Anschauungen

(än´shou´oong en) n. Ger.
Opinions, Viewpoints.

NOTE: The opinions expressed in this column are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Board of Directors of The CHARIS Institute, the CHARIS Editorial Review Board, or Wisconsin Lutheran College. Reactions to the opinions in this column should be addressed directly to the author.

All Pure Arts and Useful Knowledge

By Dr. Mark Braun

In 1998, at the first meeting of the board of directors for the newly formed Institute of Wisconsin Lutheran College, an initial discussion item was, “What do we call this ‘Institute?’” Dr. Greg Schulz, a member of that formative board, came prepared with a suggestion: The Center for the Humanities, Arts and Religion in Society. The acronym CHARIS is also the Greek word for “grace.”

Questions were quickly raised whether this acronym was intended to exclude the sciences, while emphasizing the liberal arts, which may have seemed especially obvious under the faculty’s old three-part structure of natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities divisions. But “Arts” was meant to include the scientific arts, much as the General Prayer in the 1941 Lutheran Hymnal referred to “all pure arts and useful knowledge.”

Yet it would be fair to say that in the secondary educational institutions of the WELS, and in the school experience of most students and called workers in the WELS, English composition, literature, music, history, and biblical and classical languages have received greater attention than mathematics or the natural sciences. To be sure, some future Lutheran elementary school teachers took interest in math and science and selected them as a concentration area while in college. Only recently, students at Martin Luther College have been able to add a major in science, choosing either life or physical science as part of a five-year program. Still, most other synodically-trained workers gladly complete their education with only a few introductory science courses.

I can speak with more familiarity about the education track for pastors. Course offerings in science and math were lean compared to those in ancient and modern history, biblical Greek and Hebrew, British and American literature, and German and Latin. A few of us showed aptitude in the sciences, but more of us were heard to complain, “Why do I need to know this to be a pastor?” Some of us are living testimonies that one can become a capable pastor with only minimal achievement in trigonometry, biology, chemistry, or physics.

Yet pastors may find themselves in something of a love-hate relationship with science in their ministries. We remind our listeners that human wisdom cannot provide answers to life’s deepest questions, and we decry reliance on scientific explanations that discredit the creation account or dismiss biblical miracles. Yet we may become scientific “rag pickers,” filing away the findings of a research project here or referencing the results of an opinion poll there—whatever we think may bolster previously held positions. We may read Creation Science literature for anything that might help prove evolution wrong, or cite data demonstrating that people still believe in a divine being, the reality of human sin, or the possibility of life after death.
The problem is that we may not know very much science, particularly its language, methodology, value, and limitations. I recall a pastoral colleague (who shall remain unnamed) sitting down one day to join a group of science faculty members at the lunch table. In the course of their conversation, my colleague remarked with an air of certainty that “as we all know, the second law of thermodynamics disproves the theory of evolution.” With surprising gentleness, the chemists and biologists nonetheless utterly dismantled the poor theologian’s supposedly unassailable assumptions about the second law of thermodynamics. For years I suggested that the “water vapor canopy” theory offered an explanation of the pre-flood world that was both scientifically defensible and biblically grounded. “My colleagues have demonstrated the numerous limitations of that non-scientific theory, and I have stopped using it.”

There was a time, we are told, when the pastor was one of the few educated persons in his community and maybe the only man in his congregation who had gone to college. If that was ever true, it is not true anymore. There are now many well-educated men and women among our listeners. Who knows how often they winced in embarrassment or shook their heads in disbelief as they heard us droning on overconfidently about issues we really knew very little about?

This issue of CHA RIS is devoted to the results of a series of psychology research projects conducted by and chiefly among WLC students. The methodology described and the terminology employed in these articles will undoubtedly be familiar to our many readers who have been educated in the sciences. But terms like “convenience sample,” references to Likert scales, and abbreviations such as M, SD, t, and p may be just as unfamiliar to the theologically trained as Hiphils, the punctiliar aorist, and the difference between norma normans and norma normata are unfamiliar to those outside our disciplines.

This is nothing new. Past issues of CHA RIS have contained articles entitled, “The Relationship between Moral Integrity, Psychological Well-Being, and Anxiety,” “Economics, Strategy, Games, Signals, and Doctrinal Dilution,” “An Overview of Intelligent Design,” as well as the results of several statistical and demographic research projects. We look forward to articles on stem cell research and other subjects of scientific inquiry in future issues of this journal.

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**Special Issue on Adolescence**

By Dr. Leanne Olson

Adolescence is a complex, poorly defined developmental stage representing a journey from childhood to adulthood. As a result of the intertwined factors of chronological age, socio-historical influences, biological development, psychological individuation, and cultural expectations, adolescence represents the transition between childhood and adulthood uniquely experienced by those individuals in middle school, high school, and in some cases, college.

Although the boundaries of the adolescent transition from childhood to adulthood are vague and controversial, adolescence generally commences as the child begins the teenage years at age 12 or 13 and concludes with full-time work, marriage, or some form of psychological and social independence. With the exception of infancy, adolescence is the stage of life when the body grows and changes more dramatically than at any other time in development. Donning an adult-like appearance alters the self as well as the expectations and demands of others. Adolescents begin the task of forming an identity and acquiring the capacity of abstract thought and reason. With that, the adolescent not only entertains but also answers moral, spiritual, social, and political questions. The adolescent’s social experiences change as she begins to encounter the freedom and independence of thought, feelings, and behaviors. The adolescent’s world dramatically expands from including primarily his family to enveloping multiple friends, peers, and other adults. Adolescents’ perspective-
taking abilities and widening social contexts enable them to learn that their own unique experiences represent single examples amid a growing number of alternatives. The adolescent learns that he is not only changing but that he must also acquire the responsibility for the possibilities.

Chronological, biological, psychological, and social changes combined with the culture’s lack of clarity as to whether the teenager is a child or adult create both tension and opportunity for the adolescent. On the one hand, she is child-like, enjoying the freedom and protections of taking risks and making mistakes without permanent consequences. Simultaneously, however, she appears to be an adult and is required to think, feel, and behave as an adult. In many ways, the adolescent can experience the best of both child and adult worlds. Yet these two worlds cannot exist simultaneously without friction, and each teen must negotiate and blend the two throughout this transition. This journey is filled with hundreds of “firsts” that make the journey unique for each adolescent.

This special issue of CHARIS: A Journal of Faculty Scholarship provides thoughtful and diverse perspectives on the complexities of adolescent development. These perspectives illuminate biological, psychological, and social influences that interact to create the various and diverse expressions of adolescence. This special issue evolved in cooperation with many individuals, particularly the Wisconsin Lutheran College students enrolled in PSY 211: Experimental Psychology instructed by Dr. Wendy Close and PSY 323: Adolescent Development instructed by Dr. Leanne Olson. The research studies involved hundreds of middle- and late-adolescent participants aged 14 to 22 from Wisconsin Lutheran College and several Wisconsin public and private high schools. Thanks goes to Paul Haase, who coordinated the researchers’ access to the high school students, thus ensuring the proper ethical treatment of minors and the successful implementation of informed consent procedures from the administration, faculty, staff, and participants at the high schools. In conversation with area high school principals and teachers, Paul also played a key role in identifying the relevant and timely topics included in this special issue.

Note to the Reader

The articles in this special issue of CHARIS have been authored by psychology students at an undergraduate Lutheran liberal arts college. As such, these authors are novice researchers just beginning to master the multiple skills necessary to conduct and accurately report reliable research outcomes. Due to space limitations and the nature of this journal, the student researchers substantially trimmed their research reports required for their courses. They also altered the standard American Psychology Association writing style, creating articles accessible to CHARIS readers.

The student researchers want to alert the reader to the fact that their conclusions are limited by several important issues. The research techniques employed by the authors consist of descriptive and quasi-experimental research designs and as such do not imply more than statistical relationships among the variables of interest. The researchers wish to caution the readers to avoid making causal inferences when arriving at conclusions about the relationships between the constructs introduced in the research studies. With more space, the authors of the articles could provide numerous additional explanations for their findings based on variables the researchers could neither control for nor account for given their descriptive designs. The researchers also collected very small and homogeneous samples of teens that fail to represent “adolescents” in general. Readers are reminded that these studies represent only the first of many research studies that must be more expertly designed and conducted before the authors can be confident that their findings represent reliable behaviors across adolescents.

These limitations aside, the scientific inquiries, psychological perspectives, and shared Christian vision of the researchers have merged to offer an informative and interesting special issue of CHARIS. Christian scholarship comes with unique and wonderful stewardship responsibilities. The
Christian researcher blessed with faith in Jesus Christ recognizes that God has designed everything that the researcher attempts to describe, explain, predict, and influence. In their quest to acquire excellence in scholarship, these student researchers desire to practice the scientific method and more importantly to use these skills to benefit the church and the world. Yet, it is their faith that will prove essential in understanding and revealing truth about adolescence.

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

1 Corinthians 13:11