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A Sociolinguistic Study of Naming in American English
A B S T R A C T

Nothing on this earth exists without a name. Naming is a universal human activity. The first and most important right for human being is definitely the name that should carry an esthetical characteristic and have an acceptable meaning in society. So everyone should have a good name. This study presents a sociolinguistic analysis of naming and names in American English. It tackles the problem that personal names and naming practices are a human universal, but systems of naming vary across cultures. It aims at investigating the practice of naming and sources or categories of names used in American English society. To carry out the aims and verify the validity of these hypotheses, a methodological procedure is applied which is mainly analytic. In this study, two models adopted which are Tesone's (2011): *In the Traces of our Name: the Influence of Given Names in Life*, and Al-Barany et al (2011): *Kurdish Personal Names in Kurdistan of Iraq: A Sociolinguistic Perspective*. Selecting the data from the names recorded in the registration offices in South Alabama University, and depends on authentic materials of naming of American English. Furthermore, a statistical analysis of the sources and categories of names is made.

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التسمية في اللغة الانجليزية الأمريكية - دراسة اجتماعية لغوية

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الخلاصة:

لا يوجد شيء معلوم في الأرض بدون اسم، فالتسمية هي نشاط بشري عالمي. إن الحق الاول والاهم

للإنسان هو- بالتأكيد- الاسم الذي يجب أن يحمل خصائص جمالية وأن يكون له معنى مقبول في المجتمع، لذلك يجب أن يكون لكل فرد اسم جميل، تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً اجتماعياً لغوياً للتسمية والأسماء في اللغة الإنجليزية الأمريكية. تحاول الدراسة الحالية دراسة مشكلة أن الأسماء الشخصية وممارسات التسمية هي عالمية بشرية ، لكن أنظمة التسمية تختلف عبر الثقافات، تهدف الدراسة إلى التحقيق في ممارسة التسمية ومصادر أو فئات الأسماء المستخدمة في المجتمع الانجليزي الامريكي. لتنفيذ الأهداف والتحقق من صحة هذه الفرضيات، يتم تطبيق إجراء منهجي تحليلي بشكل رئيس، جرى اعتماد نموذجين في هذه الدراسة هما تيسون (٢٠١١) الذي يشرح بعض ممارسات التسمية ومصادر الاسماء في العالم وتراكيبها والباراني (٢٠١١) الذي صنف الاسماء الى مصادر وفئات، جرى اختيار البيانات من الأسماء المسجلة في دوائر التسجيل في جامعة جنوب ألاباما والاعتماد على مصادر موثوقة للتسمية في اللغة الإنجليزية الأمريكية، علاوة على ذلك ، يجري تحليل إحصائي لمصادر وفئات الأسماء..

مفتاح الكلمات: ممارسة التسمية، الاسماء، المواليد الجدد، اللغة الانجليزية الامريكية، علم اللغة الاجتماعي.

1. Introduction

Naming is an essential practice, which people use to identify what surrounds them as a way of communication around the world. This practice differs according to cultural beliefs. Each culture has its own rules and habits in naming their newborns. This study tries to detect naming newborns and names used in American English society in an attempt to explicate naming phenomenon of the language under investigation.

The sources of naming vary; some societies prefer religious names, others prefer popular names when persons are designated or called. The name itself is either a word or a combination of words; compound words are used in naming newborns. Thus, this study also tries to verify from what sources people derive their names and which ones are more influential on them?

1.1 Definitions

The word *name* comes from the old English *nama*; cognates with old German *namo* and the Greek word *onoma* (Danesi, 2004:118). Names as labels for people, place, etc. (Saeed, 2009:27), while naming is the process of giving that name.

Bruck and Bodenhorn (2006:3) define the process of naming as a crucial aspect of converting "any bodies" into "somebodies".

1.2 Theory of Names

Your name is your badge. So as long as the person is nameless s/he is amorphous. When s/he receives or creates a name through which s/he can identify himself, s/he enters upon a really subjective existence (Pei, 1965:37). Name has important role in the evolution of human being since the time of the first creations. In the Glorious Qur'an:

“And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, “Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful”. (31) They (angels) said: Glorified are You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise. He said: “O Adam! Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names”, He said: “Did I not tell you that I know the Ghaib (unseen) in the heavens and in the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?” (Al-Baqarah [The Cow] 31-33, Al-Hilali and Khan, 1434 H: 7-8).

Almighty Allah created all the names. He taught Adam all of them at the beginning of creation. Besides, this is the first source of speech. Thus, The Almighty Creator threw all the names into the heart of Adam, and the creatures had known them through communication (Ash-Shaarawi, 1996:8). Although some commentators disagree upon the interpretation of the word ‘names’ mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an that it may belong to proper names of humans or to objects, many people agree that the origin of all the knowledge is Almighty Allah (Azzam, 2010:34). The ability of Adam to know and identify the name of all things positioned him to have dominance over other creatures. Saeed (2009:28) states that there are two theories of names. He terms the important one as the description theory, which provides a name as a label or shorthand of knowledge about the referent. Another is the causal theory which is based on the idea that names are socially inherited or borrowed. At some points, a name is given to a person perhaps in a formal ceremony.

However, linguists and scholars try in vain to establish the origins of names, just as they would in vain open a discussion about the creation of language. Tesone (2011:2) thinks that naming and words are indissolubly connected.

1.3 Types of English Personal Names

1.3.1 First Names

As its name suggests, it is the first name that the newborn receives after his/her birth either by a ceremony or without according to the society and culture that a person belongs to (Ismail, 2016:26).

1.3.2 Surname

A surname, also called family name or last name, it is a name added to a first name, that an individual shares with the other members of his/her family. Surnames may identify occupations held by the family at a past time or even currently. The most common English surname is *Smith* (Hendrickson, 2008:643). According to Smith (1969:6) virtually most surnames in the western world may be classified on the basis of their derivation into one or more of the following four groups:

- 1- Sire-names; from the father or other relationships.
- 2- Nick-names; from the action or description.
- 3- Occupational names; from occupation or office.
- 4- Place names; from village names or landscape features.

1.3.3 Nickname

It comes from 'an eke-name' which means 'an also name'. It is an epithet describing the characteristics of the bearer that applies to an individual in place of (or as well as) his/her personal name (Bowers, 2004:7). The nick or ascribed names are selected by or applied to individuals based on personality, physical appearance, profession, achievements or mannerisms. The implication is that such names are not given at birth, but until much later in life. They follow no family condition consideration, in contrast to first names. Although it is stylish, it is not obligatory or required for an individual to have a nickname all his life (Ogunwale,2012:26).

1.4 Structure of Names

English words can be classified on the basis of the combinations and types of morphemes of which they are composed. A classification adopts three main classes: simple, compound, and complex words (Stageberg, 1981:116). Proper names as words are also classified with the same classes such as; *John* and *Hepburne-Scott* (Quirk and Greenbaum,1973:60).

1.5 Gender and Names

Names denote crucial information about gender, that state whether the named person is a male or female, because each group has its own names. The majority of languages vary in the way they reflect gender. In the English culture, some female names are derivatives of male names, as in the examples: Victor - Victoria, Henry -

Henrietta (Lederer,1991:59). Also, female Christian names follow a similar pattern as the males, like *Michaelle* and *Georgette* (Hawana, 1977:16). Americans have male, female, and neutral names. Most common names such as: *John*, *Mary*, *Richard*, and *Elizabeth* are single-gender names in America and English-speaking world in general. Frequently, {-ah} or {-ee} suffix at the end of a name signifies a female name, such as *Sarah* and *Destinee*, but not universally. Ad-Duri and Salih (2006:57) add that there are names that are mutually used for both males and females. Gender-neutral names, the given names that can be used by males and females alike, are common in America. In classifying names into males and females, there are many neutral names that can be used by persons regardless of their gender, such as: *Alex*, *Kalin*, and *Robin*.

2. Practice of Names

The practice of naming varies according to cultural norms. Name giving practices do not follow a uniform path, nor do they remain fixed over time. This practice depends on culture, ceremony, omen, taboo, and fashion of independent societies.

2.1 Culture

Culture is basically everything that embraces people mode of life. Naming a newborn may be a special procedure for every family in most cultures. In English contemporary societies, names of children are usually chosen from a selection of existing names belonging to the linguistic and cultural collection of which the parents are part. In many instances, the choice is intended to the perpetuate memory of forebears or cultural heroes or to honour members of the family (Blumenthal, 2009:125). A few hundred names are chosen by vast number of people every year, these are the well-established and safe names, with which it is substantially impossible to go wrong. Among the most popular male names are *Adam*, *Andrew*, *David*, *James*, *John*, *Matthew*, *Michael*, *Taylor*, and *William*, while for females'; *Anna*, *Elizabeth*, *Hannah*, *Jessica*, *Mary* (and its other versions such as *Mariam*), *Sarah*, and *Susan*. Most of them go back to the Bible and are considered the traditional choices for American people.

A newborn's name may be chosen or named by different people (e.g., parents, one of the family members, paternal or maternal family members, and even by a community member) around the baby and may reflect those individuals' values and tastes. However, parents remain the main responsible ones for naming their baby if s/he is not given a name and each suggested name cannot be announced without their approval. So, in American culture, various individuals have had the right to name babies. In some circles, the father chooses a name for the first baby, while the mother chooses a name for the second, and they continue to alternate. In

other communities, it is the opposite; the mother chooses the first name, the father chooses the second, and so on.

Naming practices and names are closely related to cultural values and beliefs. Religion, which is the main element in every culture, constitutes a big group of names in the current data. These names that are derived from the Old Testament (Jacob, Joseph, Sarah, Rebecca) and New Testament (John, Zachary, Elizabeth, Mary), and names of other saints, religious figures, and names contain expressions that refer to religion such as; *Theodore* (Divine gift) and *Tobias* (God is good). These religious names are regarded as abstract ones, including acts and blessings. However, religious names will be mentioned later in details in the religious source. Some parents pass on to their newborns their own names, names of some close relatives, admired friends, or others. Boys are likely to be given names after relatives more than girls.

American people are influenced by literature such as books of names, television, and other social media in bestowed names. Nevertheless, these are not the predominant factors when naming a baby.

Some given names, like any other cultural traits, come and go in the society. Most of them have a popularity peak and then vanish. Compared to other relevant traits, names appear to be very appropriate for studying cultural changes, as a name's success depends primarily on the influence surrounding culture upon the newborn's parents.

There are rules that restrict what names can be given, it depends on where people live as they have restrictions vary according to States. As in Alabama; only the English alphabet is allowed, while symbols and numbers are not, hyphens and apostrophes are permissible. Generally, a naming law limits the names that parents may legally give to their children, usually to protect the child from an inappropriate or offensive name being given. Some States in America have such rules, with most regulating the meaning of the name, while few only regulate the scripts in which it is written. Notwithstanding, naming is still somehow a free choice in American society and as a result, there are numerous various names that can be used.

In this vein, practices of naming are part of cultural practices reflecting values and beliefs in a community. These cultures of names, while common in some states, is not locally uniform. Depending on certain cultures and/or ceremonies, naming conventions can and will vary. However, a thorough analysis of baby names shows

a complicated process of naming and semantic motivation influenced by socio-cultural norms.

2.2 Ceremony

A naming ceremony is the event at which an individual is given a name or names. The most common ceremony for the newborn is naming. There are no rules of the time or when to hold the ceremony. It can happen very soon after the baby's birth, or it can happen later in their life.

A naming ceremony is exceedingly sacred. In Christianity, naming a baby is usually done through the Baptism ceremony, especially among Catholics. Baptism is a Christian rite of admission and adoption, almost invariably with the use of water. It may be performed by sprinkling or pouring water on the head, or by immersing in water either completely or partially. They thought that John the Baptist baptised Jesus. Baptism is considered a sacrament in most churches, and as an ordinance in others. Baptism is also called Christening. In other cases, the rite of Baptism ideally takes place on Sunday, in the presence of church members, relatives and friends. It begins with the parents presenting the child for Baptism. The priest meets them at the door of the church and asks them "What name do you give your child?" to which they respond with the name of the child to identify the child in order to complete the rites of Baptism.

Naming ceremonies are usually not conducted in a church and have the choice of including religious content or not, nor are they officiated by a priest or a church man. They can also be held everywhere so families have the freedom to decide where they would like to celebrate.

According to some priests, naming ceremony in church is not a substitution for baptism, but a means for American and African-American parents and their families to welcome and celebrate the newborn into their homes, communities, and world.

According to some Jewish customs and ceremonies, a baby boy is named at his circumcision, usually at eight days old. If this event is delayed, some authorities maintain that the name should be given when the father is called to the Torah. However, the more common ceremony is that parents wait until the circumcision is performed. If the child is a firstborn and the *redemption of the firstborn* ceremony is being held, some authorities say that a baby boy should be named at that

ceremony. Another ceremony is that if the baby is ill, and people would like to pray for the baby using his name, he should be given a name earlier.

While in the case of a baby girl; she is named at a first Torah reading following her birth. It is the Jewish custom to name a baby girl at the first possible Torah reading (Torah readings take place on Saturdays as well as Mondays and Thursdays, and other special days on the Jewish calendar). Some people have the custom of waiting until Saturday to name the baby, when it can be done in the presence of the more community. The naming is usually accompanied by a feast to mark the entry of the spirit into the body at the time.

Generally, naming a baby may occur without any ceremonies, only choosing a name, and it may take place immediately after birth, a few days, or may be agreed upon during pregnancy. However, as with cultural practices of naming, ceremonies could not be confined. Perhaps there are ceremonies that scholars and researchers have not recognized yet. In some American slave communities, people do not name their children until one month after birth. Also, the New Englanders delay naming and the related attribution of personhood for a long time after birth, referring to their infants as 'the baby', 'it', or 'the little stranger' until "little stranger became familiar".

2.3 Omen

Omen is a phenomenon, an event or happening that denotes destiny and its occurrence makes someone have a clear message about what is lying in the unseen for that person (Dwivedi, 2000:9). People give their children optimistic names hoping that they will be the same as their names in the future. There are many names refer to hopeful occupations as their children will be princes, princess, and leaders. Some Jewish do not name their children after dead person because there was a fear that the soul of a person would follow his or her name, which meant death for the living and disruption of the heavenly rest of the dead. While Christians name their children after the living without causing them any harm, Jews avoid doing so.

Although omen is a phenomenon, it is not very prevalent in the United States; there are no explicit works by sociologists to diagnose the names that carry good or evil signs for its bearer. However, people believe that the names denote beauty, purity, and/or a good occupation will carry a good future for the bearer.

2.4 Taboo

Naming taboo is a religious or cultural taboo against naming, speaking, or writing some given names. There are some names that are not taboo but are forbidden, dislikable, or not used by American society. However, there are no taboo or forbidden names in the data. This explains that American society is mostly away from the taboo or forbidden names.

2.5 Unique Names

Unique baby names in the recent years have become a fashion more than a custom. Families are, now more than ever, looking for more unique names. According to baby survey that made by *BabyNames.com* of over 400,000 parents, most answered preferring to avoid or skip the top 10 baby names. Some parents do not want their baby to be "one of five Aidans in his class", that they want to stay away from the frequent names.

People are coming up with new and various ways to give unique names, including unique spellings of more common names, like the unique male name *Zakaria* which is derived from the old version *Zachary*, and the female name *Nathaly* which is derived from the old version *Natalie*.

Also there are some new names that are just variants of a well-forgotten old one. Despite of the fact that the popularity of names is constantly changing, certain patterns can be identified in this process. Traditionally people prefer female names ending in {-a} and {-ah}, such as; *Anna, Emma, Hannah, Mia, Sara* and *Sarah*, as well as names beginning with a hard {K-}, such as; *Kylie, Caitlin*, and *Courtney*. According to scholars' observations, the popularity of female names ending in {-n} has rapidly increased, such as; *Aiden, Hayden, Caden*, and *Jaden*, and for males, names beginning with {J-}, such as; *Joshua, Joseph*, and *Justin* are preferred.

Unique names are prevalent in areas where mixing with other cultures is available. Moreover, regions in the United States that have been settled by Europeans use less frequently popular names. *Unique* itself, is a unique neutral baby name that is of American origin which means 'unlike others'.

English websites and recent sources offer unique and new names. There is no similarity between them and names in the data. Unique male names, such as; *Fielder, Rafferty*, and *Osgood*, while female names are *Ailsa, Anouk*, and *Merrin*.

In a very small degree, fashion names depend on the things or events taking place in the world. In industrialized countries, Native American names that are drawn

from nature or based on nature gradually fell out of favour. Names like *Rose*, *Fern*, or *Pearl* are considered old fashioned and unsuitable for the workplace.

It may mark an increasing cultural shift towards individualism, as American culture has become more individualistic, parents have preferred giving names to children that make them distinctive and that means using more unique names and less popular names.

This concludes that, in English language practice of naming and especially in adopting new names, the main emphasis lies on the phonetic, graphic, in other words, on the external shape of the name. However, it could be said that unusual and unique names are related to popular American culture.

3. Sources and Categories of Names

Certainly, most people want to choose a name that is associated with good qualities and a successful and happy life. It should be not old-fashioned or bizarre. Besides, it should not be too boring or obvious either. However, the right choice is more difficult. Most parents choose names from the prevalent ones in order to be in the safe side. There are many other sources from which American personal names may be derived. The data of names of students are classified into the following sources and categories:

3.1 Religious Names

The prevalent religions in the United States of America are Christianity and Judaism, and other religions. As it has been noticed in the data, some names are related to the Bible. Also there are some names related to Islam and other religions.

The religious names, according to the American society, are derived from different sources. The male names of the Old Testament are “Adam” (the first man created by God), “Jared” (descendant of Adam), “Noah” (the builder of the Ark that survived him, his family, and animals of each species from the Great Flood.), “Javon” (Noah’s grandson), “Abraham” (the first patriarchs’ Jewish), “Isaac” (borne by Abraham’s son), “Jacob” (the son of Isaac and Rebecca. He was the father of twelve sons, who gave their names to the twelve tribes of Israel, and above all, he was the most important patriarch in the Book of Genesis.), “Joseph” (borne by Jacob’s favourite son), “Asher” (Jacob’s son), “Benjamin” (Jacob’s twelfth and youngest son), “Aaron” (name of Moses’s brother, who was appointed by God to be Moses’s spokesman and became the first high priest of the

Israelites.), “Joshua” (Moses’s companion and successor), “David” (the greatest of the Israelite kings), “Caleb” is one of the only two persons who set out from Egypt with Moses to live long enough to reach the *Promised Land*, this name is related to a Hebrew word for ‘dog’, “Samuel” (prophet) two books of the Old Testament are named after him, “Elijah” (a Hebrew prophet) as mentioned in the two Books of Kings, “Daniel” (borne by a Hebrew prophet whose story is told in the Book of Daniel), “Jonathan” (name of several characters in the Bible), “Isiah” (one of the four major prophets of the Old Testament), and “Emmanuel” (foretold name of the Messiah in the Old Testament), whereas “Sarah” (Abraham’s wife), “Rebecca” (wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob), “Leah” (Jacob’s first wife and seven of his children’s mother), “Rachel” (Jacob’s second wife and Leah’s sister), “Miriam” (Moses’s elder sister), “Hannah” (mother of Samuel), and “Ruth” (the central character in the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament) are female names. The feminine forms of some religious male names are “Micaela” and “Danielle” are female names. Usually, female religious names are regarded mothers, wives, or other relatives of Prophets, saints, and other religious figures.

On the other hand, the male names of the New Testament and its account of the life of Jesus include “Elliott” (prophet) is the version of the New Testament that derives from *Elijah* of the Old Testament, “James” (the evangelist, author of the second gospel in the New Testament), “Jamison” (son of James), “Jimmy” (short form of James), “Thomas” (one of twelve apostles of Christ of the New Testament), “John” (Baptist) is also a name of several characters in the Old Testament, although this spelling is used in the Authorized Version of the New Testament, “Zachary” (father of John), “Jeremy” (version of the New Testament from Jeremiah; a great prophet of Hebrew), “Matthew” (author of the first gospel in the New Testament), “Andrew” (first disciple to be called by Jesus) and also the warrior in the New Testament, “Philip” (one of Christ’s apostles) also called Philip Evangelist, “Peter” (the bestknown of all Christ’s apostles), and “Timothy” (saint). Names like “Elizabeth” (mother of John), “Mary” (Virgin Mary) which is the New Testament form of “Miriam” mother of Jesus the Christ, and “Lois” (the grandmother of Timothy) are female names.

Thus, the names derived from the Old and New Testaments include the religious figures, histories, legends, laws and prophecies of the ancient Hebrew and the Bible.

Some Americans of Indian origin are using names that refer to their religion and the names of their gods, e.g., the male name “Venkatesh” (name of god Vishnu).

Some biblical names are rarely repeated. They were uniquely created to express parental sentiments at the time of birth, they are represented by the male name “Zane” (gift from God), “Theodore” (Divine gift), “Tobias” and “Shawn” (God is good).

Islam influenced American Muslims to use names from Arabic language, which is likely, i.e., Arabic to be used for the purposes of religion like the male names “Muqit” and “Ali”, while the female names are like “Khadija”, “Fatima”, and “Takia”.

There are names that refer to religions like “Christopher” (Christ-bearer), “Kristian” (Christian), and “Malcolm” (follower of Columba) for males.

The Anglicized forms of religious names which were used in other foreign languages and transferred to American English become common names used by American society as centuries passed by. These names are for males like “Evan” (form of John) used by several countries, “Ian” (Scottish version of John) and “Jack” (form of John).

Names of archangels also have a share in the common used names for males such as “Gabriel” (archangel) appeared to *Daniel* in the Old Testament, to Zachary in the New Testament, and, most famously, to “Mary” to announce the impending birth of Christ, “Raphael” (archangel), and “Michael” (borne by an archangel in the Bible) though its meaning is (who is like God?) this is a rhetorical question which implies that nobody is like God.

3.2 Personality Trait Names

Personality characteristics or traits that people give in the form of names to their children are unlimited. Most of them express parents’ wishes of their newborns to be in future, like the names of nobility, laurel, and exalted, which are male names “Albert”, “Avery”, “Austin”, “Brian”, “Eugene”, “Gene”, “Marques”, “Patrick”, “Viraj”, and female names are “Alberta”, “Alicia”, “Allison”, “Allia”, “Audrey”, “Laura”, and “Patricia”, and even of (noble birth) as “Eugenie” and of (sovereign) as “Shamika”.

Happiness and joy are international sources for names, the male name “Anand” is an example, and female names “Felicia”, “Gweneth”, “Hillary”, “Leticia”, “Namisha”, “Rena”, and “Tyisha” are good examples. And to be eternal and living long are reflected in the male names like “Dante”, “Dequan”, “Ethan”, and “Hudson”, and the female name “Macy”.

Names of brightness, youthful and those with similar meanings which are given to males are “Hubert” (bright heart, mind, or spirit) or having a shining intellect and

“Robert” (bright fame). Other names such as “Young” (young), “Abhinav” (new and young), “Julien” (youthful), “Kishore” (young or small boy), “Srikanth” (charming) are male names. Female names are like “Claire” (clear bright), “Clara” (famously bright), “Jill” (youthful), “Kyara” (bright), “Maina” (young), “Shalanda” (attractive), and “Thelma” (willful).

Wisdom and Knowledge with guidance are essential characteristics to inspire names. These names “Akeem” and “Hakim” (wise) of Arabic and African origins, “Drew” (wise), “Ernest” (seriousness), “Jason” (healer), “Keyon” (guiding), “Rashad” (wisdom, right guidance), “Santosh” (satisfied), “Savon” and “Savoni” are derived from Italian surname that means (a wise or knowledgeable), “Solon” (wisdom) are male names. Names like “Darnisha” (a secretive woman), “Gregory” and “Kacee” (vigilant), “Jessica” (watchful), “Kassidy” (clever), “Monica” (advisor), “Rasheeda” (guided), “Sofia” (wisdom), and “Sai” (talented) are female ones.

Names carrying characteristics or traits of modesty, purity, and faithful and the other kindly and generosity characteristics like “Amin” (trustworthy), “Arlando” (loyalty), “Brady” (large-chested), “Cade” (pure), “Cody” and “Kody” (helpful), “Cortez” (courteous), “Damon” (to tame), “Dillan” (loyal or faithful), “Hien” (quiet), “Hieu” (dutiful to parents), “Hung” (wonderful), “Justice” (fair or just), “Khalil” (friendly), “Vinay” (modesty) are male names. Female names are represented by “Alma” and “Cori” (maiden), “Anisa” (friendly), Cherish (dearly held), “Chasity” (chaste), “Cortney-Gail” (courteous) though the first part is a neutral name but it is regarded as a female name because of the second part “Gail” is for female, “Gisela” (pledges), “Gwendolyn” (fair), “Justine” (upright), “Kaitlin”, “Katelyn”, “Katie”, “Kara, and “Reyna” (pure), the same is with “Nakia” (pure) of Arabic origin, “Livia” (one who protects others), “Maya” (industrious), “Mercedes” (merciful), “Mercy” (mercy), “Nancee” and “Nancy” (gracious), “Veronica” (truth), and “Virginia” (virginal).

Every parent wants their children to be victorious in whatever they do and be free. Male names of strength, victory, and freedom form a large part of the names, such as “Aric” and “Terrell” (ever powerful), “Colin”, “Jay”, “Jaylen”, and “Nicholas” (of the victorious people), “Nikita” (unconquerable), “Victor” (conqueror) or derived from victory, “Jabari” (fearless) of African origin, “Jarrett” and “Trace” (brave), “Tristan” (bold or tumult), “Frank” (freeman), “Vikram” (valour), “Vijay” (victory) of Indian origin, “Deandre” (a manly man), “Delaney” (challenger), “Emil” (rival), “Kendrick” (chief hero), and “Lonnie” (ready for battle). Female

names are like “Andrea” and “Breanna” (brave), and “Nichelle”, “Victoria”, “Vijaya” (victorious) or free with strong such as “Carla”, “Carole”, “Charlotte”, and “Karly” (free and strong), “Kendra” (keen power), “Carley” (the little strong), and finally “Emily” is the feminine form of *Emil* (rival).

Not only do strength and victorious names inspire people to choose names from, but also names of peaceful that literally translated to “peace” or those that have similar peaceful meanings, such as *harmonious*, *calm*, and, *tranquil*, like, male names: “Tully”, “Aryn”, and “Jeffery” (peaceful), “Terrence” (tender), and female names are: “Mahala” (tender), “Melinda” (gentle), and “Shalonda” (peace).

Names refer to physical characteristics such as male names “Barry” (a fair-haired man), “Roy” (a red-haired man), “Campbell” (crooked mouth), “Gray” (a gray haired man), “Grayson” (son of Gray), “Long” (long), and “Tameron” (have a crooked nose). Whereas “Blanca” (blonde), “Candace” (white-skinned), “Gwendolyn” (smooth), “Kiara” (little black one), “Melanie” (dark-skinned), “Paula” and “Paulette” (small) are female ones.

All-containing characteristics, such as, the male name “Sterling” (high quality), and female names are “Catrice” (wholesome woman), “Emma” (all-containing), and “Emmalee” (one who is complete).

Finally, names that carry negative characteristics such as “Brennen” (a sorrowful man), “Kelan” (slender) are male names, and female names are “Cheyenne” and “Shyann” (unintelligible speaker or speaking incoherently), “Kaylyn” (slender), “Mallory” (unlucky or unhappy), and “Thy” (untamed). Other characteristics or traits that are not considered from the foregoing carry normal traits or which only refer to the gender of the newborn are represented by female names like “Barbara” (stranger), “Colleen” (girl), and “Donna”(lady).

The above names are some of the baby names that are inspired by personal traits or qualities which parents hope their kids to have in future. A name is the image of a person, giving children names based on these qualities can impress people who will come in contact with them in the future.

3.3 Nature and Environment Names

Nature is the guiding force; its elements never cease to amaze people to choose names from it. There are many male names that are derived from the landscapes and atmosphere or space and landmarks such as “Aidan” and “Keagan” (fire) as one who is fiery, “Alan” and “Craig” (rock), “Arun” (redness of the rising sun),

“Braden” (from the wide valley), “Bradley” (from the wide meadow), “Brandon” (beacon hill), Brooks (brook), “Camden” (winding valley), “Denver” (green valley), “Carson” (son of Marsh dweller), “Clay” (moist earth), “Cole” and “Coley” (dark one), “Coleman” (servant of Cole), “Douglas” (black stream), “Dylan” (son of the wave, sea, or ocean), “Forrest” (a wood land dweller), “Glen” (valley), “Keith” and “Guy” (wood or valley), “Holden” (deep valley or hollow in the valley), “Kelvin” (river), “Kyle” (narrow land or strait), “Lance” (land), “Landon” (long hill), “Logan” (hollow), “Lyle” (island), “Murdoch” (sea), “Pavan” (breeze or wind), “Aditya”, “Ravi”, and “Suraj” (sun) of Hindi origins, “Sylas” (from the forest). Female names: “Ainsley” (my own meadow), “Eleanor”, “Elena”, and “Ellen” (the shining light), “Donovan” (dark), “Kiran” (ray of light), “Kylie” (narrow channel), “LeighAnne” (gracious meadow), “Meri” (sea), “Nerissa” (nymph sea), “Percy” (pierced valley), “Phoebe” (the shining one), “Savannah” (the open grassy plain), “Shila” (rock), “Sindhu” (water), “Sravan” (flowing or river), “Taliyah” (dew), and “Taryn” (rocky hill).

Colours are harmonious with nature. People use names that refer to their skinned-nature, black and white, and other beautiful colours. Male names such as, “Blake” and “Blakeley” (black), “Neel” and “Vinil” (blue), and “Roja” (red) are good examples.

Inanimate names, which are considered to be environmental names because they are taken from the environment, “Brandi” and “Brandy” (burning wine), “Garrick” (spear), “Gary” (hard spear), “Gerhard” (strong spear), “Magan” (resembling a pearl), “Mridul” (pearl), “Suketu” (flag), and “Tahj” (crowned) are male names, while “Amber” (precious jewel), “Crystal” and “Krystal” (crystal, a clear brilliant glass), “Helen” (shining light), “Jakayla” (crowned with laurels), “Jewel” and “Kailey” (gemstone), and “Margaret” and “Margeaux” (pearl) are female names. Numbers which are one of the elements of nature also have a share in names, male names such as “Tre” and “Trey” (the third born child), and “Quinten” (fifth) are good examples.

Names of sense and feeling that state life and nature of human beings such as “Destin” and its feminine form “Destinee” (fate) or one’s destiny and “Zoe” (life) are of this kind.

3.4 Flora and Fauna Names

Plants are life-givers, naming children after the flora is a rich tradition. Flora male names are; “Oliver” (of the olive tree) often used as a symbol of peace, “Royce”

(rose), “Sudhakar” (nectar source), “Adair” (oak grove), and “Wiley” (willow meadow), while female names are like “Ashe” (from the ash tree), “Ashleigh” and “Ashlyn” (ash tree meadow), “Bethany” (house of figs), “Cherry” (cherry, a fruit-bearing tree), “Chloe” (verdant or blooming), “Daisy” (flower called the ‘day’s eye’), Daylal (bough or branch), “Geneva” (juniper tree), “Heather” (the evergreen flowering plant), “Ilana” (tree), “Jasmine” and “Yasmeen” (jasmine; the climbing plant with its fragrant and delicate flowers), “Jelissa” and “Melisa” (honey bee), “Kiri” (tree park), “Lanaya” (limon tree), “Olivia” (olive tree), “Pamela” (honey), “Shanna”, “Susan”, and “Suzanne” (lily), “Sharrie” (great fertile), “Tamara” (date palm), “Yesenia” (flora), and “Yvette” (yew).

Animals are thought to be spirit guides in some cultures, naming a newborn after a powerful creature is considered to be sacred for some. However, names with animal meanings include both those that announce themselves clearly such as *Wolf* and *Fox*, and those whose animal meaning is more hidden, such as, “Brock” (badger), “Darby” (deer farm), “Gavin” and “Marlon” (a little white falcon), “Kobi” (turtle), “Leonard” (strength of lion), “Lowell” (little wolf), “Ralph” (wolf counsel), “Randall” and “Randolph” (the wolf shield), and “Taurus” (bull) are male names, whereas female names are like “Felina” (cat-like), “Jael” (a mountain goat), “Raven” (black bird), and “Tabatha” (gazelle).

3.5 Occupation and Achievement Names

Most occupation and achievement names start as surnames that describe a person’s job. These days, occupation and achievement names are not quite functional; nonetheless, many are popular (especially for boys).

Occupation male names are names that state governance and ownership such as “Brenden” (prince), “Darian” and “Darrion” (possessing good fortune; wealthy), “Darius” (kingly man; one who is wealthy), “Derek” (the ruler of the tribe), “Donald” (ruler of the world), “Eric” (eternal ruler or ruler of all), “Frederick” (peaceful ruler), “Gerald” (who rules with spear), “Griffin” and “Harry” (lord or prince), “Harrison” (son of Harry), “Gunnar” (brave warrior), “Harold” (leader of an army), “Henry” (ruler of the house), “King” (king; the royal ruler), “Melvin” (gentle chieftain) “Naresh” and “Regis” (king), “Rajesh” (the ruler of kings), “Richard” and “Ricky” (powerful ruler), “Rion” and “Ryan” (little king or ruler), “Roderick” (famous ruler), “Malik” (king or owner), “Kyron” (owns land), “Marshal” (leader), “Ronald” (king’s advisor), “Varun” (lord of the sea), and “Xavier” (owner of a new house). Female names such as “Erica” (eternal ruler), “Frederica” (peaceful ruler), “Geri” (spear ruler), “Jerica” (a gifted ruler),

“Princess” (princess), “Rhyanna” (great queen), and “Ryann” (little ruler) signify occupations or achievements.

Occupation names that state warriors and war-likers are, male names like: “Chad” (battle warrior) or one who is warlike, “Clancey” (red warrior), “DeMarcus” (warlike) or son of Marcus; who is, according to their tradition, Mars the god of war, “Devante” (fighter of wrong), “Herbert” (illustrious warrior), “Herman” (solider), “Garrett” (brave warrior), “Jarvis” (a conqueror), “Kurt” (bold counselor), “Louis” (famous warrior), “Marc” (warlike), “Martin” is derived from Mars the god of war, and “Kien” (warrior), whereas names like “Kelli” (warrior), “Madisen” (daughter of a mighty warrior), “Marcella” (young warrior), “Marcie” and “Marcina” (warlike) of Mars the god of war represent female ones.

Other diverse occupation names are male names such as “Carter” (cart driver) or transport goods in a cart, “Chancey” and “Chancelor” (chancellor), “Chandler” (candle maker), “Chante” (singer), “Chase” and “Hunter” (hunter), “Clark” (clerk or scholar), “Cooper” (one who makes barrels), “D’Angelo” (passenger; bringer of the glad tidings), “Edward” and its variant “Eddie” (wealthy protector), “George” (farmer; earth worker), “Howard” (noble watchman), “Jorin” (form of George), “Mason” (stone worker), “Miller” (mill worker), “Ramon” and “Raymon” (a wise protector), “Sampath” (a wealthy man), “Satish” (lord of Sati), “Schuyler” and “Skyler” (scholar), “Sherman” (shearer), “Spencer” (administrator), “Taylor” (tailor), “Travis” (toll collector), “Trent” (traveller), “Turner” (lathe worker), “Wayne” (wagon maker), “William” and “Willie” (protector), and female names are like “Amelia” (one who is industrious and hardworking), “Bailee” (a public official), and “Teresia” (harvester).

Generally, occupation male names are more than that of females. The reason is due to the nature of life that men work more in jobs than women do. Women are usually homemakers. These names show that the ruling and owning are the most occupations favoured by American society.

3.6 Time and Place Names

Some of time expressions inspire people to choose names from, due to their characteristics of beauty as they evoke the feelings of the season, or they are used because their coincidence with the birth. However, names refer to time in the data, such as the male names “Karthik” (a month in Hindu calendar) and “Wynter” (winter). Female names are like “April” represents the opening of flowers and buds

in spring, “Autumn” is the fall season, “Dawn” is time of sunrise, and “Summer” because of its pleasant associations.

Place names are the other source which inspires people to choose names from. Place names are those derived from states, countries, and cities. America is a continent on its own. It is characterized by beauty and charming of most or all of its states. Also, far-flung cities can still be part of parents’ world. Some place names are names of specific cities, while others are names refer to places in general or imaginary places as a name means *a town in the hill*. Male names that refer to specific places are represented by “Adrian” (man from Hadria), “Ashton” (man from Ash-Tree town), “Bailey” (live near Bailey or from Baily), “Boston” (city of Boston), “Brad” is form from Bradford, “Brett” (Britain), “Clifton” (from a town near a Cliff), “Dallas” (Texas, USA), “Darrell” (from Airelle), “Desmond” (from south Munster), “Devon” (from Devonshire), “German” (Germany), “Kenton” (royal town, settlement by the river Kenn), “Lawrence” and “Larry” (from Laurentum), “Lester” (from Leicester), “Brenton” (hill town) or a settlement associated with Bryni, “Lincoln” (city of Lincoln), “Lucas” (from Lucania), “Maxwell” (originally, a place called stream of Mack), “Parris” (Paris), “Roman” (of Rome), “Romario” (Roman), “Scott” (Scotland), “Sebastian” (man from Sebasta), “Trenton” (Town of Trent), “Tyree” (island off of Scotland), and “Wesley” (western meadow), and female names are like “Adrienne” (woman from Hadria), “Britany” (Great Britain), “Erin” and ‘Ireland” (from Ireland), “India” (India), “Larissa” (the ancient city Larissa), “Lori” (territory of the people of Lothair), and “Madeline” (from Magdala).

Some male names refer to general places or to imaginary places are like “Bradford” (a broad ford), “Buchanan” (house for Canon), “Colby” and “Colton” (a coal town), “Corwin” (white castle), “Dalton” (town in the valley), “Darnell” (from the hidden place), “Graham” (grand homestead), “Hampton” (little town), “Milton” (mill town), “Peyton” (from the village of warriors), “Preston” (priests town), “Quinton” (from the queen’s town), “Trevor” (large settlement), “Ramsey” (from the raven island), “Rodney” (from the famous island), “Roland” (famous land), whereas female names are represented by “Chelsey” (chalk landing place), “Haleigh” and “Hayley” (field or clearing of hay), and “Kimberly” (royal fortress).

3.7 Beauty and Love Names

Beautiful names might literally mean beauty or beautiful. Also, they include those with meanings like *handsome*, *pretty*, such as, “Kenneth” (handsome or an attractive man), “Kenny”; is a diminutive from Kenneth, “Mack” is a nickname for

most names beginning with Mac_ or Mack_, it is also a diminutive of “Mackenzie” that means (comely), “Mohan” (bewitching or enchanting), and female names are “Alayna”, “Callie”, “Kali”, and “Ingrid” (beautiful), “Jolee” and “Linda” (pretty), “Maleah” (beautiful young girl), and “Remika” (pure beauty).

Love names for males are “Connor” (lover of wolves or hounds) and “Phillip” (lover of horses), and female names are: “Aimee” (much beloved) is a variant of “Amy”, “Amanda” (lovable), “Cara”, “Mandy” (one who is worthy of love), “Priya” and “Sheryl” (beloved), “Cheryl” (darling), “Doreen” (gift) it symbolizes love, “Keisha” and “Kesia” (favourite child), and finally, “Nadia” (hope) which refers to love. The two categories may be gathered, i.e., beauty and love, such as “Kevan” and “Kevin” (comely and beloved) for males, and “Miranda” (beautiful or lovable) for females.

3.8 Honourific Names

In many examples, the choices of names are intended to perpetuate the memory of forebears or to honour known figures, members of the family, or cultural heroes as in literary works. Some names are used in an honour of actors and actresses and legendary characters. The honourific male names, or their first prevalence were used honourifically, that are spread in the American society after publicly figures or others are “Alexander” though its meaning is (a defender of mankind) it was borne by several characters such as the saints in the New Testament and some early Christian saints. However, it is derived largely from the fame of *Alexander the Great*, King of Macedon (356 BC), around whom many popular legends grew up in late antiquity, much of which came to be embodied in the Medieval-Alexander Romances’. It also became a popular Hebrew name after Alexander the Great’s benign rule of Palestine. “Alec” is a short form of *Alexander*. “Anthony” is of (an ancient Roman family). “Arthur” was borne by heroes such as the British *King Arthur* of the 5th or 6th century and a large body of legends grew up around him in literature. “Bill” the nickname *King Billy* for *William of Orange* may have influenced English usage. “Bruce” (an influential Norman family) was borne by Jean Cauvin (1509-64) a theologian from France who was one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, he is known as *John Calvin* in English, it has been used as a given name in his honour since the 19th century. “Clinton” is used in honour of the Clinton family. “Cornelius” is of an old Roman family name that possibly derives from the Latin word meaning "horn". “Dominic” is used mainly by Catholics in honour of St Dominic (1170–1221) founder of the Dominican order of monks. “Grant” is sometimes bestowed in honour of the Civil War general and 18th president. “Hamilton” is apparently begun in America in honour of Alexander

Hamilton (1757?–1804), he did much to establish the political and financial system on which the industrial prosperity and growth of the United States came to be founded. “Klaus” this name tends to be associated with the figure of Santa Claus in America, “Stephen” the first Christian martyr, whose feast is accordingly celebrated next after Christ’s own (26 December). Finally, “Tyrone” its use as a first name sounds to be entirely due to the influence of the two movie actors (father and son) called Tyrone Power.

Honourific names for females are like: “Alexa”, “Alexa-Ann”, “Alexandra”, and “Alexandria” are feminine forms of *Alexander*, “Cassandra” is a character from a Greek legend, this name is revived by parents who look to the pages of classical mythology for distinctive girls’ names, “Cass” and “Cassie” are diminutive forms of *Cassandra*, “Catherine” is an English form of the name of a saint martyred at Alexandria in 4th century. The same is about its other forms “Karen”, “Katerina”, “Katharine”, “Katherine”, “Kathleen”, “Kathryn”, and “Cathy”.

Other honourific female names are like “Cindy” (a character in fairytale), “Deanna” became popular by the singing actress Deanna Durbin (1922), “Jacqueline” is influenced by Jacqueline Kennedy, wife of President John F. Kennedy, “Sabrina” (legendary princess), “Sandra” is a short form of *Alessandra*, it was introduced to the English-speaking world by author George Meredith’s novel *Emilia* in England (1864), who used it for the heroine in his novel, also, a famous bearer is the American actress Sandra Bullock (1964-), “Shahrzad” means "free city" from the Persian elements; *shahr* means "city" and *azad* means "free", it is the name of the fictional storyteller in *The 1001 Nights*, also called, *One Thousand and One Night*, every night, she tells a story to her husband the king, for 1001 nights in order to delay her execution, “Stephani” is the feminine form of Stephen, “Tanya” was borne by several early saints who were honoured particularly in the Eastern Church. Also, it is a feminine form of the Roman name *Tatianus*, which was the name of a 3rd century saint who was martyred in Rome under the emperor Alexander Severus, she was especially venerated in Orthodox Christianity, it was not used frequently in the English-speaking world until the 1980s. Finally, “Tara” has been used as a female name in America since around 1940s, probably because of the success of the movie *Gone with the Wind*, in which the holder of this name has great emotional significance. Even in Britain, it was not much used before the 1960s, and its popularity, since then, seems to be the result of its use for the character *Tara King* in the television series *The Avengers*.

3.9 Circumstantial Names

These names are based on the circumstances surrounding the birth of a child that may relate to the manner of birth, places of birth, time, festivals or sacred days and other circumstances. The data contain female names that relate to the time of birth, which are coincided with or born on the Christmas day, such as; “Latasha”; popular among the Blacks, and other names; *Natalia*, “Natalie”, “Natasha”, “Natosha” and “Stacie”, which all refer to the same circumstances or meanings; born on the Christmas day. Although, the names *Tre* and *Trey* mean *three* that is adopted from nature but also these names may be regarded as circumstantial names that reflect manner of birth to refer to the third child in sequence of the family. However, such names need to be known from the family to discover the circumstances in which was the reason behind giving the name.

3.10 Death Prevention and Survival Names

There are no such names in the data that refer to death prevention and survive.

3.11 Uncategorized Names

Not all names have meanings, or in other words, not all names can be classified under the previous categories, this is why they are uncategorized names. These names may be taken from foreign languages that have not been mentioned in English sources, or they may be mere signs as if they are empty names that designate nothing. Also, some names are similar to other categorized names in the data but are not documented in the sources. However, there are a lot of uncategorized male and female names in the data such as “Anfernee”, “Bentley”, “Carlyle”, “Madhusudan”, and “Vikash” for males, while “Aerial”, “Jakiyah”, “Manasa”, “Sheenal”, and “Sudheer” are female ones.

4. Criteria of Choosing Names

Hence, the backbone of the American names made up of English names borrowed in turn from the Britons, Celts, Normans, and Danes, the Old and the New Testaments and other biblical names, and from other foreign languages. Americans are more concerned with the pronunciation of names and their forms than their meanings and origins. They may not pay any attention to the name origin.

Conclusion

This study is a preliminary investigation of naming and names in American English. Needless to say, there are hundreds of names; those here are just a sample. It is an attempt toward understanding their cultures in naming and names as a

branch of the science of onomastics in sociolinguistics. The study has reached the following conclusions:

1. Naming systems belong to social/cultural systems in which they are embedded. Also, they offer indications on the type of social and cultural ethos within which they are used.
2. Naming practices reflect important traits and essential values in their respective social organization.
3. Children are not named by a specific person or time, and there is no tradition followed by all. They may be named after the religion, relatives, friends, deceased persons, liking the name, or other reasons.
4. A thorough Analysis of names has revealed a more complicated naming process of American English which is shaped by sociocultural norms.
5. Names contain precious information on the history of human groups.
6. Names are mainly divided into 14 sources and categories. It is noticed that every two similar sources or somehow similar are combined together. Religion comes first, followed by personal traits, then occupational names, and ends with death prevention and survival names that are the least or not existing at all, because it is an old belief.
7. Most of the other categories are close to each other in use. Most of beauty, love, and flora names are for females while those that refer to power characteristics, fauna, and occupations are for males.
8. Religion is the essential source of names. Religious names are the traditional choices for American people because they are safe and well-established names, with which it is impossible to go wrong.
9. The names that express personal traits come in the second rank after religious names in inspiring people to choose from. In turn, they are more diverse, most of them carry successful and motivational characteristics.
10. Flora female names are more than that of males because plants are a symbol of beauty and peace, and they, in turn, symbolize females, while fauna male names are more than that of females due to the powerful traits of animals.
11. The criteria of choosing names; how the name sounds, are the criteria for judging the beauty of it.
12. It has been observed how the names of births are transformed from an accurate choice of what is meaningful in the pronunciation and meaning to the search for the strange and the uncommon name without regard to pronunciation and meaning.

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