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Hello, I Love You, Won't You Tell Me Your Name?: An Anthropological Investigation of Naming

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Hello, I Love You, Won't You Tell Me Your Name?:
An Anthropological Investigation of Naming

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Abstract

This study investigates how parents select the names of their children. Anthropological research on naming is very sparse, despite the immense power of names to reflect cultural variables, such as: kinship, gender relations, socioeconomic class relations, and differences in taste and personal preference. I surveyed a sample of parents at three daycare facilities in a small town in the Midwest about their children's names and how they chose those names. My findings indicate that kin naming plays a significant role, but many parents find a balance between choosing a name with "meaning" and choosing a name based on their personal taste and popular, contemporary aesthetics. This study found that many parents strive to individualize their children through naming, yet they also use it as a way to establish their children's place in their kin network and culture.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

"We shall find the history, the religion, and the character of a nation stamped upon the
individuals in the names they bear" (Yonge 1863, vol. 1:1)

Every person has a name. Every name has a story behind it. And every story behind

a name has a cultural context in which it is embedded. The process of naming a child is

different in every culture. In some cultures, the person who names the child, the meaning of

the name itself, and the contexts in which it may be spoken are all significant. It is common

in the United States for the parents to have the ultimate choice of their child's name. Yet I

recently discovered a groundbreaking new technology with the potential to revolutionize

naming in the United States. In 2011, a developer named Nathan Parks created an app for

the Apple iPhone or iPad which when place on the belly of an expecting mother, scans

through lists of potential baby names until it detects a kick or "any sign of enthusiasm" from

the baby, at which time it identifies "the baby's choice" of its own name (iTunes Preview

2011). The "Kick to Pick" application, may be a fun way for parents to select a name, but it

is also symbolic of the way that some parents view naming and their role in it (iTunes

Preview 2011).

While using an iTunes app to select a name may seem unusual to many American

families, cross-cultural studies of naming reveal incredibly diverse ways in which names are

selected. For instance, the Malay peoples sometimes write a different name on seven

bananas and place them in a circle around the infant (Alford 1988:41). The name written on

the first banana the child reaches for becomes the baby's name (Alford 1988:41). The

Navajo wait until a baby has laughed for the first time before giving the child an ancestral

clan name in addition to the name given at birth (Haviland *et al.* 2010:200). In many
countries, even legislators get involved in naming practices. In Brazil, Law No. 6015, Article
55 from 1973 mandates that government employees working in the civil registry "should not
register names that are likely to make their bearers the objects of ridicule," according to
psychologist Emma Otta's research (1997:134). Parents are eligible to contest an official's
ruling in front of a judge (Otta 1997:134). In Iceland, the laws regarding names are even
stricter. The government of Iceland actually has a Personal Names Committee that decides
whether a name that is not on the official list of approved names—the Personal Names
Register— will be permitted as a name for a newborn child (Ministry of the Interior—Iceland
1996:1). Regardless of the how a name is chosen, all over the world, "ethnographic research
has failed to reveal a single society which does not bestow personal names on its members"
(Alford 1988:1).

In cultures in which an individual selects the name, the choice of name, which at
times involves namesaking, becomes a significant decision. Names are in most cases
bestowed upon us, meaning that "the act of naming has the potential to implicate infants in
relations through which they become inserted into and, ultimately will act upon, a social
matrix" (Bodenhorn & Vom Bruck 2006:3). The U.S. Social Security Administration is one
of the primary institutions responsible for providing data about the current state of naming in
this society. Every May they release lists of the top names using data from applications for
Social Security cards (Jayson 2011:3D). Our culture is now guided by websites devoted to
helping expecting parents find names, such as Babycenter.com which reports the new trends
like the rising popularity of *Summer* and *Clover* for girls and *Rain* and *River* for boys (Jayson
2011:3D). There may be more sources than ever before for seeking out new sources of

names, potentially leading to a wider variety of names. Yet the lists of Top Names that is released each May continue to include names that have been used for hundreds of years.

Names do not define the named. However, social scientists have debated this matter by stating that "personal names, I have argued, symbolize identity" (Alford 1988:81). Ethnographic research has found that most cultures do see names as important means of classifying people and distinguishing them from others (Alford 1965, Lieberson 2000). Uniqueness was found to be a significant aspect of naming behavior in thus research as well, suggesting as Frankfurter did that "anybody who is any good is different from anybody else" (Alford, 68). Yet as the population of America grows well into the millions, the question of uniqueness of names must be examined more closely. A name is both a mandated legal identification and a socially constructed personal identification (Finch 2008:712). It is in this regard that personal preference and taste start to influence naming choices.

Names, especially surnames, place a child in the context of his/her lineage and provide a cross-generational connection to the child's ancestry (Finch 2008:721). In an overview of scholarly research on naming, Finch (2008) notes that forenames can reflect the particular kin relationships that are most valued by the parents, as well as which relationships they choose to shape for their child (720). In this way, the "act of naming, the very act of constituting personhood, is fundamentally rooted in kinship" (Finch 2008:721). While parents may choose to display family connections in naming, they are simultaneously establishing the individuality of the child (Finch 2008:714).

In anthropology, there have been very few examinations of naming practices in the U.S., which vastly overlooks the important functions that names serve. Names have the potential to convey a great deal of meaning, even if the meaning solely reflects the social and

historical moment in which the child is born. Yet research on naming is still sparse. The study of naming behavior, "in a historical context, has been much neglected, and its importance seldom recognized" (Smith-Bannister 1997:1). This study contributes to the knowledge of naming practices in the U.S., which is minimal at best, especially in the field of anthropology. The little research there is focuses on specific geographic regions or minority group naming practices. Much of the existing research is interdisciplinary—mostly amongst the social sciences. However, as two cultural sociologists, Elchardus and Siongers (2010) note, "the study of first names is a woefully neglected area within cultural sociology" (403). There have been very few studies that examine the holistic naming behavior in American culture.

The research conducted in this study serves the field of anthropology by providing an examination of the naming of children, which is so deeply embedded in culture. My study intends to contribute to the knowledge that these researchers have gained and to use their results to explore how naming has changed over time and how it varies geographically. This study seeks in some ways to replicate the research conducted by Rossi (1965) in Chicago, Alford (1988) in Oklahoma, and Lieberson and Bell (1992) in New York state. This study would be one of the first cases of holistic research on American naming conducted since these times.

This study examines the choices that parents make in naming their children and how they came to those decisions. Parents must choose between honoring their kin and in some cases continuing family tradition, while also selecting a name that reflects their personal preference and for some, embodies the traits that the parents aspire to see in their children. Naming is a reflection of American values such as kinship—especially patrilineal kin—

gender dynamics and patriarchal family structures, as well as an emphasis on the nuclear family, and a desire for individualism. Through naming, parents attempt to individualize their children, while simultaneously establishing them as members of their kin network and culture.

   This project begins with an exploration of past literature on naming: beginning with cross-cultural research and continuing onto naming in the U.S. The theoretical analysis and literature review have been combined in this project, since most of the theories explored for the sake of this study were based on ethnographic research. Then the methods of my own research are explicated. The results of the surveys that were distributed will be examined, followed by a discussion of the results in the context of past research. This project concludes with a brief summary of the results and discussion as well as suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review/Theory: Cross-Cultural Naming Practices

Naming practices vary from one culture to the next, yet there are themes in naming that consistently emerge in past research. Anthropologists who conduct ethnography in any culture will find that naming behavior is a rich source of cultural understanding. Stated briefly, "by examining the diversity of naming systems across cultures, we can begin to see how differently societies conceptualize personal identity" (Alford 1988:51). Naming is an act that different people earn the right to do, which can have a set meaning for the person receiving the name and for everyone who will call him/her that name. In this way, names display key aspects of the values of a culture. Many cultures have very strict norms about naming, such as traditional name inheritance or forbidding the use of a person's name after he/she has died. In many cultures, names are taken directly from words in the language, meaning they have direct semantic meanings. These meanings have enormous implications on what a child is expected to become and what they are expected to value. This chapter examines past research conducted all over the world, providing a cross-cultural understanding of naming practices in order to place the research of this study into a larger cultural framework.

Kin Naming

There are many societies for whom naming a newborn child after relatives or ancestors is of utmost importance. Traditions of naming children after kin may represent a way to honor a relative, to ensure that family legacies live on, or simply to create a bond between living kin (Breen 1982, Smith-Bannister 1997). Naming was shown to be a medium

for expressing patrilinealism in early modern Europe (Smith-Bannister 1997:3). In Western Ireland in the early 1900s, there were set patterns for naming children that honored kin and also continued traditions of selecting names with religious significance (Breen 1982). For the Trobriand Islanders, kin names were given to children to symbolically reinforce matrilineal kinship (Weiner 1987:54). In this section, I will discuss the naming practices in Western Ireland and among the Trobriand Islanders. Both of these cultures believed that namesakes play an important role in the life of the child who bears that name: whether it be spiritual guidance or protection, or a matter of property inheritance (Breen 1982:711; Weiner, 1987:56). This demonstrates that the practice of namesaking can be highly valued for various reasons.

Naming practices of early twentieth century Western Ireland, for example, strongly reflect kinship and Christian traditions. Richard Breen investigated the process of the bestowal of forenames and nicknames in a rural Catholic parish called Tuogh in County Kerry by conducting fieldwork from 1977-1978 (Breen 1982:703). He examined the baptismal register for the parish between 1900-1950, looking specifically at recorded names (Breen 1982:703). His examination can be interpreted as content analysis—consisting of compiling the listed names. This led him to several conclusions regarding the patterns behind the names chosen for newborn members of the family.

Breen observed that there is a distinct set of rules regarding the naming practice in Western Ireland, specifically following a patrilineal bestowal of names. The first male born to a family is given the name of the paternal grandfather while the second male is given the name of the maternal grandfather (Breen 1982:703). The first female born is given the name of the paternal grandmother and the second female is given the name of the maternal

grandmother (703). Beyond that, children are named after relatives—especially relatives with prestige, such as family members in the priesthood or relatives who are unmarried and have property to be inherited (Breen 1982:703). These rules are followed in order to show the grandparents respect and recognition, while signifying the patriarchal nature of this society. It also reflects inheritance as following the rules of primogeniture, meaning that the eldest son had the first right to take over the family property (705). The population for this study—the parish of Tuogh—was made up of family farms, making inheritance a very important aspect of life (705). This set of naming rules was intended to bring about "the transmission of real or symbolic property from one individual to his namesake" and establish similarity between family members (Breen 1982:711). Thus, kinship played a crucial role in the naming practices in this parish.

This ideology that sharing a name has great significance also extends to naming children after Christian saints. Breen found that middle names were almost always saints' names, though first names could also have biblical connotations (1982:706). This was done in order to personalize the relationship between the child and a saint so that the saint would be more likely to answer prayers from the child (1982:706). Girls were very often named Mary so that the Virgin Mother would protect the girls and help them to be more like her (1982:706). A particular saint's name may have been chosen because it was the name of the hospital where the baby was born—typically named for the patron saint of the county (Breen 1982:707). Other times, the child might be born on the feast of a saint, and so he or she will be given that saint's name (707). Clearly religion and family tradition were the most influential factors in determining names for children in rural Western Ireland between 1900-

1950. However, the author notes that by 1940, new names were starting to appear, showing less adherence to the previously discussed rules.

It is also interesting to note that because of these restricted naming patterns in rural Western Ireland between 1900-1950, families had a restricted set of names to choose from. Families who named their children after relatives had an even more limited pool of names. There were only 35 male names and 26 female names in the parish of Tuogh used for first or middle names between 1900-1940 (Breen 1982:704). However, there were 57 male names and 45 female names used between 1925-1950 (704). This shows that the naming patterns are following the traditional patterns to a lesser extent over time.

Family naming in Europe followed traditional patterns for centuries, but it was at times altered by historic events. Going back to 17th century England, a shift in kin naming occurred, which is still relevant to examinations of contemporary naming behavior today. In a quantitative analysis of historical documents collected from civil parish registers, Smith-Bannister (1997) concluded that in 17th century England, there was a shift away from naming children after their godparents towards naming them after the parents themselves (Smith-Bannister 1997:65). He found that between 1538-1700, a population of 77,653 children (girls and boys) whose baptismal records he obtained from 16 parishes in England, show that a significant number of parents decided to name primarily the eldest children after themselves (Smith-Bannister 1997:65). Naming a child after a godparent was a way to connect the child to spiritual kin and to establish the sponsor-sponsored relationship (Smith-Bannister 1997:74). Changes within the Church during this time period, especially protestant reforms, placed more emphasis on the parents, allowing them to take over the spiritual responsibility that had formally been accorded to godparents (Smith-Bannister 1997:75).

Thus, names were still a way to link children to their spiritual advisors but following Puritan ideas, the parents, not the "ritual kin" that Catholicism deems godparents, have the educative role within the Church (Smith-Bannister 1997:75, 184).

As a result of naming children for godparents, then for parents, the repetition of names from generation to generation led to the same three names appearing in the top three names fairly consistently between 1538-1700 (Smith-Bannister 1997:185). Parent-child naming led to an increase in the proportion of children with those top names and a decrease in the names which parents chose from—meaning that there was less variety in naming during this time (Smith-Bannister 1997:185). One further observation that Smith-Bannister (1997) made is that there was a lower rate of mother-daughter and godparent naming for girls than father-son and godparent naming for boys, leading to more diversity of girls' names and less concentration of the same names within the population (186). The reason for this gender difference in kin naming is that, according to Smith-Bannister, mothers were observed to be of a "lesser importance" in naming children than fathers because the name of the mother was not included in parish register documents until around 1600 in some regions of England (Smith-Bannister 1997:43).

The increase in parent-child name-sharing was not so significant as to indicate that every family in England made the attitudinal shift towards emphasizing the parents or the nuclear family, so the scope of these conclusions should not be interpreted as indicative of widespread change across the country (Smith-Bannister 1997:76). Yet this study did reveal that historical, political, and especially religious changes had noteworthy implications for naming in this time period (Smith-Bannister 1997:183). These changes affected the size of the pool of names which parents selected from and they exacerbated a gender divide in kin

naming and in the diversity of girls' names (186). Smith-Bannister made no reference to racial differences, so only inferences could be made that this population was primarily Anglo-Saxon. It should be noted that Smith-Bannister (1997) argues that the parent-child link was typically established between the parents and the first-borns because there was no guarantee that more children would be born to those parents (76). This study reflects the influence of sociopolitical and religious contexts and the evolution of the role of the family on naming.

Family names in other cultures have also been found to reinforce the connection between kin in more symbolic and spiritual ways. Among the Trobriand Islanders of Papua New Guinea, the way that infants are names reflects beliefs about how new life is created. Annette Weiner's extensive fieldwork from 1987 among the Trobriand society over a total of twenty-two months provided her with extensive insight into the culture of this group. Her ethnographic field research on the islands revealed much about the naming practices they employ. Trobriand islanders are named at birth by their mothers after a deceased member of her family (Weiner 1987:54). This reinforces the link between the new child and matrilineal ancestors, who are believed to play an active role in the lives of future generations: "Each dead person ultimately becomes the means for new life via the physical connection between women and the spirits of their matrilineal ancestors" (Weiner 1987:55). Names serve as "the first public recognition of the infant's matrilineal identity" (Weiner 1987:56). This includes claiming the rights to property belonging to the matrilineage (Weiner 1987:56). However, this ancestral name is rarely used in daily life (Weiner 1987:56). Fathers also give names to their children: names that usually the father's sister selects from her own matrilineage (Weiner 1987:56). These names will be used in social interactions, but may not be passed on

to his/her own child because they are viewed as loans from the father's matrilineage (Weiner 1987:56). Children have lesser rights to property belonging to their father's matrilineage (known as use rights) signaling that if a father gives property to his children, it forms an "intimate bond" (Weiner 1987:56). Names for the Trobrianders signify close ties in a spiritual manner, and also establish means for transmitting actual property.

Kin naming is the primary source of names in a large number of cultures. In all of these cultures, the choice to continue a family tradition can be a way to pay homage to a relative or even, more pragmatically, to transfer material property. These choices are made by individuals acting on behalf of the people they are related to. In no way are these decisions made completely independently, and they may represent family traditions or cultural customs. Regardless of the motives, kin naming does reflect upon both the family and the larger culture.

Assimilation and Cultural Identity as Displayed in Naming Practices

The way that names are chosen for immigrants from a different ethno-linguistic background living outside of their homeland is another important aspect of naming to consider. Minority groups must navigate between the maintenance of the naming practices of their own culture or the accommodation of the dominant group's naming practices (Reinecke 1940:345-351).

Kevin Heffernan (2010) studied just that by analyzing English name use by different Asian students in Canada. Heffernan (2010) administered a survey to 132 undergraduate students in Toronto of Chinese, Korean, or Japanese ethnicity which assessed whether or not they used an English name, in which situations they used it, and why (25). He discovered

that while "a vast majority of the Chinese respondents (68 of 71) and the Korean respondents (29 of 33) have an English personal name…only one of the Japanese respondents (N=23) does" (Heffernan 2010:27). He proceeded to investigate this drastic difference in the names that these students chose to go by.

When asked why they use English names, the author was able to make several conclusions that the students themselves were not fully recognizing. Far fewer of the Japanese respondents reported that one reason to use an English name is because it is easier for Westerners to pronounce (Heffernan 2010:28). Chinese and Korean students did however report that fellow Chinese and Korean students call them by their English names, showing that name change was not strictly for pronunciation reasons (Heffernan 2010:30). The author proposed that this shows a desire to signal "their affiliation with western culture" (Heffernan 2010:32). Heffernan (2010) also suggested that more Chinese and Korean students adopt English names because in their cultures, it is common for a person to have several names in their lifetime, depending on age and status. In Japanese culture, on the other hand, a person is given one name at birth, which is retained through the course of his/her life (Heffernan 2010:32). This shows that "the adoption of an English personal name is compatible with Chinese and Korean naming culture but not Japanese naming culture, and this is most likely the reason why Japanese do not adopt and English personal name" (Heffernan 2010:32). Facilitating the pronunciation of their names was just one of the factors why Chinese and Korean students took on English names, but by no means the only one. Naming, at any age, is very much a culturally based process, as this study demonstrated.

Group Identity Maintained through Naming

Languages, including naming practices, can be used as a tool for maintaining cultural heritage in the face of an imposing, outside force (Harrison 1999:69). Naming can even be used to differentiate between groups when a majority group seeks to prescribe behavior (Harrison 1999:69). This includes socioeconomic groups trying to set themselves above others or ethnic minority groups facing cultural imposition by a dominant group. In some cases, it is an outside force that prescribes certain naming practices, while in other cases, practices were adopted by the colonized force out of economic need: the need to access the resources of the dominant group (Harrison 1999:69). The Soviet Union and Christian missionaries both represent groups that imposed set cultural behaviors onto societies. Several researchers have demonstrated how distinct groups struggle to assert their own privilege or protect their independent customs in the face of a dominant or imposing group.

One of the ways that social scientists have tried to understand naming is by trying to differentiate naming among different socioeconomic classes. Theorists have sought to explain how naming is stratified by classes [Lieberson and Bell (1992), Lieberson (2000), and Besnard and Desplanques (2001)]. This includes research on whether people in the lower classes are likely to copy the naming practices of the upper classes. Two French researchers analyzed the first names of 367,000 people born in France between 1930 and 1988 to study what they referred to as the social diffusion of taste (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:67). They defined diffusion of taste as a transference of trends from one social class to another (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:67). Besnard and Desplanques (2001) compiled names from data gathered by the *Institut nacional de la statistique et des etudes economiques*

(INSEE) about employment, in which they classified people into distinct socioeconomic groups (67-68).

They categorized each name in terms of its "relation to fashion" in the year it was given using specific statistical criteria focusing on how many babies received that name in the population (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:67). An 'innovative' name was assessed based on how ahead of the trend it was; including a name given to a baby before it was given to one in every one thousand babies and a name given to a baby before it was given to one percent of all births (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:67). The authors did find that there was a hierarchy of how innovative the names were based on how high the socio-occupational category was (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:69). For instance, "information professions and artists" and "liberal professions" gave their children the highest proportion of innovative names, while "agricultural workers" and "farmers" gave their children the lowest proportion (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:69). This was fairly consistent over time, when the authors analyzed these results based on year of birth (separating births into 20-year spans) (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:70).

The authors did note a "compression" of this hierarchical trend, however, in that the number of innovative names of the lower classes was gaining over time while the proportion of innovative names of the higher classes was diminishing slightly (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:70). Their explanation is that the classification of people into socioeconomic groups shifted in more recent years (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:71). This referred to the elite being less elite as more people moved into higher categories as different occupations gained more prestige or earned higher salaries (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:71).

The hypothesized vertical diffusion of taste in names is not as powerful a model as it once was, as Besnard and Desplanques (2001) noted, citing the work of Besnard and Grange (1993) who found a clearer hierarchy. Yet, it is still significant. One variable that the authors used to justify the hierarchy that they observed was the level of sociability of the different occupations (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:73). People who had wider and more diverse social networks—like artists, journalists, and tradesmen—chose more innovative names compared to farmers, for example (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:73). In conclusion, the authors did discover that parents of high socio-occupational status chose more innovative names that lower status parents, which provided some support for the vertical diffusion of taste in names model, yet in more recent years, the stratification was slightly less pronounced. The networks of different people as well as the resources that they draw names from, following Bourdieu's model of cultural capital, reflect how they as a group are able to set themselves apart.

The issue of group identity is salient for various ethnic groups and minority groups in different areas. The Tuvans, an indigenous Turkic people of South Central Siberia, used naming as a way to preserve their ethnolinguistic identity when they were subsumed by the Soviet Union in 1944 and forced to incorporate Russian naming practices (Harrison, 1999:69). Before 1945, there were no Russian names found in Harrison's (1999) sample. The number of individuals in this sample born during this era was small, yet further corroboration is that none of the Harrison's native language consultants could name a single relative born before 1945 who was given a Russian name when they were born (Harrison, 1999:72). Researchers for this study surveyed 2,000 Tuvan individuals, in some cases across four generations of one family to observe changes in naming over time (Harrison, 1999:72).

Russian "socio-realist" names like *Traktor* 'tractor' and *Brigada* 'brigade' became quite common in the 1950s, after the annexation (Harrison, 1999:72). By the 1960s and 1970s, Russian names overshadowed Tuvan names to the tune of 55% of Tuvan children being given Russian names in 1970 (Harrison, 1999:73). Yet the 1980s saw a reemergence of typical, traditional Tuvan names, as the power the Soviet Union held over Eastern Europe waned (Harrison, 1999:73).

Across the four generations represented in the sample, Tuvans were able to access both naming practices: using Russian names to access cultural capital under Soviet control, yet including elements of Tuvan naming so as not to lose yet another aspect of the Tuvan language (Harrison, 1999:69). For example, Tuvans created the feminine form of male Tuvan names by attaching Russian female suffixes onto the end of the name (Harrison, 1999:78). Many Tuvans, when forced to adopt surnames in the place of their clan names, used given names as surnames and added the gender-appropriate Russian suffix (Harrison, 1999:75). Sometimes this even occurred as a clerical error on the part of Russians who were unfamiliar with Tuvan naming practices that differentiated given names and clan names (Harrison, 1999:75). The result was that the Tuvans saw a huge increase in the number of surnames under Soviet rule—many of which obviously originated as given names or nicknames like 'hero boy' (Harrison, 1999:75). It is also common for a Tuvan to provide the Tuvan lexical meaning of his name when introducing himself in Russian (Harrison, 1999:71). This is one strategy for maintaining a minority ethno-linguistic identity in the presence of a dominant language. By showing that a name has a semantic meaning in their language, Tuvans are justifying what may just appear to be a strange, foreign name to Russian speakers.

The survey for this study also analyzed why Tuvans chose or avoided names in the Tuvan language. Reasons to avoid Tuvan names included: "Tuvan names [being] hard to spell or pronounce, likely to be made fun of, sound funny in Russian, or may hinder a child's future success" (Harrison, 1999:72). Tuvan names were chosen, however, because they express "ethnic identity (e.g. 'my son is a *real* Tuvan'), desire to use ancestral names, and aesthetic considerations" (Harrison, 1999:72). Thus, the naming practices in Tuva reflect how this minority ethnic group was able to resist the dominant Russian culture through "syncretism," or by preserving aspects of their traditional system while accommodating the imposed system (Harrison, 1999:78). In this case, "name choice and everyday name use both influence and reflect the emerging ethnolinguistic identity of a people" (Harrison, 1999:79). Names among the Tuvans are symbolic of how two cultures have come to negotiate power and status.

Foreign influences have altered their naming practices among the Jlao Kru people of southeastern Liberia, though they are able to retain some indigenous naming behavior. Those Kru who attend church, who speak English, and who are literate are seen as 'civilized' and are given a baptismal name (Tonkin, 1980:657). These names are usually European names drawn from Christianity (658). Kru names become only an initial after the Christian name, yet the Kru still see a civilized name "as additional to one's real name and not a replacement for it" (Tonkin, 1980:658-659). Kru personal names are still used when speaking the Kru language (Tonkin, 1980:658). One function of Kru names is to signify that one is civilized, often reflecting economic necessity in Liberia in the past.

Naming serves various other functions within the Kru community that have been retained despite the presence of Christian missionaries. The first is that naming incorporates

a child into the father's smaller settlement, or the patrilineal community (Tonkin, 1980:653, 655). The community, not the parents, bestows names on children, often through namesaking—or individuals offering up their own names, especially if they assist in the birth or childrearing (Tonkin, 1980:655). The author herself was offered a woman's name as thanks for expressing condolences for a death, showing that people do not even have to belong to the Jlao community to be given a name (Tonkin, 1980:655).

One significant aspect of Jlao naming is divination. The Jlao people believe that names have to be accepted by the children themselves. It is possible for "babies [to] reject their name by crying or other signs interpreted by a 'country doctor' who will offer alternatives until he divines the one that is accepted" (Tonkin, 1980:655). This signifies a belief in communication between "the newly born and the newly dead" (Tonkin, 1980:662). Tonkin never explicitly described the religion of Kru, and occasionally referred to some theories and beliefs (such as birth being linked to death) as "indigenous" (Tonkin, 1980:661). Almost all of the names that she encountered were names of the child's relatives, yet there was no explicit social doctrine making this a necessity (Tonkin, 1980:655).

Names were chosen for a variety of reasons in the cultures described above, especially to reinforce ethnic or class boundaries or to access resources of the dominant group, but none of those researchers explored the reasons for the selection of each individual name. They only examined the broader naming patterns within a culture. It is important to understand wider cultural variations in naming, especially in response to outside cultures, in order to be able to understand the reasons why specific names were chosen, because names are selected in a cultural context.

Semantic Meanings of Names

One way that parents select names in various cultures is by examining the literal meanings of names. There are many cultures in which names are given for their unique semantic meanings (Gao 2011, Harrison 1999, Watanabe 2005). This is one phenomenon that in U.S. society is very uncommon (Alford 1988). It seems that few Americans know the meaning or origin of their own names without soliciting information from a database (Alford 1988:145). Cross-culturally, names with semantic meaning often convey the desires that parents have for their children—whether it be success or beauty. In some cultures, the meanings carry great weight and must be lived up to. In other cultures, the name may have a semantic meaning, but the words viewed as appropriate for use as a personal name are virtually limitless—i.e., the Tuvan name meaning 'cheese' (Harrison, 1999:70). Past research has explored the ways in which different cultures view the meanings of names.

Cultural sociologists Elchardus and Siongers (2010) sought to explore how Belgian students perceive the impact of names on forming a person. In 2005, they surveyed 589 first-year university students in an Introduction to Sociology course in Belgium to investigate this impact (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:407). They found that nearly 50% of the participants believe that first names can influence who a person becomes (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). Out of those 50%, 15% reported that they believe that people individually act in accordance with their own name and strive to live up to it (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). The remaining 85% of the participants who believe that names influence a person believed that this occurs through acting in response to how other people react to their name (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). These responses to others' reactions might include trying to live up to the ethnic identity emphasized by some names, or living up to the

evocative meaning of a name (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). An example of this was one student named *Cindy* who felt that she was treated like she was dumb and lower-class because this was the evocative meaning her name produced (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). Thus, according to 40% of the total participants, "first names can give rise to negative or affirmative reactions, emphasize or de-emphasize class and ethnic identity, and create a positive or a negative impression for the name bearer" (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). Following a majority of the participants, most evocative meanings reflect personality traits rather than direct references to race or class, and they were primarily the results of personal experience (Elchardus and Siongers 2010:408). In this culture, the meanings of names are more semantic than literal, yet many are associated with traits. Elchardus and Siongers (2010) theorized that names are associated with cultural tastes that produce the social effects that are attributed to names (419). Unfortunately, Elchardus and Siongers (2010) do not discuss what distinguishes the other participants who disagreed that names influence personhood. This study revealed that among half of their participants—Belgian college students—names wield great power.

Another example of a culture in which name meanings are attributed a great deal of importance is China. In order to investigate Chinese naming behavior, Ge Gao (2011) distributed an open-ended survey questionnaire to 103 Han Chinese in the city of Beijing, asking them about the meaning of their names and their opinions of them. Gao (2011) was able to make several important conclusions from their responses about the semantic meanings of names. He found that the highest percentage (60%) of name meanings were classified as meanings which reflect parental expectations (167). Examples of these names are: 'intelligence/knowledge,' 'success,' 'health,' and 'happiness' (Gao 2011:167-168).

Participants spoke directly of how their parents' wishes are shown in their names. For instance, one participant is quoted as saying, "My name connotes impressive. My parents expect me to make remarkable achievement in my career" (Gao 2011:168). Names such as these had boosted the self-confidence of the name-bearers, made them feel special, or inspired them to try to live up to their name, according to the name-bearers themselves (Gao 2011). One participant whose name means "forever spring" told researchers that she is able to better overcome challenges because she knows that her name "predicts that [her] life will be as beautiful as the spring season" (Gao 2011:169). On the other hand, not all of the participants felt that their names had meaning. Some believed their names to be purely symbolic and without impact on their personality or success (Gao 2011:170).

The majority of participants liked their names and the top three reasons why were: because they were meaningful, because they bore parental wishes and thus, established an emotional bond between themselves and their parents, or because they were pleasant names to hear (Gao 2011:171). One of the top reasons why people disliked their names was because it was "easily duplicated" (Gao 2011:171). It is particularly important in China, where the population is large and the number of last names is limited, for a person's name to be unique (171). Names are very much gendered in China; they reinforce concepts of masculinity and femininity. In China, a "male's identity is closely associated with toughness, strength, power, and greatness…[while] a Chinese female's identity is coupled with her physical appearance and the gentle disposition" (Gao 2011:173). Chinese parents must contend with various "layers of meaning" in selecting a name, such as these gender stereotypes as well as their aspirations for their child (Gao 2011:169).

Sixty percent of the participants did report that their names have significant meaning for them and their future, which shows that parents are placing significant weight on the semantic meaning of the names they select (Gao 2011:168). This study is limited in that it does not survey the parents of the participants on why they chose those names and if the meaning that the children interpreted is truly the meaning that parents intended. The children may not know the full story of where their names originated, nor can they be expected to know the complexities involved in this process that took place decades ago, regardless of what their parents have told them.

A different case study of the semantic meanings of names was conducted by Wantanabe in 2005. For this study, Watanabe extrapolated general naming practices from naming books commonly found in bookstores in Japan (Watanabe 2005:26). Watanabe found that:

> In the past century, male given names often reflected the political and ideological climate of the era in which babies were born, while female names did not. Female names tended to express abstract qualities that are deemed feminine according to Japanese culture, but which are not affected directly by the social and political conditions at the time of birth [Watanabe 2005:27].

One example of such "eras" that he describes is WWII, when the most popular boys' name *masaru/shoo* meant 'to win/to be superior' (Watanabe 2005:29). Girls' names deemed of "abstract feminine quality" and also incorporated Japanese cultural symbols include *mizuki* meaning 'beautiful moon,' *kotone* meaning 'sound of Japanese harp' (Watanabe 2005:27). Contemporary names typically express parents' aspirations for their children—i.e. the popular boys' name which includes the phoneme for 'to achieve, reach' (Watanabe 2005:30). Recently, the most popular girls' names have involved the names of flowers and beautiful plants, such as 'cherry blossom,' which is a significant symbol for the Japanese, carrying

connotations of patriotism and appearing often in traditional Japanese poetry (Watanabe 2005:32). Baby name books encourage parents to choose names that are easy to remember and easy to pronounce (32). Certain phonological sounds are much more common for boys (i.e. "sharp" stops and fricatives like *–ki, -ya, -ta*), while other sounds are more popular for girls' names ("soft" glides and nasals like *–me, -ni, -ka)* (Watanabe 2005:32).

Naming a child in Japan offers an opportunity for a great deal of creativity due to the flexibility in orthography and word meanings. Those who ultimately bestow names upon a child are able to "express their creativity and visions by choosing the right form and meaning for their child, producing, for example, 48 different ways of writing the name, *yuuki*" (Watanabe, 2005:45). The meanings of names vary based on which Kanji characters— borrowed Chinese characters—are used to write them (Watanabe 2005:25-26). Two names with the same phonological form in Japanese may have very written different meanings, which helps to individualize names (Watanabe 2005:45).

The source of names is very important in Japan: "Naming a child after a relative is rare" in this culture, however it is common to name a child after a celebrity or even a beloved *anime* character (Watanabe, 2005:33). The author noted that naming after such people does occur, but it does not appear in statistical data, so it is unclear how common this practice is (Watanabe 2005:34). One naming practice that is declining in use is naming children based on their birth order. The first son was once commonly named *ichiroo,* meaning 'first son' but this is not as frequent now that the role of birth order is becoming less pivotal to the family unit (Watanabe 2005:34). Also declining in popularity but still employed are the practices of naming children after the place where they were born or the month or season in which they were born (Watanabe 2005:35-36). Some parents do still place emphasis on the

number of strokes that it takes to write the name (Watanabe 2005:37). This is a widespread fortune-telling technique based on the different meanings and luckiness attributed to different numbers (Watanabe 2005:37).

Parents in Japan must pay close attention to the phonology, the visual forms, and the cultural implications of the names they choose: "Naming a child in Japan involves dancing with form and meaning within the legal and cultural boundaries" (Watanabe 2005:45). This demonstrates both parents obedience to the traditions and their creativity in differentiating the meanings of names. Thus, this is another example of the significance of semantic values of names.

There are many cultures besides Japan and China in which meanings correspond to parents' hopes for what the child is to become. In Jordan, name meanings are seen as very important to the future of the child. Most names are derived from roots words and thus, have lexical meaning (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:82). Names may be selected from positive values of the society (i.e. 'glory,' 'justice,' 'piety,' 'kindness'), the time of the birth (i.e.,'Friday' to 'revolution' during the troubles of 1967), nature (i.e., 'jasmine'), religion, family names and names of important national figures or celebrities (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:83-89). This research focuses specifically on the Arab community within Jordan. There is much emphasis in the Arab culture in Jordan placed on living up to one's name. Several common expressions even reflect how a person with a good reputation is viewed as 'acting according to his name' (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:80). Names serve as guidance or expectations place upon a child by his/her parents (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:80). The inverse of this is also true in that a person with a good reputation can give a name more prestige and make it more popular among the population (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:81).

The author used surveys to gather data on naming practices. A random sample of families was chosen from cities and villages across Jordan in order to survey them about the motives for why their personal names were chosen (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:82). The author also analyzed a list of names of the 13,000 students at a university in Jordan (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:81). This provides a very holistic sample of a diverse population, while also looking closely at a more uniform age group.

Gender differences in naming were very much evident in Jordan. Females names were much more innovative than male names, (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:90). For instance, there were many cases in which words that had never before been used as personal names were given to girls (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:90). Male names, on the other hand, showed less innovation and more adherence to traditional, historical names (90). There were few religious names for girls. This may be attributed to the push in the Islamic religion to name sons after the prophet Muhammad (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:86). Overall, there was much greater variety in girls' names found (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:91). At the university where the researchers conducted their study, there were 800 names for 4,000 female students and only 600 names for 9,000 male students (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:91). It is also worth noting that, "for females, a name is also part of their beauty" while attractive names are not necessary for males, who "acquire prestige from the mere fact of being male" (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:90). Males are given ugly and tough names like, 'rock' and 'anger' in the old Arabic tradition (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:90). Names can reflect a degree of misogyny in Jordanian culture. Boys are preferred to girls, so it is common for a family hoping for a boy to name a girl 'finish' or 'that is the end' (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:88). Parents may also, consequently, name a

son 'livelihood, blessing from God' or 'more and more,' for example (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:88).

There are other customs among the Bedouin tribes of Jordan that are unique. A handsome baby boy may be given an ugly name (literally 'ugliness' in some cases) to "keep the evil eye and envy away from him" (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:88). Some Bedouin fathers name their newborn after the first object they see, taking it as an omen (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:88). Thus, if a father first sees a rock, he would name the son 'rock' and see this as a sign that his son will be tough, patient, and survive (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:88). A final naming myth among the Bedouin is that if the baby cries constantly in the first few months, parents see this as a sign that the baby is protesting its name and will change it (Abd-el-Jawad 1986:89).

Many personal names among the Azerbaijani people, where similar facets of Arabic culture as seen in Jordan appear, have a corresponding lexical meaning in the Azerbaijani language (Zuercher 2007:87). In 2003, Kenneth Zuercher surveyed a population of 1,900 people to study language choice behavior in Azerbaijan, and used the names solicited from his participants to examine naming behavior (Zuercher 2007:90). Out of the 1,900 participants, he used only the 1,528 participants who both belonged to the Azerbaijani ethnic group and whose names were legibly listed on their surveys (Zuercher 2007:90).

Zuercher (2007) found that females were more frequently given names in the Nature, Non-Muslim, Desire (to have the child), and Beauty categories that he defined, while males dominated the Aspiration, Character, and Religion categories (98). This implied that "in Azerbaijani culture, women are named based on how they are expected to appear…while men are named based on what they are expected to accomplish" (Zuercher 2007:99). However, women's names were also present in the Aspiration category, with such lexical

meanings as 'determination' and 'achieving' (Zuercher 2007:97-98). Men are also more visible in the public sphere, including the religious sphere of Azerbaijani society. The author described that, although Azerbaijani women participate in religious practices in the home, men dominate public religious gatherings (Zuercher 2007). Thus, it followed that 11.6% of men were given religious names compared to only 2.5% of women (Zuercher 2007:95).

The gender differences for names in Azerbaijan also include a tradition that clearly praises the birth of sons over daughters (Zuercher 2007:94). More predominant in past generations, but still used today, there were incidents of parents naming a daughter *Bæsti, Qizbas, Kifayæt, or Tamam,* meaning 'that's enough' or 'that's enough girls' in Azerbaijani; names that appeared a total of eight times in this study (0.8% of the sample) (Zuercher 2007:94). Garibova and Blair (1999), whose research Zuercher used in this interpretation, found that these names were primarily given to girls born into large families in rural areas where parents see it as more desirable to have a son (in Zuercher 2007:94). In contrast, just over ten percent of the girls in this sample, however, were given names with meanings expressing the parents' joy at the birth of their daughter (Zuercher 2007:94). It can be concluded that parents on average are more often happy to have a daughter, and that although they emphasize beauty and exoticness in girls' names in Azerbaijan, they also signified high aspirations and positive character traits placed on them.

One researcher came to question the results of the parental aspirations placed on children through naming. Jahoda (1954) explored the effects that names can have on the future of a population of Ashanti children in Ghana. Every child born into the Ashanti tribe is given a "soul name" which is derived from the name of the day on which the child is born (Jahoda, 1954:193). The words for Monday and Wednesday both have meanings that are

extended to the connotations of the names. Monday means 'the day of peace' while the word for Wednesday contains the root word which means 'to die,' closely related to the phrase 'to commit a murder' (Jahoda, 1954:193). Thus, boys who are born on Monday and receive a Monday soul name are "supposed to be quiet, retiring, and peaceful," while a Wednesday boy is believed to be "quick-tempered, aggressive, and a trouble maker" (Jahoda, 1954:193).

The author of this study decided to put these beliefs to the test. Thus, Jahoda examined school records and Juvenile Court records of 1700 boys in the tribe to assess and compare the delinquency committed by Wednesday and Monday boys (1954:194). The results revealed that the 180 Monday boys were in fact much less likely to have any record of delinquent offenses than all other boys in the sample (Jahoda, 1954:194). Wednesday boys (numbering 209) were much more likely to commit offenses than all other boys (Jahoda, 1954:195). While Monday boys committed a total of two offenses against people and Thursday boys committed the second highest offenses against people totaling eight, Wednesday boys committed a total of twelve (195). The author offers that the beliefs that the Ashanti hold about these boys may be "selectively enhancing certain traits which otherwise may have remained latent" (Jahoda, 1954:195). The possibility of Ashanti boys becoming troublemakers or pacifists may not be directly caused by which day of the week they are born on, yet this study showed that there is a significant impact of names on boys in this case. These results could be further explained through more ethnographic research, but for the moment, it is worth noting that names can carry connotations which in this case may directly effect the name bearer.

In conclusion, names with meanings in many cultures have very specific things that they are expected to convey. This includes names reflecting parental aspirations for a child,

or values that the parents expect will become a key part of their child's life. In these cultures, the child will almost always know the meaning of his/her name because of its explicit semantic meaning. Thus, a name has the potential to have a real impact on the actions of a person and how others treat him/her. Names are very much embedded in a social context in this way. Names affect not just the named person, but also the name-giver and everyone else who may share a name.

Name Taboos and the Bestowal of Multiple Names

There are many cultures in the world, which for a variety of reason, place taboos on particular personal names. A taboo on a name means that no one is allowed to speak the name. No one is allowed to bestow that name upon a child. There are even cultures in which it is forbidden to say a word that sounds like a tabooed name. Taboos typically evolve from beliefs about deceased persons' spirits reeking havoc on those who speak their names, as is the case of the Tiwi (Hart 1930).   Some societies, as a result, bestow many names upon children, in the case that a name should become tabooed. Similarly, there are many cultures which practice teknonymy, or referring to a person based on their relation to the youngest member of their family line (Geertz and Geertz 1975:85). Past ethnographic research among the Tiwi peoples and the Balinese focused primarily on non-industrialized, tribal societies, which have retained their indigenous practices in the respective ethnographic present.

The Tiwi people of the Melville and Bathurst Islands in North Australia have several names due to the fact that there are several members of the village who are given the right to select a name for a newborn child (Hart 1930:280). A father names his child, as do his brothers, who serve a paternal role (Hart 1930:280). Brothers and older male relatives of the

child's mother are also entitled to name the child, as well as the mother's mother (Hart 1930:281). However, the mother herself may never name the child (Hart 1930:281). In the Tiwi tribe, women do not participate in rituals, including the ritual of naming (Hart 1930:281). The exception to this is the maternal grandmother of the child. The mother's mother is the symbolic representation of the matrilineal clan for the child (Hart 1930:281). Thus, she is the sole female in her family allowed to name a child.

The Tiwi do have taboos against names of the dead. Using the name of a deceased person, or even using words in their language or in English which resemble the name, goes against a very strict social mores (Hart 1930:282). It is believed that people's spirits wander the Earth after their death and that they do not take kindly to hearing their name used (Hart 1930:288). Additionally, any names that the deceased person bestowed on others are also rendered taboo after his/her death (Hart 1930:282). Children who were given names by the person who has died are no longer permitted to go by that name (Hart 1930:282). Should it be their only name, they need to be given another name (Hart 1930:282).

The Tiwi also follow the strict code amongst their tribe that each name given to a child should be unique. It is seen as unacceptable for a person to be given a name that someone else in the tribe already has—including names of persons recently deceased. Hart (1930) found that "although the Tiwi number nearly eleven hundred people at the present time, and each one of these has on an average three names, a careful study of these three thousand three hundred names fails to reveal any two as being identical" (281). This usually means that names are not bestowed immediately, but that people usually take time to be sure that no one else shares a name before bestowing it on a child (Hart 1930:281). By puberty, a child usually has several names—anywhere from one to seven names—each made known to

the entire tribe at some point (Hart 1930:281). One name will generally be used more frequently than the others (Hart 1930:280). Thus, it is likely that only the father, mother, and the person knows all of the names (Hart 1930:281). The Tiwi have such important taboos surrounding names that it begins to make sense why they have so many names. For a person with many names, it is essentially guaranteed, "that at any particular time that some of them will be free from any of the prevailing tab[oo]" (Hart 1930:290). It is logical then, for a person to have many names in their lifetime in order to keep from being nameless once a taboo against their name becomes effective.

Naming practices take on a unique form in Bali, where it is once again common to have multiple names throughout the course of one's life. Hildred and Clifford Geertz (1975) studied the Balinese over the course of many years, and found that views on kinship are very much reified in naming. The Balinese practice teknonymy, which means that a person's names shifts, potentially many times in his or her life, with each status attained (Geertz and Geertz 1975:85). After you have a child, you become "father of…" or "mother of…" and no longer use your childhood name (Geertz and Geertz 1975:86). This shift occurs again when the person becomes a grandparent or great-grandparent, always taking on the newest status term and the name of the youngest child or grandchild in the patriline (Geertz and Geertz 1975:86). The name given to a person at birth is no longer used to address the person once he or she has married and had children (Geertz and Geertz 1975:86). In fact, "it becomes extremely discourteous to use a person's childhood name instead of his teknonymous name, for to do so is to imply that he is still immature" (Geertz and Geertz 1975:86). In Bali, fathers are the core political figures and grandfathers hold a great deal of political influence, so it follows that the Balinese naming system would emphasize having children (Geertz and

Geertz 1975:90). A person who is childless is forever referred to as a child. Teknonymous

names thus demonstrate the prestige of a person based on family role, stress the importance

of fertility, and stress the importance of future descendents over ancestors (Geertz and Geertz

1975:90).

The Balinese naming system plays a vital role in the way that ancestors are

remembered. Simply put, they are not remembered. Teknonymous names are structured

around the youngest member of the family. By the time that a third or fourth grandchild is

born, the childhood names of the grandparents may be long forgotten. This means that as

names are forgotten over time, the ancestors themselves are forgotten. Ancestors (living or

dead) may be referred to by their kin-terms, but past that, nothing about the ancestors

themselves is transmitted (Geertz and Geertz 1975:91). As Geertz and Geertz (1975) say,

"the most significant function of teknonymy for Balinese social structure is that of promoting

genealogical amnesia, of systematically preventing any long-range genealogical knowledge

from being preserved as a family tradition" (91). A "cultural veil" falls upon those who have

died and moved closer to the world of the gods, and this is reinforced by the naming system

in Bali (Geertz and Geertz 1975:92). Since ancestors are forgotten, contemporary kinship ties

are also forgotten as a result, since common lineage is lost with knowledge of common

ancestors. Thus, this system is very much "downward looking" in terms of genealogical

descent (Geertz and Geertz 1975:90). This represents an entire people's outlook on kinship,

formed around names.

As this research has demonstrated, names may be important because of the fact that

they are either unique or are shared by many people in a given culture. Names may be

forbidden from use or even from being spoken so as not to upset a spirit or dishonor an

ancestor. Names may be changed to reflect one's new place in the society. And though names may be completely original or widely used, they must still serve the purpose of identifying a single person. In cultures where many people share names, this issue is resolved through the bestowal of new, usually less formal names.

In conclusion, this chapter has shown how names are of the utmost importance to cultures, especially when names are attributed meaning. In the U.S., most people are not accustomed to names having a direct translation or an easily traceable origin. Yet all over the world, names are attributed meanings, which will usually have a very special meaning to the person who bestowed the name and the person who receives it. Naming patterns provide great insight into understanding how a culture functions and what each culture values. To ignore names is to ignore the explicit displays of culture which each person carries independently, yet uses to demonstrate their place and their belonging in a particular culture.

Chapter 3:

Literature Review/Theory: U.S. Naming Practices

Naming varies greatly across different borders and among different groups of people, and this is absolutely the case in the United States. Considered by some to be a melting pot of different cultures and subgroups such as racial/ethnic groups, religious sects, and regional populations, the U.S. is a fascinating case study of naming behavior. Even within one population in the U.S., differences in naming behavior exist between different generations, socioeconomic classes, and genders (Alford 1988, Lieberson 2000, Rossi 1965). Across several fields of social science—primarily sociology, anthropology, and psychology—past research has examined naming in the U.S. among a variety of subgroups. While some of these studies have been broad and quantitative—such as Lieberson (2000) who analyzed names in one state over the course of almost an entire century—others have been qualitative case studies of specific areas. Anthropological investigations of naming in the U.S. have sought to explore differences in kin naming, in the meanings of names, and the popularity of names between racial and ethnic groups—including immigrant populations—and between socioeconomic classes.

Kin Naming

Children across many cultures are given the names of a kin member, which is a practice also present in Anglo-Saxon naming. Bestowing names from within the family is a crucial aspect of naming patterns in the U.S, historically and contemporarily. Kin names are

important or even culturally prescribed sources of names for many groups, yet they are more valid sources of names for some groups more than others. Alford (1988) theorized that kin naming "provides parents with a means to honor name sources, express and display family continuity (and thus transmit status), encourage the child's identification with the family, and/or encourage name-source-like behavior (138). With kin naming, there have been significant differences across generations observed by social scientists. Rossi (1965) found in her landmark research of naming practices from the early to the mid twentieth century for middle class families in Illinois that a majority of her participants practiced kin naming (501).

Rossi gathered data from a sample of three neighborhoods in Chicago, Illinois, which represented typical middle-class neighborhoods (1965:500). She ended up sampling 347 mothers with 951 total children ranging in age from one month old to 47 years old (Rossi 1965:500). The children were divided into categories solely based on the decade in which they were born (from the 1920s to the 1950s) in order to examine patterns over time (Rossi 1965:500). There was a diverse religious background within the sample: 39% of the women were Protestant, 35% Catholic, 20% Jewish, and 6% listed as "other" or "none" (Rossi 1965:501). It is also important to note that while participants' race is not explicitly stated, 40% of the women had four grandparents born in the U.S., 30% had two or more grandparents born outside of the U.S., 25% had one or more parents born abroad, and 5% of the mothers were born abroad (1965:501). This shows a diverse population in terms of ethnic backgrounds, which will be important to remember when it comes to analyzing the role that kinship plays in naming children. Unfortunately, the author does not break down the results using this variable.

Rossi interviewed each mother to investigate the namesake of each of her children.

She described the interview questions as follows:

> 'Are any of your children (is your child) named after someone on your or your husband's side of the family?' If the answer was yes, the respondent was asked which child, its sex and birth order, and which relative each child was named after. Mothers were also asked: 'Are any of your children (is your child) named after someone *not* related to you or your husband?' followed by probes as to which child and exactly whom the child was named after. [Rossi 1965:501]

Rossi (1965) found that a very high number of children were named after a relative: 590 children, or 62% of the sample (501). What is even more significant is that only 16% of the families interviewed did not have a single child named after a relative (Rossi 1965:503). Thirty-six percent of the families had at least one child named after a relative, and 48% of the families named all of their children after kin (Rossi 1965:503). Thus, "in five out of every six families, at least one child was named for a relative" (Rossi 1965:503). The majority of the kin that children were named for (85%) came from the parental or grandparental generation, with those two generations providing names in an almost equal proportion (41% of kin names and 44% of kin names, respectively) (Rossi 1965:508-509). Within those generations, collateral kin (almost entirely aunts, uncles, great aunts, and great uncles in this sample) made up 23% of all of the names (Rossi 1965:509). Only 5% of the sample was named after a person not related to the family and 33% of the children in the sample were not named after any specific person (Rossi 1965:503). Additionally, first-born children were more likely to be named after kin than later-born children, with boys being more likely to be named for kin at all birth order levels (Rossi 1965:504). All of these results show that kin naming was a very common practice in middle-class Chicago in the 1920s through the 1950s.

Alford (1988) conducted research in Oklahoma that replicated Rossi's investigation of kin naming. Data from Oklahoma revealed that, "boys received at least one name (first or middle) from a relative 67 percent of the time, while girls received at least one name from a relative 46 percent of the time" (Alford 1988:131-132). This is a comparably high majority of people named for kin. These conclusions were drawn from Alford's investigation of 400 naming decisions in Oklahoma through examining birth records and conducting personal interviews (Alford 1988). His sample was 82% White, rural, mostly lower-middle class to middle-middle class, and Protestant (Alford 1988:27). The study in Oklahoma consisted of a more lower class sample when compared to Rossi's sample which was predominantly middle or upper-middle class and urban, which Alford cites as the reason for the slightly lower occurrence of kin naming in his research (Alford 1988:132).

Another theme that came out of Alford's 1988 study is that there was a higher tendency for family names to be given to children as middle names, instead of first names in Oklahoma (135). Kin names were used for middle names much more frequently than for first names in this sample (Alford 1988:135). Alford (1988) postulated that many parents consider using a kin name as a middle name as still honoring a relative and connecting the child to kin, while still enabling parents to give the child an aesthetically preferred name as the first name (135). He proposed that parents might be under the opinion that "while the middle name becomes a part of the child's formal identity, the child's everyday identity is primarily associated with the name that he or she goes by" (Alford 1988:135). So if a kin name is more old-fashioned, the child still has a more popular or aesthetically appealing name to actively use (Alford 1988:135).

Alford's study also found that the higher the class status of the participants, the more kin naming occurred (Alford 1988:132). First-borns in Oklahoma were also more likely to be given family names reflecting the special importance bestowed on first-borns for carrying on the family prestige (Alford 1988:134). An alternate explanation is that the "most honor-worthy" kin in the parents' eyes may have run out as the family grew larger, leaving fewer honor-worthy namesakes by the time a second or third child is born (Alford 1988:135).

Evidence for socioeconomic class differences in kin naming was also found in Virginia over the span of several decades. Taylor (1974) observed that higher-class White families were more likely to give their children kin names as first names. Children of higher status firstborn White males were given their fathers' names with a greater frequency than firstborn White sons of lower status fathers, evaluated by the father's occupation (Taylor 1974:17). Taylor (1974) analyzed birth certificates and certification records which granted him access to the names given to all firstborn males born in Richmond, Virginia between 1913-1968 (specifically in 1913, 1930, 1950, and 1968), as well as the race and occupation of the fathers (13). The author took a 5% sample from a Richmond birth certification records, however, he does not divulge why he only included Black and White fathers of first-born males in his analysis, presumably ignoring other racial minorities. Class did not relate to kin naming for Blacks in this sample as it did for Whites, but the same trickle down process occurred: that for Blacks and White, those of a lower class status did increase their kin naming and those of a higher class status did decrease their kin naming over the time period of the study (Taylor 1974:17). Taylor (1974) argued that kin naming was used as a means of transferring family prestige among higher-class families (11; in Alford 1987:137-138).

There were also interesting trends that occurred with suffixes like "junior" or "II" following names. Name inheritance (i.e. the bestowal of names ending in the suffixes "junior" or "II") became more and more common for Blacks in this sample, to the point where in 1968 the rates of name inheritance were almost equal for Whites and Blacks (Taylor 1974:15). In 1913, these name suffixes were "virtually confined to the White population, and more specifically, the white-collar and property-owning classes" (Taylor 1974:19). However, the practice of name inheritance increased for Blacks in the first 30 years in this sample, more closely approximating the trend for Whites during these years, yet this trend peaked about 20 years later for Blacks (Taylor 1974:15). A similar pattern occurred for blue-collar workers—meaning that name inheritance peaked later for blue-collar workers than for white-collar workers (Taylor, 1974:17).

These two patterns serve the argument of Taylor (1974) that the group with lower social status copied the use of these name suffixes from the group with higher status to borrow this symbol of high status (19). Other scholars have met this argument with contention, however (Lieberson, 2000:150). The Taylor (1974) study did provide evidence in support of the theory that naming practices were copied by lower status subgroups to gain status. First-born males in this sample from Richmond reflected the model of class diffusion that Philippe Besnard (1995) would later propose, but conflicting evidence from other studies must be considered.

Names originating from kin do reflect wider social trends and historical factors like the role that nuclear and extended family plays in daily life, and there is evidence to suggest that kin naming is influenced by socioeconomic class variables (Taylor 1974; Besnard 1995).

Yet there are additional factors that come into play in naming that also establish clear differences in broader naming patterns in the U.S.

Gender Differences in Naming Trends

        Investigations of kin naming revealed differences in the naming of girls and boys. Past research of gender differences in naming behavior in the U.S. has shown differences in the sources of names for boys and girls, in the turnover rates on the lists of the top names, and the symbolic meaning of names for girls and boys. Many of these differences are rooted in sexism and symbolic roles for males that are not expected of females. For instance, the idea that the males carry on the prestige of the family may very well influence the names chosen for males (Rossi 1965:503). Lieberson and Bell (1992) showed how the top 20 girls' names were given to fewer girls than the number of boys given the top 20 boys' names, signifying that there tend to be more unique girls' names (517). Thus, some gender differences in naming are significant and can represent underlying cultural norms and expectations.

        To return briefly to Rossi (1965), she found that girls' and boys' names reflected attitudes towards their respective roles. Girls were more often named after people outside of the family than boys. In Rossi's 1965 study of middle and upper-middle class families in Chicago, girls were more frequently named for friends or neighbors while boys were more frequently named for fathers, grandfathers, and great grandfathers. She found that 70% of sons were named for kin compared to 52% of daughters (Rossi 1965:504). Rossi (1965) concluded that for her participants, "women play the more crucial role in family and kin activities, while men are the symbolic carriers of the temporal continuity of the family"

(503). It is also interesting to note that boys were more often given names from the Bible when not named after kin, whereas girls who were not named for kin were most often named for friends of their mother's (Rossi 1965:504). Rossi (1965) interprets this as boys' names being "rooted in the past, linked to religious tradition" and girls' names as linked to modern social relations, reflecting what she called "fashion" (504).   She also points to the divide between traditional, historically-rooted names and fashionable names more prone to fluctuation in popularity in the fact that there were 52 different girls' names in the 108 girls' names that were mentioned by participants and only 33 different boys names in the 174 boys' names that were listed (Rossi 1965:504). Sex is clearly an important variable in the source of the names that parents in this study bestow upon their children.

It is important to note the years in which Rossi (1965) examined naming practices. She categorized the children in this sample into four distinct age groups in order to compare naming practices within the frame of each decade, from the 1920s through the 1950s (Rossi 1965:500). In the 1920s, a girl was much more likely to be named after a relative on her mother's side of the family than after a relative on her father's side of the family (Rossi 1965:511). The same applied to boys, who were much more likely to be named after a relative on their father's side of the family (Rossi 1965:510). Over the years however, that gender split became much less pronounced, to the point where in the 1950s, a girl was almost just as likely to be named after her paternal kin as her maternal kin (Rossi 1965:511). Rossi has suggested that this represents the movement towards fewer divisions based on sex in society as a whole (Rossi 1965:511).

However, years later in 1988, Alford found other gender differences in his replication of Rossi's 1965 study. To recapitulate, Alford (1988) analyzed 400 naming decisions in

Oklahoma through birth records and personal interviews. He found that seven percent of female names and only three percent of male names in this sample were gender-ambiguous (Alford 1988:148). He justified this by claiming that in America, women may be given more gender-ambiguous names than males because gender perceptions in our society "permit females substantial latitude to behave in 'masculine' ways, while males have much less latitude to engage in 'feminine' behaviors" (Alford 1988:148). This reflected the patriarchal nature of our society in that "women might use men's names to acquire something of their status" (Alford 1988:149). It is also interesting to note that in the Oklahoma sample, 6.4% of the females in this population received derivatives of their male relatives' names, while none of the males received derivatives of their female relatives' names (Alford 1988:149).

In other research on American naming practices, Lieberson and Bell (1992) found further gender differences in naming—this time, having to do with the popularity of certain names and their usage in society. This study examined children born in the state of New York between 1973-1985 (Lieberson and Bell 1992:515). The researchers examined gender, name popularity, and differences based on education using the mother's educational attainment, as provided by the New York State Bureau of Biostatistics (Lieberson and Bell 1992:515-516). They defined the most "popular" names as the names that appeared most frequently in their sample. They found that the 20 most popular names in their sample were given to 45% of all of the White boys in their sample, compared to the 20 most popular girls' names in this study that were given to only 31% of White girls in their sample (Lieberson and Bell 1992:517). They also classified "unique" names as those names that only occurred once in their sample (Lieberson and Bell 1992:518). Four percent of White boys were given unique names, compared to 6% of White girls who were given unique names (Lieberson and

Bell 1992:518). Thus, the first of the gender differences revealed are that more boys than girls were given top names and fewer boys than girls were given names that appeared only once in this sample.

One variable that showed gender differences that Lieberson and Bell (1992) discovered was the educational attainment of the mother, provided in the data they examined (515-516). In this sample from New York state, educational attainment proved to have only moderate influences on naming patterns, but they differed by gender. It was observed that women with less education tend to favor names without long-standing traditions more often than higher educated mothers (Lieberson and Bell, 1992:533). There was a higher frequency for girls' names ending with an *–n* sound among higher educated parents, which Lieberson and Bell (1992) saw as being less distinctly feminine because names ending with an *–n* sound were just as common for girls as they were for boys (520). Thus, the authors believed *–n* names were popular for higher educated mothers because they were less "frilly," playing down gender differences (Lieberson and Bell 1992:533). Names ending in a "schwa-like" sound (i.e. *Jessica* or *Sarah*) were very common among girls and very uncommon among boys (Lieberson and Bell, 1992:520). Thus, the "schwa" was seen as a more feminine phonemic ending or a more traditional ending for girls' names by the researchers and interestingly, this ending was favored by lower educated mothers (Lieberson and Bell 1992:534). Their explanation is that the traditionally feminine name ending was more popular among lower educated mothers because traditional gender roles hold a greater importance to them (Lieberson and Bell 1992:534). However, it must be taken under consideration that while the authors were trying to explain the results of their data, the views on traditional gender roles were speculations.

Girls names were generally less traditional in another way that emerged out of a comparison of Lieberson and Bell 1992's data with an external source listing popular names: the 1979 book by Stewart titled *American Given Names* (519). This book was used to provide a single source for what could be considered traditional names for this time, or as the authors state, "a useful listing of names judged to be part of the standard stock in the United States" (Lieberson and Bell 1992:519). Forty-five out of the top 50 names for boys in their sample appeared in the Stewart book of names, compared to only 35 out of the top 50 girls' names (1992:520). There was also a greater turnover in girls' names noted. Out of the names that made the top 20 in 1985 that were not in the top 20 in 1973, only one out of the seven new boys' names was not found in Stewart's book compared to five out of the ten new girls' names not found in Stewart's book (1992:520). Lieberson and Bell (1992) suggested that there is more innovation accepted with girls' names because past studies (e.g. Alford 1988, Rossi 1965) found that boys were more likely to be given kin names and were more often seen as the symbolic carriers of family honor (521). These findings reflect a social tendency to assign a "lesser role to women" (Lieberson and Bell 1992:521). This allowed for girls' names to be more decorative, thus more fashionable—for instance, girls were more likely to be given names with French origins, often associated with fashion, culture and style in the U.S. (Lieberson and Bell 1992:521). There was more turnover and more "play" with girls' names, or fewer ties to tradition and convention (Lieberson and Bell 1992:521).

From these studies, evidence suggests that girls' names have less symbolic importance than boys' names (Rossi 1965; Alford 1988; Lieberson and Bell 1992). This means that girls' names were often viewed as being more reflections of taste and fashion, while boys' names were more often the representations of tradition and family legacy. These

findings show that names are influenced by cultural views, notably when it comes to gender. This exemplifies how names are situated in a cultural context, including the patterns that lead other parents to choose names from the same sources, and even, the same names.

Name Popularity

The popularity of names, meaning how frequently certain names are chosen in a population, can certainly affect the name choices of parents. Some parents prefer to choose a name that can be frequently encountered, while others find top names unattractive. Recently Tucker (2009) explored how the significance and the attractiveness of popular names have changed over time. To provide a glimpse into naming decades ago, research conducted by Allen *et al* (1941) on preferences for unique or common names was reviewed. These studies show that popularity was an important aspect of naming to consider in the past and in a contemporary context. Popularity and uniqueness was shown to be a factor for many parents.

D. Kenneth Tucker (2009) found in his analysis of the top baby names in the United States that the usage of popular names has certainly changed over time. Tucker (2009) analyzed the U.S. Social Security Administration's *Popular Baby Names* website which features statistical information on the top 1000 male and top 1000 female names for each decade between 1880 and 2006. He found that the single most popular name for males in 1880, *John*, went from being given to 8.2 percent of boys to the most popular name in 2006, *Jacob,* being given to 1.1 percent (Tucker, 2009:53). The most popular name for females in 1880, *Mary,* went from being given to 7.2 percent of girls to the most popular name in 2006, *Emily,* being given to 1.0 percent of girls (Tucker 2009). As Tucker (2009) described this trend, "the most popular given names are not as popular as they were" (53).

Tucker (2009) has provided interesting findings regarding frequency trends, yet he has not extended his insight beyond the statistical data. Overall, popular names are increasingly more dispersed and less concentrated in the population (Tucker 2009). Tucker drew these conclusions from statistics about names over the past 127 years on the U.S. Social Security Administrations's *Popular Names* website (Tucker 2009:Appendix). This website, unfortunately, does not separate names into racial and socioeconomic class categories, so there are many factors that Tucker (2009) was unable to explore. He proposed that twentieth century parents consciously attempt to avoid the most popular names, which is why the top names now represent less of the population than they used to (Tucker 2009). However, he failed to address why this trend among the popularity of names was occurring. One explanation for this could be that his analysis was entirely quantitative with no interaction between him and his participants.

The popularity of names was related to people's aesthetic preference for that name in a previous study. Allen *et al* (1941) surveyed a group of 275 college students to see how first name preferences were linked to their frequency of occurrence both at the college and national level (282). The researchers elicited the names found in the student body directory and used them to create a frequency table (Allen *et al* 1941:283). Based on their median rank order of names, they compiled a list of the most common, somewhat common, and rarest names. They also conducted a content analysis of the names in Thorndike's *Word Book* (1932) and evaluated names based on how frequently they appeared in this book as an indicator of commonness.

College students were then given questionnaires to assess their preferences. For example, several questions asked:

1. If you were a parent of a child and were asked to choose a name from a given pair of names which name would you choose? For example, if you had a son and were asked to choose between Donald and Eugene you might prefer Donald. To show your preference you would make an X in the place provided to indicate your choice.
2. If you were a parent of a son what would you name him? (   ).
3. If you were a parent of a daughter what would you name her? (   ).
4. If you could have chosen your own first name would you have chosen the one you have? No (   ) ;Yes (   )
5. If your answer is No in above question what name would you have preferred? (Allen *et al* 1941:284)

The researchers found that most men preferred common names. Men who reported being dissatisfied with their own names had less frequent names in Thorndike's book and preferred more popular names, whereas men who were satisfied with their names had names more common in the book (Allen *et al* 1941:288-289). Women were dissatisfied with very unusual and very common names but overall, they possessed and preferred uncommon names (Allen *et al* 1941:293). All of the participants, whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their own names, chose more common names for their hypothetical sons and more unique names for hypothetical daughters (Allen *et al* 1941:290). It is also interesting to note that men chose girls' names that were close to the frequency of occurrence of the girls' names at the college, but women at the college chose names that were even more unique than their own names (Allen *et al* 1941:290). One of the most significant conclusions that Allen *et al* (1941) drew from this study was that once names occurred too often in a society, they lost their appeal and began to fall out of popularity (292).

This research showed that preference and frequency of occurrence were related in this sample. They found that their participants "reacted more favorably to the common names and less favorably to strange names," though names that became too popular would lose their appeal over time (Allen *et al*1941:292). In the nine years between the publication of the

Thorndike book and the names found on the college campus, certain names like John and Mary had already fallen from the top positions (Allen *et al* 1941:292).

The date of publication of the Allen (1941) study and the population used must be taken into account when analyzing these results. This questionnaire was given to a small number of students attending "the local college," which was presumably located in Michigan, where the authors taught and published (Allen *et al* 1941:283). The authors report that their participants were sophomores and juniors in college, from rural districts and small towns, primarily of Anglo-Saxon, German, and Irish descent (Allen *et al* 1941:284). The first set of questions on the questionnaire provides limited choices in names that participants are asked to select for their hypothetical child. The second set includes open-ended questions about name preference. However, in both of these cases, these names were entirely hypothetical and solicited at a moment's notice from an individual person, not a set of expecting parents. These do not entirely approximate real life, in which no one is ever given just two name choices, nor asked to come up with a name on the spot. People also have to take the child's other parent into account in making these decisions, something that young college students taking this survey individually would not have done. While this study does provide interesting insight into Anglo-American naming practices in the Midwest in 1941, it does not incorporate naming practices of actual children. It also does not fully develop an interpretation of why the differences that were found occurred.

This section has explored the wide social influences of naming, since no name is selected for a newborn completely isolated from the context of culture. Name popularity acknowledges the potentially large number of other people who will choose the same name. It is important to recognize that parents might be taking commonality and uniqueness into

account when choosing a name and in choosing where to look for inspiration for names. This has an influence on individual sources of names and how those reflect the cultural context a child is named in.

Names with Semantic Meanings or Associations

Parents seeking to distinguish their children with unique names and also those who choose names regardless of popularity may also be inclined to select names with meaning. Choosing names for their lexical or semantic meanings has been a significant theme in many areas of the world. Among Anglo-Saxons, especially in the U.S., names with lexical meanings are not as common as they are in other cultures. Andersen (1977) found that only 40 women's names and 7 men's names out of 2,500 given names had recognizable semantic meaning (i.e. Earl, Lance, and Victor) (in Alford, 1988:146). In this case, however, the pool of given names for women was larger, and women's names were found to come in and out of fashion more than men's names (Alford, 1988:146). Nevertheless, other features of names appear to be given greater weight than semantic meanings or name origins when American parents are selecting names. Unlike in other societies, "the majority of given names in common use in the U.S. originated hundreds, even thousands of years ago, and their meanings are known chiefly by etymologists" (Alford, 1988:145). That is not to say, however, that names are not attributed certain qualities or connotations. The uniqueness of names, whether they are masculine, feminine, or aesthetically appealing can even have implications on the selection of those names.

A simple but interesting study from Strunk (1958) investigated people's attitudes towards their names and what implications they have on how they view themselves. One

hundred male and 20 female students at the West Virginia Wesleyan College were asked if

they liked, disliked, or feel indifferent towards their first, middle, and last names (Strunk

1958:64). For each name that they reported disliking, they were asked to explain why,

though interestingly, they were not asked to explain why they like or feel indifferently about

their names. The main reasons for disliking names were because they were common or

uncommon, they lacked aesthetic appeal, or they did not sounding masculine enough for

boys, or feminine enough for girls (Strunk 1958:65). Each student was also given a self-

rating inventory test developed by psychologist J.J. Brownfain in 1952, which scores

individuals on self-satisfaction and self-acceptance (Strunk 1958:64-65). The results were

the following:"[t]he 81 students who liked their first names obtained a mean score of 6.32

(SD 0.98), the 26 who disliked their first names, a mean score of 5.78 (SD 0.83), the lower

score standing for a lower self-rating" (Strunk 1958:65). Thus, the students who liked their

names had slightly higher levels of self-satisfaction than those who did not like their names.

The same pattern occurred with self-acceptance, or being satisfied with the kind of person

they are (Strunk 1958:66). It should be noted that while information on race, class, and

religion of the participants was not gathered, the religious affiliation of this university with

Methodism should be taken into account.

The data showed that names do have implications for these students. This sample

was small and relatively homogenous in that overall, the students had a high mean score for

both self-satisfaction and self-acceptance (Strunk, 1958:65). This was offered as one

explanation as to why few participants disliked their first name (22%) (Strunk 1958:65).

Strunk (1958) did significantly limit the attitudes that people can hold towards their name by

only providing three categories for participants to choose from. The author himself discussed

how these conclusions about dislike for names resulting in lower self-satisfaction and self-acceptance would be more final by conducting "a similar study on a group containing more individuals with stronger negative feelings towards themselves" (Strunk 1958:66). Yet the results do carry implications for the importance of choosing the right name for a child, or at least one that they are likely to like.

One study conducted by Zweigenhaft *et al.* (1980) analyzed the psychological characteristics of people whose first names were classified as unique. The research explored the psychological effects of the names of undergraduate students at Wesleyan University, based on the California Psychological Inventory (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:204). One discrepancy in this study is that women were not accepted at the university until 1970, providing a much smaller sample of women than men (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:204). Thus, this inventory test scored the 2319 male and 284 female first-year students who each took the exam upon entering the university on a select list of characteristics (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:205). No discussion of the race or socioeconomic class of students in the sample is included in the literature. The authors focused only on the nature of the names themselves, which obviously overlooks several important factors that come into play.

The researchers defined unusual names as those which only occurred once in the sample for either males or females (Zweigenhaft et al 1980:205). Yet because this was a somewhat small sample, errors inevitably arose, such as the name Benjamin, which is not all that unusual, only appearing once (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:205). To account for this, the researchers had a group of 20 undergraduate students at Guilford College in North Carolina rate the names that only appeared once at Wesleyan as either "very unusual (i.e. "never heard of this first name,") unusual ("not many people have this first name,") common ("heard it

many times,") or foreign" (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:204). They proceeded to exclude "relatively common" or "foreign" names from the "unusual" names category for their study (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:204). Virtually no information is provided on the 20 undergraduates who were asked to rate the names or the reasons why the researchers selected this method. The researchers made an excellent attempt at being thorough in establishing truly unusual names, but of course, determining what is unusual to some people is still subjective.

The authors then examined the differences in psychological characteristics of people with and without unusual names. Women with unusual names (which appeared only once at the university and were determined to be rare by an outside group), scored much higher on several items on the psychological inventory test: "Sociability," "Social Presence," "Self-Acceptance," and "Achievement via conformance" (Zweigenhaft et al 1980:205). These women also scored higher than the control group, which the authors reported showed that women with unusual names display more "optimal personality profiles" than women with usual names in this sample (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:205-206). The authors fail to divulge further details about the California Psychological Inventory or how they determine an "optimal personality" based on these results (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:206). It is also notable that there was no significant difference between the scores of men with unusual names and men with common names, besides a slightly lower score for men with unusual names on "Intellectual Efficiency" (Zweigenhaft *et al.* 1980:205). The authors use this data to demonstrate that having a unique name was beneficial from a psychological standpoint, yet more research would be needed before these conclusions can serve as solid proof of the implications of unusual names.

This research demonstrates that although most names may not have direct lexical translations that people in the U.S. are aware of, certain names do have meaning attached to them. These attachments can include connotations based on gender associations, perceived uniqueness or strangeness of a name, and aesthetic appeal.

Names in the U.S. may be selected with connotations surrounding them. The sources from which names are drawn can affect the way that people perceive both names, and, based on each person's own judgment and experience, the identity of the person. Names can serve symbolic purposes— allowing others to categorize individuals into social categories. They can also serve as tools or resources that can be used to gain social advantages as a form of displayed cultural capital, according to the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. Classes and groups may adopt names specifically because they are associated with a high status group or even a high status celebrity. Yet no matter what the view held towards a particular name by the collective group, the selection of a name is still up to each parent, driven by their own cultural background and resources, and perhaps most importantly, by their taste.

Considerations of Taste in Naming

Naming must be considered not only in the context of a family, but also in the context of a broader society. Each year, the U.S. Social Security Administration releases a list of the top baby names given to children born in that year. These lists demonstrate the names that sets of parents most frequently decided to give to their newborn boy or girl. Yet if those decisions were all made, for the most part, independently by parents and perhaps their family and friends, Lieberson (2000) theorizes that there must be a wider social mechanism bringing all of these independent sets of parents to the same name. One particular name becoming

more popular than another does not benefit anyone economically, so there are no marketing agencies, for instance, that serve to influence parents' name choices (Lieberson 2000:xiii). The social factors at play to determine popularity lead back to a collective personal taste. Each person responsible for naming a newborn has personal tastes that operate within the collective personal taste of that culture. Personal taste is never free from the influence of the broader culture and society. Name selection is no exception.

When social scientists examine taste, they typically refer to trends among groups. For Besnard and Deplanques (2001), "taste is apprehended by means of first names chosen by parents for newborn children" as listed in all official birth records in France between 1930-1988 (65). Names are a valuable resource for studying the spread and adoption of tastes between groups because naming a child one thing over another costs nothing in material goods, but it still reflects individual and group preference (Besnard and Desplanques 2001:65). If one group chooses a name for their children more often than other names and more often than other groups, then it can be said that name displays a group difference in collective taste.

No discussion of taste would be complete without mention of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital explains that any particular cultural competence is to a certain degree a scarce resource, which benefits those who can obtain that competence (in Richardson, ed. 1986:86). As the theory goes, "cultural capital can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore, quite unconsciously" (Bourdieu in Richardson, ed. 1986:86). Yet it always entails a "distinctive value" (Bourdieu 1986:86). Lieberson (2000) has interpreted Bourdieu's theory as referring to the high value placed on certain ways of

behaving as well as certain tastes or knowledge that distinguish people in one class from another (Bourdieu as cited in Lieberson 2000:22). Those in possession of certain types of cultural capital, "draw[ing] their profits from the use of a particular form of capital…will be classified among the dominant group" (Bourdieu 1986:87). Thus, the lower status group will be those who "are less likely to have the background to understand these tastes and interests" (Bourdieu as cited in Lieberson 2000:22). Names are a form of displaying those tastes, interest, and knowledge, particularly for the higher educated (Bourdieu as cited in Lieberson and Bell 1992:513).

Names that are especially popular among certain groups or socioeconomic classes may reflect beliefs about name appropriateness for that status, access to different knowledge and mass media, social norms and pressures, the imagery of the names, and expectations for the child's future (Lieberson 2000:24). Differences in naming between groups can more clearly signify differences in taste between groups, since naming is not affected by differentiated access to wealth (Lieberson 2000:24). According to Bodenhorn and vom Bruck (2006) who examined past research on naming in anthropology, each name can establish one's identity and help cross social boundaries, giving them "commodity-like value" (4). Bourdieu (1991) postulated that names fix a person's identity and inform a person of what is expected of him or her—from gender to titles of nobility (in Bodenhorn and vom Bruck 2006:14). Names can serve as markers of status, cultural identity, or simply parental taste, and thus allow people to identify others and assign them to specific categories (Lieberson 2000:24).

When the theory of cultural capital is applied to naming behavior, it is logical to hypothesize that when lower classes adopt a name once used by higher classes, the higher

classes will stop using that name as it ceases to be a high status marker (Lieberson 2000:262). Lieberson (2000) compared his results to Philippe Besnard's 1995 model of class diffusion, based on research with names in France, but found evidence against this model. Upon close examination, Lieberson (2000) claimed that some of the patterns of names in the sample that Besnard (1995) used were overlooked and did not actually support a class diffusion model (147).

Stanley Lieberson (2000) analyzed and critiqued Besnard's 1995 research and developed several counter theories based on extensive research and analysis of previous studies (discussed more fully below). He argued that names are never selected by parents in isolation, but are the function of various mechanisms that follow codes of fashion and taste (Lieberson 2000:xiii). He argued that in contemporary U.S. society, "as the role of the extended family, religious rules, and other institutional pressures declines, choices are increasingly free to be matters of taste, and they reflect corresponding differences among subsets of the population" (Lieberson 2000:24). In terms of taste, people may report that they like a name, without fully understanding or being able to explain why (Lieberson 2000:26). The wide appeal of a name becomes a factor that in and of itself influences the appeal of the name in one direction or the other. Some parents are disposed to favor uncommon names, while others favor popular names (Lieberson 2000:171). Yet popularity is determined by a collective group of people favoring or disfavoring a name (Lieberson 2000:171). Lieberson (2000) explored the mechanisms that cause favored names to rise to the top of the lists of the top baby names, beginning with social influences related to socioeconomic classes.

Lieberson (2000) found evidence against the class imitation model in his analysis of personal names in Texas (147). Lieberson compiled a list of the first names given to every white child born in the state of Texas for every fifth year between 1965 and 1990 from birth certificates (Lieberson 2000:147). He did not have access to the mother's education level, but did have access to the month of the pregnancy at which prenatal care began, which was found was very highly correlated to the mother's education level in separately obtained data (Lieberson 2000:Notes to pages 130-147). Thus, assuming each mother's socioeconomic status was linked to the quality of prenatal care, Lieberson examined whether it was likely that names became popular among the lower class after having become popular among the higher class (Lieberson 2000:147).

The results of this analysis showed that the majority of the names did not fit with the hypothesis of class imitation (Lieberson 2000:148). Rather than popular upper class names being copied by the lower classes, many names in his study actually became popular among the lower class without every having been popular among the upper class (Lieberson 2000:147). Others names became popular among both classes at the same time, or fell out of popularity among the lower class before they fell out of popularity among the upper class, contrary to the diffusion model (Lieberson 2000:147). There was only one trend in Lieberson's sample in Texas that did follow the class diffusion model: the upper class abandoned the use of many boys' names once they had become popular among the lower class (2000:154). Therefore, Lieberson's results are generally contradictory to the theory of class-based influences on naming behavior, which suggests that the theory needs to be expanded or redefined (2000:154).

Certain social influences have greatly expanded the name variety that people had access to at various points in history. Lieberson (2000) theorized that urbanization and education increased the variety of names that people has to choose from (42-43). By this he referred to shifts away from large family farms to centralized urban areas where information flowed more widely, as well as better access to such information as sources of names through increased literacy, among other variables (Lieberson 2000:43). To examine this factor, he analyzed external statistics from various government sources and past research (Lieberson 2000:42). He focused on changes in top names using the variables of education (such as the percentage passing secondary school exams and the percentage attending school), urbanization (i.e., urban population as a percentage of total population) in France, Scotland, England and Wales, California, Denmark, and Iceland (Lieberson 2000:42). The successful application of this theory to several countries as well as California, meaning that increased urbanization (and school enrollment rates) in twentieth-century California did coincide with increased name turnover, suggests that if applied to more states within the U.S., a similar pattern would emerge (Lieberson 2000:50). Lieberson (2000) demonstrated through statistics how innumerable factors can affect naming trends and that these trends may find strong correlations between name diversity in some areas.

Lieberson also discounted the widely held belief that the mass media have a direct and concrete impact on names. Overall, there is no strong evidence that the media influence the role that fashion plays in naming or serve as a source for popular names (Lieberson, 2000:64). Lieberson argues that "if names are popularized because they appear in the media, this occurs only because other, more fundamental influences have operated first to make names a matter of taste" (Lieberson 2000:65). This can be demonstrated with the case of the

name *Marilyn.* The name *Marilyn* had already peaked and had even begun to decline in popularity at the time when Marilyn Monroe entered the Hollywood scene (Lieberson 2000:231). Movie stars and other prominent figures in the media do not have as big an influence on the popularity of their names as one might think (Lieberson 2000:230).

Lieberson (2000) explains that in fact, many celebrities' names already rank highly among the top baby names when these celebrities become famous. When it comes to the names of characters making a name trendy or more popular, writers often choose names because they are trendy instead of looking to start new trends (Lieberson 2000:240). The same goes for actors and actresses who choose their own stage names. Stars are often influenced by the increasing popularity of names in choosing their stage names, and then their choice of that name may increase its popularity even more so (Lieberson, 2000:121). This was the case when Jane Peters chose to act under the stage name Carole Lombard, causing *Carole* to spike in popularity after she became a Hollywood icon (Lieberson 2000:121).

Lieberson (2000) conducted a case study in order to measure the actual effect that media names have on given names. In his short analysis, he acquired birth records for White children born in Illinois between 1916 and 1989 from the Illinois Department of Health (data used primarily for his study of racial differences in naming Lieberson and Mikelson 1995). He then compiled a list of celebrity names and their characters from the most popular movies in each year (using various lists compiled by other researchers, including the top highest grossing movies at the time) (Lieberson 2000:234). Lieberson (2000) then compared this list of famous actors and actresses' names and compared them to names on the birth records from Illinois (234). He found a weak correlation between the use of a name for the leading

character in a movie and an increase in that name being given to his sample of White children in Illinois five and ten years later (241). Lieberson (2000) explained that the names of famous figures tend to be popular before they become famous, meaning that much of the names' increase in popularity has already happened when they debut (235). He assumed that because celebrities are able to take on stage names, the names they choose to go by (even if they keep their given name) will be based on that names' pre-existing popularity when they enter stardom (Lieberson 2000). This means that in general, as was the case in Illinois, the fame of celebrities does not start major, long-lasting trends of popularity for their names (Lieberson 2000:255).

Lieberson (2000) further analyzed name popularity by theorizing that tastes move in a specific direction, so that new tastes are often based on tastes that are already present. Tastes may become symbolically associated with people or events that increase or decrease their appeal (Lieberson 2000:127). Tastes may be based on subtle linguistic structures, like certain sounds that are popular at a given moment (Lieberson 2000:106). Linguistic trends even influenced which biblical names parents chosen in California in 1906 and 1984 (106). Biblical names with unpopular linguistic structure (i.e., the male *Matthias* or *Abel*) were avoided because their phonemic structures were unpopular at the time, regardless of their biblical connotations being positive or negative (Lieberson 2000:106).

The reason that names became popular and then unpopular over time can be based on numerous culturally significant circumstances. Lieberson (2000) theorized that, "names expand based on how receptive the milieu the child is immersed in is," as well as existing linguistic trends, and the imagery or associations of the name (167). He frames his example of such a milieu in the use of the name of a musical figure. If the social network of a family

is familiar with this particular musical figure, then there is a greater chance that the family

giving their child using that musician's name will result in its popularization in that specific

population, thereby facilitating its potential spread to other populations (Lieberson

2000:168). Existing linguistic trends may include, for example, the rise in popularity of the

Djeh- prefix in names such as *Jennifer* and *Jessica*. The reign of the name *Jennifer* as the top

girls' names for fifteen years starting in 1970 spawned a number of popular *Djeh-* names:

Jessica in 1970, *Jenny* in 1980, *Jenna* in 1984, as well as *–er* ending names: *Heather* and

Amber in the next decades (Lieberson 2000:119-120). Factors such as these can lead to a

name catching on, though it can be nearly impossible to predict which select few names will

rise to the top in the future.

However, there are cases in which the symbolic association of a name can outweigh

trends in linguistic structure of a name. The name *Donald* saw a decline in popularity in the

U.S. after the success of Donald Duck, as did the name *Adolph* after the rise of Adolf Hitler

in the 1930s (Lieberson 2000:131). Meanwhile, it is important to keep in mind that "the

symbolic enhancement or contamination of taste, in this case a name, may not be the same

for all subsets of the population—indeed, the symbol may be attractive to one and

unattractive to the other (or at least neutral for one)" (Lieberson 2000:173). This is the case

not just for figures in the media or current events, but also for names that become popular

among specific groups of people. One important notion to remember, however, is that while

names have been discussed above as singular entities, like *Donald,* names become popular or

unpopular for a "collective attribute" that they share (Lieberson 2000:171). So even though

one name alone is chosen for a child, it is the appealing phoneme or appealing connotation

that makes a name popular at any given moment, making names part of a larger model which

cannot be overlooked (Lieberson 2000:171). The popularity of certain names changes as the symbolism of names change—and those shifts are a societal inevitability (Lieberson 2000:131).

The popularity of names can be cyclical at times, as demonstrated above. Names that were once among the top baby names but fell out of popularity often remain unpopular for extended periods of time, and many never regain popularity (Lieberson 2000:159-161). Yet if the decline in popularity is due to negative associations of the name, then there may come a time when those negative associations—especially for a name considered old-fashioned—are forgotten (Lieberson 2000:165). If that does occur, then a name may resurface, though they seldom do (Lieberson 2000:165). Lieberson (2000) examined unpublished data on names in California provided by the State of California, Department of Health Services, Health Demographics Section, Sacramento to draw that conclusion (Appendix 1). He compiled a list of the names that appeared in the list of the top 20 names for each year between 1906-1989 and examined how long they stayed on the list of the top 20 names (Lieberson 2000:158). The majority of names that temporarily entered into the top 20 names and then fell off the list in California during this time hardly ever reappeared in the top 20 (Lieberson 2000:158). For over 80 years in California, with few exceptions, if a name became popular but then fell out of favor, it never regained that popularity (Lieberson 2000:158).

However, names do not share the same level of popularity for every group within one culture. As discussed above, specific groups or peoples view names differently. For instance, names becoming affiliated with certain ethnic groups can influence how outsiders perceive those names (Lieberson 2000:173). The case of names among Jewish peoples in the United States serves as an example for this point. Certain names in the dominant Anglo-

Saxon culture in America became widely used among Jewish populations, leading those names to become associated with Jewish culture (Lieberson 2000:174). The names developed a "symbolic contamination" for non-Jewish peoples in the United States, which led them to become even more strongly associated with Jewish culture, since the dominant culture was abandoning the names (Lieberson 2000:174). In response, these names became less popular among the Jewish as well, because of that strong association with the Jewish, and not with the dominant culture (Lieberson 2000:174). Every group in the United States is susceptible to experiencing such give and take with mainstream society when it comes to names, and ethnic groups and especially immigrant populations are illustrative of this. Many immigrants to the United States are reluctant to use their "Old World names," as they were so lowly regarded, especially in the days of the first migration of that group (Lieberson 2000:183).

Naming among Mexican immigrants in America also provides interesting insight on this issue of naming within a dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. Lieberson (2000) found that "Mexican Americans largely overlap more with Anglos than with Mexican immigrants" in their choice of names (186). He used lists of the 20 most popular names for first-generation Mexican immigrants, Mexican-Americans with at least one parent born in the U.S., and White Americans in Texas every five years between 1965 and 1990, provided by the Texas Department of Health (Lieberson 2000:186, Appendix 2). Mexican-American children whose mothers were born in the United States were given names that were more similar to White American children's names than Mexican children whose mothers were born in Mexico. Thus he concluded that names do reflect cultural assimilation (Lieberson 2000:189). However, a closer look reveals that parents of Mexican descent most often chose the same

names as Anglo Americans when the linguistic structure of the names followed the pattern of

Hispanic names—such as the feminine –*a* ending for female names (Lieberson 2000:189). In

other words, "the strong linguistic connection among Mexicans, between gender and the

linguistic character of names, actually influences which popular Anglo names Mexican-

Americans adopt in the United States" (Lieberson 2000:173). The author states that this

immigrant population chose names that are compatible with the typical linguistic features of

names in their homeland—how common the sounds are or how easy a name is to pronounce

(Lieberson 2000:191).

Various factors, such as national pride, attitudes towards assimilation, recency of

immigration, and group history, are at play in immigrants' choices to use names with origins

in their homeland (Lieberson 2000:221). Names will certainly reflect either assimilation into

the mainstream culture, an adherence to ethnic identity, or a compromise between both of

these behaviors. For immigrants, many social pressures and influences of the dominant

society, especially for those seeking upward social mobility, "undermine efforts to have a set

of tastes that are uninfluenced by the dominant society" (Lieberson 2000:221). Foreign

influences are particularly important to consider when examining names in the United States.

In further investigating cultural assimilation patterns, Hawaii serves as a case study of

several different cultures merging in an isolated location which still feels the influences of a

dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. Reinecke (1940) researched Hawaiian sociolinguistics in the

1930s and 1940s and made important observations about personal naming practices of

several ethnic groups. One of the most important conclusions that he drew about this widely

diverse population was that, "during the past fifteen years there ha[d] been a remarkable shift

toward bestowing at least one English name on almost all infants" (Reinecke, 1940:352).

Since the time of the Christian missionaries, who required that native Hawaiians give their children a Christian name and take their father's surname, English names have gained prestige (345). Many parents in 1940 began to see the inevitability of acquiring an English name, but in assigning one at birth, parents had more control over the English name that their child might eventually use (352). A large majority of people however, gave their children an ethnically diverse combination of names. This signaled assimilation into the cultural mainstream without a complete surrendering of cultural heritage.

Certain ethnic groups were faster to take on American given names than others in Hawaii in 1940, when Reinecke published his research on this subject. The Portuguese and Spanish had no trouble in Anglicizing their names, while Filipinos often chose American names entirely different sounding from their own (Reinecke 1940:350, 351). Chinese immigrants were beginning to adopt American names at the time of this research, but the majority still used their Chinese names (Reinecke 1940:351). Many Chinese surnames were Hawaiianized—e.g. *Akana* and *Ahuna*—and younger generations of Chinese immigrants were combining English, Hawaiian, and Chinese names (Reinecke 1940:348). English spellings of Chinese surnames are varied due to the lack of direct correspondence of Chinese sounds to English letters (Reinecke 1940:347). In some cases Anglicizing names meant losing a portion of a group's identity. When one clan name was translated into English in several different spellings, over time, clan ties were often forgotten, resulting in lesser clan solidarity (Reinecke 1940:347).

Japanese immigrants to Hawaii generally resisted adopting American names, though they were much more likely to do so in an advantageous situation, for examples, in American classrooms (Reinecke 1940:351). A small number of Japanese immigrants took on English

middle names and shortened their Japanese forename to an initial (Reinecke 1940:349).

Japanese immigrants did Anglicize the pronunciation of their names in Hawaii because

unlike in the Chinese language, the pronunciation of Japanese names, when Anglicized, was

usually much closer to the original pronunciation (Reinecke 1940:349). Overall, Hawaii

became a very diverse place in the 19th century, and ethnicity became a highly salient

identifier: "Few persons care[d] to disguise their ancestry, and few are able to do so by

changing their surnames" (Reinecke 1940:351). Thus, Hawaii in the early to mid twentieth

century displayed an interesting interaction between majority and minority cultural identity

that manifested itself in naming practices.

To conclude this section, different groups exhibit different naming patterns, the same

way that individuals, even within groups, display different personal taste. The important

thing to take away from these findings is that there are social forces acting on each group and

acting on each individual to create collective tastes which cause some names to rise to

popularity and others to stay uncommon or unique for the time being. The uniqueness of

names is a particularly salient variable when considering racial differences in the U.S.

Racial Differences in Naming Patterns

Just as differences in naming for ethnic groups and immigrant populations is

important to consider in the U.S., naming practices also differ greatly among races.

Researchers have discovered marked differences in the naming patterns between African-

American and Caucasian samples in the United States (Fryer and Levitt 2004; Barry and

Harper 2010). One of the most noteworthy findings, for instance, is that "more than 40

percent of the Black girls born in California in recent years received a name that not one of

the roughly 100,000 White girls born in California in that year was given" (Fryer and Levitt 2004:769). In studying American naming practices, the significant racial differences—especially in the uniqueness of the names— exemplifies the social forces that names reflect.

The statistic reported above was one of the results of a study which analyzed information taken from birth certificates for all children born in the state of California between 1961-2000, totaling over sixteen million births (Fryer and Levitt 2004:772). Children were divided into categories based on their listed race, which is problematic because despite being a legal document, race is extremely difficult to categorize, being that it is purely a social construct. Yet based on self-reported information on race taken from these state records, the data almost always showed that "variables associated with low socioeconomic status are also associated with Blacker names" and this link grew stronger over time (Fryer and Levitt 2004:783). Fryer and Levitt (2004) use the term "Blacker" to represent names used almost exclusively by Black parents. In the past twenty years, there has been a sharp rise in these distinctively Black names being chosen by "mothers who are young, poor, unmarried, and have low education" (Fryer and Levitt 2004:787). This data signified that names high in distinctiveness among Blacks may be a consequence of larger racial issues in American society.

Overall, the biggest difference between Whites and Blacks in terms of naming was the uniqueness of names. Black children in America are much more likely to be given unique names and especially distinctively Black names than White children (Fryer and Levitt 2004). Yet this discernible difference has not always existed. In the 1960s, Black names and White names were more similar than they are today (Fryer and Levitt 2004:770). Yet from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, a Black girl in a segregated community "went from receiving

a name that was twice as likely to be given to Blacks as Whites to a name that was more than twenty times as likely to be given to Blacks" (Fryer and Levitt 2004:770). Fryer and Levitt (2004) proposed that the reason for this disparity is that each group has certain prescribed behaviors that identify a person as belonging to that group, including giving each child distinctively in-group names. It then follows that the increase in distinctive Black naming patterns would coincide with the Black Power movement in the 1970s which "encourage[d] Blacks to accentuate and affirm Black culture and fight the claims of Black inferiority" (Fryer and Levitt 2004:791). Historical shifts in cultural pressures to distinguish Black culture may be at the root of this phenomenon.

Race was further investigated as a source of variation in naming practice in the U.S. by Herbert Barry and Aylene Harper in 2010. These researchers analyzed birth certificates and certification forms in Pennsylvania from 1990, 1995, and 2000, focusing on the distinctions between Black and White children (Barry and Harper 2010:48). Babies were categorized by these two racial categories based on the recorded race of the mother as compiled by the Pennsylvania State Health Data Center (Barry and Harper 2010:49). The category of Whites included Hispanics, who were not given a separate category in the earliest sample of birth certificates (Barry and Harper 2010:49). "Non-Whites" made up only 2 percent of all births in the state in 1992, so it was presumed that this was the reason that only Blacks and Whites were analyzed (Barry and Harper 2010:49).

In this study by Barry and Harper (2010), the authors found staggering differences in the frequency of the names based on these racial and gender categories. The analysis revealed that in 2000, 50% of all White males in their sample were accounted for by the 48th ranked name (with rankings based on popularity or name occurrence in their data) and 50%

of all White females were accounted for by the 95th ranked name (Barry and Harper 2010:50). Put another way: half of all White males were given names that fell into the category of the top 48 most popular names. The researchers had to go all the way down to the 308th ranked name to account for 50% all Black males and the 804th ranked name for Black females to account for 50% of all Black females (Barry and Harper 2010:50). This meant that to make up 50% of the Black female population in this sample, researchers had to include names that were given to only two girls (Barry and Harper, 2010:53). This splits the population of Black females evenly in half between those whose names were given to three or more girls and names that were given to only one girl (Barry and Harper 2010:53).

These findings suggest that there are substantial differences between racial groups in these samples. Names served as symbols of in-group unity for African-American populations in California and Pennsylvania (Fryer and Levitt 2004; Barry and Harper 2010). This demonstrates how names are significant markers of position within a greater culture and of social change over time.

This chapter has shown that names are identifiers of many different social variables in America: gender, race/ethnicity, and as some evidence suggests, socioeconomic class. Names distinguish individuals as part of a certain culture or social network. One theme that emerged throughout much of this literature is an emphasis on names as signifiers of American individualism: from the decisions to choose unique names, to the wide variety of names visible in contemporary society. Expecting parents often make the decisions about names independently of other parents, often attempting to emphasize uniqueness. Yet they are in fact situated in the cultural context in which many parents, acting under the same cultural influences on their taste, end up selecting the same names. The literature discussed

above often used specific regions or specific ethnic groups in a set period of time.

Understanding their findings among their respective populations allows for a better

appreciation for the contribution of my study to the current social scientific knowledge on

naming in the U.S.

Chapter 4:

Methodology

In order to draw my own conclusions about naming, I first needed to collect data. Past researchers developed theories based on case studies and ethnographic data gathered among various populations. While some of these past social scientists examined upwards of thousands of names in entire countries, my methods were carefully chosen primarily for their efficacy. My method of choice was surveying. Through distributing surveys, I was able to collect a large amount of data anonymously while still gaining enough depth in the responses to draw conclusions. The participants at the daycare facilities that I surveyed were able to provide me with rich data on the reasons why they chose certain names for their children. I then used the data they provided me and applied it to other naming resources (a naming book from 1936 and a national naming database) to place the data in a larger cultural context. Although there are certainly drawbacks to using only this method, ultimately it was a successful approach. This section aims to better explain the methodology that was used, beginning with a more detailed explanation of surveying and its advantages and disadvantages as an anthropological method and then discussing the population that I researched.

Surveys proved to be an excellent method of choice for this study. I developed an open-ended, ethnographic survey that asked parents to describe the names of their children and how they came to select those names. The full survey is included in Appendix B to allow for a more thorough understanding of the information solicited from participants. The survey was distributed to three day care centers in a small Midwestern town in the U.S. The results of the survey were analyzed qualitatively, by identifying certain themes that emerged in the

data, and quantitatively, by using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to determine the exact numbers corresponding to certain themes.

Open-ended surveys are a valuable ethnographic method because they can reach a large sample of the population. They question people directly about a wide range of topics that might otherwise be seen as off-limits. In this survey, open-ended questions were used which by definition "do not present the respondent with predetermined response categories" (Crane and Angrosino 1992:143). This enables respondents to frame their answers in their own words. In a study of naming in which a large group of participants may have an extremely vast set of reasons as to why they selected a name, this was important. The problem with this is that respondents need parameters limited to the issue the researcher is trying to approach while allowing flexibility and freedom in responses. This means, "the first rule of survey construction, then, should be to ask only questions that relate directly to the major issue that is to be investigated" (Crane and Angrosino 1992:141). Secondly, "researchers must make special plans to spell out their intentions in the clearest possible language" (Crane and Angrosino 1992:141). This meant that it took time to carefully prepare the questions to ensure that they would be clear in what information they were seeking.

The benefits of using surveys to research a topic certainly make it worth the effort. It is a very efficient method because the opinions of many people can be collected in a small amount of time. Surveying is not a very time-consuming method considering the amount of responses that are received. It was relatively inexpensive to complete the study. Respondents answered open-ended surveys in their own words, anonymously, allowing them to express their thoughts more freely. This also means that topics that were more controversial could be approached in a safer way. This topic was not particularly

controversial, yet some people shared very private things, which they did not have to worry would be traced back to them. I kept the surveys, enabling me to look back at them in the event that there was some doubt over a certain answer. There was no need to rely on memory or hastily written notes like there might be with interviews in which no recording device was used.

There are drawbacks of using ethnographic surveys as a preferred method. I was forced to rely heavily on the respondents' ability to interpret the questions in the intended way. There was no opportunity to ask probing questions and no terms could be clarified. I also thought of several questions I wish I had asked after the surveys had gone out, but I knew that it would be impossible to make alterations. It was also difficult in a few cases to understand what was meant by a given response or even what the person's handwriting said. I had no way of knowing who is actually filling out the survey, the conditions under which they filled it out, or if there were multiple people chiming in or swaying the respondent's answers. Furthermore, there was also no way to know how truthful responses were, especially in regards to educational attainment. I did have to rely on respondents to fill out the surveys, and it was difficult to get a high response rate. Some of the day care centers had drastically higher response rates than others. This was most likely due to the poor placement of the surveys in the lobby of one facility and the minimal publicizing of the surveys at one day care center versus a highly supportive staff who placed a survey in the cubbies of each child at another facility. After creating the survey, contacting the day care centers, distributing enough surveys to get sufficient results, and periodically checking up on and collecting the completed surveys, I analyzed the survey responses, which did prove time-

consuming. Yet this method typically provides a great source of data and this study was no exception.

The primary reason that surveying was chosen over other anthropological or ethnographic methods was because it provided both breadth and depth effectively. Interviewing would have severely limited the number of participants I could have included in this study, since I had limited time and resources to conduct this research. While many of the researchers on whom I based my study chose interviewing as their primary method, I was able to ask essentially the same questions in my surveys. Surveys allowed me to reach more participants in less time than it might have taken to conduct interviews but it produced similar information as other studies of naming.

I gained access to my population through contacts familiar with these day care centers. I was introduced to one of the coordinators of the daycares. I was then able to set up a meeting with this coordinator to explain my project and ask her permission. She was more than eager to comply, and so I received a great turnout for the surveys at that location. A similar situation occurred at another day care center where I was met with a very warm reception and much excitement over my project. I also saw a great response rate at this second site. At the third location, I obtained permission to leave my surveys in the lobby but had more trouble gaining support. I distributed 240 copies of the survey between the three sites. I stapled a blank envelope to the back of each survey and on each survey, I instructed participants to seal the survey in the envelope and place it into a drop-box I constructed myself to have only a small slit at the top. The drop-box was strategically placed in the lobby of each facility. Sealing the envelopes contributed to the anonymity of the surveys. The surveys were anonymous in that the parents' names were not solicited. Children's first

names and middle names were requested but not their last names. Participants were told that first names would appear in the study, but not in conjunction with the middle names. Without last names, and without linking a child to a particular day care center, the children will not be identifiable and will thus be kept anonymous.

I chose to distribute the surveys at day care facilities where the children were fairly young, and as such, had been named recently. I considered surveying expecting mothers, yet decided against it because many of their decisions may not have been final and I did not want my data to be hypothetical in nature. Alternate options would have been to survey new mothers in a hospital setting, but access to the population would have been much more difficult since there would have been a lot more risks and difficulties in trying to conduct research in a setting such as a hospital. The day care facilities where I distributed the surveys represented a diverse array of both socioeconomic classes and racial/ethnic groups, according to the coordinators, and also according to the widely available information on United Way aid to help disadvantaged families pay for the day care.

For several reasons, I decided to only ask participants to describe their race/ethnicity, their marriage status, and their highest educational level attained in order to approximate their socioeconomic status. Asking for their occupation could have potentially left me with too many categories to find broader themes, and asking them to identify their socioeconomic status may have added inaccuracies, since class can be difficult or too private a variable to self-report. In order to find themes with education, I had to make some judgment calls and decided to place people with degrees beyond a bachelor's degree as having "Advanced degrees" and people who attended trade school, beauty school, the police academy, a 2-year college, or people who had received their Associates' degrees in the same category as those

who reported having had "Some College." Unfortunately, this grouping eliminated much of the nuances of educational attainment, but it did allow me to have fewer variables, allowing more themes to emerge.

Once I retrieved the surveys from each site, I compiled the responses into several spreadsheets. From there, I was able to look for re-occurring patterns, or themes, in the data. I began to record the themes and to create new spreadsheets using these themes. This required making several judgment calls which another researcher might have approached differently. For instance, if parents did not describe where they learned of a name or provided no extended details about the name origin, but reported using baby name books, or naming websites, then I classified those as originating from books or websites. The exception to this was if the parents gave no details about where they learned of the name but made a statement about having "always liked" a name, then I classified it as unknown in origin. I also labeled names reported as being "chosen by parents" as "unknown."

For the complex category of "liked it," I also had to make some judgment calls. If a parent reported liking an aesthetic quality of a name (i.e. "we liked that it was short" or "we liked that it was sweet and strong") then it was counted as both an "aesthetic appeal" reason and a 'liked it' name. The same occurred when names were reportedly chosen for being linked to a certain heritage, sounding good with other names, when the mother and father both agreed on it, when it was chosen because it was popular, when it was chosen because the parents liked the nickname, and when parents had liked it for a long time (usually before the pregnancy). The judgment calls were made when parents reported things like, "we chose it because we both agreed on it," leading me to infer that agreeing upon a name meant that the name was liked by both parents.

I also did not distinguish between first names and middle names of relatives given to children in the initial table, though some of those are expanded upon in the results section. I made the inference that if a great aunt's middle name was being given to a child, the parents were passing along the great aunt's name, either in honor of her or to recognize the role of kin in their child's life. It was easier for me to observe patterns in the large number of relatives that children were named for when I grouped together first and middle names. If a name was passed down for multiple generations, i.e. John III, then I counted the name as being both the father's name and the grandfather's name on the paternal side. This allowed me to acknowledge that both of these relatives, and in fact the whole of the patriline, were being recognized through naming. Once I had the themes from the data, I used some statistical analysis, through simple Excel functions like averages and medians to quantify some of the patterns.

I also used two tools outside of my data collected from surveys as tools with which to draw more themes from the data. The first of these is the website that I used to gain information about the modern popularity of the names in my sample. I was able to utilize the Social Security Administration Baby Names website to access the rankings of each first name in my study going back 20 years. I did not solicit the birth year of each of the children in the study, thus I did not have the specific year in which each mother and father were going through the naming process. This was an additional measure that I decided to take in order to best protect the identity of the children in the sample population. However, the coordinator at one of the daycare facility described to me how the majority of the children at the center were very young, and only a handful of children remain at the facility after school through about the sixth grade. It was also impossible for me to know how old the oldest child was,

since it may have been that only the youngest still attended the day care and the oldest are much older. For these reasons, I checked the rankings of the names going back 20 years, to show change over time, and to try to include as many potential birth years of the children as possible.

The second external tool that I used to find more themes was a 1936 book by Eric Partridge *Name This Child: A Dictionary of English and American Christian Names.* In order to determine which names had what I dubbed "longevity," I crosschecked each first name against the names in the book. I chose to use just one book to have more uniformity in the way I classified names as having "longevity," and this was the oldest naming book that I had access to. Partridge (1936) provided a broad list of names from various origins, especially Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, French, Celtic, and Latin. The names in this book were clearly biased towards Anglo-Saxon, Christian culture, thus many of the names in the study might have had longevity, only in other cultures, and were thus, not counted.

To conclude, the surveys provided an efficient way to collect a large amount of data, yet made it impossible to conduct follow-ups with some of the more cryptic answers that I was given. Using the data from the surveys, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and using the modern day ranking website legitimized by the Social Security Administration as well as a 1936 naming book, allowed me to understand and draw conclusions about the names collected. The reception I received at the day care centers and the reactions I got from parents who saw me retrieving the completed surveys renewed my beliefs that this topic is exciting and important to people, but that they seldom get the chance to share their story about the origins of their children's names. The results of this study revealed a wealth of

information about naming and its significance to those who bestow and those who receive

names.

Chapter 5:

Results

This study produced a number of fascinating results about naming. These results were broken down into corresponding themes based on responses that were mirrored throughout the surveys. Many of the themes had to do with kin naming and personal preference. I also examined the surveys by the education of the parent who completed the survey to see if differences emerged based on this factor. I examined commonalities in the types of names that were chosen, both in the sources of the names (including kin, Biblical figures, media figures, and baby name books) and also in the types of names that were chosen (including uniqueness and popularity, longevity, and phonemic similarities). While ideally the numbers of responses would have been much higher, there are still strong patterns that emerge in the data.

Fifty-six participants filled out this survey. There were 51 females and 5 males. There were 5 fathers, 47 mothers, and 4 participants did not report their relationship to the children. The average age of the parents was 37.3 years old. An overwhelming majority of the participants (54 out of 56) were White/Caucasian. One participant was Hispanic and one listed her race/ethnicity as "of European descent."

The educational attainment of each participant was solicited to serve as a rough indicator of socioeconomic status. There were 21 children (18% of the 116 children in this sample) from homes in which one parent had finished high school, 35 children (30.2%) born to a parent who had completed some college, including a trade school, beauty school, or the police academy, 26 children (22.4%) born to a parent who had completed college, and 34 children (29.3%) born to a parent who had finished college and attained an advanced degree.

There were slightly more boys born to parents who have attained less education (36 boys born to parents who finished high school or attained some college) than higher education (32 boys whose parents attained college and advanced degrees). The opposite was true of girls: there were more girls born to parents of College educated and Advanced degree-receiving parents (28) than there were girls born to parents who finished high school or completed some college (20). However, it must be noted that the education of only the parent filling out the survey was requested. Parents may very well have different educational attainment. Only five out of 56 parents who responded to the surveys were male, and it may be expected that the results would have differed if only the fathers' education was requested instead of primarily mothers.'

There were a total of 116 children, 68 males and 48 females between all of the participants. There were seven names from this sample that made the top ten names of 2010 and fifteen names that were not even in the top 1,000 names in 2010. This data was gathered from the U.S. Social Security Administration website (2011). In order to examine which names have been widely used in the United States for generations, I used a baby name book from 1936 by Eric Partridge called *Name This Child: A Dictionary of English and American Christian Names*. Themes emerged from the sample related to kin names, religious names, media names, family dynamics in naming, and name popularity and longevity.

Kin Naming

A significant number of children in this study were given the names of kin. The data was analyzed below based on which family members each child was named for, the birth order of the child, and whether or not the child was given this kin name as a first or middle

name. Once middle names were taken into account, a majority of both boys and girls in this

sample were named after family members. The table below shows the distribution of all

boys and girls named for kin, based on first and first and/or middle names and based on birth

order:

Table 1: Total Boys and Girls Named After Kin

	1ST NAMES (out of 68 boys)		1ST NAMES AND/OR MIDDLE NAMES (N=68)		1ST NAMES (out of 48 girls)		1ST NAMES AND/OR MIDDLE NAMES (N=48)
ALL BOYS	10	14.7% of all boys	53	77.9% of all boys	ALL GIRLS	12	25% of all girls	30	62.5% of all girls
1st-born boys	8	19% (Out of 42 1st born boys)	32	76.2% (out of 42 1st born boys)	1st born girls	10	26% (Out of 38 1st born girls)	26	68.4% (Out of 38 1st born girls)
2nd born boys	2	10% (Out of 20 2nd born boys)	17	85% (Out of 20 2nd born boys)	2nd born girls	2	20% (Out of 10 2nd born girls)	4	40% (Out of 10 2nd born girls)
3rd/4th born	0	0% (Out of 6 3rd/4th born)	4	66.7% (Out of 6 3rd/4th born)	3rd/4th born	0	0% (Out of 0 3rd/4th born)	0	0% (Out of 0 3rd/4th born)

As the above table demonstrates, there are more girls named for kin than boys when

you only examine first names. However, when middle names are taken into account, there

are more boys than girls with kin names in every birth order category. For the boys, the 2nd

born boys were the most likely to be given family names (first and/or middle), while for the

girls, the 1st born girls are the most likely to be given family names.

Boys were more likely than girls to receive a family name for their middle name

regardless of birth order, but the opposite was true for first names. When totaled, 62.5% of

the 48 girls in the study and 77.9% of the 68 boys were named for kin through either the first

or middle name.

One way that Rossi (1965) broke down her data was by analyzing it in a table

outlining the distribution of the grandparents' names used for children's names. Using her

same format, that table was recreated with my data below:

Table 2: Distribution of Grandparents' Names by Gender of Child:

	Boys (N=68)	Girls (N=48)
Named for Father's Father:	First names: N=2 **(2.9% of all 68 boys)** Middle names: N=7	First Names N=1 **(2.1% of all 48 girls)** Middle names: 0
Named for Father's Mother:	First names: N=0 **(0% of all 68 boys)** Middle names: N=0	First names: N=2 **(4.2% of all 48 girls)** Middle names: N=2
Named for Mother's Father:	First names: N=3* **(4.4% of all 68 boys)** Middle names: N=5	First names: N=0 **(0% of all 48 girls)** Middle names: N=0
Named for Mother's Mother:	First names: N=1 **(2.2% of all 68 boys)** Middle names: N=1	First names: N=0 **(0% of all 48 girls)** Middle names: N=8
Unspecified Grandfather:	First names: N=0 **(0% of all 68 boys)** Middle names: N=2	First names: N=0 **(0% of all 48 girls)** Middle names: N=1

*All first names in this table were given to first-borns except for two 2nd-borns named after
their mother's father

There were six girls and boys who share first names (or have versions of) with their

grandfathers, yet only three girls and boys who share first names (or have versions of) with

their grandmothers. For both boys and girls together, there were 5 children given the first

names of their fathers' parents and 4 from the mothers' parents. There were 14 middle

names from the mother's parents (all 1st-born children) and nine middle names from the

father's parents (all 1st-born children). Thus, the fathers' parents' names were given slightly

more predominance than the mothers' in that they were used more often as first names, yet the mothers' parents' names were recognized more often in the middle names.

In terms of the ascendant generations distant from the child, the largest percentage of children named for family were named for family one generation removed from them: mostly parents. Out of 98 kin names given to children (middle and first being separated), 43.9% of the names were parents' names (first, middle names or maiden names), aunts', uncles', or parents' cousins' names. The percentage of children's names diminishes with subsequent generations. Two generations removed (grandparents and great aunts and uncles) made up 38.8% of the kin names, three generations removed (great-grandparents) made up 13.3% of the names, and four generations removed made up 3.1% of the names.

When all of the kin names were broken down into categories pertaining to the mother's family, the father's family, or both, several patterns emerge. The following table displays the distribution of kin names based on gender:

Table 3: Maternal* and Paternal Kin Distribution (Both first and middle names combined)

	BOYS (N=53 boys named for kin, approx. 78% of boys in the sample)	GIRLS (N=30 girls named for kin, approx. 63% of girls in the sample)
Paternal Kin	N=31 (58.5% of 53)	N=12 (40% of 30)
Maternal Kin	N=19 (36% of 53)	N=24 (80% of 30)
Bilateral (Both Maternal and Paternal Kin, included in those figures above)	N=3 (5.7% of 53)	N=3 (10% of 30)
Unspecified Kin Name	N=7 (13.2% of 53)	N=5 (16.7% of 30)

*'Maternal' here refers to names that came from the mother's kin, including the mother's patriline and the mother's mother's patriline. Though this is a patrilineal society, the use of the word "maternal" simplified classification.
Also, note that the percentages do not add up to 100 because there were both unspecified kin and bilateral kin that belonged to either maternal kin, paternal kin or both and were thus counted multiple times.

This table shows which side of the family the kin names given to boys and the kin names given to girls came from. More boys were given paternal names than maternal names and more girls were given maternal names than paternal names. There were a significantly higher percentage of girls given maternal names (80%) than boys given paternal names (58.5%). When this data was examined from a cross-gender perspective, there was a higher percentage of girls given paternal names than boys given maternal names.

Girls were slightly more likely than boys to be named "bilaterally," meaning they were given a first name from one side of the family and a middle name from the other or a mixture of two family members' names. Examples of this include, the middle name *DeAnn* (#29) which is a mixture of her father's middle name and her mother's middle name. This also includes the middle name *Lynnann* (#39) created from: "a mixture of her grandmothers' middle names, paternal- *Lynn*, maternal-*Ann*." In the case of *William* (#43) both his mother's father and his father's father happened to share the name, so it was given to him, the second-born son, as his middle name. Such bilateral naming occurred 3 times for the boys and 3 times for the girls. What occurred more frequently was a different kind of bilateral kin-naming in which families with multiple children would name one child after the mother's side of the family and another child after the father's side of the family. For 13 out of 32 families with multiple children, some children were given first and/or middle kin names from one side of the family while their siblings were given kin names from the other side of the family.

There were two unspecified "family names" (#41, 19) used in this sample, both used for girls' names. This is interesting as it might indicate less concern with honoring a particular family member and more concern with demonstrating the role of family in the

child's life. There is some evidence of this in the statement "family is important to me!"
made by Participant #28. However, reporting only a "family name" could also be a privacy
matter in not wanting to reveal the particular family member or tradition that the child was
named for. It is also interesting to note that out of 100 kin names given to children in this
study (totaling the first and middle names of the children), 32 of these names were the
relatives' middle names. Only three of these 32 names were used as the child's first name.
This means that in about one third of the cases of kin naming, the middle name of the person
being recognized was used instead of their first name. The difference between first and
middle names can also be seen when each gender is analyzed separately.

Kin naming differed for each gender and this will be examined beginning with the
boys' names since more boys were named for kin than girls. Out of 68 boys, 53 (or 77.9%)
of the boys were named for kin, including their first and/or middle names. This included
names passed down from the child's great grandfather. There were 10 relatives whose names
were given to boys in this sample as first names. Overall there were 32 names among the
boys (first and middle combined) that came from the father's side of the family (also referred
to as the father's patriline). There were only 15 boys' names selected from among the
mother's relatives.

The extended version of this data, including the education of the parent can be found
in Appendix A. The data below distinguishes the boys' first names which came from kin:

Boys' First Names Originating from Kin: (N= 10 out of 68 boys)

Father:	N=3	*1st born: #23 #27 #51*
Father's Father:	N=2	*1st born: #27, 51*
Father's Father's Father:	N=1	*1st born: #27*
Mother's Father	N=3	*1st born: #54 2nd born: #13, #49*
Mother's Father's Father	N=0	

Mother's "Grandfather" (Unspecified) N=0

Mother's Mother   N=1   *1ˢᵗ born:* #29

There was one boy with the suffix 'junior,' attached to his name, one with the suffix

'III,' and one with the suffix 'IV.' All of these boys were first-borns. There was one

additional boy (#34) who was given a first name that sounded similar to his father's name,

which I counted as being inherited from his father. There was one participant who mentioned

that her son's father is a 'junior,' (#45) but their son was not given this same name. No boy

was given a version of his mother's name.

This data shows that it is the patriline—both the father's and the mother's patriline—

which was most heavily represented when boys' first names were kin names. Three boys

were given traditional family first names from their patriline, three were given the names of

their mother's father, and one from his mother's mother. To further illustrate the

predominance of the patriline, there were no boys named for women on their fathers' side of

the family. There was only one boy named for a female relative from his mother's side of the

family. This boy (*Mark* #29) was given a diminutive version of mother's mother's name

(*Margaret*).

Middle names also reflected the importance of kinship and the emphasis on the

patriline. The chart below demonstrates how the data for boys' middle names was broken

up:

Boys' Middle Names (n= 52 out of 68 boys)

Patrilineal kin names   *N= 34 (50% of 68)*

Father	N= 22
Father's Father	N=7
Father's Father's Father	N= 2
Father's Brother	N=1
Father's "Grandfather" (Unspecified)	N=2

Mother's kin names   *N=15 (22% of 68)*

    Mother's Father   N=5

    Mother's Father's Father   N=1

    Mother's "Grandfather" (Unspecified) N=1

    Mother's Mother   N=1

    Mother's Brother/Sister   N=3

    Mother's Cousin (Unspecified) N=1

    Mother's Maiden Name   N=3

Unspecified Mother's/Father's Side   *N=3 (4.4% of 68)*

There were 34 boys' middle names from the father's side of the family, 15 middle names from the mother's side, and 3 unspecified family middle names. Twenty-two of boys in this study, the majority of the patrilineal (father's side) middle names, were given their father's first or middle name for their middle name: given to 16 first-borns and 6 second-borns. More middle names came from male relatives on the father's side than on the mother's side. Seven boys' middle names were patrilineal traditions, passed down to at least two generations.

In terms of naming children after the mother's relatives, there were three boys given their mother's maiden name as their middle name, but this again emphasized the mother's patriline, meaning her father's family name. Another boy (#32) was given his grandmother's maiden name for his middle name and one boy (#8) was given comes from his mother's sister's surname for a middle name, though it is not stated whether this was also the mother's patriline or the sister's husband's surname. While attempting to recognize women in the ancestry through naming, these names are still among the minority compared to the number of boys named directly for male kin. There were far fewer generational names (only 2)

passed down for the girls in this study. This was just one of the many gender differences that emerged from this sample, which will become evident upon analyzing the girls' kin names.

There were 30 girls named for kin, which equals 62.5% of the 48 girls in this sample, slightly fewer than the percentage of boys named for kin. The results of first names are shown below:

Girls' First Names (n=8 out of 48 girls)

Mother's kin   n= 4   (8.3% of 48)
> (*1st born: #9 mother's middle name, #34-mother's great grandmother)*
> (*2nd born #15-mother's grandmother, #30-mother's cousin)*

Father's patriline n=2   (4.2% of 48)   (*1st-borns: #31, #6)*

Father's mother   n=2   (4.2% of 48)   (*1st-borns: #15, 24)*

More girls were given names from their mother's side of the family (n=24, first or middle name of the girls) than from their father's side of the family (n=12). While there were 4 boys named for their fathers in this study, only one girl was named after her mother, and she was given her mother's middle name as her first name. All of these boys and girls were first-borns. No 2nd born, 3rd born, or 4th born girls were given kin names from their mother's side of the family as their first names. In fact there were no 3rd born or 4th born girls named for a relative at all—only a 2nd born girl, *Mary* (#34), named for her father's great aunt.

There were 7 male names passed down to boys as first names in the patriline and only 2 female names passed down to females as what I have classified as "traditional names." Two first-born girls, *Kathryn,* and *Ella* (#15 and 24) were named after their father's mothers and one was given a diminutive version of her name (i.e., *Ella* for *Ellen)*. Another girl *Danielle* (#6) was given a female version of her father's father's name (*Daniel*). The

opposite of this was seen with the males in the case of one boy, *Mark* (#29) being named for

his grandmother *Margaret.*

Girls' Middle Names (n= 27 out of 48 girls)

Mother's Kin   n=20 (41.7% of 48 girls)
    Mother's first/middle   n=6   (12.5% of 48)
        #29 combination of both parent's names
        #34 passed down for as middle name for females for three generations
        #24 passed down for as middle name for females for four generations
    Mother's Mother   n=8
    Mother's Mother's Mother   n=1   (*1st born: #24*)
    Mother's "Grandmother" (unspecified)   n=3   (*1st #4, 11 2nd: #19*)
    Mother's "Great-Grandmother"   n=1   (*1st-borns #34*)
    Mother's Maiden   n=1   (*1st-borns #21*)
    Mother's Sister   n=2   (*1st-#24, 2nd #34*)
    Mother's Great Grandparents' Surname   n=1   (*2nd born #35*)

Father's Kin   n=7   (14.6% of 48 girls)
    Father's Name   n=2
    Father's Mother   n=2
    Father's Sister   n=1
    Father's "Grandmother" (unspecified)   n=2

There were six mother's names, (first, middle, or maiden) used as daughters' middle

names. Two of these names were middle names passed down along the matriline: #36

"*Elaine* is my and my mother's middle name" and #24, *Marie,* "maternal middle name line

[mother, grandmother, great grandmother]." Names like these that were shared by multiple

relatives were only counted in the total once, but were counted separately in each respective

category. This traditional naming is comparable to the two families in which males' middle

names were passed down along the patriline. There were a greater number of boys named

for their fathers, grandfathers, great grandfathers, and great-great grandfathers (73.5% of

boys) than girls named for their mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers, and great-great grandmothers combined (56.3%). And there were only six mother's names (first, middle or maiden) used as daughters' middle names compared to 22 father's names (first or middle) used as sons' middle names. Participant #9's daughter was given a version of her father's middle name *Lee* as her middle name *Leigh*. This occurred similarly for the boys with #17 receiving his mother's maiden name as his middle name, but that simply acknowledges a different patriline. Overall this shows that there is still a greater likelihood that boys will be named for kin than girls.

Now that the specific relatives whose names were bestowed upon children have been examined, there is much more to analyze about the participants who chose to bestow those names. One important aspect of kin naming to consider is the aggregate families who named all, some, or none of their children after kin. This reveals the parents' decisions to either link all of their children to kin through naming, or potentially, to honor only some important family members through naming. The full results are shown in Table 4, located in Appendix A.

Table 4 shows the significant occurrence of kin naming in this sample. The most significant data from this table is that there were 34 families (25 with multiple children and 9 with one child) or 60.7% of all 56 families in this study, who gave all of their children a first and/or middle family name. This is compared to the 8 families (7 with multiple children and 1 with one child) (14.3% of all 56 families) who gave none of their children a family name as a first or middle name**.** This table also shows that there were 25 families (about 45%) who gave all of their children a kin name as either a first or middle name. There were 9 additional families (16% of all families) who gave their only child either a first or middle kin name, out

of 10 families who only had one child. On the contrary, there were only 7 families (12.5%) with multiple children who did not give any of their children kin names (for first or middle names), excluding the one family (1.8%) who did not give their only child a family name. Overall, 33.9% of all of the families gave at least one of their children a first name that was a kin name and 85.7% of the families gave at least one child a family name as the first or middle name.

For those families who only gave some of their children family names, there is a pattern in how they named the other children. Overall, if one child in a family was named for family and the other children were not, then the other children were usually given names that the parents simply "liked," usually from baby name books or websites. There were six families in which the first-born child was given a family first name and the subsequent children were named out of baby name books or names that were simply "liked." Even when the first-born was given a non-family first name while the other siblings were given family names, it was a "liked it" name in four out of five cases for the first-borns' first names (one being a liked it/Bible name, and the exception, a friend's name). There were three cases in which 2nd or 3rd-born children were named for media figures. A similar pattern occurred when both first and/or middle names were considered: for the majority of the families in which at least one child was given a family name, the children who were not given family names were given "liked" names in all but three cases of media names, one friend's name, and two Biblical names.

Out of the 34 families that gave all of their children family names (first and/or middle), 11 had Advanced degrees, 11 graduated College, 11 had Some College experience, and 4 had a High School education. Out of the six families who gave all of their children

family first names, 4 had Advanced degrees and there was 1 with a College degree and one with Some College experience. This result indicates that higher education is linked with first name kin naming. For the 8 families who gave none of their children any family names, 2 had Advanced degrees, 3 graduated College, 1 had Some College experience, and 2 had a High School education. For those 14 families who gave their at least one but not all of their children family names, 3 had Advanced degrees, 2 had graduated College, 5 had Some College experience, and 4 had a High School education. Thus it seems like the parents who did not give all of their children family names tended more towards having less education. The ones who gave all of their children family names tended more towards having more education. However, the numbers in this study are very small, and more research would be needed to draw more substantial conclusions.

The kin that children were named after also varied by educational attainment of the parents. There was a great deal of diversity both in the kin that children were named after and in the educational attainment. However, a few patterns did emerge. Parents with Advanced degrees were slightly more likely to give their children names from both the mother's side and the father's side of the family than the other education groups. They were also more likely to give their children names with traditions, such as names given to multiple generations of the family. This was the case for six out of the nine boys given "traditional" or generational names and for one of the two girls given tradition or generational names. Parents with Advanced degrees gave more girls maternal names (n=7) than the other educational groups, followed by Some College experience parents (n=6), College educated parents (n=3), and High School graduate parents (n=1). Advanced degree parents (n=4) were tied with Some College (n=4) parents for giving the most girls paternal names. The parents

with Advanced degrees were tied with College graduate parents for giving the most boys paternal names (n=9 for each). Parents with Some College experience gave the most boys maternal names (n=9), followed by Advanced degree parents (n=5), College (n=3), then High School graduate parents (n=1). While other social variables may be influencing these results (i.e., class membership, race, and religious background), these an indicative that educational attainment can be a moderating factor in naming decisions.

Of all of the 23 family names given to children as first names, there were only three reportedly chosen for also being just "liked." This might be an indication of familial obligation in naming children trumping personal preference. Yet one interesting quote demonstrates the way in which parents find a name that they like while fulfilling familial duties. When asked about why having a family member share the name of her child influenced her decision to choose that name, Participant #9 spoke of her decision of "passing names down along generations but not names I disliked :)." This participant chose her father's middle name for her son's name. No other participants explicitly mentioned this, yet this participant's explanation might elucidate the wide variety of relatives whose names were given to newborns. If parents wanted to choose family names, they could do so, but still take into consideration their personal preference by choosing names that they like, leading to the use of names of relatives that were somewhat obscure, i.e. the child's great-aunt's middle name (#34) or grandparents' middle names.

While friends are usually considered outside of the traditional definition of kinship, there are fictive kin, such as friends, whose names may be given to children. In this study, there were six children named after friends (first names) constituting 5.2% of all first names.

Five of these children named for friends were male (four 1ˢᵗ-borns plus one 2ⁿᵈ-born) and just one was female.

This study has shown that kinship is an important factor that parents consider in selecting the name for their children. There was a large emphasis on the patriline and on putting the symbolic continuation of the family in the sons' names rather than the daughters' names when first names and middle names were considered. Besides serving as namesakes, parents and also their kin also played a crucial role in the name selection process.

Name Consultation

One additional factor significant to naming is who is doing the actual naming. Many people did consult others in this selection process. The most common response for those who did report consulting others was that the participant consulted only their spouse or partner. There were 11 responses in which the participant consulted only their spouse (i.e. #12 "my husband"). Nine participants consulted "family" and six participants consulted family, friends (in the case of #36, "close family and friends") and even coworkers (#48). Participant #1 is indicative of a majority of this category in saying that she consulted with her husband and that, "we told a couple of friends when we narrowed our name list down to 3 names, but that is all." Some were more open to outside suggestions, such as Participant #33 who said that, "we consulted in friends and family. We considered any suggestions that we got." On the other hand, participants like #12 reported that they "told family/friends name ideas, but didn't care necessarily what they said." Similarly, Participant #48 said "we involved the whole family and some co-workers for suggestions. We never ended up using any of their suggestions though." It could be that they were seeking independence in the

naming process, as will be discussed further, or like Participant #38, they consulted "just family, in-laws. The rest I wanted it to be a surprise." There were many parents who expressed a desire to make the decision themselves.

Parents expressed in various ways how they felt like naming their child was their responsibility alone. For example when asked if she/he consulted with anyone, participants responded with items such as:

>Participant #15: "we consulted with family at first but quickly stopped because they all had different opinions…so we picked the names and kept it a secret until they were born so no one would influence our decision."

>Participant #40: "no we talked about it with others, but did not 'consult'- the decision was completely ours to make."

>Participant #42: "did tell them some of our ideas and allowed for feedback but we wanted to make the decision ourselves."

>Participant #3: "I didn't purposefully consult people, but people gave their ideas anyways."

Out of the 56 responses, 28 (exactly half) of the participants answered the question "Did you consult with anyone in the naming process?" with the answer "no." Thus, independence in the decision was a common theme for these parents. When this figure was examined across parental education factors, it was found that for the education categories of High School, College, and Advanced degrees, about 40% of the parents consulted others in the naming process (including just the spouse). However, about 70% of the parents with "Some College," an Associates degree, or a degree from a trade school consulted others in the naming process. Most parents who consulted others did not report who had the ultimate say in the name that was finally selected. Some participants did express in various forms how people desired "feedback" or "input" or consulted with others once the short list of

names was narrowed down. Thus, it might be possible that there were names chosen that other people (friends, family, co-workers) rejected.

There was also the issue of family pressure. For example, #38 discussed how her "in-laws wanted certain initials and wanted it that way to fit family men's jewelry. So telling them no was hard." For Participant #45, "my MIL [mother-in-law] *hates* unusual names and my husband dislikes any name that sounds too 'regal.'" Thus certain people may have more influence over these decisions than others and certain things may be valued more by the parent.

The main conclusion drawn from these responses is how much the nuclear family was emphasized. As discussed, parents did not want to be "sway[ed]" (#34, also in #15) but made the decisions together as parents. There were 11 participants who reported only consulting their spouses or partners about names, such as # 13 who said that the only person she consulted was "just [her] spouse." Agreement between spouses or partners was another huge theme that emerged in this data. There were only 3 participants that were not in a relationship at the time at which they had their child (note, however that there were 2 participants who did not answer the question about relationship status). This means that the majority of participants were in relationships, which inevitably influences the naming process. This is reflected by the 16 participants who listed agreement between spouses as one of the challenges of the naming process. Examples include:

> Participant #4 wanted "[a name] we could agree on"
> Participant #21 (when asked about challenges) "mostly that my husband liked the name as well"
> Participant #34 described how she and her spouse did not disagree on all of their children, but that "Only Mary's name was contentious for us. We both had another first choice for her but compromised on a second choice we could agree on."

Participant #2 (a mother of twin boys) "we decided we each got to name one any name we chose"

Naming also reflected the dynamics of family decision-making. Participants like #34 and #2 compromised with their spouses, which also manifested in other ways.   Other participants spoke of "letting" their partner or spouse use a name that the partner wanted. For example, #42 reported that, "I loved this name [*Katherine*] so my husband 'let' me use it." In a few cases, the names were simply described as "father's choice" (#28) or a statement like, "his father chose name" (#27). Participant #51 described how, "my husband and I didn't really argue. If we had a boy it was always going to be Michael. If I had had more choice he would have been Cedric X :)." There are obviously complex relational balances at work in these joint decisions, which at times are not jointly made at all.

Besides family and friends, however, there were many external sources that parents consulted for names. When it comes to examining the differences in names chosen by those with different educational attainments, the number of parents who used baby name books, internet naming websites, or lists of top names decreased as the education of the parent increased. The number of people who used these resources went from 50% of parents with a High school education to about 19% of parents who had Advanced degrees. When it comes to the use of baby name books, internet naming sites, or lists of top names, fewer parents used these materials to select girls names than boys names. For girls, 23% of the names were drawn from these sources, and for boys, 29% were taken from these sources. The largest groups of children whose names came from naming books or websites were the 1st born children (29%) and the 3rd/4th born children (31%) compared to 23% of the 2nd born children. Based on the response of one participant #26, who reported using baby name books and having to come up with "lots of boys' names" for her four sons, I postulate that in choosing a

name for the first born, the parents also discovered other names for subsequent children, thus decreasing the reliance on those books. This would explain why fewer 2nd born names came from baby name books. By the third and fourth born children, it is possible that they no longer had any names picked out from naming the previous children or they simply forget them, thus, they turned once again to those resources.

Another reoccurring theme among the names in this study is that many of the participants reported liking a certain name before the mother even became pregnant. As Participant #29 reported, "when I was in 3rd grade, I heard the name and it stuck with me." Participant #37 said that, "as a young girl I chose the name Matthew for a child." Participant #42 picked out the name for her first born son while she and her now husband were dating. Four participants said that they had "always liked/loved" a certain name or "I liked X before I had kids" (#20, 41, 43, 56). It is of course impossible to determine what was meant by the word "always" on the surveys, so these participants might be referring to names selected in their own childhood as with #29 and 37, or they might be names that had appeal throughout the name selection process, though it is impossible to know for sure with just this information. It is noteworthy that all of the participants who fell into this category were mothers (except for #41 who did not report her relationship to the child but did report being female). This theme is important in that it acknowledges that the process of selecting a child's name does not have a clear starting date. On the other hand, #10 spoke of the name being a "last minute decision." Once again, we have a broad range of answers.

This brings us to the issue of the decision itself and the challenges that come with it. There were a few participants who explicitly stated that they had a great deal of difficulty in naming their children. For instance, Participant #12 declared, "I'm a teacher, that makes

naming your children extremely difficult." Participant #43 might have further explicated that response by saying, "my husband is a teacher so every name had an association with a former student." As Participant #48 said outright, "Choosing names is hard!" One participant, #41 said explicitly, "boys were harder" when discussing naming challenges. However, not everyone expressed that same level of difficulty. Ten participants, when asked if they faced any challenges in the naming process simply stated that they faced no challenges. The people who answered "no" or stated having few challenges were often those that named their children after family members. For example, participant #6 said that they had "no challenges- when we found out we were having a girl we named her immediately after her grandparents and never changed it." The gender divide was roughly equal in terms of which sex was 'more difficult' to name. However, there were slightly more boys whose names were reportedly less difficult to choose. Whether or not the parents faced challenges in trying to select just one name for their children or whether the choice was easy, each of these participants did succeed in naming their children.

Parental and familial roles in naming are obviously crucial. The nuclear family was heavily emphasized and even between the parents, the decision was made together, although in some cases with more contention than in others. This is essential to understanding who makes the decisions and what decisions are made. The person or people who did choose the name of the newborn ultimately had to choose the source of the name and what it meant to them. There were an incredibly vast number of sources that parents drew names from besides family, and these will be examined closely in order to understand wider naming patterns.

Names from Alternate Sources: The Bible and the Mass Media

Two significant sources for names which emerged in this study were the Bible and the mass media. However, it is also significant that these names were far underutilized in comparison to kin names. This section examines the role that religious names and media names played in naming among this sample and how that varied slightly based on the educational attainment of the parents.

Ninety-one children in this study come from families in which the participant reported practicing a Christian religion. Thirteen children were intentionally given religious first names—all of them from the Bible, according to parents' responses on the surveys. The children were from six families (2 were Catholic, 3 were Christian, and 1 was Mennonite). These names were: *Sarah, Elizabeth, Joshua, Noah, Elizabeth, Aaron, Eric, Abigail, Daniel, Adam, Mary, Katherine,* and *David.* Four out of those 13 names were also family names: *Sarah, Aaron, Daniel* and *Mary*. Only one out of the five participants who had a Biblical name gave his/her children Biblical names. Children with Biblical names also tended to come from parents with more education. There were 10 out of the 13 children given Biblical names whose parents had Advanced degrees (in other words, 4 out of 6 parents who answered the survey). There were only three children whose first names were Biblical whose parents did not have an Advanced degree and all three had a parent with a College degree. The family tree and the Bible were not the only source for person-inspired names, however.

While the Bible has had a longstanding tradition of providing names for Judeo-Christian children all over the world, many sources of names fluctuate greatly across time. Names that are heard in films or read in novels will naturally serve as sources of names, forming the class of names that were cited as originating from the mass media. Eighteen of

the names in this sample originated from some mass media source, such as television, sports, film, music, and literature. First names that I placed into the category of 'media' names were very broad in their origins, as shown below:

<u>Television</u>   n=6
    1st born

        #23 soap star

        #25 from a television show character

    2nd-born

        #12 Heard on a cooking show

        #26 it was "popular at that time-tv, etc."

        #19 from the television show Hannah Montana

    3rd-born

        #3 from a television show character

<u>Professional Athletes</u>   n=5
    1st-born:

        #28 for his "father's favorite basketball player's last name"

        #17 "My ex husband loves baseball. His favorite player's name is Greg X. I
            loved the last name for a first name"

        #36 for a professional football player's first name

    2nd-born:

        #40 for a player's first name on the 2002 World Cup soccer team

        #50 for professional football player, Peyton Manning

<u>Film</u>   n=3
    2nd born

        #2 from *Legends of the Fall*

        #38 from *A Walk to Remember*

    3rd-born

        #20 from *Legends of the Fall*

<u>Musicians</u>   n=2
    2nd born

        #1 from the lead singer of a band

    3rd-born

        #2 named after Bob Dylan, whom "[his] father loves."

<u>Literature (Fiction/Nonfiction, excluding naming books)   n=2</u>
1ˢᵗ born
#3 from a book
#35 from a book

There were 18 children total named from the media. There were 12 boys (17.6% of all boys) and six girls (12.5% of all girls). The largest number of media names came from television. There was only one middle name that came from the media, and this was another "soap star's" name for #23, as was this child's first name. It is very difficult to say without follow-up questions whether the name was simply heard from a media source, or if the intention was to honor that media figure in particular. For most of these children, male media figures' names were given to male children, five female figures' names were given to female children, and only one male figure's name given to a female.

In some of the cases, the names were a way to honor a beloved celebrity figure (i.e. Bob Dylan) or a beloved character. One participant wrote, "I thought [*X*] was a sexy name that will always remind me of that show" (#3). In some cases, the parent reported choosing names from the media long in advance of having the child. For instance, the name *Lachlan* (#3) was selected from an unspecified novel long before his mother was even pregnant, according to her.

When education levels are considered, the group that drew names from these sources the least was the parents with advanced degrees (19% of families in which the participant had an advanced degree gave at least one child a media name). The group that drew from the media the most often was the parents with Some College parents (50% of Some College parents gave at least one child a media name). Twenty percent of parents with a high school education and 22% of parents with a college education gave at least one child a media name. These show no overarching trend for education but it may be noteworthy that the parents

with advanced degrees infrequently chose media names (only 8.8% of children born to a

participant with an advanced degree were given a media name compared to 26% of children

born to a participant with some college experience).

It is unclear in many of the cases if the celebrity or character was meant to be honored

or whether it was simply the source of a name. Regardless, the media was shown to be a

source for 15.5% of all names in this sample, so the effects of the mass media on naming

should be acknowledged.

Personal Preference

While there were a large number of children named for particular family members,

Biblical figures, or media figures, there was also a large portion of children who were given

names for other reasons. Personal preference is obviously is significant factor in selecting a

name for a child. Parents choose names for a wide variety of reasons related to taste,

including the simplest of all: "because we liked it." Many names in this sample were not

chosen to honor a particular person. When these were broken up into the number of boys and

girls who were named for other reasons, then broken up into birth order and education level

of parent, several patterns emerge. These are shown in Table 5 in Appendix A. This

category is the first of many categories of personal preference, which includes a preference

for certain phonemes as well as the appeal of the way that certain names fit together.

To begin with, the names not selected to honor someone were examined for any

patterns related to taste. Table 5 shows that for both boys and girls, the 2nd born children

were the most likely to not be named for someone in particular. The girls were slightly more

likely to fit into this category with 54% being named for no one in particular compared to

50% of the boys. Only 48% of the 1st born boys were not named for a particular person compared to 60% of 2nd born boys and 33% of 3rd/4th born boys. Only 50% of the 1st born girls were not named for anyone in particular compared to 70% of the 2nd born girls and 0% of the 3rd/4th born girls.

This data shows that the 2nd born children's names may have been more often chosen for personal preference rather than to honor a single person. It may also signify that girls' names are slightly more likely to be chosen for personal preference rather than as a way of paying homage to someone. When it comes to educational attainment of the parents, boys of High School educated parents were most likely to be named for no particular person and girls of High School educated parents were the least likely. Percentages of Some College, College, and Advanced degree children named for no one were all higher for the girls than for the boys. Although not shown on the table, the highest percentage of children named for no one in particular for boys and girls came from Some College parents (29.4% and 34.6% respectively). Boys were least likely to be named for no one in particular—a category that reflects personal preference—when the parents have Advanced degrees and for girls, when the parents were High School educated. However, there are many more themes related to personal preference that need to be addressed.

A separate feature of personal preference was names that were reported being chosen simply for being liked. There were 78 names out of this sample of 116 children whose names were chosen because the parent "just liked" the name. This category included names liked for various aesthetic appeals, if it was just thought up by the parent, if the parent liked that it was unique, if both parents liked it, or if the parents gave no explicit reason for choosing a name, but reported using baby name books or websites. There was a greater

percentage of girls' names chosen for being "liked" (70.8%) compared to boys' names

(64.7%). This again signifies that girls' names were more prone to the influences of parents'

taste.

One of the other sources of preference that parents may have unconsciously or

consciously selected has to do with the actual sound of the name. Dividing the names into

categories based on their sounds, revealed several patterns. The results are shown in Table 6

in Appendix A. A simplified version of this table is shown here:

BOYS (n=68)
-n   n=32   47.1%
-other consonants   n=27   39.7%
-elle   n=4   5.9%
-a/'schwa'   n=3   4.4%
-ee   n=2   2.9%
(-consonant sounds total   n=63   92.7%)

GIRLS (n=48)
-n   n=15   31.3%
-a/'schwa'   n=12   25%
-ee   n=10   20.8%
-other consonants   n=7   14.6%
-elle   n=4   8.3%
(-consonant sounds total   n=26   54.2%)

Overall, names ending in *–n* were the most popular sound category for both sexes.

These 32 *–n* names for boys include: *Tristen, Franklin, Devin, Logan, Braden, John, Ashtin,*

Lachlan, Braylon, Jordan, Evan, Brian, Owen, Colton, Mason, and *Nathan.* For girls, these

15 *–n* names were: *Lillian, Karen, Caitlyn, Kathryn, Addison, Adrien, Regan, Evelyn,*

Morgan, Breanne, Payton, Megan, Anne, and *Katherine.* Names ending in *–ee* sounds were

the least popular for the boys (representing only about 3% of boys' names: *Zachary* and

Coby) but about 20% of girls' names ended in *–ee.* Names ending in 'other consonants'

besides –*n* and –*l* were much more popular for boys than for girls (about 40% compared to about 15%). These include: -k/-c as in *Eric,* -s/-ce as in *Jayce,* -eth as in *Seth,* -t as in *Robert,* -p as in *Philip,* -m as in *Adam,* -ew as in *Andrew,* and -er as in *Tyler.* For girls these included names like: *Elizabeth, Paige, Iris, Abigail,* and *Taylor.* Overall, 63 out of the 68 boys' names (92.7%) ended in a consonant sound, including –*n,* -*elle,* and –other consonants. Twenty-six out of the 48 girls' names (54.2%) ended in consonant sounds, which is a little over half of the percentage of boys' names. The second most popular name ending (-*a/'schwa'*) for girls was also much less popular for boys (25% compared to 4.4%). These names included: *Adria, Sophia, Ella, Sarah, Anna, Clara, Mette, Alivia,* and *Raya.* For boys these included: *Noah, Joshua,* and *Luca.* This shows that vowel endings were much more popular for girls.

When divided along parents' educational attainment, the patterns that emerge here are vague. For boys, the name endings -*a/'schwa'* and –*ee* (which were actually more popular for girls in this sample) were also more popular for sons of parents with Advanced Degrees than any other education group. For girls, the –*ee* ending was more popular for girls of parents with a High School than the other educational groups. The –*elle* endings (i.e. -*Michael)* were equally popular for sons of parents of all education groups. The –*n* ending was most popular boys with parents having Some College (40.6% of the –*n* ending boys), but it was most popular for girls with parents having Advanced degrees (53% of the –*n* ending girls).

Another theme which emerged was in the category of "linguistic preference," consisting of names chosen because of an existing family pattern of initials, or syllables, names chosen because they were short, or easy to pronounce (in multiple languages in the case of 2 families). These reasons included:

Participants:

#47	family tradition of names beginning with a vowel
#52	family tradition of names beginning with the letter R
#22	(for the 2nd-born son) "[we] liked it and it was a J name like the rest of the family"
#22	(for the 1st born son) "[we] liked the name and it had 2 "e's" like daddy's name and 2 t's like mommy"
#33	"We also thought it would be a cute touch to have both our children have 'G' names"
#31	"we wanted to spell it the easiest way so people would pronounce it right."
#50	Named their children following the desire for "[their] children's name to have a T and a Y in them because that is the first letters of the parents names"
#11; #44	Names chosen based on their ease of pronunciation in both English and Spanish, owing to the fact that at least one parent was Hispanic

These linguistic preferences reflect both family tradition as well as aesthetic taste. Both genders of children given these names are represented evenly in this category. Making everyone in the family's names start with the same letter is clearly appealing to these sets of parents, yet it may not be an option that even occurred to the other parents. Linguistic preferences are only a portion of the aesthetic tastes however.

Another way that aesthetic tastes manifested themselves was through the pairing of names. One concern of some parents was that the name would fit well with their last name or the other siblings' names. Twenty-one participants listed one of the criteria for the names they chose as fitting with the child's middle name, last name, or both. Some participants described the names going well together as an important factor when asked why they chose each name, but others mentioned it in response to the later question in my survey specifically about that issue. Participants were asked on the survey, "Do you think your last name influenced your decision?" This included the following participants:

Wanted all names to go well together   n=3

#38	"as long as it all sounded good together"
#40	[one factor was] "how the names sounded together"

#42 "we wanted to make sure the names sound ok together"

Wanted first name to go well with last name   n=10

#29 "the first name had to flow with the last name, sound good"

#34 "liked how X went with our last name"

#43 "some of the names we liked did not go well/flow with the last name"

#47 "we have a peculiar last name so not everything fits"

#53 "I'm not keen on names sounding similar to the last name (ending)"

#54 "worked well with the last name"

#56 "thought it sounded good with our last name too"

#55 "[middle name] sounded good with X [first name]"

#16 "we have a very long last name, wanted our children's first name to be short and easy."

#46 "I love the name *William* but we have a W last name."

Wanted first name to go well with middle name   n=3

#31 "we had to come up with a name that sounded good with it [the chosen middle name]

#35 "the [middle] name sounded good with it"

#37 "we wanted it to sound okay with the 1st and middle names"

Some parents were very specific about the types of sounds (letters, syllables, or rhythm) that they were looking for in a name. This included the following participants:

#11 "my last name is Italian, so we wanted to choose names that had a nice rhythm with mine."

#12 "we wanted something that sounded well together :) Two syllables with a one syllable last name."

#47 "To sound good as a full name, her 1st name needed more than one syllable to flow with our last name"

#34 "we have a rather unusual last name for this area, so giving them more common first names was Ok. The sound of our last name also ruled out several first name choices."

#55 "probably would not choose a |k| sound (hard K sound) because last name begins with |k| sound."

There was frequently a desire for certain sounds, or a lack of certain sounds. Fortunately for some of these parents, there were actually resources that help parents with this, as mentioned by #34: "the most helpful one [baby naming website] gave clusters of names related to your siblings names." These clusters might be based heavily on the aesthetic and linguistic similarities of the names. Some parents desired names to sound well together and others had very specific demands about the sounds. These are all directly related to personal preferences. Certain linguistic features are shown here to be more desirable to some parents and not to others, leading to common trends in the sounds of names, like the phonemes in names endings. Yet the diversity in these sounds and trends signifies the variety of personal preferences, evident even in naming.

Further Manifestations of Personal Preferences: Name Meanings

Besides phonemic appeal, there are other ways that parents found ways to distinguish names based on attributes. Names were chosen by some parents because of the meaning of the name. These meanings were either denotative (in terms of the origin of the name) or connotative (in terms of what the names mean to the parents). Some participants actively sought out the denotative meanings or origins of the names. Participant #55 depended upon "internet searches for meaning" to find a name. There were many commonalities among the meanings that parents sought. The most prominent meanings for boys related to strength and for girls—sweetness and strength. Such names with meaning were:

BOYS

Strength:

#18 *Tristen*	"bold and strong"
#27 *Justin*	"liked the name, sounded strong"

#45 *Joshua*	"the biblical Joshua was instructed to be strong and courageous and reassured that God was always with him"
#49 *Daniel* and *Noah*	couldn't be "made fun of" and "good strong classic names"
#4 (for 2 brothers)	"names last forever so we had to make sure in 50 years it would still sound strong"
#33 *Grant* and *Garret*	"good, solid names"

Masculinity:

| #28 *Andrew* and *Jordan;* | "being masculine enough" |
| #31 *Devin* | chose the "most masculine" spelling variation |

Religious Meaning:

#42 *David*	meaning: beloved (in the Bible)
#43 *Nathan*	meaning*:* gift from God
#37 *Matthew*	meaning: God's gift

GIRLS

Pretty/Strong

#45 *Abigail*	Biblical figure "referred to as not only beautiful but intelligent"
#55 *Christine*	"pretty" (middle name)
#39 *Iris*	wedding flower
#4 *Sophia*	name that "in 50 years it would still sound strong"
#44 *Michelle*	"sweet and strong at the same time"

Other:

| #55 *Anne* | name was "short and simple" |
| #31 *[1ˢᵗ born girl]* | "unique but meaningful" [diminutive of father's name] |

The most prevalent quality that parents liked in a male name when they explicitly described the qualities they liked about a name is that it is "strong." Being strong and masculine were important qualities in a name, and quite possibly, their sons. For girls, attributes besides strength were emphasized. Although being strong was also a positive connotation in a name in two cases, in one, "strong" was used to describe the names of all

children collectively—including the two boys, so it may not have been the primary concern for the girl's name. In the other case, being strong was a good trait only when it was coupled with being a "sweet" name. Being pretty, or associated with a flower (#39 *Iris)*, or even the month of spring (#23 *April)* was significant to at least these parents. The names *April* and *Iris* also link these girls to nature, which relates to nature as being viewed as feminine (i.e. 'Mother Nature'). Linking girls with being pretty or feminine was also a theme seen in that the name *Abigail* (#45) was selected for a figure who was beautiful and also intelligent. In the case of the name *Anne* (#55) the name was liked because of something about the name itself—that it was "short and simple" making it seem as if the name does serve a decorative function.

There were several Biblical or religious name meanings, for boys and girls.   First of all, the meaning was linked to the person in the Bible for whom a child was named after, presuming aspiration of those traits. In the case of #37, the participant described how she "chose *Matthew* because it means 'God's gift'" and how that meaning became especially important to her after a significant tragedy occurred in her life. *Matthew* and *Nathan* have the same meaning (gift from God), so it is interesting to note that although the parents chose these names for their meaning, they chose two different names with a shared meaning.

Another way that parents found meaning in names has to do with the personalities that they felt names determined. Some of the participants shared commentary about the ways that the names fit or suited their children. One of the most interesting comments came from Participant #3, a mother of three who said the following:

> As with all people, their names seem to fit them. In my boys' case, I think
> they really do. *X* is a unique child, very different, just like his name. *Y* is very
> calm, normal, sweet boy just like his name. *Z* is very ornery and wild...He
> definitely fits his name!!

This mother's statement indicates that she believes her children to have been shaped by their names. Other participants made similar decisions at their children's birth regarding how a child was going to fit his/her name. This includes Participant #10, who said that, "At the time, *X* was different—and he looked like a[n] *X*," which was a name they had chosen because they "liked it." There was also Participant #19 who said about her daughter, "originally her name was to be *Elizabeth May* using both my grandmothers' middle names but when she was born she just didn't look like an *Elizabeth* so we decided on *X* and used *Elizabeth* for middle name." Thus, a small group of parents were concerned with names matching the child, while one believed that the names made the children. Along those lines, there were parents who simply "liked" names expressing that a name, "was simple and just felt right" (#53) or "once we found the right name, we knew" (#33).

One other way that meaning was ascribed to names, besides name origin meanings and associations, was by naming a child after a relative or friend. Many parents reported that they wanted a name with "meaning" and therefore, chose a kin name or a friend's name (n=7). This occurred most often when a name had a special connection to a family or friend. Names were especially used as a way to commemorate or honor someone who had passed away in seven different cases:

Deceased Kin/Friends   *n=7*
> #8- 1st-born- little brother, deceased
> #6- "to honor both our deceased parents' memories. Both passed away from   cancer."
> #16- "he is named after a friend who passed away"
> #56- middle name is short for name of grandfather who passed away 2 months before her birth
> #45- "his father is named after his maternal grandfather who died very young"
> #47- (middle name) from mother's sister who passed away after four days
> #7- reported the name of their first child who "was born into heaven" and why they chose that
>   name, after the mother's grandfather who had passed away

(#3- reported that her own name came from her mother's mother who was very ill and passed away six months after she was born)

Tragedy appears to have given these names meaning to many of the families that bestow them. For example, Participant #8 reported choosing the name *Marie* because it "has meaning" because it is the girl's aunt's middle name (#8), or the participant who said, "we wanted to pick a name with meaning, not just a name we liked" and so this participant chose all family names (#15). Names were explicitly used to honor someone, usually a friend or relative, in eight cases. With the family members who were being "honored," it is impossible to know which of these are still alive and which are deceased if the participant did not say. However, Participant #53 made it a point to choose a name that no friend or relative already had. This might be explained partially by Participant #23's statement that with her son being a 'junior' "everyone said his mail and his dad's would get mixed up." Some parents might see it as less confusing if no two names in the daily life of the child are shared.

While "meaning" was interpreted differently by many parents, the overall appeal of many names seemed to lie in the associations that parents had with these names. There were kin names which had special meaning and names which conveyed strength or sweetness, and also names which simply sounded good to parents. These were all elements of personal preference and taste as well as symbolic significance. Another way that taste manifests in names is through the appeal or lack of appeal of popular names.

The Popularity of Names

Due to the rankings of name frequency by the Social Security Administration, parents and social scientists alike are able to determine a given name's popularity. This means that people can potentially become more familiar with the uniqueness or high frequency of a name,

and use that information to evaluate names. Using this information, I was able to determine

which of the names from the sample were popular (at times more popular than parents expected),

which names were rising and falling in popularity, and which names were unique. Yet parents

often do make decisions based on such information, choosing to make their decisions aware or

unaware of the decisions of other expecting parents. For this reason, the popularity of names

does speak volumes about naming practices in the U.S.

    Out of all 116 names in this sample, very few were among the most popular in the

country in 2010, 2000, or 1990. Table 7 below shows the names from this sample that were in

the top ten at the start of each decade between 1990-2010 and its respective ranking for that year.

Table 7: Top-Ranked Names from the Sample

Top 10 in 2010 (name and ranking)		Top 10 in 2000 (name and ranking)		Top 10 in 1990 (name and ranking)	
GIRLS 2. *Sophia* 7. *Abigail*	*N=2*	5. *Sarah* 8. *Jessica* 9. *Elizabeth* 10. *Taylor*	*n=4*	1. *Jessica* 6. *Sarah* 9. *Elizabeth*	*n=3*
BOYS 3. *Michael* 5. *William* 6. *Alexander* 7. *Noah* 8. *Daniel*	*n=5*	2. *Michael* 4. *Joshua* 7. *Andrew* 9. *Daniel* 10. *Tyler*	*n=5*	4. *Joshua* 5. *Daniel* 6. *David* 7. *Andrew* 9. *Justin*	*n=5*
Top 50* N=37 (*number of names from the sample in the top 50)		Top 50* N=37		Top 50* N=32	
Top 100 N= 52		Top 100 N=50		Top 100 N=41	
Not in the Top 1000 N=15		Not in the Top 1000 N=15		Not in the Top 1000 N=25	

So for example, the name *Sophia* was ranked #2 in 2010, meaning that it was the second

most common name given to girls born in that year. All data was gathered from the Social

Security Administration Baby Names website (2011). Names were not grouped together if they were the same name but spelled differently for this category. This is because the Social Security Administration website operates using a single spelling of a name.

There were seven names from this study that made the top 10 lists for 2010 (2 girls' names and five boys' names). Nine of the names from this study made the top 10 in 2000. Only 2 names, *Daniel* and *Michael,* appear on the top 10 lists for both 2010 and 2000. Only one name from the sample, *Daniel,* was on the top ten lists in 1990, 2000, and 2010.

In terms of unpopularity, there were some names that did not appear in the top 1000 names, which is the point that the Social Security website does not even report the ranking. For 2010, there were fifteen names from this study that did not make the top 1000 names (eight male and seven female). Twenty-five names were not in the top 1000 in 1990. Ten of those 25 had become more popular by 2010 (meaning they were on the list of top 1000 names by that year). This means that many of the names had recently become more popular.

Some of the names in this study have grown tremendously in popularity in the past ten or twenty years. For example, the name *Addison* was not even in the top 1000 names in 1990 was ranked #322 in 2000 and #11 in 2010 (Social Security Administration website 2011). There are numerous examples of steady increases in popularity, including *Ella,* which jumped 843 spots in the past twenty years to #13 in 2010. Curious as to why specific names like this increased so dramatically in popularity, I discovered that interestingly, the name *Ella* had the same ranking in the year 1880 that it did in the year 2010. This just demonstrates the rises and falls in popularity of names and the cyclical nature of these occurrences. The names that surged in popularity from not being ranked in the top 1000 to being ranked as high as number 79 include:

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For girls:	1990	2010	For boys:	1990	2010
Payton	>1000	#79	*Hudson*	>1000	#138
Isabelle	>1000	#105	*Braylon*	>1000	#236
Alivia	>1000	#174	*Luca*	>1000	#271
Miley	>1000	#217	*Jayce*	>1000	#298
Halle	>1000	#551	*Tristen*	>1000	#334
Jaylee	>1000	#612	*Landyn*	>1000	#371
Regan	>1000	#719	*Triston*	>1000	#574

Regardless of where they started off in the rankings, 19 girls' names and 24 boys' names from this sample showed a general increase in popularity between 1990 and 2010. There were several names that showed a dramatic increase in popularity in just five years (from 2005-2010). The names with the most dramatic increases in popularity in just five years include: *Landyn, Jaylee, Jayce, Hudson, Luca,* and *Braylon.*

There were also names that during these past 20 years showed a decrease in popularity, some of these decreases being quite large. *Garret* was ranked #505 in 1990 but was not in the top 1000 in 2010, similar to *Coby, Jarrett,* and *Keri.* Thirty-one names total (17 boys' names and 14 girls' names) were decreasing overall in popularity by 2010. The rest of the names were inconsistently increasing and decreasing and were labeled neither 'generally increasing' or 'generally decreasing in popularity.'

Along with popularity comes the theme of uniqueness. A large number of participants spoke of their desire or the challenge of selecting unique names, yet names that were not "weird." Overall, there were 25 names: 14 boys' (20.6% of all boys) and 11 girls' (22.9% of all girls') names chosen because they were "unique." A few participants actively sought out names that were not too popular, such as #53 wanting to "stay away from Top Baby Name options" or #25, who sought names "no higher than 50 on SSN [Social Security Names] website in last 10 years."

Variations of the theme of being unique included:

Uncommon Names   n=4

#35 *Charity*	"not too many people have that name"
#33 *Garret*	"neither of us had heard of it too often"
#36 *Braylon*	[challenge] "finding one that you didn't hear all the time"
#39 *Iris*	"not used very often"

Preference for Different Names   n=3

#48 *Maxton*	"I like different names"
#38 *Landyn*	"I wanted the names to not be popular at the time. But they all became popular afterwards. I wanted different [names that would] stand out as cute and unique"
#37 *Philip*	"not as common as other names"

Unique but not Strange   n=4

#47 *Avery*	"unique but not too crazy"
#1 *Colton*	"it can be hard to pick unique names without ending up with strange names"
#46 *Braden*	"wanted something different but not too way out."
#40 *Landon*	"not too common nor too weird"

On the other hand, two parents preferred more common names: #7 *Addison* chosen specifically off of the list of Top Baby names in 2007 and #26 *Tyler* observed to be "popular at the time-on tv, etc."

When it comes to popularity within the sample, there were numerous name duplicates. Overall, there were 56 male first names for 68 boys and 43 female first names for 48 girls. That means that 80% of girls had a name that was not shared by any other girl in this study compared to 66% of boys who had a name not shared by anyone else in this study. Twenty-three boys and 10 girls shared their name with other boys and girls, respectively, in this study. The full results are shown below:

Table 8: Duplicate Names in the Sample

	BOYS N=68	GIRLS N=48	BOYS MIDDLES N=67 (one boy had no middle name)	GIRLS MIDDLES (N=46 two girls had no middle name)
# of NAMES	56	43	44	27
# of NAMES NOT DUPLICATED	45	38	32	20
# of NAMES DUPLICATED	11	5	12	7
DUPLICATED x6 times	0	0	0	2
X5	0	0	1	1
X4	0	0	2	0
X3	1	0	4	1
X2	10	5	5	3

The male names that were duplicated were: *Tristan/Triston/Tristen* (appeared 3 times, spelled differently): *Adam, Andrew, David, Eric, Evan, Gavin, Landyn/Landon, Mark, Seth* and *Tyler* (appearing 2 times each). The female names that were duplicated were: *Elizabeth, Ella, Katherine/Kathryn, Morgan,* and *Paige* (appearing 2 times each). Five of the duplicated names were names that were "just liked" by both sets of parents, and the majority of those were found in baby name books or websites. A lot of the duplicate names had mixed origins, however, meaning that one couple might have "just liked" the name while another chose it to honor a relative. One name was chosen by both sets of parents from the Bible, one name was chosen by parents from two separate media outlets (sports and film) and one name was chosen by both parents from the same movie.

Middle names were duplicated much more frequently. There were only 44 male middle names for 68 males and 27 female middle names for 48 females. That means that only about 65% of males did not share their names with another male in this study and only 56% of females did not share their names with another female. The male middle

names that were duplicated were: *Matthew* (5 times), *Michael and Christopher* (4 times

each), *David, Lee, Patrick,* and *Robert* (3 times each), and *Alan, Daniel, James, Joseph,*

and *William* (2 times each). The female middle names that were duplicated were:

Elizabeth and *Lee/Leigh* (6 times each), *Marie* (5 times), *Lynn* (3 times), and

Nichole/Nicole, Rene/Renee, and *Anne/Ann* (2 times).

Interestingly, one parent who reported choosing a name because "I wanted something

uncommon that you don't hear very often" (#18) chose a name that appeared 3 times in

this study of only 116 children from the same three daycare facilities. This shows that

duplication can be far from intentional.

There were 25 names in the study which the parents chose out of an expressed

desire for unique, uncommon, or 'don't hear very often' names. Out of those 25, there

were seven that were not in the top 1000 names of 2010. Five of those seven names

(*Adria, Maddux, Mette, Maxton,* and *Raya)* were not in the top 1000 in 1990, 1995, 2000,

2005, or 2010. These five names could be considered truly unique if the qualifications

for unique are described as being ranked in the top 1000. The remaining two names that

were not in the top 1000 in 2010 (*Coby* and *Garret)* had were ranked in the top 1000 in

1990 but dropped out of popularity. Of all of the 25 names chosen for being unique, for

the 19 that appeared in the top 1000, the median ranking in 2010 was 73. This means that

although the names were perceived to be unique, collectively, they scored a ranking 73,

placing the names (not counting the six >1000-ranked names) in the top 100.

Three names out of the 25 'desire for unique' names had decreased in popularity

while the remaining 14 were rising in popularity from 1990 to 2010. Several of these

names had risen significantly in popularity over the twenty-year and even the most recent

five-year period, including seven which were in the top 50 in 2010 (*Mason, Logan, Avery, Owen, Evelyn, Jackson,* and *Landon)*. This case is indicative that there were widespread taste patterns occurring in the country that these parents may not have been aware of. In other words, many different sets of parents chose the same name independently of each other. At least these seven parents believed that they were picking a name that would not be very common, when actually those names became somewhat common for newborns in 2010. Some of these names rose significantly in popularity in a very short period of time. For example, *Landon* was ranked #200 in 2000 and rose to #32 by 2010. As one parent (Participant #38) expressed on her survey, "I wanted the names to not be popular at the time. But they all became popular afterwards. I wanted different [names that would] stand out as cute and unique" and just to reiterate the point, she later commented, "they ended up becoming popular names." And she had a point. One of her sons' names was not in the top 1000 until 2004 but by 2010 it was #371 (Social Security Administration website 2011).

If name rankings are considered in the context of parental education levels, a fascinating pattern emerges. Table 9 below demonstrates how there is a steady increase in likelihood of using names in the Top 20 and in the Top 50 as the level of parental education increases.

TABLE 9: Parents' Choice of Top Names based on Educational Attainment

EDUCATION LEVEL		TOP 20		TOP 50
High School	Number of Names given by High School parents in the Top 20 in 2010	N=1 (4.8% of 21 total High School names)	Number of Names given by High School parents in the Top 50 in 2010	N=3 (14.3% of 21 total High School names)
Some College	Number of Names given by parents in the Top 20 in 2010	N=4 (11.4% of 35 Some College names)	Number of Names given by parents in the Top 50 in 2010	N=12 (34.3% of 35 Some College names)
College	Number of Names given by parents in the Top 20 in 2010	N=6 (23.1% of 26 College names)	Number of Names given by parents in the Top 50 in 2010	N=12 (46.2% of 26 College names)
Adv. Degree	Number of Names given by parents in the Top 20 in 2010	N=9 (26.5% of 34 Adv. Degree Names)	Number of Names given by parents in the Top 50 in 2010	N=17 (50% of 34 Adv. Degree Names)

This shows that parents with Advanced degrees are more likely to give their child a name in the Top 20 or the Top 50 than a parent who has received only a High School education. These name rankings, as reported by the Social Security Administration Baby Names Website (2011), are from 2010, which is most likely a few years after the child was born. These results about the most popular names could show a pattern of parental preference based on class. If popular names are classified as trendier, then the more educated appear to prefer the trendier names. Yet there are multiple factors to be considered, such as more kin names being used by parents with more education. There are also other variables like race and class which were not as salient in this study because there was little racial diversity and education was the only class variable solicited. A somewhat different pattern emerges for this theme of trendiness if it is examined from the opposite direction, meaning whether or not names have a legacy.

In order to determine which names have long-standing legacies, or "longevity," I cross-checked each first name against the 1936 book by Eric Partridge *Name This Child:*

A Dictionary of English and American Christian Names. The book provides a broad list of names from various origins, especially Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, French, Celtic, and Latin (Partridge 1936:5). In using this book, my objective was to identify names that have been widely used in the United States for generations. This way, even if a name like *Elizabeth* does not appear in the list of Top 10 baby names in the Social Security Administration index, I would not be forced to classify it as unique, but could classify it as a name with longevity in this country. By attempting to determine which names are supposedly 'trendy' and which names have a greater "longevity," I hoped to understand the motives as to why people select certain names.

Overall, more boys' names than girls' names qualified as having 'longevity.' The extended results can be found in Table 10 in Appendix A. Sixty-six names total for boys and girls appeared in the book (56.9%), meaning over half of the names could be considered to have longevity. For boys, 61.8% (n=42) of the names appeared in the 1936 name book compared to only 50% of the girls' names (n=24). The largest number of girls' names from the 1936 book was given to girls by parents with Advanced degrees. The largest number of boys' names came in the book came from parents with Some College experience, followed by parents with Advanced degrees. The highest percentage of names which appeared in the book for both boys and girls, were names given to the children of parents with Advanced degrees. The fewest number of boys' names and second fewest number of girls' names in the book came from parents with a High School education.

For boys, 68.8% of the names of parents with advanced degrees appeared in the book. For girls, 66.7% of girls born to parents with advanced degrees had names with

longevity, however only 30% of girls born to college-educated parents had names with longevity. On the lower end of the spectrum, only 41.7% of boys and 47.6% of girls born to high school graduates had names with longevity. These results very moderately show an inclination of parents with more education preferring names with "longevity" that appeared in the 1936 book. This might be seen as providing moderate evidence to support a hypothesis that less educated parents are more likely to select 'trendy' names, while parents with higher education are more likely to select names with longevity. However, as shown above, parents with higher education were also more likely to select the highest ranked, or the most popular name. Therefore, I feel the correlation between education and longevity is somewhat inconclusive.

In terms of kinship, only 5 family names given as first names did not appear in the 1936 book. There were 20 names total that were family names that were also in the 1936 book, 10 girls' names and 10 boys' names. The majority of these (11 names out of the 20) were 2 generations removed followed by one generation removed (8 names).

Longevity, popularity, and uniqueness are all valuable factors of naming practices. The responses to this survey show that parents often desired uniqueness in names. Some of these parents succeeded in selecting unique names as of 2010, while others were unaware that the names they were choosing would become widely used in the country a few years later. Thus is the nature of naming. The increases and decreases in name popularity can be difficult to predict, since they can fluctuate rapidly. There was more diversity among girls' names (meaning fewer duplications) than boys' names. Fewer girls' names than boy's names had longevity. There was also a slight tendency for parents with higher education to select the most popular names, but also the highest

number of names with longevity. Yet popularity does not necessarily translate to trendier names, since traditional names that have been commonly used for centuries, or names with "longevity" may still be popular. It is difficult to predict years in advance which names with longevity might see a reappearance on the Top Name lists and it is difficult to know for how long they will remain popular. One thing that these responses did reveal is that many parents are vocal about how popular they want a name to be, and this alone is significant to studying naming behavior.

The responses of the participants in this study reflect the widely diverse ways that people select names and the incredibly rich symbolic meaning that names have. Names signify gender roles, parents' roles and the importance of the nuclear family and extended kin network, and the influence of naming resources. This chapter has provided insight into the name selection process of parents and the ways in which the parents operate within their cultural context. Now that the results have been explored in great detail, the implications of these results can be discussed. This study was compared both to past research on the topic of naming as well as the theories postulated by social scientists who have also sought to better understand naming behavior.

Chapter 6:

Discussion

This study attempted to provide new insights into naming and also show the changes in naming over time by partially replicating past studies. The discussion of the results from the previous chapter will include a review of the relevant research that in some areas was replicated, and will describe how this study differed. The results mirrored the findings of past research on several elements of naming. Themes also emerged which past research has not explored. In placing this research into the context of other anthropological and social scientific research, the importance of naming becomes evident.

The Cultural Implications of Patterns in Kin Naming

To begin with, there was a very high tendency towards naming children after kin in my sample. There are many reasons why parents might choose to name their children after relatives. According to Alice Rossi (1965), "naming a child after a relative is not merely a gesture of solidarity with a particular relative; it may be a symbolic means for linking the parents and their children to some emotionally significant aspect of the past" (503). Thus, some parents chose to honor certain relatives, to honor a family tradition, or to link their children to their past in some way. By linking kin naming in this sample to past research, I hope to explain some of the motives that parents expressed to me in order to better understand the phenomena of kin naming and show how it has and has not differed from other data. The major themes that emerged were the prominence of the patriline and the nuclear family, and the gender roles exemplified by naming.

In a patrilineal society, like the U.S., descent is traced through the male line. The responsibility for propagating the group falls upon men's shoulders, "thereby enhancing their social importance" (Haviland *et al.* 2010:272). The kinship patterns in this study reflect both Anglo-American and Judeo-Christian traditions that are highly prevalent in America. An overwhelming majority of my participants were Caucasian Christians, and the names that they gave their children are a form of expressive culture of this group. One of the values among this group is certainly kin naming as a way to honor a relative or establish a connection between the child and a relative.

The U.S. system of kinship in some ways mirrors the Eskimo system of kinship in which relatives outside of the nuclear family are grouped together, regardless of which side of the family they are on (Haviland *et al*. 2010). The father's brother is not distinguished from the mother's brother: all of them are simply "uncles" (Haviland *et al*. 2010:278). The nuclear family is referred to by distinct terms (i.e. 'parents' and 'siblings') because these are the family members most active and most significant in our daily lives (Haviland *et al*. 2010). This created issues in my study when I attempted to divide the kin that children were named for into matrilineal and patrilineal kin, because often times, participants would not specify kin such as "aunts." My study demonstrates to some extent, the existence of patrilineal and bilateral kinship, which reflects the significance of generational descent, and the significance of kin in day-to-day life. Along these lines, friends appeared to serving the role as fictive kin for some of these families. The slightly higher number of children in this sample given the names of friends of their parents than in Rossi's 1965 study suggests a growing importance of parents' friends as fictive kin.

I found a similar number of boys named for kin in my sample that Alice Rossi found in her 1965 study of naming among 347 Caucasian, middle-class families in Chicago. This study conducted in a small Midwestern town is comparable in being primarily white and based on the education levels, potentially largely-middle-class, allowing the most significant variable of comparison to be the time period. Overall, the factor of time progression seemed to have little effect on kin naming. Her major findings are as follows: Rossi (1965) found that in five out of every six families (about 83%), at least one child was named after a family member. She found that overall, 16% of families did not have a child named for kin, 36% had at least one but not all children named for kin, and 48% of families gave all of their children kin names (Rossi 1965:503).

Dividing the results by gender, 70% of her 477 boys were named after kin (not distinguishing between first and middle names), including 78% of her 279 1st-born boys (Rossi 1965:504). The number of 1st-born boys given kin names in her study was greater than the number of 2nd-born boys given kin names, which was greater than the number of 3rd and 4th-born boys (Rossi 1965:504). This same decreasing pattern occurred with the girls' names based on birth order. Out of the 474 girls in her study, 52% were named for kin. Rossi found that 72% of girls and 48% of boys were named for both maternal and paternal kin, bilaterally (1965:505). Rossi (1965) claimed that the "strong tendency is for daughters to represent the fusion of the two sides of the family" (505). She also examined the generational depth of kin naming, meaning the number of children named from relatives one generation away from the children up to four generations removed. She found that the highest percentage of family names came from two generations

removed (44%). In Rossi's study, grandparents and great aunts/uncles were seemingly given namesaking priority over parents, aunts and uncles.

I found that 60.7% of all families gave all of their children family names (as a first and/or middle name) when those families with only one child who gave that child a kin name are included. That figure drops to 44.6% when I only considered families with multiple children who were all given at least one family name. Rossi does not say whether or not she included only children. If she did include families with only one child, my number was found to be much higher than what she found in her data. I found that 14.3% of all families (with one or more kids) named none of their children after family (first or middle names), compared to her 16%. Again, there is much similarity. In my study, 85.7% of the families gave at least one child a family first or middle name, similar to Rossi's sample in which 83% of the families gave at least one child a family name. These numbers are very close, yet again. However, when examining only first names (something Rossi does not specify) this number drops to 33.9%, meaning that about one third of all families gave at least one child a family first name.

I found that 77.9% of my 68 boys were named for kin, which is a slightly higher rate of kin naming for the boys than the 70% in Rossi's study in 1965. I found that 76.2% of my 42 1st born boys were named after kin, compared to Rossi's 78% of her 279 1st-born boys. These figures are remarkably similar, despite having a smaller sample size in this case. Where my study diverges is that I had a higher rate of 2nd-born boys named for kin than first-born boys, while Rossi's data showed kin naming decreasingly steadily from the first-born to the fourth-born. This pattern did occur for the girls in Rossi's study as well as the girls in mine. In the 1965 study 52% of all 474 girls were named for kin

compared to 62.5% of the 48 girls in my study. Our figures were also very similar when broken down by birth order.

I did find a similar percentage of boys and girls named for only maternal kin (meaning kin on the mother's side of the family) that Rossi (1965) found. In my data, 36% of the boys' first or middle names and 80% of the girls' first or middle names came from maternal kin compared to Rossi's 42% for boys and 73% for girls (1965:505). When it comes to children named for paternal kin, the percentage in my study named after paternal kin was again similar to the percentage in Rossi's study: 58.5% of boys in my study compared to 77% of the boys in her study were given first or middle paternal kin names, and 40% of the girls in my study compared to her 41% of girls (1965:505). My figures and Rossi's (1965) figures include first and middle names as well as children named for kin from both sides of the family.

When it comes to gender differences, the fact that maternal kin names are more widely used than in Rossi's study in the 1960s, signals a shift away from the patriarchal nature of American society. The fact that more boys were named for paternal kin than maternal kin and more girls for maternal kin, might simply be explained by the fact that many boys received their fathers' names and more girls received their mother's middle names, keeping in line with the gender association of a particular name. Yet there are more factors in this sample to consider in drawing conclusions about gender dynamics.

There were a significantly lower number of children in my study named bilaterally (for a relative from the maternal side and one from the paternal side) than in the Rossi study. In my study those percentages were only 10% of girls and 5.7% of boys given kin names compared to 72% and 48%, respectively in her study. This is a

dramatically smaller percentage. My sample loosely supports Rossi's (1965) theory that girls are more likely than boys to be given bilateral names, potentially fitting her argument that this is used as a way to bridge the maternal and paternal sides of the family. However, there is a much smaller percentage of bilateral naming in general in this sample, which could reflect a move towards naming multiple children bilaterally. Within one family, one child was given a maternal kin name and a second child was given a paternal kin name, for example. This type of bilateral naming occurred for approximately half of the families with multiple children. Thus, it may be more significant for parents today to have one child representing each side of the family than for one child to have to represent both sides. Using Rossi's (1965) theory about daughters being used to symbolically unite the mother's side of the family and the father's side of the family through the naming of one child, my interpretation of this data is that bilateral naming is now more spread out over multiple children. With this twist on bilateral naming, it is not just one child who fuses the two families together, but each child who is given a role in reinforcing the unity and importance of the nuclear family.

In my study, the highest percentage of family names came from one generation removed (43.9%) compared to Rossi's 44% of kin that were two generations removed. Overall, the results are very similar, except with slightly more emphasis on the parental generation than the grandparental. This again reflects a shift towards more emphasis placed on the nuclear family: meaning there are more people named for their parents than there were in past generations, minimizing the role of the demographic differences between the Rossi study and this one.

Looking at different generations, there were some surprising similarities about kin naming that emerged when examining the differences between the results of this study and the results of Rossi's 1965 study when she broke her results down by the decade in which each child was named. The percentage of sons named for maternal kin was identical to the percentage from the 1930s. The percentage of daughters named for paternal kin was 2 percentage points away from the percentage Rossi found for the children born in the 1940s. The percentage of daughters named for maternal kin was 1 percentage point away from the percentage Rossi found for the children born in the 1930s. The biggest difference is in the much smaller percentage of sons named for paternal kin today, which dropped from the lowest 74% it was in any of the decades in Rossi's study to 59% in this sample. This difference might be explained by the fact that in my study, there were slightly more boys born to parents of lesser education (high school or some college) than higher education (college and advanced degrees) who have been found to be the largest demographic to use kin naming, especially males inheriting their fathers' names (Taylor 1974). Yet overall, this data shows that kin naming actually has experienced only minor changes between the early to mid-1900s and the 2000s.

Kin naming has been shown to be an indicator of class as well as transferrable status. In a study conducted by Taylor (1974), who analyzed names of firstborn Black and White males born in Richmond, Virginia between 1913-1968, he found evidence to support a theory that kin naming (especially the uses of suffixes like "junior") was more common among upper classes (13). This led him to propose that suffixes are symbols of status, which can be usurped and theoretically passed down through generations (Taylor 1974:20). In my study, I did find evidence that kin naming is more common among the

higher educated parents who completed the surveys. The majority of families who gave

all of their children family names had advanced degrees. Parents with advanced degrees

were slightly more likely to give their children kin names, both maternal and paternal.

However, in the case of the three boys who share a name with their father and past

generations, the educational attainments of their parents were mixed. One of the boys

who inherited his father's name was born to a parent with a high school education, one

was born to a parent who had completed some college, and one was born to a parent who

had an advanced degree.

It is important to consider that it was three mothers who completed the surveys of

these boys, while Taylor (1974) used the fathers' occupation as a class indicator. In this

study only the parent filling out the survey was asked for his or her educational

attainment, and the majority were mothers. The moderate evidence towards kin naming

being more prevalent among higher educated parents who completed the survey should

not be overlooked. Education can be considered a form of prestige for parents. When it

comes to kin naming, especially in a study in which parental names were frequently

passed down, passing down one's name may be seen as passing down some of that

prestige. It may be more common for parents with advanced degrees. The logic used by

Taylor and by Alford (1988) whose later study, discussed below, also addressed this

theory, was that "the greater the prestige of a family, the more it will be concerned with

prestige perpetuation" (Alford 1988:133). In this way, the slightly higher incidence of

kin naming for parents with advanced degrees may be better understood.

When comparing this study to Rossi's 1965 study, there were generally more

similarities than differences. The overall number of families who gave their children kin

names might be reflective in that this study was conducted with White, middle-class families in the Midwest as well. Second-born boys in my study appear to have been assigned more weight than first-born boys in receiving kin names, suggesting a possible decline in the significance of the hierarchy of male birth order. There was also evidence that gender roles between these populations have shifted over time. There were more maternal kin names given to males and females and there were more paternal names given to females. While this might suggest more cross-gender kin-naming, overall the emphasis on the patriline in naming was profound.

When the results of my study are compared to Alford's 1988 replication of Rossi's 1965 study, the findings regarding kin naming are again notably similar. Alford (1988) conducted his research with 400 primarily White, rural, mostly lower-middle class to middle-middle class, and Protestant parents in Oklahoma. One of Alford's (1988) major findings, like Taylor (1974), is that the rate of kin naming was higher for the upper classes. He found a high percentage of boys named for kin and a lower percentage of girls named for kin. Alford's (1988) percentages of kin naming for both boys and girls were lower than in Rossi's study, which he explained by the lower class standing of his participants in Oklahoma. Finally, Alford postulates that his data suggests a higher value placed on the aesthetic appeal of girls' names. He describes that "American parents are more interested in the aesthetic value of girls' names than in that of boys' names as one feature of a general cultural value emphasizing attractiveness for females and accomplishment for males" (1988:134). This, and several of the other theories were supported in data from my study. In my sample, there was a slightly higher incidence of

kin naming than in Alford's study: 78% of boys in my sample compared to 67% in his as well as 62.5% of girls in my study compared to 46% of his.

Alford's 1988 research on kin names bestowed in Oklahoma, did find that kin names were used for middle names much more frequently than for first names. Alford (1988) postulated that many parents consider using a kin name as a middle name as still honoring a relative and connecting the child to kin, while still enabling parents to give the child an aesthetically preferred name as the first name. He proposed that parents might be under the opinion that "while the middle name becomes a part of the child's formal identity, the child's everyday identity is primarily associated with the name that he or she goes by" (Alford 1988:135). So if a kin name was more old-fashioned, the child still had a more popular or aesthetically appealing name to actively use.

Kin names were used more often as middle names than for first names in my sample as well. Furthermore, about one third of the kin names chosen for children's first or middle names were the relative's middle names. I would also agree that my results demonstrated that most of the kin names that were used as middle names for the children in my sample were paired with first names that were simply "liked" by the parents. In my opinion, the results from my study do corroborate Alford's (1988) argument that kin names are still seen as symbolically meaningful as middle names while the more actively used first names reflect more of the personal preference of the parents. More research would be needed to understand the role of the middle name to these parents. It must be noted that the middle names of relatives were often chosen, with some parents' responses signifying that they chose between the relative's first name and middle name, using their personal preference. Participant (#9) described wanting to use a family name, but not a

name she disliked. According to her statement, this participant felt like she fulfilled her duty by honoring their kin or carrying on a naming tradition, whilst still having a say in what the name is.

In terms of personal preference, my data supports Alford's (1988) theory that there is a higher value placed on the aesthetic appeal of girls' names. This explains the reason why more boys are given kin names. This also explains why more girls are given "liked it" names and are not named for any particular person more frequently than boys. There was also the theme of attributing other sorts of aesthetic qualities to a name such as #27 *Justin,* whose parents "liked the name, [it] sounded strong." These are subjective traits that the parents have assigned to the named they chose in order to justify those choices. Of course, names that are 'strong' or 'pretty' to one person might have completely different aesthetic appeal or no appeal at all to a different person. This is an indication of the wide variety of tastes or preferences that appear in this study. Yet it is also important to remember that 78 names were chosen because they were "liked" in some capacity, so while not explicitly mentioning what they really liked about a name, we can attribute this to aesthetic appeal as well.

One related issue of kinship and personal preference was the way that the background of parents' own names influenced the background of their children's names. Some parents chose to carry on family or Biblical traditions. Yet there were 18 participants who did not know where their own name originated (n=9) or did not state where their name originated (n=9). Almost all of the 18 parents who did not know or list the origin of their name gave their children names just because they "liked" the name. Fifteen gave their first-born children names that they "liked" and 17 out of the 18 had

given at least one child a name chosen only because they "liked" by the second child. Six out of those 18 participants gave their children family names and 10 out of those 18 used baby name books or websites to find names. These results show that in some ways parents who did not know or did not want to reveal the origin of their name tended to pick names mostly on personal preference. While some parents want to continue a tradition like the ones that their names followed, parents whose names seemingly did not come from a tradition felt less compelled to do so, according to the responses.

In general, my sample had the greatest percentage of kin naming than the past studies of Rossi (1965), Taylor (1974), and Alford (1988). All three of these studies used primarily White participants and the studies was conducted in a somewhat rural, somewhat suburban population, so the biggest difference in my study is the even spread of educational attainment, which could mean a wider socioeconomic distribution. There is some indication that kin naming is just as common as it was in the years of those studies and evidence that it is slightly more common. Yet the potentially wider socioeconomic spread and different geographic area must be factored in. There are numerous aspects of kin naming and differences in population to consider in explaining both the similarities and the slight differences in this study.

The rules of kin naming in the U.S. do appear to follow the patterns of a predominantly Anglo-Saxon patriarchal society in which the patriline is reflected in naming. This was similar to the case of the town in Western Ireland in which children are giving names following a set pattern of bestowing grandparents' names to the first and second children, and then bestowing the names other 'relatives of prestige' (i.e. relatives in the clergy) on subsequent children (Breen 1982:703). In the U.S. there was a

much larger variety of kin names used besides the names of the grandparents. Yet the parents who filled out the survey often mentioned being "close" to that relative or friend, signifying that these are considered 'relatives of prestige' to these individuals.

As names can be seen as a form of prestige, kin naming can also be important in the symbolic transmittance of material possessions or property, as seen in Western Ireland as well (Breen 1982:711). This was evident in my sample in only a few cases. One mother (Participant #38) felt pressured by her in-laws to give her sons certain initials in order for them to inherit the family's jewelry for men that had certain initials on them. Interestingly, the mother decided against using those initials and chose names she had a personal preference towards. No other cases of parents naming their children kin names with the purpose of ensuring them an inheritance (in that case, the jewelry) were stated. Yet it should be noted that it was men's jewelry, indicative of distinctly male traditions.

The patrilineal, patriarchal society was somewhat reflected in who chose the names. There were many reports from mothers of finding it difficult to select a name that both parents liked. There were other reports of collaboration and compromise in the naming process. And there was also, most reflective of the patriarchy, some mothers who reported their children's names being the father's choice. Yet most of the participants who reported consulting no one else in the name selection were women—specifically mothers. This indicates that these mothers took on the primary responsibility of name giving. No matter who was given the role of ultimately selecting the name that would appear on the birth certificate, this study revealed in several ways how parents viewed this as a significant decision.

The nuclear family was emphasized in that about half of the participants reported not consulting anyone in choosing their children's names and even more reported getting suggestions and ignoring them. For these families, it was the parents' preferences which most came through in the names they selected. The more people involved in the naming process, the more preferences and potentially negative associations with each name suggested are revealed. Yet because these parents took chief responsibility form naming, it was their personal associations and connotations attributed to each name that were most carefully considered.

It must also be noted that surnames were not analyzed in this sample. They were excluded from the study for reasons of privacy and participant anonymity. Surnames might demonstrate more emphasis on the patriline in American Anglo-Saxon tradition in which most children are given their patrilineal surname from their father, yet this information was purposely not solicited. Surnames are significant to kin naming, and may be another way of reinforcing the patriline, however, they are usually not a matter of personal choice or individual identity but more of a legal matter, so this topic was not analyzed in this study.

One element of kin naming that was not solicited from participants, but which they revealed, was how naming children after deceased friends and relatives was considered a way to honor a person. There was one participant who explicitly took it as a sign of honor to name a child after someone who has passed away and seven participants specifically named their child after deceased persons. However, there are many cultures that feel very differently about using names of the deceased. The Tiwi people of an island chain off the coast of Australia have strict social codes against using the names of

the deceased or even speaking similar sounding words out of fear that the dead dislike

hearing their names used and their spirits will cause trouble (Hart 1930:282, 288). The

Balinese have similar codes which forbid the use of the names of those who have died,

following the belief that the deceased move closer to the realm of the gods and are thus

disconnected from the living generations (Hildred & Clifford Geertz 1975:85,92). These

cultures, along with many others, would not approve of the names of the dead being

bestowed upon children and would fear angering the spirits. On the other hand, the

Trobriand islanders see kin naming as a way to link newborns to their mother's ancestors

to bestow the name of a deceased matrilineal kin member (Weiner 1987:54). The dead

are viewed as playing an active role in the lives of these children (Weiner 1987:55). The

perceived consequences of naming children after the deceased is culturally prescribed in

most cases. In this sample, there were no misgivings about naming children after

deceased relatives reported.

This section dealt with one of the primary topics of analysis in this study: kinship.

The results of my research in a small town in the Midwestern U.S. have been compared

to the results of the studies that this project was modeled after. Striking similarities in the

rate of kin naming between this study and findings from as far back as the 1920s (Rossi

1965) led me to conclude that kin naming is still significant as it has been for generations.

Kin naming emphasized the nuclear family, the patrilineal nature of American society,

yet still the significant placement of much of the responsibility of naming onto mothers.

There was also a finding related to gender in that girls' names were less often kin names.

All of these studies discussed focused on kin naming and represented its importance to

naming in general. These authors recognized that kin naming had broader implications for the families and for the cultures that act upon them.

Names Becoming Traits

In many cultures, a majority of names have a direct lexical meaning. This lexical meaning often ties directly to a quality that those parents most desire in their child. There were several cross-cultural examples of this idea. In this sample, names were more often associated with certain traits, usually based on the characteristics of people with those names. As this section demonstrates, expectations that names create people were prevalent in this study.

The first example of names having lexical meanings is that 60% of names with meanings chosen by a sample of parents in Beijing, China were considered to reflect parental expectations, such as the names meaning "intelligence/knowledge," "success," "happiness," and many other traits (Gao 2011:167-168). Gao (2011) surveyed 103 Han Chinese parents in the city of Beijing in the early 2000s about the names they chose for their children and found that most parents believed names were supposed to stand for something that children would strive to live up to (169-170). At first glance this concept may seem foreign to Anglo-Saxon American parents choosing names because in the English language, there are far fewer personal names that directly signify a trait as those do. But for many parents, the associations they have with the names actually do become those traits that they expect for their children.

While other countries might use lexical translations to project parental expectations for a child, in this study, some parents projected the connotations they had

about each particular name they chose. Parents reported choosing certain names for being "strong" or "masculine" or not too "regal" or for the girls, "pretty" or "sweet and strong." These were largely qualities specific to each gender that the parents might desire in their children. Gao (2011) found similar data in China where the "male's identity is closely associated with toughness, strength, power, and greatness…[while] a Chinese female's identity is coupled with her physical appearance and the gentle disposition" (173). Though in China many names have lexical meanings that reflect ideas of gender, in American society, most meanings associated with each gender are just as culturally contextualized as the arbitrary semantic meanings assigned to different names.

Connotations about names form in several ways in American culture, as demonstrated in my study. These might develop based on past experiences, such as encountering people with that name, and even media or Biblical figures with that name. There is certainly something to be said for not naming children after people who we do not particularly like. Two participants (#12, #43) reported that being a school teacher make naming difficult, as every name has an association with a past student. This reflects how we associate particular names with particular people and how parents seek to avoid choosing the names that those people have. This may have operated for kin-naming as well. Parents may have been unlikely to name their child after a relative who was disliked, since the opposite was expressed in several cases (that the parent was close to that relative). The only case in which a name might be bestowed despite disliking a person, was for the sake of inheritance, discussed in the literature but not found in this sample. This may even extend beyond association and cross into the realm of divination:

the parents may hope that the child does not end up embodying the qualities that are disliked about the namesake.

Parents' desires and expectations for their children could extend to parents choosing names that they saw as "unique but not too far out there" (#47). These too are traits which parents could want their children to grow into: being unique but not weird. This was also seen in the case of the mother who wanted to choose a name that "couldn't be made fun of" (#49). This mother may have been attempting to protect her child, with the hopes that giving him a name that cannot be made fun of will help him to avoid being made fun of altogether.

For the Kru peoples of Liberia, whose indigenous naming practices were studied by ethnographer Elizabeth Tonkin (1980), children are believed to have opinions of the names chosen for them and they make their dislike of a name known by crying. While the notion that babies are able to decide their own fate may seem unusual at first glance to an Anglo-Saxon American in modern society, I received several responses in my surveys which conveyed somewhat similar ideas. There were two parents who each reported that their child "looked" like a certain name or that the name they had picked out, when the child was born, did not look like it fit the baby.

The Ashanti people of Ghana believe that names do determine certain traits and Jahoda (1954) found remarkable evidence that names actually might affect the future of a child. In this society, each child is given a name related to the day of the week on which they were born and some of these days have either positive or negative connotations (Jahoda, 1954: 193). The boys given names related to the 'bad' day of the week ended up committing more crimes in their adolescence than boys named for the 'good' day of the

week, as Jahoda found when examining juvenile court records (Jahoda, 1954: 194). The way that the Jahoda feel about these names may result in the society "selectively enhancing" the good or bad traits, thus affecting the way that the child grows up.

In my sample, one mother made a comment that very much reflected the Ashanti idea of names leading to certain outcomes. This mother felt her children fit their names, or grew into them. Although she made these claims presumably according to her associations of the names, she made it sound as if these were universally applicable by starting her comment with "as with all people" (Participant #2). Her claim was that the traits she saw in the names through their connotations (for one son, a particular film character), led her sons to embody those traits. Her son who had a name that she considered to be "calm, normal and sweet," also acted that way (Participant #3). Jahoda (1954) found similar responses from the Ashanti people about the way people who have certain names act. Jahoda (1954) did imply that the behavior emerged out of being treated according to those expectations, which might be occurring with this Participant #3 in my study, knowingly or subconsciously. This participant was not alone however in expecting certain responses in children based on names. Parents reported waiting a few days after their children were born, possibly to consider the way the child looked. These parents in my study did feel as if names are linked to physical features, and personality traits. For these participants, names held a great deal of power in that they could actually direct the life of their child. This will be another theme that emerged in people who named their children after specific celebrities or characters.

The Influence of the Media

The media represented a small but significant source of names in this sample. Yet interesting patterns emerged that had to do with the popularity of those names from the mass media and the expectations and associations that went along with those names, following the participants' responses. The results show that the mass media have a minimal influence on the increased popularity of many of the names. Names do become associated with people or groups, and the name appearing in the mass media is one way that this may occur.

There were two names in this sample of 116 which the two separate sets of parents both reported selecting because it was the name of the character in the film, *Legends of the Fall*. This name was the name of the main character, played by Brad Pitt. Based on the two boys in this rather small sample who were given this name because of the movie, one might assume that the movie popularized the name. However, according to the Social Security Administration Popular Baby Names website (2011), the name had already been fairly popular for years before, peaking at #222 in the mid 1980s. Though it saw a renewed spike in popularity after the film debuted, rescuing it from a slight decline in popularity, the film only reinvigorated this name's established popularity.

This fits with Lieberson's (2000) theories of the media's role in popularizing names. Through his extensive research on naming, he found that "if names are popularized because they appear in the media, this occurs only because other more fundamental influences have operated first to make names a matter of taste" (Lieberson 2000:65). Lieberson (2000) found a very weak correlation between the appearance of a name for the leading character in a movie and an increase in that name being given to

White children in Illinois five and ten years later. His thesis is that "the association of a taste need not simply involve an individual, it can be enhanced through its linkage with a class or category of people or activities that we find appealing" (Lieberson 2000:127). Names may suffer in popularity if the original source of that name declines in popularity (such as a popular figure or image) (Lieberson 2000). Many names lose popularity because they are tied to imagery that society no longer finds appealing (Lieberson 2000). One exception to this, which is difficult to predict, is a name that has been used for so long that it no longer needs the original namesake to perpetuate it (i.e. *Elizabeth*) (Lieberson 2000). These help to explain why the popularity of names is cyclical rather than unvarying over time.

Returning to the name from this sample, *Tristan,* it was already growing in popularity at the time of the film's pre-production stage and the writers may have been aware of that (Social Security Administration website 2011; "Brad Pitt: IMDB"). The writers may have thought the name fit the character, as we have already established that parents in this sample sometimes did. After all, the word 'tryst' denotes a romantic encounter and the character *Tristan* epitomized romance in that film. What is evident is that the character in this film does typify a category of people (in my words, 'handsome, rough and rugged, yet emotionally vulnerable cowboys') that two parents in this sample had a positive enough connotation to choose to name their sons after it. This category of people might see their names gain popularity because of positive connotations or parental aspirations.

There are many reasons why names become popular and it is necessary to consider many circumstances surrounding the decisions parents make each year. It is

unknown whether or not *Tristan* had been heard by the parents in this study before the release of the film. There was a third set of parents who also gave their son this name, though they did not cite *Legends of the Fall* as the source of the name. It is also unknown if the third set of parents did see the movie, or heard the name elsewhere, isolated from the context of the handsome cowboy genre. The reason why so many people just reported "liking" certain names is still largely unknown without the ability to pose follow-up questions to these participants.

Linguistic Patterns

In addition to associations or connotations, there are other factors of personal taste or preference that also play a role in naming. One facet of taste that past research examined is linguistic preferences among parents. There were patterns that occurred in the phonemes of names and also in the languages in which names could easily be pronounced.

To begin with, Lieberson and Bell (1992) conducted research on children born in the state of New York between 1973-1985 and drew several conclusions about preferences for certain phonemic name endings. They found that "many popular names are later unattractive because their phonemic structure is no longer in vogue" (Lieberson 2000:161). In terms of phonemic name endings, Lieberson and Bell (1992) found that the *"-a/schwa"* sound was very common for girls (34 of the top 100 names in their sample ended this way) and very uncommon for boys (520). Names that ended in consonants comprised 87% of the leading boys' names given to white male—about double the rate of girls' names given consonants (Lieberson and Bell 1992). These

authors made the argument that the minimal gender divide for the *–n* ending made it more appealing for highly educated mothers who do not hold as fast to 'traditional' gender roles for women, thus traditional vowel endings for girls, as the lower educated mothers do (Lieberson and Bell 1992:534). They postulated that *–ee* and *–a/schwa* endings are most traditional for girls and more distinctively feminine, thus having a greater appeal to less educated parents (Lieberson and Bell 1992: 534). Lieberson and Bell (1992) argued that "even when there is turnover, the new leading names for boys are more likely to reflect a taste for "old-fashioned" names" because with girls, it is "less critical that they be 'traditional' in the sense of having roots in society" (521). Their conclusions about the varied adherence of tradition and typical gender roles are based on weak evidence. Yet phonemic differences among the socioeconomic classes were evident.

There is further evidence of phonemic trends from Watanabe's 2005 study of naming in Japan. Once again there was a strong tendency for girls' names to have a "soft" and "feminine" phonological glide or nasals like *–me, -ni, -ka* and for boys' names to have a "tough" or "sharp" stop or fricative like *–ki, -ya, -ta* (Watanabe 2005:32). This implies feminine and masculine associations with particular phonemes, offering an explanation for the gender difference in names with those phonemes.

This explanation is useful in interpreting the preferences for girls' names ending in vowels, and boys' names ending in consonants that I found in my sample. Vowel-ending names (*–ee* and *–a/schwa* endings) were far more popular for the girls than for the boys. This corroborates both the results that Watanabe (2005) and Lieberson and Bell (1992) found. My study also corroborates the Lieberson and Bell (1992) finding that

there was an equal preference for boys' names and girls' names ending in –*n,* making this the most gender-neutral ending in my sample as well. The name ending –*n* for example was the single most popular ending for a boys' name in this sample but used for a number of girls' names in this sample as well.

The –*n* ending was not disproportionately more popular for parents of higher education in my sample, as Lieberson and Bell (1992) found that it was for girls' names. When it came to the education of the parents, the –*ee* ending for girls' names was slightly more popular for the less educated parents, yet the opposite was true for the –*a/schwa* names which were most popular for the parents with Advanced Degrees. In my study it appears that the –*a/schwa* ending may be considered more popular for the lesser educated parents, but association of –*ee* names with femininity or traditional girls' names may have faded. I found a similar result as these researchers in my sample: the "-a/schwa" sound was used for 25% of all girls' names and 4% of boys' names. I also found that a very high percentage (92.7%) of boys' names ended in consonants in my sample and that it was about double the rate of girls' names given consonants, comparable to what Lieberson and Bell (1992) found.

Further evidence for this could be the fact that out of the top 10 girls' names for the year 2010, six ended in –*a/schwa (Isabella, Sophia, Emma, Olivia, Ava,* and *Mia)* and only one boys' name in the top 10 boys' names did (*Noah)* (Social Security Administration Baby Names website 2011). Just because this name ending is more popular for girls does not necessarily mean it is more traditional or more feminine. However, now that it is being given to girls so much more often than boys, that association of the -*a/schwa* ending with girls has been strengthened. Phonemes were one

way that educational attainment groups differed in my study, but not entirely in the way that past literature found.

Linguistics did factor into naming among non-English speaking populations. Lieberson's (2000) study of Mexican-American immigrant naming in Texas between 1965-1990 revealed through examining birth records, that the names chosen by Mexican heritage parents in America were closely aligned with the names Anglo Americans in Texas chose. However, Mexican-American names retained linguistic similarities that made them easy to pronounce in English and Spanish (Lieberson 2000:186).

The overwhelming majority of my sample consisted of Caucasian women, which did not give me much data to be able to compare the responses across racial/ethnic lines or gender lines. However, there were two Hispanic mothers (Participants #11—a father who spoke of his Hispanic wife's involvement and #44) in this sample who reported that an important factor in choosing their children's names was that the names were easy to pronounce in both English and Spanish. This is very similar to the results of Lieberson's (2000) analysis of Mexican-American naming. For instance, Participant #44 chose the name *Michelle,* which is a widely used Anglo-American name, but which is also highly compatible with Spanish phonology. The first family with a parent of Hispanic ethnicity in my sample (#11) chose an Italian name and a name that could be Italian/Spanish in origin. The other (#44) chose two widely-used Anglo American names. Thus, even similar linguistic (pronunciation) desires did not lead to similar preferences in names for the two Latina mothers in this sample. It is significant that this study primarily involved Caucasian mothers, because it does reflect upon the racial/ethnic make-up of the daycare

facilities in some way, and also reflects that it was primarily the mothers who took responsibility for answering questions regarding these children's names.

The linguistic features of names in this sample supported evidence that sounds are used to distinguish genders and ethnicities, in the case of Spanish-speaking ethnicities. This shows how even seemingly minor aspects of a name, like phonemes, can signal widespread cultural phenomena. When parents independently select a girls' name that ends in a vowel, they are placing their child into the social matrix that often prescribes this vowel ending as distinctly feminine. Implied in the linguistic commonalities of names is that parents choose names individually in a larger social and cultural context. This will become more salient in the next section, which discusses common tastes in the sample.

Traditional and Unique Names

Uniqueness was a quality desired by many of the participants in my study. These parents often reported determining unique names by choosing a name that they had not heard very often. Yet naturally this raises the question of how one knows if a name is truly unique. This section explores the actual uniqueness of "unique" names and also discusses the gender differences that traditional names, trendy names, and unique names determine.

Overall, there were 19 names chosen for being "unique" which were in the top 1000 names in 2010 and 6 that were not in the top 1000. Those 6 names could possibly be classified as truly unique, yet the Social Security Administration website (2011) does not provide us with the number of children given each name, so even a name ranked

#1001 could still be the name of thousands of children born in 2010. The 19 names in

my study desired for being unique that were in the top 1000 had a median ranking of 73.

This signifies that the "unique" names were perhaps not as unpopular as the parents

hoped. Ten of the 19 'unique' names ranked in the top 100 in 2010, 8 of the names

ranked in the top 50, and 3 of the names ranked in the top 25. However, it must be taken

into account that these children were likely born before 2010. If the children in this study

are daycare-aged, their parents gave them these names they believed to be unique in the

years before 2010.   Names may be rising in popularity when they are chosen, but they

have not yet become so well known as to appear 'too popular.'

     As discussed above, parents desiring unique names could relate to parents' desires

for their children to stand out. Yet in several cases of parents desiring "unique" names

they actually chose names which shortly thereafter became quite popular. This is the

case for one mother who picked her son's name because she believed it to be unique,

while two other mothers from this study chose the same name (with the spellings varied).

Instead of having her son's name stand out at his daycare, now he is one of three boys

with the same name, potentially in his same daycare, in the same small town. I argue that

these 15 parents may dislike having common names for their children because they want

them to stand out. I also argue, based on literature regarding name association, that the

more people given a certain name and thereby associated with that name, lead to an

increased chance that a negative association will arise out of one of those people. This

theory derives from the data suggesting that parents associated names with people and

avoided names of people they may have disliked. With a unique name, there is more of a

chance that a child will be viewed tabula rasa by someone new, who has had fewer encounters with others with that name.

Researchers in the past have argued girls' names are more prone to the whims of fashion or trends just by lieu of the fact that there are more names for girls and fewer for boys. One of these studies was conducted by Allen *et al* (1941) who found in his study of Caucasian college students in the Midwest, found that men tend to have and also prefer common names while women tend to have and prefer more unusual names. These researchers also found that names waned in popularity once they had become too widely used in society (Allen *et al* 1941:292). While Allen *et al* (1941) does not offer any interpretation of why men and women differ in being given unusual names, there are explanations offered previously by Lieberson and Bell (1992) having to do with males being given more of a symbolic role for each family than female descendants and being more connected to societal roots for that reason (521).

To some extent, these arguments were supported in my study. There is some evidence to argue for girls' names being more prone to trends. More girls' names than boys' names were chosen because they were "just liked." A higher percentage of girls than boys were more likely to be named after no particular individual (family, friends, media figures, or Biblical figures). There were fewer girls' names duplicated in this study. When the ratio of the number of girls' names/boys' names to number of girls/boys was examined, there were more girls' names for the population than boys' names. More girls' names were unique, which suggests that they are less tied to tradition. In fact, there were fewer girls' names than boys' names in this sample that were also found in the 1936 book by Eric Partridge, classifying the girls' names by my standards as not having

'longevity.' There were more boys' names than girls' names in the Top 20 and Top 50,

suggesting that the boys' names are less unique and more widely known in this country.

This information signifies that more boys from this population were given more popular

or mainstream names than girls. However, there were also more boys than girls given

less frequently used names that were not even in the top 1000 names in 2010. This may

mean that boys had names that were more popular than girls to some extent but also more

unique or obscure (in the sense of not being in the top 1000).

It is crucial to note that while more boys were given 'traditional' names than girls,

there were also more boys than girls given kin names (78% of the boys compared to 63%

of the girls named for kin). Kin names from the generation in which the 1936 naming

book was published are obviously more likely to be featured in the book. The same

applies to names that can be classified as trendy or popular today. It cannot be stated

with any certainty that parents chose these names because they were stylish at the time if

they are kin names used in a past era.   As Lieberson (2000) demonstrates, "if a girl is

named after her maternal grandmother, for example, this choice may well tolerate a wider

range of levels of popularity than would a choice in which popularity is a central factor in

the decision" (155). However, the fact that so many relatives' middle names were used

does present the possibility that parents chose a trendier name out of the first and middle

name of a relative while still being able to claim homage to that relative. More research

would be needed to investigate this theory, however.

The popularity of names is a factor of taste, which past literature has examined

based on educational attainment. While obviously educational attainment does not

directly correlate to socioeconomic class, it does allow us to look at one way in which

naming differs based on the education attainment of the parent, which may vary the amount of cultural capital that parents have had access to (to borrow Bourgois' term). Education was chosen as a gauge for socioeconomic following Lieberson and Bell (1992) who made education the basis for much of the comparisons in their study of American naming practices. Their justification was Gans' (1974:70-71) position that "education is probably the most important influence of class on taste" (523). Therefore, they took information about their participants' education and crosschecked it against their findings about naming.

Several themes emerged based on parents' education levels in the Lieberson and Bell (1992) study of births in New York state between 1973-1985. Mothers with less education favored names without long-standing traditions more often than higher educated mothers (Lieberson and Bell 1992:533). Highly educated parents used unique boys' names less frequently, but otherwise uniqueness was fairly consistent across education levels (Lieberson and Bell 1992:530). These authors also found that girls' names were seen in the Top 20 names among less educated mothers only after they had been in the Top 20 names for higher educated women, implying a certain class diffusion model beginning with higher education tastes trickling down (Lieberson and Bell 1992:542). However, it must be kept in mind that other researchers have found evidence to refute the class diffusion model (Lieberson 2000). In my analysis, I did use Lieberson and Bell's (1992) applications of education differences as an indicator of taste in other ways. I took their educational differences model further in my study and also attempted to apply it to kin naming differences.

In my sample, educational difference themes emerged and some of them were aligned with the results of the Lieberson and Bell study (1992). Similar to the results that those researchers found, parents with advanced education were more likely to give their children 'traditional' names, in my case, names featured in the 1936 naming book. Overall, parents with higher education (with an emphasis on parents with advanced degrees) were the most likely to: 1) name all of their children after kin, but especially in their children's first names 2) give their daughters more names that were maternal in origin than paternal 3) give their sons names that were paternal in origin 4) give their children family names passed down for multiple generations 5) give their children Biblical names. These results demonstrate that kin naming appeared to be highly prevalent among families with higher education and that Christian names were also important. Kin naming expectations prevailed more often for the parents with advanced degrees, suggesting that family names were given higher priority over media names or names that came from the internet/baby naming books.

Parents with more education were also more likely to give their children names that would be in the Top 20 and Top 50 in 2010. Whether or not this shows that parents of high education are the trendsetters or trend followers, it would be nearly impossible to say without the specific years of birth of each child (left out of the surveys for participants' privacy). Since many parents with higher education did choose kin names or Biblical names there are certainly other factors to consider. Parents with higher education attainment levels were the least likely to 1) name their children after figures in the mass media or literature (although college-educated parents were the most likely in the latter case) and 2) use baby name books or websites.

Thus, it is interesting that despite using fewer sites or books listing popular names, parents of higher education did select more names that would become popular in 2010. This could provide evidence that they are more inclined towards trendsetting. This would be in line with the Lieberson and Bell (1992) results which showed that girls' names were seen in the Top 20 names among less educated mothers only after they had been in the Top 20 names for higher educated women. Yet this did not occur with boys' names. Most results of my study were in line with Lieberson and Bell (1992), who found that women with less education favored names without long-standing traditions more often than higher educated mothers. The authors failed to wholly justify why that theme might occur.

The traditional, trendy, or unique nature of names was quite important to many participants in this study. They considered names on the basis of these factors, often preferring more unique names, especially for girls. There was evidence to support the theory that girls' names can be less symbolic and more fashionable. Yet the use of kin names, which could originate from past generations, was certainly a factor in this finding. There was also evidence that higher education led to the selection of names with longer tradition, yet this is logical being that many parents with higher education chose kin names or Biblical names than the other educational categories.

To conclude, this chapter has described in detail the results of this study and how they compare to past social scientific research. The implications of kin naming and how it portrays gender and family dynamics have been shown, as well as the ways that names are viewed as dictating traits—even uniqueness to a place in history. From this analysis,

it is possible to understand the contribution that this study makes to naming practices and the field of anthropology.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the importance of naming to a sample of primarily Anglo-Saxon parents in the Midwestern U.S. Even a cursory look at the detail in the completed surveys would reveal how much thought some parents in this culture put into choosing a name. Many participants described at great length how they selected names for their children: reporting their challenges, their memories of coming across the perfect name, and even their battles with in-laws. There were many participants who spoke of the names they chose having "meaning"—referring to what each name means specifically to them. What they may be largely unaware of is how each name is situated in the greater cultural context in which they are deeply embedded. This study revealed that there is a large number of ways in which names are critically linked to one another in a cultural context. Names in this study revealed much in the way of kinship relations, gender dynamics in the family and in the greater culture, and the emphasis on both the nuclear family and the idealizing of individuality.

This research provided much insight into naming practices in the U.S. in a contemporary context, especially regarding kinship and gender. One of the primary findings of this study is that kinship is still a dominant aspect of naming. Kin naming was found in a majority of the participants, for both first names and middle names, but primarily for the middle names of the children in this sample. More boys were named for kin than girls, which Rossi (1965) suggested signified assigning boys a more symbolic role in carrying on family tradition. Girls' names, on the other hand, were more varied (with less duplication in this sample), were more likely to come from media sources like

fiction books or television, and were more often chosen simply because they were "liked." The results corroborated past evidence suggesting girls' names are more prone to trends rather than carrying symbolic significance (Lieberson and Bell 1992, Rossi 1965). One strong reflection of Anglo-Saxon American culture was observed in the high value placed on the patriline for kin names, as well as the patriarchy—reflected in the female participants whose husbands chose the names or else "let" them, the mothers, choose the names. This was also reflected in that parents chose names which either reflected their personal aspirations for what types of people their children would grow up to be (as in names that were "strong" for boys). Yet a majority of surveys were completed by mothers, who took responsibility for naming the children or at least were very much aware of the deciding factors.

The expression of personal preference and individuality was also a significant factor in the naming process for these participants. The fact that very few kin names were also reported being "liked," suggested the inclusion of personal preferences was limited in choosing a kin name. One way that this was reconciled is that the middle names of kin were often chosen to both honor that relative but also to give parents a choice between two names: the first and middle. The parents were the ones who felt primarily responsible for choosing the name of their child, and thus, the participants who consulted people outside of the nuclear family were the minority in this sample. So it was the personal preference of one or both of the parents that was strongly expressed. This reflects both the importance of the nuclear family, especially considering that the highest percentage of kin names came from the parents or the parent's generation (i.e.

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aunts or uncles), and the fact that parents stressed that this was a decision that ought to be made by parents alone.

Individuality was also expressed in the naming patterns and the reoccurring preference for "unique" names. A high number of participants stressed their desire to find a unique name, but also ones that would not be considered "weird." Yet at the same time, many of the unique names were not actually as unique as the parents believed, showing up multiple times in the sample or being rated somewhat highly on the Top Names list. This shows that parents are not always in a position to consider the wider cultural context in which they are choosing names. Names, such as many of the ones within this sample, rise and fall suddenly in popularity. Outside of rankings, expecting parents have little indication about which names other expecting parents are selecting. Increases or decreases in the popularity of names are difficult to predict, so even dedicated statisticians have trouble gauging the cycles of name popularity. Thus, many parents rely on their aesthetic preferences to select names, which are influenced by tastes appealing to their wider culture. One example of this is the popularity of the phoneme $-n$ being used as a name ending for boys and girls. I found evidence to loosely support the theory that names, like most tastes, trickle down in popularity from the upper classes to the lower classes (though my variable of choice was educational attainment) through imitation. This was only evident in one name ending being preferred by one education group over another, however.

The naming behavior observed in this study can be extended to the rest of the daycare centers at which the data was collected. I would argue that it is representative of the entire population of the town, and potentially, other similar-sized towns in the

Midwestern U.S. It would be too great a stretch of this small sample to claim that it is representative of any larger population. While this study can serve as more of a case study of the population of this town, the numerous similarities between the findings regarding names at these daycares and research conducted in Chicago (Rossi 1965) and Oklahoma (Alford 1988) do suggest that this population bears some resemblance to the populations studied by those researchers. It can be loosely concluded that this sample did signify similar patterns as these two locations at their respective time periods.

This study represents only the beginning of research on naming in the U.S. There is still much research that could be done in this culture to better understand this phenomenon on a wide scale. The first future research I would suggest is to do the same study, but with far more participants. This would provide a much bigger sample from which to draw conclusions. There are many differences in naming between different racial and ethnic groups that merit future study as well. While this project provides interesting insight on primarily Anglo-Saxon culture, it was too small a sample to understand Anglo-Saxon naming holistically. An additional investigation of naming might also compare multiple geographic areas in their naming, multiple races/ethnicities, or multiple religious groups.

It would be interesting to inquire about parents' relationships with each friend or relative after whom they named their child. It would also be interesting to learn what parents think about the power of names. For instance, what do parents think it means to name a child after someone—in terms of honoring a person or potentially inheriting the traits of that person? I would find it interesting to investigate parents' opinions of certain names and the connotations that they associate with each name, including what sources

led them to these associations. It would also be interesting to explore the value that parents place on having an uncommon or a popular name and what that says about their culture, their attitudes towards society, or even their social networks.

It would be interesting to see if the fact that there our fewer names in Anglo-Saxon culture that have direct lexical links to traits as in other languages and cultures will change as people search for more unique names. For instance, on a commercial that I recently heard for Levi Jeans, a woman who was interviewed about her jeans introduced her young daughters: *True*, *Brave*, *Soul*, and *Glow* ("Let's Curve ID Rubyellen Bratcher" [video clip] 2012). She followed up the introductions of her daughters with the statement, "yes those really are their names," almost as a testament to the fact that these names, like all names that denote a trait, are unusual in this country and this culture. At least, they were unusual, perhaps until now. Further research questions could also include, are parents who are better read more likely to give their children names from literature? Are film buffs more likely to choose names from movies? All of these factors could be considered in future research.

With more time and access to the additional resource, I would have conducted interviews to better understand the consequences and functions of names. Ideally, I would have been able to ask more follow-up questions of participants. I also would have liked to interview hospital staff in maternity wards or teachers who deal with children and their names regularly. I am curious to find out if there is any merit to the callous colloquialism, "you would get beaten up with a name like that"? What about teasing centered around names? If there is a trend towards a wider variety of names and thus, more 'unusual' names, then how will children and older generations react to unusual

names? These are all research questions that merit investigation, especially longitudinal

research. Along the lines of 'unusual' names, it would also be fascinating to study

perceptions of celebrity baby names and whether or not people view unique celebrity

baby names as breaking with cultural norms or as trend setting.

Unfortunately, without the ability to follow up with participants, I was not able to

inquire more into naming children after celebrities or fictive characters. By bestowing a

celebrity name, do parents hope for their children to grow up to be more like that

celebrity? Perhaps the name *Dylan* was meant solely to pay homage to Bob Dylan, but it

may also have been the wish of the father that his son grow up to be musical, or to share

the same incisive, spirited persona that Bob Dylan was so well known for. These are

further elements that could be investigated.

An additional aspect that merits further exploration is American views on naming

children after the deceased. Many cultures specifically forbid this practice, which is

widely accepted and even encouraged in the U.S. as a tribute. Perhaps even within the

dominant Anglo-Saxon American culture, there are people who might also believe that it

is in fact an ill omen to name someone after the dead. Do people in this society believe

that to name a child after someone who died young of an illness puts the child at risk of

dying young as well? This would also be something that further research should

investigate.

One result that did surprise me was how few parents reported bestowing names

pertaining to their cultural heritage. I expected to find many more cases of parents who

wanted to choose specifically Irish, Jewish, or French names, for example. From these

results, it appears that out of 116 children's names, cultural heritage was the explicit

reason for choosing only one name, which also happened to be a family name. While it is possible that parents made somewhat unconscious decisions about names associated with particular heritage, many of these participants may not feel connected to a specific ethnic heritage or may not feel the need to express it through naming. This might speak to the fact that this study was conducted in a community in Midwestern America, where the dominant culture is primarily based on Anglo-Saxon traditions, rather than individual ethnicities. A similar pattern occurred with the very few religious names and the large number of parents who reported practicing a Christian religion. Families who do not give their children religious names may consider themselves to be just as religious as families who did give their children religious names, so what distinguishes these families? These would be two additional phenomena to investigate.

While this study provides insight into the naming practices amongst Anglo-Saxons in the Midwestern U.S., there is still much research needed to complete a holistic approach to naming in American culture. Baby names remain a fascinating subject of conversation, as they are ever evolving in their nature, their number, their symbolism, and arguably, their uniqueness. The sparse study of naming in anthropology does a disservice to the significance that names have in our culture. Names wield great power. They identify and signal membership in a certain culture, a certain social group, and a certain family, while at the same time setting people apart as unique individuals. Names should not go undervalued as a rich source of data about a culture and the decisions that are made by people acting under influences of that culture. Anthropology would benefit greatly from more in-depth investigations on naming practices, as they reveal much about family relations, class relations, and even the influences of the mass media in a historical

moment. Names matter. Even The Doors were aware of the incredible power of a name

when they sang, "Hello, I love you, won't you tell me your name?"

Appendix A

Kin Naming Among Participants:

BOYS

(numbers correspond to participant numbers)
(HS= High School education, SC=Some College, COL= College education, ADV= Advanced degree)

PATERNAL
    Father: n=26
        First Names: n=4
            1st born: 23 (HS), 27*(SC), 34 (ADV), 51*(ADV)
        Middle Name: n=22
            1st born: 3 (SC), 4 (COL), 20 (HS), 22 (SC), 26(COL) 28 (COL), 30 (HS), 31*
            (HS), 34*(ADV), 36 (SC), 38(SC), 40* (COL), 43(ADV), 45* (ADV),
            48(COL), 49 (COL)
            2nd born: 14* (ADV), 17 (SC), 28 (COL), 33(HS), 37 (SC), 42*(ADV)

    Grandfather: n=9
        First Names: n=2
            27* (SC), 51*(ADV)
        Middle Names: n=7
            1st born: 10 (ADV), 31* (HS) 34*(ADV), 40* (COL) 45* (ADV) *2nd born:* 14*
            (ADV), 43 (ADV)
    Great-grandfather: n=3
        First Names: n=1
            27* (SC)
        Middle Names: n=2
            2nd born: 14*(ADV), 42*(ADV)
    Other: n=2
        First name: n=1
            1st born 8 (SC) (boy's brother)
        Middle Name: n=1
            1st born: 38 (SC)-father's brother
Patrilineal Tradition*: n=9
        First names: n=2
            1st born: 27* (SC), 51*(ADV)
        Middle Names: n= 7
            1st born: 31 *(HS), 34*(ADV), 40* (COL), 45* (ADV) 51*(ADV) *2nd born:* 14*
            (ADV) 42 *(ADV)

Paternal Unspecified
    Father's Grandfather: n=2
        Middle name: n=2
            2nd born: 4 (COL), 49(COL)
    Mother's Sister/Brother n=3
        Middle name: n=3
            1st born: 38 (SC)-uncle *2nd born:* 8 (SC)-aunt, *3rd born:* 38 (SC)
    Mother's Father n=8
        First Name: n=3
            First born: 54 (ADV)
            Second Born: 13 (SC), 49 (COL) N=2
        Middle Name: n=5

1st born: 1 (ADV), 33 (HS) *2nd born:* 43(ADV), 48*(COL)-gpa and dad *3rd born:* 3 (SC)

Mother's Grandfather (Mother's Father's Father) n=1
    Middle Name: n=1
        2nd born: 48*(COL)

Mother's Grandfather (Unspecified) n=1
    Middle Name: n=1
        2nd born: 49(COL)

Mother's Cousin: n=1
    Middle Name: n=1
        1st born: 14 (ADV)

Surname: n=4
    Middle Name: n=4
        1st born: 11* (ADV), 17* (SC), 32* (ADV)
        2nd born: 40(COL)

Bilateral: n=3
    Middle Name: n=3
        1st born: 38(SC) *2nd born:* 43(ADV), 49(COL)

Unspecified patriline/matriline: n=3
    Boy's uncle: n=1
        Middle Name: n=1
            2nd born: 22 (SC)
    Boy's Grandfather: n=2
        Middle Name: n=2
            1st born: 9 (SC), *3rd born:* 26 (COL)

GIRLS

Mother's side
    Mother:
        First name: n=1
            9 (SC)
        Middle Name: n=6
            1st born: 1 (ADV), 21 (SC) 24*(SC), 29(SC) **N=4**
            2nd born: 15 (ADV) 34* (ADV) **N=2**
    Grandmother (Mother's Mother):
        Middle name: n=8
            1st born: 2 (SC), 6 (COL), 10 (ADV) 15 (ADV), 24* (SC), 39(COL) 53(COL)
            2nd born: 34* (ADV)
    Great-Grandmother
        Middle names: n=1
            1st born: 24*(SC)
    Other:
        First name: n=1
            34(ADV) greatgreatgma
        Middle name: n=1
            1st born : 34(ADV)-gggma

Matrilineal tradition:
        Middle name: n=2
            1st born: 24*(SC), 2nd *born*: 34* (ADV

Mother's Patriline
    Mother's Sister n=3
        Middle name: n=3
            1st born: 19 (SC) maternal aunt, 30 (HS) maternal aunt, 47(ADV) maternal aunt

Mother's Side (Unspecified Maternal/paternal)

Mother's grandmother n=1
    First name
        2nd born: 15 (ADV)
    Middle name: n=3
        1st born: 4 (COL), 11 (ADV) **N=2**
        2nd born: 19 (SC) **N=1**
Cousin (of mother)
    First name: n=1
        1st born 30 (HS)
Other
    Middle name: n=1
        2nd born: 35(HS) gggpas' surname
Patriline (Father's Side)
    Father: n=3
        First names n=1
            Ist born 31 (HS)
        Middle names n=2
            1st born: 9 (SC), 29 (SC)
    Grandfather: n=1
        First name
            1st born: 6 (COL)
    Father's Sister n=1
        Middle name
            *1st born:*8 (SC)
    Father's Mother n=4
        First name: n=2
            1st born: 15 (ADV), 24 (SC)
        Middle name: n=2
            1st born: 39 (COL), 43(ADV)
    Father's Aunt (unspecified): n=1
        First name
            2nd born 34 (ADV)
    Father's Grandmother (unspecified)
        Middle name: n=2
            1st born: 45(ADV), 53 (COL)
Surname
    Middle name: n=1
        2nd born: 35(HS) gggpas
Bilateral
    Middle name n=3
        1st born: 29 (SC), 39(COL), 53(COL)
"Family Name"
    First name n=2
        1st born: 32 (ADV), 41 (HS)
Cousin (unspecified)
        First name: n=1
            19 (SC)
Grandfather (unspecified)
        Middle name: n=1
            2nd born: 56 (SC)

Table 4: <u>Families that Gave *All*, *Some*, or *None* of their Children Kin Names</u>

	ONLY FIRST NAMES	TOTAL (% of 56 families)	FIRST AND/OR MIDDLE NAMES	TOTAL (% of 56 families)
Families with ALL kids with kin names	#15, 32, 34	N=3 (5.4%)	#1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 40, 43, 45, 49	N=25 (44.6%)
(Only children named for kin)	#6, 24, 51	N=3 (5.4%)	#5, 6, 21, 24, 36, 39, 47, 51, 53	N=9 (16.1%)
Families with AT LEAST ONE CHILD BUT NOT ALL with a kin name	#2, 8, 9, 13, 19, 23, 27, 29, 30, 31, 41, 49, 54	N=13 (23.3%)	#12, 13, 20, 23, 26, 27, 35, 37, 41, 42, 48, 52, 54, 56	N=14 (25%)
Families with NO children with kin names	#1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 33, 35, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, 50, 52, 55, 56	N=29 (51.8%)	#7, 16, 18, 25, 44, 50, 55	N=7 (12.5%)
(Only children with no kin names)	#20, 5, 7, 21, 36, 46, 47, 53	N=8 (14.3%)	#46	N=1 (1.8%)

Table 5: Children Not Named a Particular Person* based on Education level of Parent

Education level: (High School, Some College, College, Advanced degree)	**BOYS**	HS	SC	COL	ADV	**GIRLS**	HS	SC	COL	ADV
1st born	**20** (Out of 42 1st born boys= *47.6%)*	6	4	6	4	**19** (Out of 38 1st born girls= *50%)*	1	7	6	5
2nd born	**12** (Out of 20 2nd born boys= *60%)*	2	6	2	2	**7** (Out of 10 2nd born girls= *70%)*	2	2	1	2
3rd/4th born	**2** (Out of 6 3rd/4th born boys= *33.3%)*	1	0	1	0	**0** (Out of 0 3rd/4th born girls= 0%)	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**34/68 boys (50%)**	**9 /12** = *75% of HS boys*	**10/24** = *41.7% of SC*	**9/16** = *56% of COL boys*	**6/16**= *37.5 % of ADV boys*	**26/48 girls (54%)**	**3/9** =33.3% *of HS girls*	**9/11** =81.1% *of SC girls*	**7/10** =70 *% of COL girls*	**7/18**= *38.9 % of ADV girls*

*(including family, friends, media figures, Biblical figures)

Table 6: Name Endings based on Education of Parent

	Ends in "N"	Ends in other consonant*	Ends in "EE"	Ends in "Elle"	Ends in –a/schwa	TOTAL
HIGH SCHOOL BOYS	1st born: 5 (18, 23, 31, 35, 46), 3rd born: 1 (20)	1st born: 3 (30, 33, 41) 2nd born: 2 (20, 33),	0	1st born: (20), 2nd, 3rd 4th born: 0	0	
	N= 6	N= 5	N= 0	N= 1	N= 0	12
	50% % OF HS BOYS/12	41.7% % OF HS BOYS/12	0% % OF HS BOYS/12	8.3% % OF HS BOYS/12	0% % OF HS BOYS/12	
HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS	1st born: 2 (19, 30)	1st born: 0, 2nd born: 1 (20)	1st born: 3 (31, 35, 41) 2nd born: 1 (19)	1st born: 0, 2nd born 1 (23)	1st born: 1 (23)	
	N= 2	N= 1	N= 4	N= 1	N= 1	9
	22.2% % OF HS GIRLS/9	11.1% % OF HS GIRLS/9	44.4% % OF HS GIRLS/9	11.1% % OF HS GIRLS/9	11.1% % OF HS GIRLS/9	
SOME COLLEGE BOYS	1st born: 4 (2, 3, 36, 38), 2nd born: 7 (2, 3, 8, 13, 17, 27, 38), 3rd born: 2 (2, 38)	1st born: 8 (8, 9, 13, 17, 22, 27, 29, 37) 2nd born: 2 (22, 37)	0	3rd born: 1 (3)	0	
	N= 13	N= 10	N= 0	N= 1	N= 0	24
	54.2% % OF SC BOYS/24	41.7% % OF SC BOYS/24	0% % OF SC BOYS/24	4.2% % OF SC BOYS/24	0% % OF SC BOYS/24	
SOME COLLEGE GIRLS	1st born: 4 (7, 21, 24, 56) 2nd born: 1 (52)	0	1st born: 2 (29, 52)	1st born: 1(2)	1st born: (8, 9) 2nd born: 1 (56)	
	N= 5	N= 0	N= 2	N= 1	N= 3	11
	45.5% % OF SC GIRLS/11	0% % OF SC GIRLS/11	18.2% % OF SC GIRLS/11	9.1% % OF SC GIRLS/11	27.3% % OF SC GIRLS/11	
	Ends in "N"	Ends in other consonant*	Ends in "EE"	Ends in "Elle"	Ends in –a/schwa	TOTAL
COLLEGE BOYS	1st born: 5 (4, 28, 40, 44, 48) 2nd born: 2 (4, 40, 48), 4th born: 1 (26)	1st born: 2(16, 26) 2nd born: 2 (26, 28), 3rd born: (26)	0	2nd born: 1 (49)	1st born: 1 (49)	
	N= 9 56.2% of COL	N= 5 31.3% of COL BOYS/16	N= 0 0%	N= 1 6.3% of COL	N= 1 6.3% of COL	16

	BOYS/16	N= 5 31.3% of COL BOYS/16	N= 0 0%	BOYS/16	BOYS/16	16
COLLEGE GIRLS	0	*1st born:* 2 (16, 39) *2nd born:* 1 (25)	*1st born:* 2 (5, 53)	*1st born:* 2 (6, 44)	*1st born:* 3 (4, 25, 48)	
	N= 0 0% OF COL GIRLS/10	N= 3 30% OF COL GIRLS/10	N= 2 20% OF COL GIRLS/10	N= 2 20% OF COL GIRLS/10	N= 3 30% OF COL GIRLS/10	10
ADV. DEGREE BOYS	*1st born:* 4 (1, 10, 34, 43)	*1st born:* 4 (32, 42, 50, 54) *2nd born:* 3 (14, 42, 43)	*1st born:* 2 (12, 14)	*1st born:* 1 (51)	*1st born:* 2 (11, 45), 0, 0, 0	
	N= 4 (37.5% of ADV BOYS/16)	N= 7 43.8% of ADV BOYS/16	N= 2 12.5% of ADV BOYS/16	N= 1 6.25% of ADV BOYS/16	N= 2 12.5% of ADV BOYS/16	16
ADV. DEGREE GIRLS	*1st born:* 5 (1, 10, 32, 43, 50), *2nd born:* 3 (15, 42, 55)	*1st born:* 3 (42, 45, 55)	*1st born:* 1 (47), *2nd born:* 1(34)	0	*1st born:* 5 (11, 12, 15, 34, 54)	
	N= 8 (44.4% of ADV girls n=18)	N= 3 (16.7% of ADV girls/18)	N= 2 (11.1% of ADV girls)	N= 0 (0% of ADV girls)	N= 5 (27.8% of ADV girls)	18
TOTAL BOYS	**32**	**27**	**2**	**4**	**3**	**68**
% OF ALL BOYS/ 68	*47.1%*	*39.7%*	*2.9%*	*5.9%*	*4.4%*	
TOTAL GIRLS	**15**	**7**	**10**	**4**	**12**	**48**
% OF ALL GIRLS/ 48	*31.3%*	*14.6%*	*20.8%*	*8.3%*	*25%*	

*''Other consonants'' includes: -k/-c as in *Eric,* -s/-ce as in *Jayce,* -eth as in *Seth,* -t as in *Robert,* -p as in *Philip,* -m as in *Adam,* -ew as in *Andrew,* and -er as in *Tyler*

Table 10: Distribution of Names in the 1936 Book

	BOYS (1stb child, 2ndb…) N=42	TOTAL= 42 boys' names appeared in the book	GIRLS (1stb child, 2ndb…) N=24	TOTAL = 24 girls' names appeared in the book
HIGH SCHOOL (HS)	*1st born:* 2 (#18, 30) *2nd born:* 2 (20, 33) *3rd born:* 1 (20)	N= 5/42 **11.9%** of Boys' names in the book came from HS parents	*1st born:* 4 (#19, 30, 23, 35)	N= 4/24 **16.7%** of the girls' names in the book came from HS parents
SOME COLLEGE (SC)	*1st born:* 9 (#2, 3, 8, 13, 22, 27, 37, 9, 29) *2nd born:* 6 (2, 3, 8, 13, 27, 37) *3rd born:* 1 (38)	N= 16/42 **38.1%** of boys' names in the book came from SC parents	*1st born:* 4 (#9, 24, 56, 2) *2nd born:* 1 (56)	N= 5/24 **20.8%** of the girls' names in the book came from SC parents
COLLEGE (COL)	*1st born:* 8 (4, 16, 26, 28, 40, 44, 48, 49) *2nd born:* 2 (28, 49)	N= 10/42 **23.8%** of boys' names in the book came from COL parents	*1st born:* 3 (4, 5, 39)	N= 3/24 **12.5%** of the girls' names in the book came from COL parents
ADVANCED DEGREE (ADV)	*1st born:* 8 (14, 32, 34, 42, 43, 45, 51, 54) *2nd born:* 3 (14, 42, 43)	N= 11/42 **26.2%** of boys' names in the book came from ADV parents	*1st born:* 10 (1, 10, 15, 32, 34, 42, 43, 45, 54, 55) *2nd born:* 2 (34, 42)	N= 12/24 **50%** of the girls' names in the book came from ADV parents

Appendix B

<u>Baby Names Survey</u>

For Parents and Guardians:

The purpose of this study is to examine naming practices for an Independent Study project at The College of Wooster. The results will be completely confidential and the surveys will be destroyed after this study is completed. No unique names will be mentioned specifically. By filling out this survey and returning it, it is implied that you consent to your responses being used for this study. If you are under the age of 18, it is necessary for legal reasons that a parent or legal guardian signs the survey after its completion. If you would like to see the results of the study please contact me, Haley Close, at <u>hclose12@wooster.edu</u> or my advisor Pamela Frese, Professor of Anthropology, at <u>pfrese@wooster.edu</u> or at 330-263-2256
**Note: PLEASE DO NOT INCLUDE YOUR LAST NAME

How many children do you have?

What is your relationship to the children? (i.e. "mother")

What is your oldest child's first and middle name? (First born) _____

       Sex of the child: _____

       Where did the name come from?

       Why did you choose the name?

What is your next oldest child's name? (Second Born)_____

       Sex of the child: _____

       Where did the name come from?

Why did you choose the name?

What is your next oldest child's name? (Third Born)_____

Sex of the child: _____

Where did the name come from?

Why did you choose the name?

What is your next oldest child's/children's name and their sex? (If needed) _____

_____

Where did the name (-s) come from?

Why did you choose the name (-s)?

Did your last name influence your choice of names? If so, how?

What were the challenges you faced in choosing names?

Did you consult with anyone about what to name your children?

     If yes, with whom?

Did you consult any baby name books, websites, or Top Baby Name lists?

     If yes, which ones?

Does anyone in you or your partner's family share that name (or a version of that name)?

     Did this influence your selection of that name?

     If yes, why? If no, why not?

Does your child/children still primarily go by that name?

     If no, who calls them what (nicknames)?

Do you know where your own name comes from?

     If so, where?

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your child's/children's names?

With what gender do you identify?

With what race/ethnicity do you identify?

Do you practice a religion? If so, which?

What is the highest educational level that you have attained?

How old are you?

Were you married or in a relationship at the time when you were choosing a name for your children?

I consent to having this information used in this study.

Signature of participant: _____Date:_____

PLEASE SEAL THE SURVEY IN THE ENVELOPE AND PLACE IN THE DROPBOX AT

YOUR DAYCARE FACILITY NO LATER THAN NOVEMBER 13.

THANK YOU!

**For participants under the age of 18:

For legal reasons, we require that you have a parent or guardian consent to your

participation.

I give my permission for this participant's responses to be included in this study.

Signature of parent or legal guardian: _____Date_____

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