Anthony Sweat, By the Gift and Power of God.

Whether Joseph Smith received and translated the Book of Mormon through divine direction cannot be proven or disproven linguistically. Nevertheless, much can be gained by exploring the Book of Mormon from a new perspective.

Absence of "Joseph Smith" in the Book of Mormon: Lack of the Name Letter Effect in Nephite, Lamanite, and Jaredite Names

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Abstract

Although some authors of fiction attempt to hide their real names by publishing their work under pseudonyms, the letters and sounds they consciously or subconsciously select for the names of their characters often reveal the author's true identity. Since 1985, research has explored the name letter effect—the preference people show for the letters and sounds (especially initial sounds) in their own names. This tendency is evident in the highly personal and introspective literature produced in the United States during Joseph Smith's lifetime by authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, and Edgar Allan Poe. The purpose of this study was to

examine the unique names in the Book of Mormon for the consonants and vowels present in the name *Joseph Smith*. Results showed low occurrences even though these sounds are common in conversational English. In contrast, comparisons of the name Solomon Spalding to the unique character names in his fictional *Manuscript Found* showed significantly higher indications of the name letter effect. Similar analysis showed that the sound correspondences in the names Sidney Rigdon, Parley Pratt, Oliver Cowdery, Ethan Smith, and Solomon Spalding (individuals proposed as Book of Mormon authors) were different than correspondences with Joseph Smith in the unique names of the Book of Mormon, but not enough to identify any as a possible author based on name letter effect.

Absence of "Joseph Smith" in the Book of Mormon: Lack of the Name Letter Effect in Nephite, Lamanite, and Jaredite Names

Many reject Joseph Smith's claims that he received and translated the Book of Mormon through divine direction and assistance. Louis C. Midgley has pointed out that alternate theories on the authorship of the book fall into four main categories: (1) Joseph wrote it as a conscious fraud; (2) he wrote it under the influence of some sort of paranoia, demonic possession, or dissociative illusion; (3) he wrote it with the help of conspirators, borrowing heavily from other sources; or (4) he wrote it as inspired fiction.[1]

These categories have one thing in common: Joseph Smith wrote the book—with or without assistance or imitation. Whether he did it as an "uneducated twenty-three-year-old who, according to his wife, could scarcely write a coherent letter" or as a "genius" who showed "freakish capacity for automatic writing,"[2] his critics claim he was at least involved in writing the book and attempted to hide his authorship by pretending he had translated it.

It is not unusual for an author to write fiction in first person, telling a tale as if it were memories, a diary, correspondence, or even conversations in which a character recounts experiences and observations. But these authors put their names on the book covers. The Book of Mormon cover follows the title with only "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

Some authors want to diminish or hide their real names, so they publish their work under pseudonyms (pen names). One of the best known, Mary Ann Evans, did not want her work judged in terms of the female authors writing empty romances so prevalent in Victorian England, so she took the masculine name George Eliot. For a similar reason, Joanne Kathleen Rowling

was asked by her first publisher to write under her initials, J. K., since adolescent boys (projected by the publisher to be the main audience for *Harry Potter*) might not read a book by an author with two such feminine names.

As Joseph Smith was a contemporary of Mary Ann Evans for part of her life, some have posited that he could have concealed his authorship as she did. They suggest that perhaps Joseph Smith was motivated by social or business reasons, as some pseudonymed authors have been. However, whether or not authors want to, they do reveal themselves through the sounds they select for their characters' names.

The Name Letter Effect

Mary Ann Evans revealed her true identify in ways that may have been conscious or subconscious. She chose Eliot as her pseudo surname, keeping the initial letter and sound of Evans, and she put herself inside the books as well as on the covers. She did not create literary casts of thousands. But a review of character names in her best-known and best-received novels revealed a strong preference for starting the names of significant well-developed characters with the *M* of Mary Ann (or Marian, as she was sometimes called). The somewhat autobiographical female protagonist of *Mill on the Floss* is Maggie, and the sympathetic main character in *Middlemarch* has Evans's given name, Mary. The title and main character of *Silas Marner* also features the *M*, and Marner's ward and eventual savior, Eppie, has the short *E* from Evans. In *Daniel Deronda*, the characters with strong values and high standards have names that begin with *M*—Mirah (Daniel's eventual bride), Ezra Mordecai (her brother, with two of Evans's initials), and Sir Hugo Mallinger (Daniel's kind foster father).

Mary Ann Evans's pattern was not unique. Other writers during the period of Joseph Smith's life, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, and Edgar Allen Poe, similarly wove sounds from their names into their major characters. British authors, including Dickens, did this as well. Some linguists today are studying a phenomenon not identified during Joseph Smith's lifetime called the *name letter effect*, which explains that people have a particular fondness for sounds (and thus letters) in their own names, and that they consciously or subconsciously tend to favor those sounds in many decisions they make in their lives—including selection by authors of names for fictional characters.

We find this an intriguing possibility with interesting potential applications. It does bring to mind the fact that the sounds most of us use most spontaneously are those we are accustomed to hearing. Skilled linguists, language scholars, and widely traveled individuals can think spontaneously in a variety of sound systems (e.g., J. R. R. Tolkien), but Joseph Smith did not have the sort of background, education, or experiences necessary to gain such advanced phonemic awareness. The language sounds he lived with were those spoken in his family, among his friends and associates, and in his neighborhood and geographical area. And as shown by research on the name letter effect, the sounds most likely to come spontaneously to his mind during the creative process might be those in his own name.

Perhaps it would be insightful to revisit the debate about Book of Mormon authorship by examining the book in a way that, to our knowledge, has never been done before: through the lens of the name letter effect and its associated implications. This article is an attempt to begin such an examination and is by no means a comprehensive study. The authenticity of the Book of Mormon cannot be proven or disproven linguistically. Nevertheless, much can be gained by exploring the Book of Mormon from a new perspective.

Early Sound Experience

Most people's initiation into language begins with the same experience: consciousness of their own name sounds.[3] Awareness and use of additional vocal sounds develops from this recognition. Since name sounds are personal identifiers, children "feel an inherent sense of ownership," particularly over the initial sounds—and letters—as they learn them.[4] These letters and sounds are the first that many children learn to read and write.[5] Children's own and their classmates' name letters and sounds are the starting point for many classroom alphabet studies[6] and early reading activities. As children grow and become more sophisticated in their use of language and literacy, they retain the sense of personal identity in their name letters and sounds, as well as familiarity with the name sounds of individuals around them.

Name Letter Research

Researchers Koole and Pelham called attention to studies from fifteen countries that demonstrated practical preferences in addition to positive associations that adults have for letters in their own names.[7] In 1985 Jozef M. Nuttin Jr. coined the term *name letter effect*[8] in an article in which he described

it as a form of conscious "narcissism." However, he also stated that people may have decisive reactions to their name sounds, especially initial sounds, without any conscious awareness.[9] Koole, Dijksterhuis, and Knippenberg, researchers from the Netherlands, referred to the effect with the labels "implicit self-esteem" and "the automatic self."[10]

Nuttin noted that sounds are included in the effect of the letters.[11] As researchers on the name letter effect tend to refer to "letter(s)" rather than phonic designations, this section refers to letters, implying, as the cited authors do, that the letter and sound function together in the instances described. Most individuals who react to their name sounds in varied contexts are more likely to visualize a letter than a phonetic symbol.

Impacts

It would be easy to scoff at the idea of one's initials influencing his or her career choice, but Pelham, Mirenberg, and Jones, who have done extensive research on the name letter phenomenon in many contexts, found "that initials had predictive value for individuals' career choices," noting that owners of hardware stores were more likely to have names beginning with *H* than with *R*, and owners of roofing companies had names beginning with *R* more often than with *H*.[12] Even stranger, researchers in finance were surprised to find "evidence that the name letter effect influences investors' security selection decisions, inconsistent with classical economic theory but consistent with 'implicit egotism.'"[13] Individuals were attracted by stocks with names beginning with their own initials, and companies with names beginning with letters common in personal names had greater "breadth of ownership" than those beginning with less common letters.[14] Five studies in consumer research all found that participants were more likely to choose a brand with a name beginning with one of their initials than a brand name introduced by a letter with no personal association. An article in the *Journal of Consumer Research* reported these studies and concluded, "Presumably, objects that include the letters from people's names absorb some of the positive valence that people associate with these letters."[15]

Despite these research findings, most people reject the possibility that their conscious choices could be affected by something so simple and egotistical. Nevertheless, they have to concede that subconscious preferences may be a different matter. Jones, Pelham, Mirenberg, and Hetts, along with other colleagues, found name letter effects in selection of marriage partners and places

to live. They concluded, "Taken together, these findings suggest that *implicit egotism* has important practical implications."[16] Jones, Pelham, Carvallo, and Mirenberg highlighted these findings under the humorous title of another article: "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Js."[17] Had we not realized how extensive the research of these particular authors has been, we would have laughed at more than the sound play.

We were surprised to learn that Nelson and Simmons, school of management professors at the University of California and Yale University, respectively, had examined data for MBA students over fifteen years (1990–2004), controlling for significant variables, and found that students who had names beginning with a *C* or a *D* had lower grade point averages than students with names beginning with an *A* or a *B*.[18] This seems almost unbelievable, but for what it's worth, these results did surface as respected researchers examined a large sample over time.

Concerning the potential influence of name letters on choices of consumer products, investments, occupations, homes, and even marriage partners, we tend to take such claims with the proverbial grain of salt. However, conscious or subconscious influences on choices involved in creative works, including language choices, seem more in accord with what is known and accepted about creativity and symbolic representation.

Authors of Joseph Smith's Time

Early in Joseph Smith's lifetime, much of English and American literature consisted of journals, biographies, and "histories"[19]; in this literary environment novels and stories tended to be introspective, with many focused on the "self" of the author. The books being written and read in the United States during the period in which the Book of Mormon came forth contained a good deal of self-centered self-expression, and the use of authors' name letters emphasizes this point.

Particularly striking are the names of Nathaniel Hawthorne's memorable characters who represented aspects of his own personality or experience: Fan*shawe*, Grim*shaw*, *N*ed *H*iggins, *H*epzibah, *H*olgrave, *H*ester, and Reverend *H*ooper. Edgar Allan Poe, another influential author of Joseph Smith's period, left a high percentage of characters unnamed. He did name *E*gaeus, *E*lenora, *E*rmengarde, *E*thelred, and *P*rince *P*rospero, all of whom were characters representing himself or his wife, Virginia. Poe never liked his middle name, Allen (the name of his foster family). It seems fitting then that

the only major *A* name in his stories is a rather prominent mummy with the revealing name *A*llamistakeo.

The same tendencies exhibited by Mary Ann Evans, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allen Poe can be seen in the works of Charles Dickens. More research is needed to determine if the name letter effect is similarly obvious in the writings of other nineteenth-century authors. It was not found as abundantly in either Jane Austen's or Thomas Hardy's works. However, its presence in the publications of a number of prominent authors seems to demonstrate a pattern.

Book of Mormon Names

If many of the books being produced and read in America during Joseph Smith's time appear to be filled with major characters sharing their authors' name letters and sounds, it seems logical to assume that Joseph Smith might have done similarly if he had been creating fiction. Perhaps he did not have the narcissism (conscious or unconscious) to deliberately flaunt his name sounds. But unconscious influences might have contributed to the invented names, since his exposure to sounds and rhythms of languages beyond his own was extremely limited. Like children whose reading and writing attempts may begin with their own and their classmates' name sounds, Joseph Smith's name invention could have begun with the sounds that were part of his life and language experiences.

The Book of Mormon includes 337 proper names and 21 gentilics (analogous forms), with 188 of them found in no other source. Could Joseph Smith have invented all of them without using the sounds his conscious and unconscious mind knew best? The Book of Mormon was either written or translated in just over two months—not a good deal of time to invent 188 completely new sets of letter and sound combinations or even to manipulate existing ones.

Intrigued by the frequency and prominence of the name letter effect in the literary character names of some authors, we wondered if an examination of names in the Book of Mormon would reveal letters and sounds from the name *Joseph Smith* in number or prominence of characters. Given the overwhelming number of character names—mostly male—we added male names of his family members and the male names revealed by the census as the most common names of his period. If the sounds in the names were shown to be

frequent and prominent, Joseph Smith might be revealed as the author of the work despite his explicit claim to the contrary.

Analysis of Book of Mormon names needed to be more technical in considering sound variations than the analyses of studies and authors previously presented. The large number of Book of Mormon names and the diversity of cultures that they are said to represent required a more in-depth consideration of phonetic structures. Joseph Smith claimed that the Book of Mormon includes people and events from several different ancient American cultures (e.g., Jaredites, Mulekites, Nephites, Lamanites) with names derived from their language backgrounds (e.g., Egyptian, Hebrew, and other Semitic languages). In light of this complexity, phonetic representations are used in this section.[20]

Presence of Joseph Smith's Initials

A minor character in the Book of Mormon is named Joseph, but he is mentioned only briefly, primarily in connection to the biblical Joseph. Thus we noted his appearance but did not consider it relevant to characterization, as the relationship with biblical characters is significant to the context for the Book of Mormon. Considering that Joseph Smith claimed to have translated the Book of Mormon from an ancient manuscript, observers might expect him to hide his given name entirely (which he could easily have done with a conscious effort) rather than giving it to a minor character. The Book of 2 Nephi includes prophecies attributed to the biblical Joseph that allude to Joseph Smith Jr. and his father, Joseph Smith Sr. Such passages could possibly be classified as examples of authorial narcissism, but if this were the case, researchers of the name letter effect would expect these or similar allusions to appear more frequently and to be spaced throughout the entire manuscript.

Next we examined the initial letters and sounds of Joseph Smith's name, the most significant sounds as revealed by both name letter studies and literary examination. We found that the first sound in *Joseph* (/j/) appears in only 4 out of 423 consonant sounds in the unique nonbiblical Book of Mormon names (0.95 percent): Jacom, Jarom, Jeneam, and Josh (used in the book of Mormon only as Josh, with no connection to biblical Joshua). All of these are minor characters or names on lists. The /s/ from Smith is represented in 7 out of the 423 consonants (1.66 percent) and is found in the initial position only twice, Seantum and Seezoram; the other instances of the /s/ sounds are found elsewhere in the names or within consonant blends. Nearly all of the characters with /s/ in their names are minor; nine are considered positive, and four are negative. If Joseph Smith invented the Book of Mormon's unique character names, he seems to have not found it relevant to call attention to himself by using the letters and sounds of his own initials.

Characteristics and Contexts of Book of Mormon Names

Of the 337 proper names in the Book of Mormon, 149 are found in the Bible as well (e.g., Samuel, Isaiah, Gideon, Benjamin, Aaron, Noah, Shem, Timothy, and Jacob). A number of textual passages are common to the Book of Mormon and the Bible; if these are excluded, 53 of the names that appear in both sources are used for separate characters.[21] When place names and group names (e.g., Nephites, Lamanites) are excluded, 162 unique names remain assigned to people. The spellings and pronunciations used in this study were consistent with the earliest text of the Book of Mormon.[22] These are single names without ranks or titles. As Parry noted, "Typical of the ancient Semitic languages from which the Nephite record is [said to have been] derived, the Book of Mormon does not use surnames or attach modern titles to its names such as . . . Professor, Reverend, Count or Earl."[23]

Joseph Smith did not seem to have had a dearth of names to work with, whether they were products of his imagination or of a historical text (as he claimed). Only 17 percent of the names are major characters, and 17 percent are minor characters; 66 percent of them are noted briefly. On one page alone, 24 of the names are given in a genealogical listing. The Book of Ether (a segment that, like many books in the Bible, covers a long swatch of history) includes 25.9 percent of the unique names, although it includes only about 30 pages. Of the 162 unique and widely varied names in the Book of Mormon, 41 are mentioned only once, and many characters are not identified by any name.

The most prominent names are given often, some of them assigned to multiple characters—particularly descendants of the first recorded character with that name (e.g., Nephi, Helaman, Laman, Moroni, and Zoram). Nephi is mentioned 77 times, the unique name represented most frequently. Ammon appears in 51 references, and Moroni is mentioned 44 times. None of these widely used names include the initial name letters of Joseph Smith. Among the less common names, only Jacob (used once for a prophet and once for a rebel) can be identified as using *J*, but this is a biblical name; Sherem (a villain) has an initial *S*—but it is in the blend /sh/. If Joseph Smith was a fiction

writer, he did very well at keeping his initial letters and sounds out of his most prominent characters, unlike some of his more popular contemporaries.

Internal Letter Sounds in Joseph Smith's Name

We examined each of the unique Book of Mormon names for additional sounds from the name Joseph and found that the consonant sounds in this name account for only about 3.5 to 5.5 percent of the overall 423 consonant sounds used in the unique names. Some people pronounce Joseph with an /s/ sound and some with a /z/ pronunciation, so both options were considered. Neither vowel in the name represents more than 10 percent of the overall 375 vowel sounds. The specific percentages of all these sounds are as follows:

- /j/ 0.95 percent
- /ō/ 9.07 percent
- /s/ 1.66 percent
- /z/ 3.55 percent
- /ĕ/ 6.40 percent
- /f/ (ph) 0.95 percent

If Joseph Smith was making choices of sounds for the Book of Mormon names, he did not allow any of the sounds in his first name to become dominant (or even prominent).[24]

Our examination also showed that the sounds found in Smith are not represented extensively in the unique Book of Mormon names. The sound /s/ occurs in nine names (2.10 percent), but the /sm/ blend found in Smith occurs in none of them. The sound /m/ (without /s/) is common in the corpus of names, found in 84 of them (19.86 percent), but it precedes /ĭ/ (as in Smith) only 3 times. The /th/ sound occurs 7 times (1.66 percent). These are all much lower than the natural occurrences of these sounds in English generally.[25]

Additional Name and Sound Sources

If Joseph Smith was a novelist, he seems to have (actively or passively) managed to avoid using his own name sounds in the Book of Mormon characters. We expanded our examination to include additional name sounds that would have been prominent in his environment. Recalling his limited formal education (approximately third grade) and his restricted cultural experiences, we inferred that if he had been writing fiction he would have at least subconsciously used the letters and sounds that had been deeply engrained in

his daily language experience. We recalled a comment by Orson Scott Card, whose widely read science fiction involves inventing entire lands and cultures with, of course, a variety of names: "Every storyteller, no matter how careful he is, will inadvertently confess his own character and the society he lives in. He can make every conscious effort . . . [but] he will give himself away with every unconscious choice he makes."

As Card carefully analyzed the Book of Mormon from an author's perspective, he found no place where Joseph Smith had revealed any aspects of his name, his family background, or his culture[26]—in sound or in situation. Our study reports only the aspect of sound.

Family Names

In addition to Joseph, male names in the Smith family were Alvin, Hyrum, William, Samuel Harrison (generally used together), and Don Carlos. With the exception of Don Carlos, all of these names were listed on nineteenth-century census records as among the 100 most common male names of the period—including Harrison.[27]

Samuel is the only Smith family name that appears in the Book of Mormon, and it is a name of biblical prominence that would definitely be appropriate to its context. Sam, which seems on the surface to be a derivative of Samuel, is the name of one of the major characters. However, the name Sam has since been found on a bronze seal dating from the seventh century BC, and historians have discovered that the spelling S-a-m was pronounced by some descendants of the biblical Joseph (which would have included Sam's father, Lehi) as "Shem"[28]—neither by meaning nor context likely to be linked to Samuel Harrison Smith.

Census Names

Joseph Smith was a friendly, sociable person, not a recluse who stayed in his home and avoided people. Thus other names popular during the period he produced the Book of Mormon might have influenced the sounds he could have combined and recombined to create the names if he were doing so. Yvonne Bertills, who has conducted extensive studies of fictional character naming practices worldwide, wrote, "The author's own personal background and intentions form one significant criterion for name formation and selection of literary characters."[29] Given the ancient setting of the Book of Mormon, specific names derived from ancient origins but still familiar in Joseph Smith's

culture (and thus his mindset) might be expected to have been especially useful if Joseph had been struggling to make up hundreds of character names. Again the expectation was not the case.

Of the 100 most common names recorded on the census of the period, 38 are biblical and thus would have fit the Book of Mormon context. Since Joseph Smith had not had opportunities to encounter a variety of unusual names to serve as models of phonetic usage and patterning, and since he had never read the Bible through before he produced the Book of Mormon,[30] some critics have claimed he made minor adaptations to obscure biblical names to deceive readers into thinking the names were of ancient origin (e.g., adapting Zenock from Enoch).[31] Yet only 5 of the commonly used biblical names in the census were given to Book of Mormon characters. Although 33 additional biblical names would have been part of Joseph's daily experience, they (and obvious adaptations of them) did not appear in "his" manuscript. Neither did the sounds of the most common names recorded in the census when the book was being produced.[32]

Environmental Influences

In an attempt to claim that Book of Mormon names could be traced to Joseph Smith's personal experiences, Walter Franklin Prince wrote an article in 1917 claiming that some of the names of Book of Mormon people and places were "associated with some oft-repeated or strongly emotional experiences of [Joseph's] past life."[33] Prince continued, "The emotional accompaniment in the mind of the author furnished the soil out of which a throng of the invented proper names grew."[34] Unfortunately for Prince, the "soil" of his evidence was not fertile enough to establish completely viable connections. He attached the name Mathoni to Mason (an organization controversial in Joseph Smith's lifetime) and Moroni to Morgan (the author of a pamphlet on Masonic ritual). Since the towns of Manchester and Harmony were areas in which Joseph Smith spent time, Prince claimed that Manti and Himni were taken from those place names.[35] Because Prince could find nothing closer than those examples, it would seem that Joseph Smith's environs did not contribute in obvious ways to Book of Mormon names. Prince claimed the names of places and people affected Joseph's choices, but if such were the case, doesn't it seem reasonable that his own or his family members' initials or the popular names in the time period would be the first names from which he would have drawn ideas? He certainly would have more strong emotional

experiences with these names than the ones suggested by Price. Yet there is little evidence of these names in the Book of Mormon.

Other Authorship Suggested

Among those who consider the Book of Mormon to be a work of fiction, some have charged that it is a plagiarized work of fiction. Because Joseph Smith's name letters and sounds are not reflected in the character names, perhaps someone else's are. We looked at this possibility, considering both members of the church that Joseph Smith founded and other authors of the day who have been suggested.

Some of the more highly literate and intellectually sophisticated Latter-day Saint leaders have been nominated as possible authors of the Book of Mormon. For the purposes of this study, we did not examine their educational backgrounds or personal lives—just the letters and sounds in their names. Table 1 represents by percentages the number of times each person's name sounds were found in the total consonant and vowel sounds of the unique Book of Mormon names.

Table 1		
Name	Consonant sounds	Vowel sounds
Joseph Smith	28.6 percent	26.7 percent
Oliver Cowdery	28.1 percent	23.5 percent
Parley P. Pratt	30.3 percent	22.4 percent
Sidney Rigdon	63.6 percent	28.8 percent

Table 1: *Name Sound Correspondences between Prominent Early LDS Members and the Unique Book of Mormon Names*

Although some totals are higher than those for Joseph Smith, the only total higher than 50 percent is Sidney Rigdon—considerably higher than any of the others for consonant sounds (63.6 percent), but not for vowel sounds (28.8 percent). Thus the difference is not enough to support an assumption of authorship. According to Ernest L. Abel, who has studied the name letter effect extensively, "Authors who invent character names will be influenced by the name letter effect to one degree or another—especially those who are

unaware of the effect. A good guideline to use is that when 50% or more of both the consonants and vowels found within the author's name appear in character names you can be confident that it is not by chance that the name letter effect is present."[36]

Plagiarism suspicion has been raised for two minor authors of Joseph Smith's time period who were not Latter-day Saints. Ethan Smith, a minister, wrote *View of the Hebrews*, a religious work suggesting that the American Indians were descended from Hebrews who had migrated to the Americas in pre-Columbian times. This was a position advocated by many who lived during this time; Ethan Smith used scriptural references and philosophic reasoning, but his work did not include characters or specific happenings. Thus name letter effects are not involved in his book. When Ethan Smith's name letters were compared to the unique names in the Book of Mormon, a 45 percent correspondence was found with consonants and 25.6 percent with vowels. Thus neither his name letters nor the style of his manuscript give support for his authorship.

Questions have been more commonly raised concerning the influence of Solomon Spalding, a former minister turned author, on aspects of the Book of Mormon. His narrative, titled *Manuscript Story* (sometimes called *Manuscript Found*), which the author freely admitted was his own fiction, involves a group of Romans who become lost at sea and end up in the Americas.

Spalding's name sounds reveal no significant presence of the name letter effect in Book of Mormon characters. His consonant sounds correspond 45.2 percent with the Book of Mormon (more than Joseph Smith, about the same as Ethan Smith, and significantly less than Sidney Rigdon). His vowel sounds correspond only 18.7 percent (lower than both Joseph Smith and Ethan Smith).

In contrast, when Solomon Spalding's name letter sounds were compared to the names of the characters in *Manuscript Found*, his consonant sounds were represented in 65 percent of the total consonant sounds, and his vowel sounds made up 57.9 percent of the total vowel sounds. Spalding's sounds are represented prominently in the characters of his own manuscript, but not in the characters of the Book of Mormon.

Thus neither Joseph Smith's contemporary LDS writers nor his contemporary outside clergymen/authors seem to have left their name letter imprint on Book of Mormon names.[37] The striking number and variety of Book of

Mormon names appear to us to be considerably beyond the experience or the possible "unconscious egotism" that might be attributed to Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was a fiction writer, he was certainly an atypical one, whose lexicon of names cannot be explained in terms of the name letter effect.

Significance

Witnesses noted that Book of Mormon names seemed to have been provided by Joseph Smith with remarkable spontaneity—the several scribes who wrote the manuscript from Smith's dictation agreed that he never hesitated when he gave a name. They noted that there were many names that he couldn't pronounce, but he spelled them effortlessly and afterward corrected errors in the scribal spellings.[38] Joseph Smith has not been credited with either the linguistic skills or the photographic memory to have been able to do this with names from his own imagination.

In the highly personal and introspective literature produced in the United States during the lifetime of Joseph Smith, great authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, and Edgar Allan Poe (and less prominent authors like Solomon Spalding) were present in the name letters and sounds as well in the characteristics and actions of major characters in their fiction. That the Book of Mormon does not follow these linguistic or biographic trends does not prove it is not a work of fiction, but it does show it to be different from these examples where its characters are concerned.

The name letter effect provides a new lens for looking at the relationship of Joseph Smith's education, life experiences, and language base to the phenomenal accomplishment of creating in about 60 days a total of 162 unique personal names found in no previously existing sources. As the various comparisons in this article show, he would not have experienced the sounds and patterns in these names in his own name, in family names, or among friends and acquaintances with common names of his period. The same lens applied to some of his associates and to other authors of his time shows similarly low rates of name letter correspondence drawing into question any accusations of their involvement in authoring the Book of Mormon.

Pulitzer Prize–winning historian and author Daniel Walker Howe classified the Book of Mormon as "a powerful epic written on a grand scale with a host of characters, a narrative of human struggle and conflict, of divine intervention, heroic good and atrocious evil, of prophecy, morality and law" and ranked it as "among the great achievements of American literature."[39] Howe

suggested that the book could be accorded this deserved status if Joseph Smith had admitted authorship.

If, as Howe asserted, Joseph Smith was the unacknowledged author of this masterpiece, he was surprisingly skillful at maintaining his anonymity. If the Book of Mormon was Joseph Smith's creative product, he successfully avoided leaving evidence that would be detected by linguistic lenses.[40]

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland remarked, "If Joseph Smith—or anyone else, for that matter—created the Book of Mormon out of whole cloth, that, to me, is a *far* greater miracle than the proposition that he translated it from an ancient record by an endowment of divine power."[41] May we add, if the Book of Mormon was cut "out of whole cloth," it must have been highly variegated and richly imprinted cloth, and not homespun. Its component threads are still being discovered. RE

Notes

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16. John T. Jones, Brett W. Pelham, Matthew C. Mirenberg, and John Hetts, "Name Letter Preferences Are not Merely Mere Exposure: Implicit Egotism as Self-Regulation," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 38, no. 2 (March 2002): 171. See also Brett W. Pelham, Matthew C. Mirenberg, and John T. Jones, "Why Susie Sells Seashells by the Seashore: Implicit Egotism and Major Life Decisions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 4 (2002): 469–87.

17. John T. Jones, Brett W. Pelham, Mauricio Carvallo, and Matthew C. Mirenberg, "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Js: Implicit Egotism and Interpersonal Attraction," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87, no. 5 (2004): 665–83.

18. Leif D. Nelson and Joseph P. Simmons, "Moniker Maladies: When Names Sabotage Success," *Psychological Science* 10, no. 12 (2007): 1107–8.

19. J. Paul Hunter, *Before English Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 339.

20. We chose to use more common symbols rather than IPA because they would be more familiar to those likely to be reading this publication.

21. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology or a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," in *By Study and Also by Faith,* vol. 2, ed. J. Lundquist and S. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1990), 126–35.

22. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

23. Donald W. Parry, "The Book of Mormon: Integrity and Internal Consistency," in *Expressions of Faith: Testimonies of Latter-day Saint Scholars*, ed. S. E. Black (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 211.

24. Some may argue that *Joseph* can be pronounced with a schwa (/ə/), the most common sound in conversational English, but that would still only account for just over 18 percent of the vowel sounds in the names that were examined.

25. See M. Ardussi Mines, Barbara F. Hanson, and June E. Shoup, "Frequency of Occurrence of Phonemes in Conversational English," *Language and Speech* 21, no. 3 (1978): 221–41; see also http://las.sagepub.com/reports/most-read. Note that there are 5 phonemes in *Joseph* and 4 in *Smith*, for a total of 9 phonemes in the full name. We analyzed all pronunciation possibilities (/z/ vs. /s/ and /ə/ vs. /ĕ/), for a total of 11 phonemes. However, since the /s/ phoneme occurs both in the middle of *Joseph* and at the beginning of *Smith*, we were left with only 10 phonemes to study. In the Mines et al. study, 72 phonemes or combinations of phonemes were reported and ranked. Of the 10 possible phonemes in Joseph Smith's name, 9 are above the median of 36. The other, /j/, is ranked 38th. Four of the phonemes are in the top 10, with /ə/ ranking 1st, /s/ ranking 5th, /ĭ/ ranking 8th, and /ĕ/ ranking 10th. An additional 3 sounds are in the top 20: /m/ ranks 13th, /z/ ranks 16th, and /ō/ ranks 19th. This means that 7 of the 10 phonemes in the name *Joseph Smith* are among the 20 most common

sounds in conversational English. The /f/ sound ranks 24th, and the /th/ sound ranks 35th. The rankings seem to indicate that the sounds in Joseph Smith's name, though uncommon in the unique names of the Book of Mormon, are very common in conversational English.

26. Orson Scott Card, "The Book of Mormon—Artifact or Artifice?" in *A Storyteller in Zion: Essays and Speeches by Orson Scott* Card (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft,, 1993), 20.

27. See Whitney Erickson et al., "Convergent Multivariate Graphics for Capturing the Naming Patterns in U.S. Census Data from the Nineteenth Century," in *2008 Proceedings of the Section on Government Statistics*, American Statistical Association (Alexandria, VA: American Statistical Association, 2008).

28. John Gee, Matthew Roper, and John A. Tvedtnes, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 1 (2000): 40–51.

29. Yvonne Bertills, *Beyond Identification: Proper Names in Children's Literature* (Abo, Finland: Abo Akademi University Press, 2003), 46.

30. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, ed. Preston Nibley (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 82–83.

31. See Earl M. Wunderli, *An Imperfect Book: What the Book of Mormon Tells Us about Itself* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2013). The author claimed that Joseph adapted Bible names—many of which are quite obscure (e.g., Pagag from Agag, Chemish from Carchemish), but his assertions did not take into account the biblical census names with which Joseph would have been most familiar.

32. Using census data, we identified the most common 25 names from each of the first two decades of the nineteenth century and removed duplicates to total 27 names. There were 15 with multiple pronunciations, including *Joseph*. In all, there were 46 forms of nineteenth-century names to compare to the unique Book of Mormon male names. We tallied how often each phoneme in the nineteenth-century names appeared among the 423 consonants and 375 vowels identified in the 143 unique Book of Mormon names. Using the numerators and the denominators, we obtained a probability of each name relative to Book of Mormon names. None of the nineteenth-century names ranked high, but the phonemes of all pronunciations of *Joseph* were among the least represented in Book of Mormon names and significantly lower than the probabilities of all the other nineteenth-century names ($t[44] = 2.98$, $p = .002$ [one-tailed]). This indicated a low occurrence of the name letter effect.

33. Walter Franklin Prince, "Psychological Tests for the Authorship of the Book of Mormon," *American Journal of Psychology* 28, no. 3 (1917): 374.

34. Prince, "Psychological Tests," 375.

35. Prince, "Psychological Tests."

36. See Ernest L. Abel, "Influence of Names on Career Choices in Medicine," *Names* 58, no.2 (2010): 65–74; personal communication to authors, September 15, 2015.

37. We compared the phonemic probabilities of Joseph Smith's name relative to the unique names of the Book of Mormon to the probabilities of the names of each of the five putative authors including all 13 possible pronunciations. For given names, the name *Joseph* had a significantly lower connection to the Book of Mormon names than did the names of the other five authors ($t[11] = 4.30$, $p = .0006$ [one-tailed]). When full names (including surnames) were compared, the 6 possible pronunciations of the full name *Joseph Smith* are significantly lower in their Book of Mormon probabilities than the pronunciations of the other five full names ($t[12] = 2.55$, $p = .013$ [one-tailed]). But when the names of the

additional men were considered as a group without Joseph Smith, there was not enough difference to suggest any of them as the original source of the Book of Mormon.

38. For a more detailed description, see Brad Wilcox, Wendy Baker Smemoe, Sharon Black, and Bruce L. Brown, "Book of Mormon Names: A Collection That Defies Expectations," in *A Cultural, Historical, and Doctrinal Consideration of Mormon Names*, ed. Dallin D. Oaks and Paul Baltes (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, in press).

39. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 314.

40. See Oaks and Baltes, *Consideration of Mormon Names*.

41. Jeffrey R. Holland, "A Standard unto My People," *CES Symposium on the Book of Mormon*, Brigham Young University, August 9, 1994, 6.