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## Guest Editor's Introduction

Allen E. Bergin

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## Guest Editor's Introduction

Allen E. Bergin

This special issue of *BYU Studies* on human behavior was conceived several years ago when Edward Geary, the editor, and I encountered each other on the BYU campus. As an old friend and neighbor, I congratulated him on his appointment as editor and made a remark to the effect that I thought *BYU Studies* was biased toward history and religion and ignored other important areas such as the behavioral sciences. Clever man that he is, he hooked me then and there into developing an entire issue of the journal that would focus on human behavior studies while also being pertinent to the moral and spiritual concerns of Latter-day Saint readers.

Creating a specific plan for the issue turned out to be difficult. There are hundreds of worthy topics and competent people to select from. It was tempting to consider devoting the issue to one of my own specialties, psychotherapy, especially since we could draw from the nine hundred members of the Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists; but that one field, socially significant as it is, seemed too narrow to capture the flavor of what is happening among LDS behavioral scientists. Eventually we drew up a list of a dozen topics and names of persons who had done important work in each area, ranging from family studies to sociobiology and including such varied topics as sex roles, depression, power motivation, and obscenity and violence on television. We considered having a short article on each subject. This was appealing in that it would provide a picture of the broad scope of efforts underway and of the creativity emerging in this field. Given our space limitations, however, this approach seemed to run the risk of superficiality, so we ultimately elected to arbitrarily choose three diverse subjects and do them in depth.

While I might well have chosen other topics, I settled on representatives of the clinical, theoretical, and sociological domains because they are important and because there were individuals dealing with them who were creative and competent both in their professional specialties and in making their professionalism relevant to the spiritual and intellectual life of the Latter-day Saint subculture. In selecting our

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three essayists, I sought both diversity of views and creative, pathfinding efforts that might make a difference in how we think and act in our work in the future. Moreover, there had to be some products or results of this creative energy which would realistically illustrate the intent of each scholar's design and which would be available for each of us as readers to assess in our own terms. Whether the views expressed by the three individuals I selected will prove to have a major effect on the way we view and manage human behavior remains to be seen, but I am betting that this will be the case. This, then, suggests a final criterion for their inclusion here: that their works, however history may assess them, simply cannot be ignored by anyone who takes seriously the study of human behavior.

Once I had made the final decision on the topics and the contributors, it seemed important to have critiques written by persons from outside the LDS community. I felt that such commentaries would be a useful stimulus to our thinking about the main essays and would help to prevent insularity. We were fortunate in obtaining commitments from three distinguished scholars: H. Newton Malony, Ph.D., of the Graduate School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, who is both a clinical psychologist and a Methodist minister; Jon P. Alston, Ph.D., a sociologist and professor of sociology at Texas A&M University; and Ivana Markova, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of Stirling, in Scotland. I am most grateful for their perceptive contributions to this special issue.

Readers may be curious to know how I personally assess the specific positions presented by our three major essays. It seems to me that our outside reviewers have done a good job of commenting on the implications of these works, and that in these comments, and the replies by the authors, we have plenty to think about. Possibly, the critics could have been more critical, but that is a matter of judgment as to what is important in assessing creative essays such as these. Such matters are grist for future discussions, perhaps in this forum or elsewhere. I did not choose these participants because I necessarily agree with everything they have to say, but because they are vigorous, brilliant, and provocative thinkers whom I respect for their work and their integrity.

I hope this issue of *BYU Studies* devoted to human behavior will make it clear why I believe this kind of work is important to us individually and collectively. I also hope we have set the stage for many more contributions by behavioral experts to this important forum in the LDS community.