ADULT DEVELOPMENTS

In the following article, a former symposium coordinator presents just one such vision for the *Society's* future for the purpose of discussion.

A Vision for the *Society for Research in Adult Development*   *Michael L. Commons, Ph.D.*

Up to now the *Society* has been operating with an underlying vision generated by Cheryl Armon, myself, Francis Richards, Dawn Schrader and Jan Sinnott among others. I attempt to articulate and expand this vision. I propose the *Society* membership consider it when deciding the *Society's* future.

The *Society* should conduct itself in a manner consistent with the principles of what we understand to be the highest stages of adult discourse and function. It should be genuine and not hypocritical, as Jack Demick and others point out. The purpose of the *Society* is to bring about both understanding of and an atmosphere for adult development.

The Domain of Justice

We should encourage a high moral stage of interaction in the *Society*. We should move from conventional to postconventional functioning by showing respect for others on a universal basis. This will free creativity from institutional fetters and advance knowledge in adult development.

Conventional scientific organizations often try to establish their credibility and status by excluding many people from membership and participation. They also develop internal hierarchies. A postconventional *Society* invites everyone to participate and enjoy its benefits. Therefore, we should open ourselves to students as well as professionals in many different fields, and encourage undergraduate research by helping undergraduates prepare their research for publication. A postconventional *Society* also de-emphasizes hierarchy. Thus, it avoids the problem of power struggles and exclusion from productive contribution that are typical of conventional societies.

Conventional societies also derive a sense of power by developing a set of certain ideas that have to be accepted without criticism. In contrast, a postconventional *Society* does not have such dogmas.

Presenters in postconventional societies believe that their audience can contribute significantly to their work. Thus, postconventional societies as a whole produce more of value even if the product is possibly less polished or uniform than it could be.

Our effort should be directed towards making the *Society* an inclusive and incentive society. Rather than being exclusionary, it should be inclusionary. People are encouraged do things within the *Society*. Many professional groups worry that their members' activities might give their group a bad name. Because of the nature of an incentive *Society*, individuals not only initiate their own activities within the *Society*, they are also responsible to the members of the *Society* for their activities.

In addition, we should try to prevent adult development from becoming an isolated science. We have seen the disadvantage of such isolation in the way mathematics has developed; it has discarded statistics and computer science as a part of the field. Now mathematics is underfunded and weaker due to its narrowness. Within adult development, the same divisions are occurring, and one of our purposes should be to prevent this process by involving scientists with different focuses.

The *Society* should continue to support the development of new ideas, conceptualizations and methodologies for the study of adult development. This means that *the Society* should continue to self-consciously invite the presentation and discussion of new and less established paradigms rather than become the mouthpiece of any particular approach to the study of adult development.

The Domain of Epistemology

The *Society* should provide a forum for the study of adult development. This forum for exchange should be based on the principles of free speech. Our aim is to minimize censorship. To further that aim, people themselves should take the prime responsibility for their own speech and writing. While being mindful of the perspective of the author, the reviewers communicate their own view of the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscripts. We could reduce the resulting high cost of publishing extra manuscript pages so as to be more inclusive of more authors. We could adopt computer-laser technology. We

could group acceptable manuscripts into well focused topic areas. As a last resort we could randomly select a fixed number of acceptable manuscripts. The process of ranking grant proposals, for example, eventually replaces innovative research with conventional research, with the explanation that the conventional research "reflects long term merit." The same thing is true in publications. Why do many new journals attract such a large readership? Readers appear to be demanding what the traditional publications are turning down. Peer-reviewed, traditional journals generally do not accept material from new authors or publish edited versions of meetings.

The Domain of Aesthetics

High-stage epistemological processes should be supported by high stage aesthetics in *Society* meeting places and publications. This means the symposia should meet in pleasing and comfortable environments. The setting should have high aesthetic qualities, and the ambiance of the meeting should also be aesthetically pleasing to the *Society* members.

The communications of the *Society* should also reflect high aesthetic standards. Therefore, we use Times Roman font, and the newsletter is typeset on a laser printer. The invitation and program are likewise typeset on a laser printer in Times Roman font. The color of the program is goldenrod, and the program cover may soon have more artwork. The program is recorded in VHS-HiFi with lapel microphones, a mixer, and it is videotaped in Hi-8 mm high resolution video with stereo hifi.

We want to encourage publication of research, especially by undergraduates and graduate students. In this way we hope to involve them further in research, and help them to feel that they have access to and are a part of the scholarly milieu of adult development. We can do this as reviewers by helping first-time authors of potential publications put their manuscripts into professional form. Such authors could even request reviewers of their choice. Reviewers could also be taken from citations as is quite often done. Such signed reviews should be supportive and constructively critical rather than demeaning. We should include peer commentary in our journals, as well as letters to the editors. Thus, the *Society* would continue to create and sustain an editorial process supportive of the intentions of its authors, while remaining as timely as possible and producing publications of the highest possible quality.

The previous guidelines for publishing material in the annual *Society* symposium volumes that attempted to fulfill the above goals follow:

1. Proposals should be solicited before a symposium.

2. Controversial papers and commentaries on them should be encouraged. Editors should not reject papers because they disagree with their content.

3. Before submitting their manuscripts, authors should have students or other colleagues edit their manuscript.

4. Symposium manuscripts that authors want the *Society* to publish should be required at the time of the symposium.

5. Volumes should be composed of papers that fit within similar topics.

6. Editors proficient in the sub-specialty of a volume should be appointed to edit that volume.

7. Following Editors' suggestions, the Managing Editor should request members of the editorial board to review manuscripts, to make selections on the basis of meeting publishing standards and to suggest revisions. Reviewers and editors should seek to clarify the writer's perspective without imposing their own. The selection norms should be publication standards in the widest possible sense. Deviations from any current professional dogma should not disqualify a paper.

8. To meet publishing deadlines, figures and tables that do not meet standards should be redone by the staff and the costs charged to the author.

9. Authors and reviewers should be responsible for insuring citations and references match each other and meet the other APA requirements.

The way symposia have been conducted up to this point has reflected our goals. Publications have been of high quality, and the *Society* continues to explore ways to improve in this area. We have, for example, considerably enlarged our board of directors recently and are pleased with the quality of reviews that authors are receiving.

We welcome the contributions of everyone working in adult developmental research. In the process we hope to help form an alliance and synergy between researchers, and to discourage competition.

We need to solicit support of, and create alliances with, potential consumers of our findings in the field. For example, psychoacousticians already enjoy good relations with their consuming industries. Likewise, the *Society* should foster and include applied scientific research.

To encourage active participation and debate in our symposia, we generally have poster sessions and discussions, although we include longer addresses when communicating results to a larger audience. Such a format for our meetings has helped members to share their discoveries while minimizing their need to defend their conclusions as truth. As the sociologists of science have pointed out, the pursuit of a position is quite often at odds with the pursuit of knowledge.

We strive to be a user friendly society. We encourage electronic communication and publication, provide information on how to use it, and plan to help our members use bitnet. We also hope to institute user assistance like software companies such as WordPerfect, and thereby encourage the involvement of all members in the constant exchange of information.