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### Front Matter

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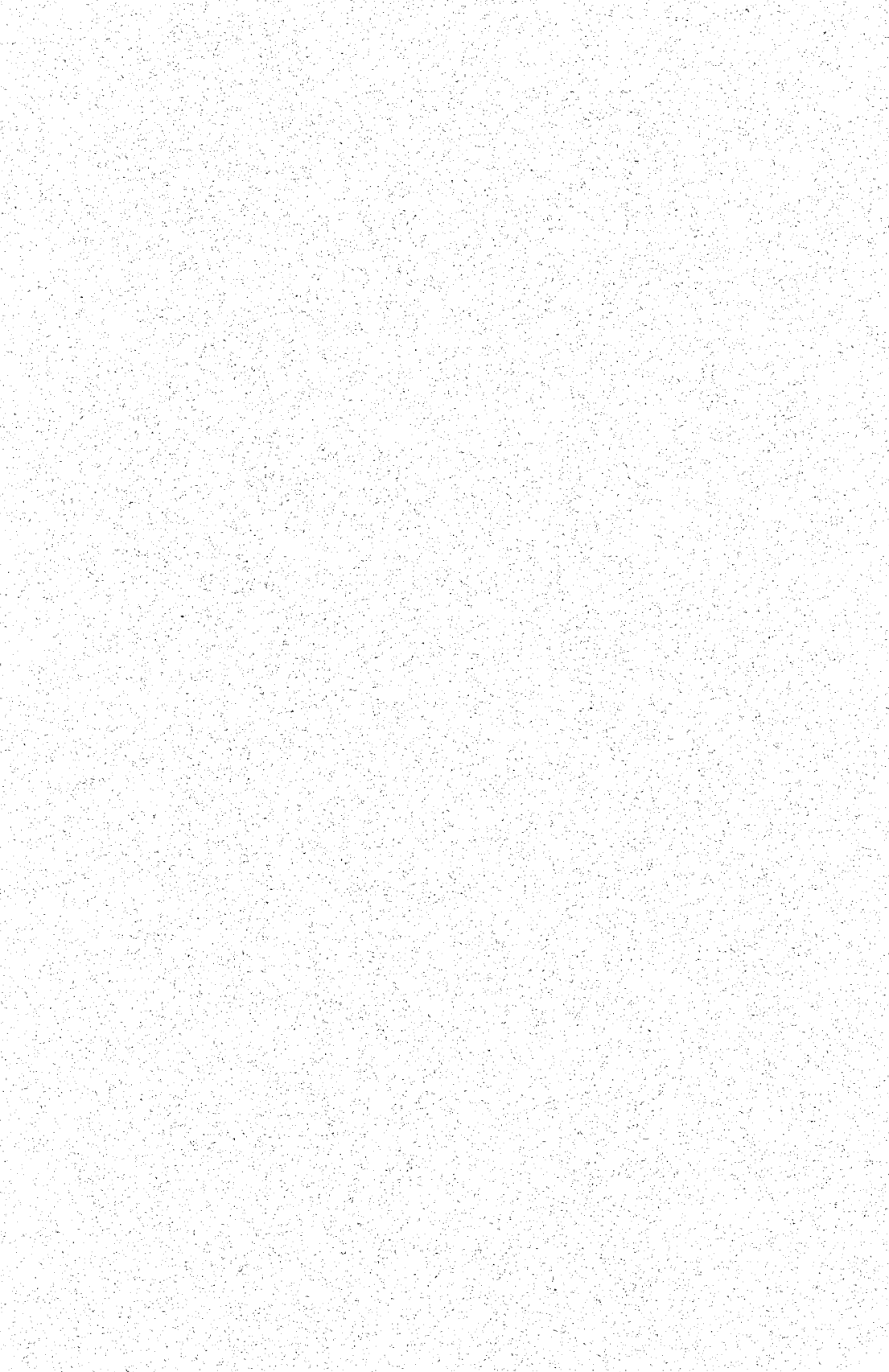
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ASSOCIATION OF  
MORMON COUNSELORS  
AND PSYCHOTHERAPISTS

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- a) To promote fellowship, foster communication, enhance personal and professional development, and promote a forum for counselors and psychotherapists whose common bond is membership in and adherence to the principles and standards of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, both in their personal lives and professional practice.
- b) To encourage and support members' efforts to actively promote within their other professional organizations and the society at large the adoption and maintenance of moral standards and practices that are consistent with gospel principles.

Article 1, Section 2, AMCAP by-laws (as amended Sept. 30, 1981).

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The *AMCAP Journal* seeks manuscripts of interest to the broad interdisciplinary membership of the Association. Articles relating to the practice, research, or theory of counseling and psychotherapy are appropriate for the Journal. Manuscripts should generally not exceed 20 double-spaced typed pages. Style should follow the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (third edition). Authors should keep a copy of their manuscripts to guard against loss. Three copies of the manuscript should be sent to the editor:

Burton C. Kelly, Editor  
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# CONTENTS

Editorial	Burton C. Kelly	10
Letter to the Editor	L. Alan Westover	11

## ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

Confidentiality: The Basis of the Therapeutic Relationship	Val D. MacMurray	14
Panel—Conflicts in Confidentiality: Child Abuse and Other Issues		26
Response of Judge Franklin B. Matheson	Franklin B. Matheson	28
Response of B. Lloyd Poelman	B. Lloyd Poelman	36
Response of John T. Nielsen	John T. Nielsen	44
Response of Marilyn Sandberg	Marilyn Sandberg	49
What Has Happened to Sugar and Spice? Our Responsibilities in a Changing Society	Agnes M. Plenk	53
A Response to "What Has Happened to Sugar and Spice?"	Juel D. Gregersen	63
Successful Mormon Families	William G. Dyer Phillip R. Kunz	73
LDS Church Members in the U.S. and Canada: A Demographic Profile	Kristen L. Goodman Tim B. Heaton	88

## BOOK REVIEW

Psychotherapy and Religious Factors: A Book Review	Allen E. Bergin	108
--	-----------------	-----

## BRIEF NOTICE

In Future Issues	Burton C. Kelly	113
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## EDITORIAL

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**T**his is the first of our theme-oriented issues of the *AMCAP Journal*. We hope and trust that you will like it.

In case you are wondering from the table of contents, the theme for this issue, ethical–legal concerns in the helping professions, is treated by the presidential address of Val MacMurray and the four papers following given in a panel presentation at the AMCAP Convention last October. As with each of the theme-oriented issues, we plan to publish additional unrelated articles that we have received, so please send us any papers that you would like to have considered for publication. Thank you.

Thanks to each of the authors of this issue for your excellent contribution to our *AMCAP Journal* readers.

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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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**D**ear Editor:

It was good to attend the AMCAP meetings this past Friday, renew acquaintances, and enjoy well-prepared presentations. It was evident that many people provided hours of volunteer service to make the meetings possible. I am writing today, however, to share some observations and concerns regarding our April AMCAP meeting. Although I was an active member of AMCAP in the late 1970s and early 1980s I have not been a member of AMCAP for the past five years or so, and I have only recently renewed my membership. For this reason I am not acquainted with the recent evolutionary trends within the organization.

I was disappointed to make three observations at these meetings which have generated serious concerns in my mind:

1. Attendance was modest,
2. The medical model of identifying and addressing gerontological challenges dominated the conference, and
3. Several of the presentations were entirely secular in thrust; that is to say, the presentations might have been comfortably made at other professional meetings unassociated with the Church. No attempt whatsoever was made to draw from, nor integrate with, gospel principles in several of the presentations.

My interpretation of these observations might be summarized in a single statement: We as an organization may be moving rapidly away from the unique assumptions, values, beliefs, and purposes which distinguish the identity of AMCAP from other professional organizations. If this interpretation is accurate, there are serious implications for the organization.

Our members that are drawn to AMCAP precisely because of its unique LDS identity may not continue to invest in an organization which seeks to “out-do” other professional organizations which operate from a secular identity. There are many conferences, seminars, workshops, journals, texts, courses, etc., which can better meet any needs in this arena than can AMCAP. I suspect that members invest in AMCAP in the hope that it will highlight social/emotional issues and challenges from a perspective unique to our LDS identity. Should we violate our own purposes, goals, philosophical values, and beliefs, the primary incentive for membership and participation will be sacrificed and the viability of the organization compromised. It would seem to me that the risks listed above are unacceptable, and unnecessary.

I would suggest that individuals who formulate seminar themes, invite presenters, select journal articles, etc., presumably the Board of Governors and Editors, adopt formal guidelines by which potential contributions may be screened. Appropriate contributions would seem to include

1. The forwarding of gospel-based or gospel-compatible conceptual frameworks, models, theories, and methodologies.
2. The application of the research process to LDS populations.
3. The comparison or contrast, and possibly refinement, of prominent theories and methodologies currently used by LDS professionals as set against the measuring stick of revealed truth. This would naturally require a willingness of our membership to tolerate debate, professional differences of opinion, and open dialogue. The integration of religious and secular truths surely is a central challenge for LDS professionals. Brother Bruce Brown’s intriguing article in the latest journal issue is an excellent example of this (although he disclaims any interest in integrating his gospel-derived beliefs and professionally derived beliefs about human behavior). It appears in fact that the journal article represents a point in Brother Brown’s lifelong process of transferring “tacit, ineffable” knowledge into the realm of “explicit” knowledge. I am grateful that he has gone to the effort, because I learned from his article.
4. The application of gospel principles to crucial professional challenges of the day. The selection of gerontological issues for our recent seminar may not have been as problematic as the decision not to assess gerontological issues through the lenses of gospel principles. If there are not LDS contributors prepared to do this at this point in time, it may be developmentally premature for AMCAP to select such a narrow focus.

5. A decision to devote an entire seminar to a single topic necessarily precludes contributions on other topics. At a time when we are seeking to generate increased participation of our membership in the production of journal articles it would appear counter-productive to solicit contributions on a single narrow topic.

These comments should not be interpreted as a criticism of the presenters nor the presentations made this past week. Many of the presentations were informative and useful secular treatments of relevant issues. Any lack of appropriateness or fit in these presentations to an AMCAP audience is in no way a reflection upon the presenters, rather it reflects upon the adopted format.

As I stated earlier, I have not been sufficiently active in AMCAP in recent years to confidently assert that my observations are indicative of “mega trends” within the organization. Nonetheless, I find myself laboring under the nagging suspicions that much of what I have been describing may not be a mere blip in the graph so much as a concerted effort to increase the “professional stature” of AMCAP. I hope this suspicion is in error and that we have not fallen into the trap of confusing secularism with professionalism. It would be tragic indeed if we came to feel embarrassed by who we are, took a suite in the “large and spacious building” (1 Ne. 12:35–36), placing the proud letters of AMCAP over the suite entrance!

I recognize that mine is but one viewpoint, and I look forward to reading and considering other points of view on these issues in the months ahead.

L. Alan Westover, MS