringing truth to power. This is somewhat
> of an iffy process:

1. Power might have ideological reasons for opposing truth.
2. Truth might adversely affect the organization.
3. Decision makers may have other sources of truth.
4. Truth might be unacceptable for narrow political reasons.

The issue of whether to allow the tempting lure of profession peer pressure to put personal success over and above a professional code of ethics is raised once again in the Chronicle of Higher Education (Raymond, 1991, pp. A4-A6), The article reveals that a study of patient histories suggests that Freud suppressed or distorted facts that contradicted his theories. Cheating does not reduce nor eliminate the gap between goals and attainment. It only serves to contribute to the crisis!

Burnout

People/organizations can grow weary of well-doing. This is expecially the case for practicing sociologists, who, from a social exchange perspective, often give much more than they receive. This imbalance occurs for a variety of reasons:

1. Sociology's relative small size in comparison to other disciplines practicing within the helping professions.

2. Sociology's lack of follow through in developing its applied and grounded practice specialties at the expense of more abstract empirical investigation and theory-building.

3. Sociology's inability to be competitive in acquiring recognition by state licensing/certification boards.

4. The lack of career opportunities for sociologists in the U. S. Bureau of Labor's Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

5. Sociology's lack of public relations prowess in informing the public at large about the potential significance of its discipline to the everyday life.

6. Sociology's liberality in allowing previously held academic/professional territories to be taken over by other disciplines.

7. Sociology's refusal to expose its strongest members in lower division or undergraduate courses where the greatest potential for new member recruitment exists.

8. Sociology's ineptness at creating clear career paths for bachelor's level graduates.

9. Sociology's inability to utilize its own social skills to expand its sphere of influence and jurisdictional domain even within those organizational structures in which it already co-exists with competing disciplines and interest groups.

10. And perhaps most distressing of all, sociology's apparent willful withholding of accumulated data and knowledge of social life from the occupants of the very social structures from which it was collected!

All of these weaknesses within sociology contribute to professional and organizational burnout, which in turn is a contributing factor mid-life crises. Such circumstances as these can lead to demoralization, discouragement, and disengagement from a worthy professional pursuit. Or, as Sheehy (1979, p. 295) aptly phrases it, "seeing the dark at the end of the tunnel."

Responses to Mid-life Transition

Stability and Continuity

For many people/organizations, mid-life is a period of increasing relaxation. If past activities have resulted in strategic positioning and constructive growth, this can be a developmental sequence characterized by:
1. Growing income (expansion of client/membership base)
2. Increased leisure (higher level positions with more discretionary time)
3. Fewer child-rearing responsibilities (work with seasoned professionals rather than neophytes)
4. New opportunities available (high point of professional reputation and desirability)
5. Expanding family structure (networking contact list at an all-time high)

Manageable Transition

For many, going through mid-life is a beatable challenge. Vaillant (1977) identifies some of the factors which make the transition manageable in his longitudinal study of two hundred Harvard graduates of 1942-44. Factors contributing to better adjustment in that sample are:
1. Higher incomes
2. Steady promotions
3. Regular pastimes or athletic activities with friends
4. Use of allotted vacation time
5. Enjoyment of work role
6. Absence of drug/alcohol misuse
7. Fewer than 5 days of sick leave per year
8. Marital enjoyment (stable/happy marriages for at least 15 years)

Crisis

For others, the mid-life period is one of increasing stress. Stressors arrive from so many directions simultaneously that the very survival of existent social

structures and their capacity for adaptable resiliency is tested almost beyond the limits. The following stressors are primarily descriptive of characteristics associated with an individual person's adjustments to physiological and social changes linked to going through the life cycle. They are secondarily applied here to similar changes that take place in the lives of professionals and professional organizations.

1. Menopause. The actual or perceived loss of the ability to generate creative solutions to problems. There is an increasing reliance on previously discovered research findings and sociotherapeutic techniques. The well or mine of innovative professional resources seems to be running dry. The accumulated past is given precedence over future discovery. A decreased sense of professional competitiveness is frequently a concomitant, as other colleagues and service organizations are continuing to be successful with creative responsiveness to changing needs.

2. Loss/assessment of the parenting role. Newer and younger organizations often experience the phenomenon of the frequent infusion of new persons into the group. This contributes to a dynamic environment where resources for leadership and tasks seem almost unlimited. Almost any idea can attract interest and people willing to transform it into a social reality. The constant readjustment to new faces and to the changing personality of the organization produce excitement, the sensation of making progress, and substantial output that is recognizable in the larger professional context. During mid-life, organizational membership may stagnate or even decline. A diminishing group of diehard leaders feels stuck with doing more and more of the day-to-day tasks necessary to keep the organization afloat. Their former role of developing younger professionals to take on proudly the responsibilities of organizational perpetuity becomes a mere memory. Hard to answer questions resonate in analytical minds. "Why aren't there more enthusiastic candidates for organizational mentoring? Does our offspring's lack of continuing interest in the organizations that helped to launch them into their careers indicate some kind of failure on their parent's part? If we could redo the past, would we do things differently?" Why even ask? We can't.

3. Pressure to attain work goals. Mid-life represents the realization that life is finite. There is not an unlimited amount of future time in which to make significant contributions to a profession or clientele. Objectives will not be reached on their own initiative or momentum. Is even professional desire, planning, and activity enough to guarantee attainment? Obstructions seem to outnumber avenues. Competitiveness outpaces cooperation. Cynically, many professional networks and organizational affiliations are entered into for personal gain, rather than mutual sharing for obtaining superordinate goals. If

goals are ever to be attained, it must be soon. Time is running out. Windows of opportunity are closing.

4. Personal reassessment. Are we satisfied with how our organization has turned out? How do we feel about the roles we play in it? Have our efforts been worth it? Would we classify ourselves as successes or failures? How do others perceive us? How many distinguished service awards have we received from our fellows? How many clients have referred others to us? How influential have our individual and collective contributions been in shaping the present and future state of our discipline and applied/practicing sociology? Have we made a noticeable difference? Or, have our inputs been canceled out or outflanked by competitors? Should we continue trying or throw in the towel and let others carry on from here?

5. Diminished sexual capacity. The fear or actual experience of social impotency is demoralizing. Early signs may include a lack of responsiveness to previously stimulating aspects of professional/organizational life. Experiences in the past that aroused excitement and contemplated enjoyment have lost their appeal. Others around you seem to be enjoying themselves immensely while you feel no enjoyment. You may find yourself going through the motions of fulfilling professional roles without experiencing the positive emotional or social payoffs of the past. The temptation to withdraw socially and let the rest of the professional community go on living more meaningful lives becomes a candidate of choice. Reluctance to engage in new relationships or coalitions may emerge due to the belief in your inability to contribute meaning and pleasure to new partners. Such attitudes and behavior or lack thereof may result in relational disconnectedness and isolation.

6. Physical changes. We cannot escape the impact of bodily factors and changes. Our bodies accompany us everywhere we go and serve to accelerate or constrain our activities. Likewise, the structure of our resume/vitas and practice organizations may either serve to propel us on to even greater possibilities or serve as a ball and chain around our ankles dragging us to a near standstill. Mid-life is a time when our structure begins to intrude on our functionability. We may begin to disdain its appearance and encumbrances. The structure may become socially embarrassing. If we can't satisfactorily modify it, then we may be forced to accept it in order to continue forward progress.

7. Caring for aged parents. What do we do with former practice superstars who no longer seem capable of making outstanding contributions? Can their previously brilliant, though presently outdated and superseded, offerings endlessly propel them into the limelight of their professional peers? Do we discard them into obscurity or do we continue to respect and honor them on the merit of their previous work? Fortunately, it is our custom to build all current arguments on the foundations of the past. Citing previous works is our standard

operating procedure. The consequence is that during our own middle age we must assume the additional responsibility of making provision for the needs of the mentors and role-models who helped to launch our own careers. Generally, this is a task which is welcomed by both individuals and organizations. It is part of the reality of the life-cycle process, and we all realize that our own turns as the cared-for will eventually come.

8. Sexual promiscuity. Just how strong is our commitment to sociological practice? Mid-life is a time when many begin to flirt with alternative professional disciplines. Wherein does our real loyalty lie? Does it reside in sociology, what is best for our own careers, our clients, public opinion, or some nebulous wandering through a series of open and closed doors of opportunity? It is at this point that many ask whether previous decisions have been reactions to the proposals and expectations of others or a result of personal proaction. The rational course may be to proceed in the direction cast by previous decisions. However, mid-life for many is a period of illogical confusion and unexplainable experimentation. Sociological practice, because of its relative newness as an entrant in the ring of therapeutic interventions, is often treated as the new kid on the block whose contribution is viewed as suspect by the more established and prestigious occupants of power positions and third party insurance vendors. Lack of professional recognition, nonqualification for certain licenses to practice, lower fees for similar services, and exclusion from direct insurance reimbursement can discourage even the most determined and hardy among us. After five years of arduous academic work beyond my bachelor's and master's degrees to earn my doctorate in sociology for having demonstrated competence to do original research, I encountered several three year non-academic professional programs in psychology which would have met the requirements for licensure in the state of California as a clinical psychologist! A person's belief and trust in the viability of sociology's particular contribution to the resolution of human interactional dilemmas can be sorely tested.

9. Negative emotions. Emotions are often involuntary. However, they are frequently caused by identifiable psycho-social stressors. The cumulative effect of the previously mentioned contributors to crises can cause sociologists to experience emotional responses of a magnitude that render routine coping mechanisms insufficient. Unrelenting bouts of depression, frustration, anger, rebellion, anxiety, and guilt may result in introspection and self/social doubt. Minimally, these negative emotions serve to distract the sociologist from concentrating on professional issues. A frequent consequence is a noticeable reduction in practice productivity. This may result in negative feedback, adding additional insult to injury. The worst possible response is reduction of hours devoted to practice and separation from cohorts. This only gives one more time to wrestle with internal mental foes, instead of engaging in constructive activ-

ity and peer support. Helping professionals and helping organizations are uniquely susceptible to burnout, especially during the mid-life time frame. When a person/association is buried under an avalanche of debilitating emotions, help must come from outside the self. This is the essence of sociology: assistance which originates from outside environmental sources. Clearly, we need each other to conquer such crises.

10. Self-destructive acts. The ultimate sign of impending crisis occurs when sociologists and their organizations engage in the very destructive behaviors which they have prepared themselves to overcome in their clients via intervention for constructive change. It is ironic that helpers and helping organizations are vulnerable to the same maladies as their patients. This fact is one of the great equalizers of life. No known social boundary (class, status, power) makes an entire category of people immune from life's exigencies. Shostak (1988) cites five of the major weaknesses of twentieth century sociologists:

   a. The propensity of practitioners to go it alone.
   b. The poor use made of data.
   c. The failure to disseminate findings.
   d. The lack of influence exerted in policy-making.
   e. Bitter division over populists (clients) and elitists (organizational power brokers).

Resolving Mid-life Crises

1. Recognize and accept the changes that are taking place. Sadler (1990) makes a statement about rewriting middle-aged scripts:

> An increasing number of adults in mid-life show signs of growth rather than decline, denial, stagnation, or stoic resignation. What are the signs of growth? The Growers remain healthy and active. Their basic attitude is openness to reality and change rather than denial. . . . They are becoming more open, flexible, and inventive rather than mindlessly narrow, rigid, and repetitive. They seek new adventure rather than trying to hold on to what is well known.

2. Admit our dark side. Sheehy (1979) encourages us to go ahead and confess that we are selfish, greedy, competitive, fearful, dependent, jealous, and possessive. Discontinuing hypocritical denial is a significant first step to applying our own helping mechanisms to our shortcomings. Refusal to face reality only serves to postpone the arrival of escape routes.

3. Conduct a social systems analysis. Here is a solution with which we feel competent. Rader (1986, pp. 64-65) reminds us of our own peculiar perspective:

> Implicitly or explicitly the assumption is made that age-related crises are natural, healthy, and progressive and that they are generated internally irrespective of social- historical context. . . . As an alternative model, the major assumption of this paper is that age-related crises are largely socially constructed and that developmental psychology is an ideology that serves to legitimate overspecialized age roles and the suffering that ensues from ageism.

Britt (1988) analyzes organizational adaptability in response to environmental jolts. He examines three critical performance levels: one, at the time of the jolt; two, at the lowest point after fall off in performance; and, three, during recovery. He also investigates three time periods: one, resistance (how long it took for performance to fall off); two, resilience (the time it took to recover performance); and three, retention (how long recovery lasts before decay). We are the avowed experts at taking such analyses from the empirical on to the applied and practice domains. Let's do it.

4. Discuss our feelings with others. Herein lies an asset of sociability: going beyond the superficiality of networking and group participation primarily for social positioning. It is imperative to cultivate primary group characteristics within the milieu of our secondary group affiliations. Conversations need to go past "sociological business" into the arena of interpersonal and intraorganizational intimacy. We can then offer support to one another in times of mid-life related stress.

5. Move from the construction to the reconstruction of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In my own practice I advocate weekly meetings for couples, families, and groups to participate actively in the gradual and ongoing reconstruction of their social realities (Robinette & Harris, 1989). It is important to note that this involves a process and not an event. Our status at any given point in time represents more of a location upon a continuum than a position in one of two dichotomous conditions. This is encouraging inasmuch as positive change constitutes a turning in direction along the continuum rather than some kind of quantum leap from an undesirable to a preferred condition. From such a perspective, even small movements can be interpreted as progress yielding a rationale for continuing optimism.

6. Riding out the down side (Sheehy, 1979). There is a recursive nature to human events. As the natural world illustrates (day/night, yearly seasons, flowers/seeds, animals shedding their skins, etc.) what on the surface may appear to

be dark, gloomy, and even mortifying is really part of a basic process of death and resurrection essential to the survival of life upon earth. Therefore, a redefinition of the situation is in order when the downside is being observed. The situation must be interpreted more holistically, keeping the entire cycle in consideration. One must remember that even the most devastating of storms does come to an end, after which the process of rebuilding can begin. Security within an environment of constant change requires adherence to the forces underlying these more universal regenerating processes.

7. Rites of passage. One way to conceptually simplify a complicated journey is to regard it as a normal sequence of experiences required to travel from one location to another in sociological space. If a map through the issues of mid-life could be somewhat uniformly accepted, then travelers could maintain a sense of where they are, have been, and are going. Lacoursiere (1980) suggests a series of stages that most groups go through as they develop. Sequentially they are: orientation, dissatisfaction, resolution, production, and termination. The heart of its application here is to concentrate on the three middle stages occurring between the formation and termination of social groups. What is portrayed echoes the tenets of the conflict perspective, a repetitive cycle of dissatisfaction and resolution followed by increased productivity. The goal here is not to get bogged down with the dissatisfaction stage. Focusing on the processes of resolution and production serves as a rite of passage through the potential quicksand of dwelling on and exaggerating the dissatisfaction stage. In my practice, I have found three helpful aids to this process: one, accepting the natural process of expansion and contraction; two, placing time limits on personal and organizational commitments; and three, praising and encouraging contributions rather than criticizing and discarding our fellow laborers.

Conclusion

We might learn something from religious organizations, which have a form of reductionism manifested in the ideology of generation, degeneration, and regeneration. McNiel and Thompson (1971) discuss at length the regeneration of social organizations. They introduce such terms as "demographic metabolism," which refer to a sustained yet dynamic social composition. They remind us that social organizations often exhibit continuity despite the coming and going of human components. Regeneration rate has to do with the change in the ratio of newcomers to veteran members of a social unit. These regeneration rates vary because they are a joint function of attrition and growth or shrinkage. For complex organizations, they conclude, growth will be greatest

under conditions of heavy recruitment and light attrition. Is this not the challenge to the continuing viability of sociological practice associations?

Gutknecht (1988) offers many helpful insights:

> We must learn to perceive human resource issues in more creative ways. . . . We need to invest in the maintenance of our human capital, just as we invest in the maintenance of physical capital. . . . We need to make a distinction between machines which break down more readily and people who are capable of refreshing and rejuvenating themselves. . . . Organizational Health Promotion results in increased productivity, improved performance, enhanced public image, employee protection, boosting morale, and in aiding recruitment.

John Bruhn (1991, p. 197) concurs and emphasizes that wellness and health promotion is a positive lifelong process. Johnson (1986), in using sociology to analyze human and organizational problems, reminds us that "theories can stimulate sociologists to assess whether their priorities focus on the maintenance of organizational structures or on the fulfillment of human needs!" Clausen (1990) discusses in detail the idea of conceptualizing stages of development along the life course as turning points which can lead to either stagnation or continued growth. It seems prudent to decide collectively that we want to move onward and upward in a manner conducive to both personal and organizational symbiotic growth.

In order for us to survive and surpass our own mid-life crisis, sociological practice (clinical and applied) needs our individual and collective energy and enthusiasm in our individual workplaces, professional affiliations, and public image.

The choice is up to us. Each of us. All of us.

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