

The Unfettered Faithful: An Analysis of the *Dialogue* Subscribers Survey

Armand L. Mauss, John R. Tarjan, Martha D. Esplin

INTRODUCTION

DURING THE SPRING OF 1984, the editors of *DIALOGUE* sent a short questionnaire to all of its then-2,300 subscribers plus 600 who had let their subscriptions lapse in the previous year. At that point, the journal had been edited in Salt Lake City for exactly two years.¹ A systematic follow-up effort on the survey lasting the rest of the year produced more than 1,800 responses (about 60 percent) with 1,779 of them usable. (See the questionnaire in the appendix.)

There is no reason to believe that nonresponse introduced any appreciable biases into the results. For example, if we can judge sex from subscriber name, *nonrespondents* showed exactly the same distribution between males and females as did the respondents (73/27). Geographical distribution, determined from mailing addresses, showed Utahns as somewhat underrepresented in the data (26 percent of respondents but 32 percent of nonrespondents), while those living outside the Pacific or Mountain states, including foreign countries, were overrepresented (45 percent of respondents but 33 percent of nonrespondents). Other possible biases from nonresponse could not readily be determined.

There was no reason to believe that any appreciable number of the respondents lacked candor, were unwilling to trust guarantees of confidentiality,

ARMAND L. MAUSS, a member of *DIALOGUE*'s Board of Editors, is a professor of sociology at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. *JOHN TARJAN* is a lecturer in management information systems and management at California State College, Bakersfield. His wife, Janet Walker Tarjan, teaches mathematics at Bakersfield College, and they have two daughters. *MARTI DICKEY ESPLIN*, a member of the *DIALOGUE* staff, was responsible for tabulation and encoding with the assistance of volunteers Donna Henricksen, Marie Jones, Martha Bradley, Marilyn Taft, Mary Van Wagoner, and Sally Anderson.

¹ It arrived from Mary L. Bradford and Lester E. Bush in Washington, D.C., in splendid editorial shape and sound financial health, but a bit behind schedule: the winter 1981 issue had appeared in May 1982. The new editorial staff, with a strenuous effort, put out five issues within twelve months and has been on schedule ever since.

or did not take their responses seriously. (The few questionnaires with frivolous and/or sarcastic answers were eliminated.) There were, in fact, at least two clear indications of our respondents' general trust and candor: (1) half voluntarily wrote in their names at the end of the questionnaire, and (2) 37 percent of all respondents including one-third of the LDS respondents gave an "un-orthodox" response to a question on Book of Mormon authenticity. In short, for all practical purposes, the responses on these questionnaires can be considered accurate reflections of the opinions and characteristics of the entire DIALOGUE subscribership in 1984. Since that time, approximately 2,000 have newly subscribed, and renewal rates have held constant at 75–80 percent.

ABOUT THE SUBSCRIBERS

Personal Characteristics

The majority of DIALOGUE subscribers were between thirty and sixty years of age, but on the youthful side of that range. The survey was administered in DIALOGUE's eighteenth year of publication, and 41 percent of the respondents were younger than forty. Nearly three-fourths were men — although this finding may simply reflect the patrilineal convention that many couple subscriptions are in the man's name. Two-thirds of the respondents said that at least one other person normally reads his or her issue. Presumably this other person is often a spouse. Eighty-two percent were currently married and home-owners, and most had professional occupations with incomes over \$35,000. Thirty-eight percent had incomes over \$50,000, and 19 percent had more than \$70,000. All but 12 percent were college graduates, and 64 percent had graduate degrees. As might have been expected, most subscribers were residents of the Pacific or Mountain States, but not by a large margin. Forty-five percent of the respondents lived outside the Pacific or Mountain states, and only 26 percent were Utahns.

In religious preference, 94 percent of the respondents were LDS and 1 percent RLDS. Four percent identified another religion or had no affiliation. Their activity rate was impressive. While general LDS church attendance figures in the United States average around 50 percent, 88 percent of DIALOGUE subscribers reported attending "most" Sundays, including 75 percent reporting "every" Sunday (Stan L. Albrecht and Tim B. Heaton, "Secularization, Higher Education, and Religiosity," *Review of Religious Research* 26 [Sept. 1984]: 43–58). Seventy-seven percent subscribed to the official Church magazine, *The Ensign*.

With regard to organizational compliance, respondents reported considerable variety. The questionnaire asked "What do you think an LDS Church member should do when faced with a Church policy or program with which he or she does not fully agree?" Only 10 percent of the subscribers felt one should "accept it on faith and do your best to carry it out." Another 37 percent felt one should go along with the policy after frankly expressing disagreement. The rest selected less conforming responses. In one matter of doctrine, nearly two-thirds of the subscribers (including at least two-thirds of the Latter-

day Saints) accepted the Book of Mormon as “an actual historical record of ancient inhabitants of the American continent, . . . translated by the gift and power of God.” The remainder had various doubts about the literal historicity of the book.

In their reading habits (or at least their acquisition of literature), most DIALOGUE subscribers could be called “avid.” Sixty-two percent buy more than ten books a year, and most subscribe to other scholarly journals. About 20 percent also subscribe to the *Journal of Mormon History* and *Utah Historical Quarterly*, while 60 percent also subscribe to *Sunstone*. Twenty-six percent were charter subscribers to DIALOGUE while 24 percent had subscribed for more than ten years. More than 80 percent of them normally read at least half of every issue.

In short, a composite portrait of the DIALOGUE subscriber shows a man on the younger side of middle-aged, married, a home-owner, highly educated, professional, rather affluent, and living in the western United States but not necessarily in Utah. He is thoroughly active in the LDS Church and committed to doctrinal basics, though somewhat independent in that he may demur when faced with Church policies with which he does not fully agree. He buys a lot of books and subscribes to a lot of scholarly journals, plus the *Ensign*. Since first having learned about DIALOGUE through a friend, he has been a long-term subscriber, reads at least half of each issue, and shares his copy with one to three other people.

Tastes and Preferences about DIALOGUE

Subscriber preferences are difficult to generalize on a number of issues since responses were quite varied. However, there was strong consensus, more than three-fourths, that the articles are about the right length and footnoted adequately, neither too lightly nor too heavily. The same is true of the amount of graphics and of the price — about right for most. Subscribers prefer variety in each issue rather than theme issues (66 percent), though many (77 percent) would like to see DIALOGUE put out book-length, themed collections of past articles. If given the editorial chair, a few subscribers volunteered that they would keep the journal’s honesty, independence, integrity, scholarship, diversity of perspective, and editorial quality.

As to content, subscribers most enjoyed articles about theology/doctrine, history, and contemporary issues. Personal essays were also favored. Least enjoyed were poetry, fiction, and articles about arts and culture. When asked to recall DIALOGUE articles they had found especially memorable over the years, respondents cited articles on blacks and the priesthood, on women and women’s issues, controversies on the nature of God (Adam-God theory, Young-Pratt disagreements, etc.), the Liahona/Iron Rod essays of Richard Poll, the First Vision controversy, evolution, sexuality, and Davis Bitton’s “Camelot” look at the Church History Division. (See supplement to the questionnaire in the appendix.) Certain authors were mentioned with special appreciation (Lester Bush, Eugene England, and Hugh Nibley) as were certain interviews (Fawn Brodie, Sonia Johnson, Sterling McMurrin).

The Impact of DIALOGUE

Subscribers share a strong consensus about the impact *DIALOGUE* has on them. More than three-fourths find the tone of the journal appropriately objective and independent, neither too tame nor too critical. Almost 90 percent felt that *DIALOGUE* has enriched their personal religious experience, mainly through intellectual stimulation, the sense of belonging it has provided, and exposure to diverse views of truth.

They are not unduly sanguine about *DIALOGUE*'s wider influence, however. Only about a fourth believe that the journal has had an appreciable influence on either Church leadership or membership. They attribute this belief to *DIALOGUE*'s limited circulation and controversial image.

Subscriber Suggestions

Ninety-four percent of the subscribers said they would have no objection to "a small amount" of advertising for books and similar items in *DIALOGUE*. When asked to list the kinds of articles they would especially like to see more of, many of the subscribers did not answer at all. Among those who did, the most commonly expressed preferences were (1) doctrinal or theological, and (2) sociological/psychological topics. Within the two large categories there was little consensus on specific topics.

When asked for "the one thing" they would especially like to change if they were to assume editorship, respondents (just over half) tended to mention two categories: business/editorial practices and content. Again, within these two categories, there was little agreement on specifics. The most common content changes would be "more humility," a wider variety of authors, and more attention to contemporary or controversial issues. Some subscribers wanted to change or improve the publication schedule, format or layout, the quality of editing, or increase circulation. Some of these problems have, we feel, been solved.

Large minorities of subscribers expressed a desire to see *DIALOGUE* sponsor related enterprises, assuming that these "could be made financially self-supporting." Half of those who responded to this question selected a lecture series from a list of options. In numbers ranging from a fourth to a third of all respondents, subscribers indicated that they would like to see *DIALOGUE* sponsor symposia, debates, writing contests, and/or *DIALOGUE* chapters or study groups. However, only miniscule numbers volunteered to help organize such events, except in the case of study groups, where 20 percent of those in favor actually offered to help.

Eighty-three percent of the 77 percent responding encouraged issuing theme books made up of previously printed *DIALOGUE* articles. The most heavily favored themes for such books were Church history, theology, women's issues, science, social issues, and the Book of Mormon. Many, more specific, themes were suggested as well. (See questionnaire supplement in appendix.)

Finally, in evidence of their good will and best wishes for the future, a few hundred subscribers volunteered either financial contributions and/or gift subscriptions, subscription referrals, book reviews, editing, or proofreading tasks.

Hand-Written Comments

The questionnaire ended with an invitation for respondents to write comments they cared to make about *DIALOGUE* or anything else. Altogether, about 10 percent of the respondents (178) included additional comments. The majority of these volunteered their names as well. Some of the comments were quite lengthy, but most were not. Most of them carried themes and focuses sufficiently specific to be classified into a limited number of categories, some belonging to more than one category. Many comments, however, were quite idiosyncratic and could not be placed readily into a category. A selection of those that express general feelings about *DIALOGUE*, both positive and negative, follow in a separate article.

The single most common kind of comment — more than a third — was a general expression of appreciation. More specific comments praised *DIALOGUE* for helping subscribers with intellectual interests and doubts feel part of a sympathetic community. Others felt *DIALOGUE* had enhanced their testimonies, spirituality, and/or Church activity. Appreciation for the openness, independence, balance, and candor of *DIALOGUE* was a frequent theme. Other subscribers offered constructive criticism.

On the other hand, a dozen or so felt *DIALOGUE* had become the preserve of an intellectual elite. About a dozen more protested what they called a “critical” tone.

Another category consisted of personal expressions: testimonies of the gospel and the Book of Mormon, etc., suspicion about an intellectual approach to Mormon studies, or — more commonly — personal anguish (which *DIALOGUE* seemed to be helping them deal with): the anguish of transition from naivete to skepticism; of closet doubt; of coping with ambiguity; of wanting to be obedient but yet feeling offended by authoritarianism, etc.

VARIATIONS AMONG SUBSCRIBERS

General Observations

As subscriber responses were examined across categories of age, sex, geographical region, education, occupation, and income, the most remarkable discovery was how little they varied. What emerged was a consensus among *DIALOGUE* subscribers that transcended demographic differences. These differences, however, may not have been as great in any case as we would have found in a more general cross-section of Mormons. The region in which subscribers lived, for example, made virtually no difference in their responses to any of the items in the questionnaire, except that Utahns were least likely to evidence strict organizational compliance (question 41). Neither did occupation/profession, income, or marital status account for appreciable differences. The most marked variations in responses occurred by age, sex, and education level. Since the education levels of respondents were very similar to begin with, these variations were less marked.

The responses varying most often were those to the questions on length of subscription (question 4) and on *DIALOGUE* content (question 10). Older

respondents were, of course, more likely to be long-term subscribers. But men were considerably more likely to be long-term subscribers than women and those with graduate degrees than those with less formal education.

Preferences for DIALOGUE content were also distinct by level of education, but preferences seem ambiguous. More respondents in both the highest and lowest education categories (but not those in between) preferred having more science articles. More personal essays were preferred more by those in the middle education category (college graduates) than by those without degrees or with advanced degrees. And the higher the education, the less likely respondents were to prefer more poetry or letters to the editor. All these relationships, ambiguous or otherwise, were statistically significant.

Responses by Sex

Questionnaire responses varied little by sex except to the question on preference for DIALOGUE features. Table 1 shows that while both sexes express

TABLE 1

DIALOGUE CONTEST PREFERENCES BY SEX OF SUBSCRIBER

Question 10: Check the three kinds of DIALOGUE features you enjoy *most*, and the three you enjoy *least*:

Topic or Feature	Males	Females	N*
History			
Enjoy Most	94%	82%	1310
Enjoy Least**	6%	18%	
Doctrine (Enjoy most)	93%	77%	1410
Science	60%	32%	893
Personal Essays	67%	89%	961
Book Reviews	70%	65%	722
Letters to Editor	71%	81%	726
Arts & Culture	25%	62%	879
Contemporary Issues	84%	94%	996
Poetry	8%	28%	1198
Fiction	15%	49%	1119

* Total number of subscribers responding for each topic or feature *and* indicating their sex on Question 30. Percents in the table are not, of course, based upon these total numbers, but upon the subtotals that are (respectively) male and female for each topic. For example, for history, the subtotals on which the percents are based are 1001 for males and 307 for females, plus 2 mispunched in key punching, for the total of 1,310. For all rows of the table, the subtotals on which percents were based were very close to 73 percent of the total for males and 27 percent for females, or, in other words, virtually identical to the sex ratio shown in Question 30 for the entire sample. All percents based on those subtotals are statistically significant below the .001 level of probability, except in the cases of book reviews (.130 level) and letters (.022).

** "Enjoy Least" figures are omitted in the table from here on, since in all cases they are simply the difference to 100 percent.

strong preferences for articles on history and doctrine, these preferences are much stronger among the men. Women, on the other hand, constitute much stronger majorities than men in favoring personal essays, letters to the editor, and articles on contemporary issues. The widest gaps between the sexes, though, occur in the case of science, where the male preference is double that of the female, and in the preferences for fiction, poetry, and articles on arts and culture, in all of which cases the female frequencies are two or three times those for males.

Responses by Age

Age too has some impact on content preference, as we can see from Table 2, though not as much as sex does. Preference levels for history, book reviews, letters to the editor, arts and culture, and poetry all increase with age (quite strongly so for reviews, letters, and poetry). Interest in fiction, on the other hand, declines strongly with age.

More interesting than age in explaining content preferences is its influence upon certain attitudes toward Church matters. Question 41, for example, asked subscribers what they thought a Church member should do on occasions of disagreement with a Church policy or program. Table 3 shows the subscribers' responses by categories of age. If the first two choices are classified as "obedient" ones, then the proclivity for obedience appears to increase with age. The most equivocal response, at the very bottom of the table, shows a corresponding decline by age from 31 percent to 17 percent.

A comparative perspective is provided from a Mauss survey of Mormons nearly twenty years ago, which asked a similar question about obedience. At that time, 42 percent of Salt Lake City Mormons and 17 percent San Fran-

TABLE 2

DIALOGUE CONTENT PREFERENCES BY AGE OF SUBSCRIBER*

Topic or Feature	<29	30-39	40-49	50-59	>60	N
History (Enjoy Most)	85%	87%	93%	95%	95%	1327
Doctrine	(no significant variation)					1426
Science	(no significant variation)					904
Personal Essays	(no significant variation)					974
Book Reviews	56%	61%	70%	72%	84%	737
Letters to Editor	52%	65%	77%	81%	90%	734
Arts and Culture	30%	28%	32%	41%	44%	890
Contemporary Issues	(no significant variation)					1004
Poetry	6%	10%	11%	14%	20%	1212
Fiction	32%	32%	19%	17%	16%	1134

* Table 1 notes also apply in principle to this table. All percents in this table are statistically significant below the .001 probability level, except in the cases of history (.015), arts and culture (.025), and poetry (.002).

TABLE 3

PREFERRED METHOD FOR HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS WITH CHURCH POLICY:
DISTRIBUTIONS BY AGE

Question 41: What do you think an LDS Church member should do when faced with a Church policy or program with which he or she does not fully agree?

Preferred Method	Fewer than 29 years	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	More than 60 years
Accept it on faith	8%	7%	8%	13%	17%
Express feelings but go along	36%	34%	38%	40%	39%
Dissent privately but don't lobby others	19%	22%	26%	23%	24%
Gather support and petition leaders	6%	3%	4%	4%	3%
Other (mostly combinations of above, contingent on circumstances)	31%	35%	24%	20%	17%
	N (100%) = 187	505	487	275	261

Some columns may not total exactly 100 percent due to rounding. Table is statistically significant at the .000 level of probability.

cisco Mormons chose "accept it on faith." Another 40 percent and 37 percent, respectively, chose "express feelings but go along." These figures total 82 percent and 64 percent "obedient" responses for the respective groups. By comparison, even the older DIALOGUE subscribers seem less "obedient"!

Age seemed to also account for some differences in responses to the question about the Book of Mormon. Question 42 asked respondents whether they regarded the Book of Mormon as authentic and, if so, in what sense. Sixty-three percent of all respondents, including two-thirds of the LDS respondents, concurred with the official Church view of the Book of Mormon as a divinely inspired and translated actual record of an ancient people. The rest of the choices reflected various declining beliefs in the literalness of the Book of Mormon. Given that so many of the subscribers held to the official Church position, little variation in responses would be expected by age, or even, probably, by other factors. However, Table 4 illustrates some decline across the age categories, from youngest to oldest, of 10 percentage points (67 percent to 57 percent) in the level of agreement with the official church teaching.

Although a similar pattern does not prevail for any other single choice in the table, the collapsed percentages for the remaining choices reflect an opposite trend, with percentages increasing from 23 percent to 31 percent from the youngest to the oldest. Considering Tables 3 and 4 together, we have evidence that DIALOGUE subscribers, while perhaps inclined to grow more mellow with age in dealing with institutional or organizational conflicts (Table 3), grow more independent intellectually in their understanding of the doctrines of their religion.

TABLE 4

BELIEF IN BOOK OF MORMON AUTHENTICITY BY AGE

Question 42a: Please check the *one* among the following explanations that comes *closest* to what you believe about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon:

Nature of Authenticity	Fewer than 29 years	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 to 59	More than 60 years
Divine origin and literal historicity	67%	62%	64%	64%	57%
Divine origin but historicity doubtful	11%	16%	14%	10%	13%
Origin and historicity doubtful but moral teachings are Godly	8%	10%	9%	9%	13%
Authentic only as 19th century literature	7%	5%	7%	8%	11%
Authentic in other ways	8%	7%	6%	9%	7%
	N (100%) = 181	489	463	270	246

Some columns may not total exactly 100 percent due to rounding. Table is statistically significant where $p = .05$.

Responses by Type of Church Commitment

In general, DIALOGUE subscribers are active Latter-day Saints. The overwhelming majority attends church regularly, subscribes to *The Ensign* (or *Saints' Herald* if RLDS), and believes in the divine origin and historicity of the Book of Mormon. Indeed the general portrait that emerges of the "DIALOGUE Mormon" is that of an active Church member who believes in the basics but maintains an independent cast of mind where organizational and program matters are concerned. Within the context of this general characterization, though, there are differences in the nature of respondents' "Church commitment." These differences are represented by the different combinations of subscribers' responses to survey question numbers 40, 41, and 42 — those asking about Church attendance, Church policy/program compliance, and Book of Mormon authenticity.

We use *orthodox*² to describe the subscriber who not only goes to church regularly but also accepts the official position on the authenticity of the Book of Mormon and is inclined to obey Church policies even when he/she disagrees. This group comprised 31 percent of the total respondents. By contrast, one who either attends church irregularly, or does not accept the official position on the Book of Mormon, or chooses not to comply with Church policies where there is disagreement, comprised 61 percent of the respondents. This group is

² We emphasize that this term is merely an *operational* one, based upon the measures that happen to be available in this particular survey. There is no intention here to pass judgment on a respondent's spiritual condition or religious devoutness in a larger sense. We are talking only about a kind of commitment to the institutional Church, as estimated by responses to these three items in the questionnaire. The same understanding applies to the other terms in this section, "selective" and "closet doubter."

identified as "selective." (Eight percent could not be classified due to nonresponse on one or more of the three questions.)

A third orientation toward the Church can be seen if we leave aside the compliance issue (question 41) and look only at those who attend church regularly despite misgivings or rejection about the literal historicity and/or divine origin of the Book of Mormon. This group approximates D. Jeff Burton's definition of "closet doubters" ("The Phenomenon of the Closet Doubter," *Sunstone* 7 [Sept.–Oct. 1982] 35–38). They amounted to 27 percent of the total subscribers. Note that the "closet doubters" are not simply an intermediate category between orthodox and selective. Those latter two are mutually exclusive subsamples, whereas the doubters come from a different "cut of the pie," a special subsample created (without reference to the compliance issue) from among regular church attenders of *either* the orthodox or selective variety.

At the outset it should be noted that there were not many differences among respondents in these three categories in the way they answered the majority of questions in the survey. It is important to recognize also that none of these three categories comprises subscribers who are inactive in the Church. Those "orthodox" in Church commitment are, by definition, all regular attenders (95 percent of them every Sunday). The "doubters" are, by definition, also active Church members (75 percent of them attend Church every Sunday). Even among the "selective" group, 81 percent are regular attenders (65 percent attending every Sunday) — scarcely suggestive of inactivity.

Demographics, however, account for some differences among respondents in these categories. The doubters and selective categories are a little younger, on the average, and are somewhat more likely to be Utahns than are the orthodox respondents. The intellectual contrasts among the three groups (though they are not great) will be apparent from Table 5.

This table highlights acceptance of the official Church position on the Book of Mormon as a criterion for inclusion in the orthodox commitment category and rejection of the same as a basis for inclusion in the doubter category. However, responses from the selective group in Church commitment are especially interesting. They may not attend church regularly, and/or they may not be as organizationally compliant as those who are orthodox; but among this group, 39 percent still accept the Church stand on the Book of Mormon, and another 22 percent believe, at least, that its teachings have a divine origin. As for the closet doubters, though they do not share the official Church position on the Book of Mormon, nearly half of them (44 percent) are willing to ascribe its teachings to divine origin.

Table 6 shows how divided the three different groups are with regard to compliance with Church policies. Again, by definition, all of those orthodox in commitment are included within the two most compliant responses. Among respondents in the other two groups, there appears but little disposition to accept Church policies on faith, though a large minority of the closet doubters (26 percent) would at least go along after expressing disagreement. Since no one was excluded by definition from any of the three categories on the basis of "obedient" responses to question 41, Table 6 really emphasizes the im-

TABLE 5
 BELIEF IN BOOK OF MORMON AUTHENTICITY
 BY CHURCH COMMITMENT CATEGORY

Question 42: Do you regard the Book of Mormon as "authentic" in any sense?

Nature of Authenticity	<i>Percent Believing in Each Kind of Authenticity</i>		
	CHURCH COMMITMENT		
	Orthodox	Selective	Closet Doubters
Divine origin and literal historicity	100%	39%	0
Divine origin but historicity doubtful	0	22%	44%
Origin and historicity doubtful but moral teachings are Godly	0	16%	26%
Authentic only as 19th century literature	0	12%	12%
Authentic in other ways	0	12%	18%
	N (100%) = 563	1099	481

Respondents designated as orthodox in Church commitment are all found in this first category of "authenticity" by definition. Those designated closet doubters are excluded from this first category by definition.

TABLE 6

PREFERRED METHOD FOR HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS WITH CHURCH POLICY,
 BY CHURCH COMMITMENT CATEGORY

Question 41: What do you think an LDS Church member should do when faced with a Church policy or program with which he or she does not fully agree?

Preferred Method	<i>Percents Preferring Each Method</i>		
	CHURCH COMMITMENT		
	Orthodox	Selective	Closet Doubters
Accept it on faith	25%	1%	2%
Express feelings but go along	75%	14%	26%
Dissent privately but don't lobby others	0	37%	35%
Gather support and petition leaders	0	6%	6%
Other (mostly combinations of above contingent on circumstances)	0	41%	32%
	N (100%) = 536	1099	481

Some columns do not total 100 percent due to rounding.

portance of this issue in distinguishing the "orthodox" from the other two groups.

The remaining tables give a little more information about these three groups and how they compare. Table 7 shows how these respondents compare in their reading preferences beyond *DIALOGUE*. Note that every single one of those orthodox in Church commitment expresses that commitment by subscribing also to the official Church magazine. (They were also three times as likely as selective or closet doubters to urge upon *DIALOGUE* less iconoclasm and more humility as they responded to question 13.) Other differences in journal subscriptions among the three categories are not startling in Table 7, but it is interesting to note that the closet doubters subscribe with greatest frequency to such unsponsored publications as *Sunstone* and *Exponent II*. This may suggest a "seeker" quality to their outlook. It may be that same sort of outlook that affects the perceptions of the doubters about the tone of *DIALOGUE* (Table 8). They are marginally the most likely to see it as "objective and independent," and the least likely to find it too critical. Similarly, the doubters are the most likely to respond that *DIALOGUE* enriches their personal religious experience, and to feel strongly so (Table 9). In follow-up verbatim responses, they also emerged as the most likely to give, as a major reason for this feeling, that *DIALOGUE* helped provide a "sense of belonging." Even more so than other *DIALOGUE* subscribers, then, this minority may reflect an intellectual and spiritual yearning.

Consistent with this last observation, compared with the other two groups, closet doubters were the most likely to read *DIALOGUE* from cover to cover, to

TABLE 7

ADDITIONAL JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTIONS OF *DIALOGUE* SUBSCRIBERS
BY CHURCH COMMITMENT CATEGORY

Question 9*: To which of the following Mormon-related publications do you also subscribe? (Check as many as apply)

Publication	Percent Subscribing in Each Category		
	CHURCH COMMITMENT		
	Orthodox	Selective	Closet Doubters
<i>Ensign</i>	100%	70%	75%
<i>BYU Studies</i>	44%	30%	27%
<i>Sunstone</i>	55%	65%	71%
<i>Sunstone Review</i>	41%	50%	56%
<i>Exponent II</i>	42%	45%	50%
	N (100%) = 563	1099	481

* Percentages for *Journal of Mormon History* and *Utah Historical Quarterly* did not vary appreciably across the three categories of the table.

TABLE 8
 SUBSCRIBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF *DIALOGUE*'S TONE
 BY CHURCH COMMITMENT CATEGORY

Question 17: In my opinion, *DIALOGUE*'s current content and editorial tone seem:

Perception	Percent Holding Each Kind of Perception		
	CHURCH COMMITMENT		
	Orthodox	Selective	Closet Doubters
Objective, independent	79%	76%	81%
Too critical, negative	14%	3%	2%
Too tame, uncritical	2%	14%	12%
Depends on topic	5%	7%	5%
	N (100%) = 563	1099	481

TABLE 9
 SUBSCRIBERS' BELIEF THAT *DIALOGUE* ENRICHES PERSONAL
 RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, BY CHURCH COMMITMENT CATEGORY

Question 18: "DIALOGUE contributes to the enrichment of my personal religious experience." Do you:

Level of Agreement	Percents Agreeing or Disagreeing		
	CHURCH COMMITMENT		
	Orthodox	Selective	Closet Doubters
Strongly Agree	37%	45%	50%
Somewhat Agree	50%	45%	42%
Somewhat Disagree	9%	7%	6%
Strongly Disagree	4%	3%	2%
	N (100%) = 563	1099	481

share it with other readers, and to like it just the way it is in price, in graphics, and in general. Closet doubters were the most likely also to want to see *DIALOGUE* produce books based on collections of previous articles. They were most likely to have appreciated articles already published on such topics as theological controversies, the black issue, women's issues, sex, evolution, and by authors like Brodie (interview), England, Nibley, and Poll.

In responding to question 18, "DIALOGUE contributes to the enrichment of my personal religious experience," the three groups again demonstrated little

difference, but the greatest difference came in the “strongly agree” category. Thirty-seven percent of the orthodox agreed, trailed by 45 percent of the selective, and 50 percent of the closet doubter group. This spread of thirteen percentage points was the widest out of the four levels of agreement (see Table 9).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SURVEY RESULTS

The survey data reveal an image of *DIALOGUE* subscribers as “the unfettered faithful,” clearly committed to the difficult but rewarding process of engaging faith and intellect — spirit and mind — in a daily dialogue on religious issues and practices. They are not an eddy or backwater in the Mormon mainstream but an important current — committed, contributing, and curious. Independence, expected among a highly educated body, is evident among respondents. This independence expressed itself more with respect to the practical institutional affairs of the Church (“policies and programs”) than in matters of basic belief or activity. Education is clearly compatible with faith. Two-thirds of the LDS respondents hold to the historicity and divinity of the Book of Mormon. Three-fourths attend Church virtually every Sunday.

Forty-one percent of the survey respondents are under forty years of age, indicating that *DIALOGUE* is extending beyond its founding generation to engage issues of interest to a younger audience as well.

Survey results do not indicate a readership desire for significant change in philosophy, style, tone, content, or other aspects of *DIALOGUE*. With some small exceptions, respondents like the journal the way it is. Further, they are intensely loyal to *DIALOGUE*, being mainly long-term subscribers — one-fourth are charter subscribers — who feel part of a community of seekers after certain kinds of religious and intellectual experiences that are otherwise missing in their lives. The fact that 61 percent learned about it from a friend underscores the importance of the *DIALOGUE* network.

In short, *DIALOGUE* subscribers represent a healthy and viable segment of the Mormon religion. Their existence suggests that being simultaneously curious and committed, intellectually alert and actively serving, is a much more common occurrence than the stereotyped divisions into mindless conformers and liberal dissidents. The light shed on “*DIALOGUE* Mormons” by this survey should quiet the fears of those who see apostasy in curiosity and should hearten those who believe that both the individual and the Church can be strengthened by a serious journal devoted to free and open discussion of the issues that lie at the heart of our religion.

APPENDIX: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: In almost all cases, the percentages below are based upon a total number of 1779, or a figure very close thereto. Where respondent options or demurrals reduced the total figure for a given percentage significantly below 1779, the lower response figure is provided on the side as “n”. Percentages for some questions may total slightly more or less than 100 percent due to rounding.

INSTRUCTIONS: You can answer most of the following questions with a check mark, but we are asking for a few words of your own. We will respect your anonymity, so we hope you will answer each question candidly. If you object to answering a question, please skip it and go on. You may also wish to elaborate on your answers in the margins.

This questionnaire should reflect the individual views of *one* person. If more than one member of your household wishes to respond, please make a copy of this questionnaire and return it too.

Thanks again for your help.

First, Some Questions About Readership:

1. How did you first learn of *DIALOGUE*?
 - 9% Advertisement
 - 4 Library
 - 3 Bookstore
 - 61 Friend
 - 2 Footnote citation
 - 20 Other (specify) (Mostly via mention in other publications.)
2. Do you usually read *DIALOGUE*?
 - 37% Cover-to-cover?
 - 45 Half or more?
 - 17 Less than half?
3. How many other people normally read your issue of *DIALOGUE*?
 - 32% None
 - 44 One
 - 23 Two or three
 - 1 Four or five
 - 1 More than five
4. How long have you subscribed to *DIALOGUE*?
 - 26% Charter subscriber (since 1966)
 - 13 15 years or more
 - 11 10–14 years
 - 12 6–9 years
 - 20 2–5 years
 - 19 less than 2 years
5. Has your subscription during this period been
 - 76% Continuous?
 - 24 Intermittent?
6. If your subscription has now lapsed, what was the main reason?
(See supplement)

7. Would you object if DIALOGUE carried a small amount of advertising limited to publishers, bookstores, etc?

94% No
6 Yes

8. If "Yes", why would you object?

(A few expressed fears that advertising might crowd out articles and/or that advertisers might exert undue influence.)

9. To which of the following Mormon-related publications do you also subscribe? (check as many as apply)

34% *BYU Studies*
43 *Exponent II*
77 *Ensign*
20 *Journal of Mormon History*
60 *Sunstone Magazine*
45 *Sunstone Reveiw*
18 *Utah Historical Quarterly*

Other (specify). (Most often mentioned were other official LDS or RLDS publications, plus *This People*, *J. Whitmer Hist. Assn. Journal*, *FARMS*, *AMCAP*, *SSSML Newsletter*, and *BYU Today*.)

Next, we'd like your opinions about DIALOGUE's content:

10. Check the three kinds of DIALOGUE features you enjoy *most*, and the three you enjoy *least*:

Most	Least		n =
91%	9%	Articles about history	1332
89	11	Articles about theology or doctrine	1435
52	48	Articles about the sciences	910
74	26	Personal essays	981
69	31	Book Reviews	744
74	26	Letters to the Editor	738
34	66	Articles about arts and culture	895
87	13	Contemporary issues	1012
12	88	Poetry	1215
23	77	Fiction	1141

11. I would especially like to see more of the following kinds of topics or issues treated in DIALOGUE:

(See supplement.)

12. Would you like to see *DIALOGUE* publish more or fewer of each of the following?

	More	Fewer	
n =			
1054	66%	34%	Issues carrying articles on a variety of subjects (with no concentration on a specific theme)
1121	90	10	Issues containing small clusters of articles on particular subjects
1166	48	52	Issues devoted almost entirely to a single theme or subject

13. If you were the editor of *DIALOGUE*, what is the one thing you would especially want to change or improve?
(See supplement.)

14. What is the one thing you would most likely want to keep the same?
(See supplement.)

15. *DIALOGUE*'s scholarly articles are:

18%	Too long
78	The right length
1	Too short

16. *DIALOGUE*'s scholarly articles are:

7%	Too heavily footnoted
90	Adequately footnoted
3	Too lightly footnoted

17. In my opinion, *DIALOGUE*'s current content and editorial tone seems:

7%	Hypercritical and negative
77	Objective and independent
10	Uncritical and tame
6	Depends on topic (mostly)

18. "DIALOGUE contributes to the enrichment of my personal religious experience." Do you:

42%	Strongly agree?
47	Somewhat agree?
8	Somewhat disagree?
3	Strongly disagree?

Why do you feel this way? (See supplement.)

19. Please list a few of the articles in *DIALOGUE* that you have found most memorable over the years. Be as specific as you can, including volume and issue number if possible (you may use the last page, if necessary):
(See supplement.)

20. Do you feel that DIALOGUE's influence on the LDS Church *membership* has been:

3% Major?
22 Moderate?
46 Minor?
15 Imperceptible?
15 Don't know?

What makes you think so? (See supplement.)

21. Do you feel that DIALOGUE's influence on the LDS Church *leadership* has been:

4% Major?
17 Moderate?
33 Minor?
20 Imperceptible?
26 Don't know?

What makes you think so? (A total of about 700 responded here, with pessimistic views on leadership receptiveness outnumbering optimistic views by about 2 to 1.)

22. Compared to the last four issues of DIALOGUE, would you like to see future issues carry:

13% More graphics and artwork
55 About the same amount of graphics
16 Less graphics and artwork
16 Don't know

23. Given the present size and content of the journal, do you consider DIALOGUE to be:

6% Underpriced
81 Priced about right
13 Overpriced

24. If each project below could be made financially self-supporting, which would you like to see DIALOGUE sponsor? (You may check more than one.)

49% Lecture series
26 Writing contests
37 Symposia
26 Debates
12 Cultural events
31 DIALOGUE chapters or study groups**
Other (please specify)

** (See supplement)

25. Would you like to volunteer to help organize or participate in one or more such projects in your area? If so, please circle the event(s) above and send us your name.
26. To make available memorable articles from past issues of *DIALOGUE*, would you like to see *DIALOGUE* reprint some of these in one or more books?
 77% Yes
 22 No
27. If yes, would you be more interested in purchasing such volumes if they were organized:
 83% According to specific themes? (e.g. theology, history, etc.); or
 16 With mixed theme and content?
28. If you would prefer a focus on specific themes, please suggest some themes on which you would like to see collections of *DIALOGUE* articles reprinted:
 (See supplement.)

Finally, we would like to know a few things about you. We will respect your anonymity and use this information only in an aggregate statistical analysis.

29. How old are you?
 11% under 29
 30 30-39
 28 40-49
 16 50-59
 9 60-69
 5 70-79
 1 80 or over
30. Please indicate your sex:
 73% Male
 27 Female
31. In what state, province, or country do you live?
 California — 19% Other Intermtn. — 10%
 Utah — 26% All other — 45%
32. Please indicate your marital status:
 11% Never married
 82 Married
 3 Widowed
 4 Divorced or separated

33. Please indicate the highest level of formal education you have attained:

- 12% No degree
- 25 College/university graduate
- 26 Master's degree
- 38 Doctoral degree

34. In which of the following categories was your total family income last year?

- 5% Under \$10,000
- 4 \$10,000– 14,999
- 4 \$15,000– 19,999
- 7 \$20,000– 24,999
- 8 \$25,000– 29,999
- 10 \$30,000– 34,999
- 10 \$35,000– 39,999
- 14 \$40,000– 49,999
- 12 \$50,000– 59,999
- 7 \$60,000– 69,999
- 5 \$70,000– 79,999
- 5 \$80,000–100,000
- 9 Over \$100,000

35. Do you:

- 18% Rent or lease your residence?
- 82 Own your residence?

36. What is your profession or occupation? (Or, if you are retired, what was it?) Please be as specific as possible. Include not just the title of your occupation, but a line or two about the kind of work that you actually do. (See supplement.)

37. Are you self-employed or do you work for someone else?

- Self-employed — 24% Employed by others — 59%
- Mixed or not appl. — 17%

38. About how many books do you buy each year:

- 15% 1–5
- 23 6–10
- 28 11–20
- 34 More than 20

39. What is your religious affiliation?

- 94% Latter-day Saint
- 1 Reorganized Latter Day Saint
- 2 Other (specify) (Mostly either ex-LDS or Roman Catholic)
- 2 None

40. How often do you attend church/worship services?
- 76% Every Sunday (or virtually every Sunday)
 - 12 Most Sundays
 - 6 Occasionally
 - 6 Rarely or never
41. What do you think an LDS Church member should do when faced with a Church policy or program with which he or she does not fully agree?
- 10% Accept it on faith and do your best to carry it out.
 - 37 Express yourself frankly to the leaders and then go along with the policy if they still decide to continue it.
 - 24 Dissent privately, but avoid actions that might encourage an open conflict among Church members.
 - 4 Gather support for your position from other Church members, and then petition the leaders to change the policy.
 - 26 Other (specify briefly) (mostly combinations of the above, depending on circumstances)
42. Do you regard the Book of Mormon as "authentic" in any sense?
- 94% Yes (please respond to Part A below)
 - 6 No (please respond to Part B)
- A. Please check the *one* among the following explanations that comes *closest* to what you believe about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon:
- 63% It is an actual historical record of ancient inhabitants of the American continent, and was translated by the gift and power of God.
 - 14 Its historicity may be doubtful, but its theology and moral teachings are authentically of divine origin.
 - 10 Its historicity and its divine inspiration may both be doubtful, but its moral teachings are sound and do accord with God's will.
 - 7 It has nothing necessarily to do with divine origin, inspiration, or God's will, but it is an authentic literary product of nineteenth century America.
 - 7 None of the above is what I believe about the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. What I believe is: (included many who "don't know")

- B. If you do *not* regard the Book of Mormon as authentic in any sense, what do you believe about:

n = 89

Its origin (i.e., how we got it, who wrote it, etc.) (Most common was attributing it to Joseph Smith's authorship.)

n = 78

Its contents? (i.e. whether it is a good piece of literature, whether its moral and theological concepts are interesting or admirable, etc.) (Most common was acknowledgement of good moral teachings in the book.)

(You may continue your comments about the Book of Mormon at the bottom of this page, if you wish.)

Would you like to help DIALOGUE? (If so, please sign your name at the end *or* send us a separate note. Thanks.)

43. I am interested in helping DIALOGUE in one or more of the following ways (check as many as apply): [All figures in this section are total numbers of responses out of 1779, and not percentages.]

165	Making a financial contribution (tax-deductible)
70	Donating issues to a reference library
46	Donating needed back issues to DIALOGUE for resale
37	Volunteering for office help
161	Giving gift subscriptions
194	Subscription referrals
22	Art and design
231	Writing book reviews
164	Editing
156	Proofreading
	Other (please specify)

44. I am currently doing research and would consider submitting a manuscript to DIALOGUE on:

191 responded affirmatively

45. DIALOGUE may wish to contact (name and address)

(52 responded affirmatively)

who is doing research on

THANK YOU VERY MUCH for your time. In the space below, or on a separate sheet, please add any ideas, comments, opinions, or suggestions you may have about DIALOGUE: A JOURNAL OF MORMON THOUGHT.

(Optional) Name: (46% wrote in their names)

SUPPLEMENT TO *DIALOGUE* SURVEY RESULTS
 Results from Questions Requiring Write-in Responses
 and Special Coding

Question 6: If your subscription has now lapsed, what was the main reason?
 (n = 242)

1. Various dissatisfactions	14%
2. No time to read	12
3. No renewal reminder	14
4. Finances	40
5. Miscellaneous	20

Question 11: I would especially like to see more of the following kinds of topics or issues treated in *DIALOGUE*:

1. Social or psychological topics	23%
a. General or non-classifiable	14%
b. The Church as a social or political institution	3%
c. Women and the Church	2%
d. Mormon relations with the outside world, including other religions	4%
2. Theological topics (A very few mentioned specific scriptural or hermeneutical topics, but almost all responses were of a more general or multiple nature, not readily subclassifiable.)	21%
3. Historical topics	13%
3. Personal essays	5%
5. Literature and poetry	2%
6. No response (This is actually an artificially low figure, since many respondents offered suggestions in more than one of the above categories, and the percentages are all based on 1779.)	36%

Question 13: If you were the editor of *DIALOGUE*, what is the one thing you would especially want to change or improve?

1. No response	44%
2. Changes in business or editorial matters	30%
a. Publication schedule	15%
b. Quality of editing	10%
c. Layout or format	6%
d. Increased circulation	6%
e. Price reduction	3%
f. More aggressive public relations and advertising	4%
g. "Change nothing" or misc. business/editorial matters	4%
	56%

3. Changes in Content	26%
a. Less iconoclastic, more humble	18%
b. More variety in authors/articles	16%
c. More emphasis on popular issues	9%
d. More controversial	7%
e. More personal essays	5%
f. More fiction and poetry	4%
g. Less fiction and poetry	5%
h. Less emphasis on Wasatch Front types of concerns	4%
i. Other changes in content	30%

Question 14: What is the one thing you would most likely want to keep the same?

(n = 875)

1. Openness, honesty, integrity, independence	23%
2. Calibre of scholarship	17%
3. Editorial quality or format	17%
4. Diversity of perspectives	12%
5. Letters to the editor	6%
6. Provocative issues	3%
7. Number of book reviews	3%
8. Other (misc.)	20%

Question 18: Why do you feel this way (i.e., why do you agree or disagree that DIALOGUE contributes to the enrichment of your own personal religious experience)?

(n = 753)

A. Reasons offered for agreeing

1. DIALOGUE stimulates intellect	33%
2. It offers a sense of belonging	14%
3. It offers diverse views of truth	14%
4. It strengthens testimony	9%
5. It has honesty	5%
6. It helps in self-acceptance	5%
7. Other (misc.)	21%

(n = 137)

B. Reasons offered for disagreeing

1. DIALOGUE offers <i>only</i> intellectual stimulation	29%
2. It is too negative	12%
3. It causes doubts and uneasiness	12%
4. It doesn't satisfy spiritually	12%
5. It doesn't satisfy intellectually	5%
6. Other (misc.)	30%

Question 19: Please list a few of the articles in *DIALOGUE* that you have found most memorable over the years. (NOTE: Figures are the actual numbers of responses, not percentages.)

- 220 — Bush, Mormonism's Negro Doctrine
- 152 — "Pink" women's issue (entire issue)
- 136 — "Red" women's issue (entire issue)
- 136 — Buerger, Adam-God issue in Church history
- 132 — Blacks and the priesthood articles (unspecified)
- 132 — Poll, Liahona and iron rod revisited
- 119 — Poll, What the Church means . . . (iron rod/Liahona)
- 107 — Bergera, Young/Pratt argument over nature of God
- 95 — Jeffrey, Seers, savants, evolution
- 87 — Eugene England (articles unspecified)
- 67 — Hill, The First Vision controversy
- 60 — Hugh Nibley (articles unspecified)
- 54 — Bitton, Ten Years in Camelot
- 52 — Sexuality in Mormon Culture (entire issue)
- 47 — Buerger, Second anointing
- 45 — Bush (articles unspecified)
- 40 — Sonia Johnson interview
- 36 — B. H. Roberts vs. Smith debate

The following articles were each indicated 22 to 30 times: Fawn Brodie interview; Shipp's, "Insider-Outsider"; Nibley, "Leaders and Managers"; England, "Blessing the Chevrolet"; Bush, "Word of Wisdom"; Mauss, "Fading of Pharaoh's Curse"; Mauss, "Mormonism and the Negro"; "Death of a Son"; and "Being Single"; "polygamy" articles and the following were noted between 10 and 20 times each: McMurrin interview; McMurrin (unspecified); article on architecture in the Church; article on Church courts and excommunication; and Peterson's "The Gift."

Question 20: What makes you think so? (i.e., What makes you think as you do about *DIALOGUE*'s influence on the LDS Church membership?)

One hundred thirty-four respondents (7 percent), in support of their belief that *DIALOGUE*'s influence on Church members is at least moderate, offered two kinds of reasons: (a) *DIALOGUE* offers intellectual fare not otherwise available; and (b) material from *DIALOGUE* sometimes shows up later in Church publications.

Two hundred six (11 percent), on the other hand, in support of their belief that *DIALOGUE*'s influence is minor or less, offered the reasons that: (a) *DIALOGUE* has such a limited readership, (b) it suffers from a general perception that it is apostate or at least "too controversial," and/or (c) *DIALOGUE*'s readers are not that easily influenced.

Questions 24 and 25: If each project below could be made financially self-supporting, which would you like to see DIALOGUE sponsor? (You may check more than one.)

The percentages of subscribers approving the involvement of DIALOGUE in each kind of activity are given in the Questionnaire proper. The information added here pertains only to responses to Question 25, which asked subscribers to indicate their willingness to help organize or participate in each kind of proposed DIALOGUE activity. Proportions volunteering to help with each activity were miniscule in all cases except for DIALOGUE chapters or study groups where 31 percent of the subscribers approved of DIALOGUE sponsorship for such things, and nearly a fourth of those volunteered to help organize or otherwise participate.

Question 28: If you would prefer a focus on specific themes (for prospective DIALOGUE reprint collections), please suggest some themes on which you would like to see collections of articles reprinted. (NOTE: Figures that follow are total responses, not percentages.)

194 — Historical themes (not otherwise specified)

171 — Theological themes (not specified)

121 — Women's issues

88 — Early Church history

82 — Science (not specified)

72 — Doctrine (not specified)

44 — Sociological issues (not specified)

41 — Book of Mormon

40 — Blacks in the Church

37 — Fiction or poetry

32 — The arts

32 — Contemporary issues like anti-Mormons

29 — Evolution controversy

26 — Polygamy

25 — Life of Joseph Smith

25 — Contemporary issues (not specified)

24 — Recent Church history

22 — Priesthood

21 — The Church in politics

20 — Organizational matters in the Church

15 — Book of Abraham

14 — Word of Wisdom

11 — Medicine

158 — Miscellaneous other