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Washington, Montana, the Dakotas – and Massachusetts: A Comparative Approach to Street Naming

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Abstract

The present paper on the street names of Washington State, Montana, and North and South Dakota (hereafter nicknamed "Dadamowa") is a preliminary and partial analysis of the street names found in the Carrier Route tapes of the United States Postal Service. Our comparative report on both Massachusetts and the Dadamowa region provides the first extensive "interstate" survey of the nature and variability of naming practices. The most obvious differences in this five state comparison stem from the grid patterns evident in the Dadamowa region. However, our conclusion finds no radical differences in the ways the streets are named in these states.

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Among proper names, first names have been defined as symbolic objects that are both free and required (Besnard 347). Although streets do not seem to have been classified as obligatory universal free goods, they are in urban settings the toponymic equivalent of forenames. In particular, like them, they are so numerous that they become semantically invisible to the natives. Like them, they are subject to fashion and to regional preferences. Finally, although it is not known whether street naming follows cycles as do first names (Besnard and Desplanques), there seem to be patterns and clear evolutions in closely related areas such as the naming of apartment complexes (Minton; Koegler) and cemeteries (Zelinsky). In short, like first names, street names constitute a particularly good indicator of socio-cultural trends.

Our study begins with a discussion of the dominant street names and street name categories for the "Dadamowa" region[1]; both are then compared to the strikingly different ranking for Massachusetts. This paper is a preliminary and partial analysis of the street names found in the Carrier Route tapes of the United States Postal Service.[2] In particular, we focus on numbered streets since they constitute one of the major naming

strategies of the Dadamowans. The second striking characteristic of our corpus is the use of abbreviations for the points of the compass (hereafter "directionals") that follow generics like *street*. Patterns in the use of the generics themselves (*street* vs. *drive*, etc.) are also noted. In the final sections, we examine prefixes, suffixes, and the eight naming patterns that account for between half and three quarters of Dadamowa streets.

The Dominant Street Names of the Dadamowa Region

Defining Streets

Streets being cultural objects cannot be defined in terms of their physical characteristics alone: the "same" street may bear several names bestowed upon it by different individuals, groups (e.g., bilingual names in Canada), or institutions (the Town *and* the State, for example). A street may bear a number and a proper name as does 6th Avenue in Manhattan ("Avenue of the Americas"); it may have a former name or a nickname that is better known to many people than its current official name; and, as it crosses a larger street or enters an adjacent municipality, its name may or may not change. Finally, within a town or city, there may be several streets with the same specific name (e.g., *Washington*), but the generic may be different (*Washington Street* vs. *Washington Avenue*). In some cases, both specific and generic are identical; only the directional differs, as is often the case with *North* vs. *South* (or *East* vs. *West*) *1st Streets* when they are located on either side of a Main Street or cross it perpendicularly. Table 1 lists the fifty most common streets of North and South Dakota, Montana, and Washington State as well as Massachusetts. Street names that are repeated within a town (with a different generic or merely a different directional such as *East* or *West*) or that continue into another town without name change are counted twice since in both cases the names could have been changed by municipal authorities.[3]

The percentage and frequency of the top names are as follows:

Total number of streets		Top street Name	
		%	Frequency
MA:	88,988 streets	.36%	320 are Park streets
MT:	10,914	1.0 %	108 are 2nd streets
ND:	3,860	3.2 %	126 are 2nd streets
SD:	4,738	1.4 %	67 are 3rd streets
WA:	52,808	3.8 %	202 are 3rd streets

Named Streets versus Numbered Streets

Even a glance at Table 1 suggests that residents of Washington State and Massachusetts live in sociolinguistically different worlds. There is not a single numbered street among the first fifty streets of the Bay State whereas Washington has only six non-numbered streets for those same fifty. Oddly, the first numbered street in the four Dadamowa states is either a second or a third street, not a first street. This may be due to chance considering that other statistical oddities appear that seem only explicable in this way: 40th street, in Washington State, occurs ninety-two times (rank 30) whereas 41st street appears only seventy-one times (rank 56).

Overall, even though the first hundred streets of Washington State contain a mere twelve named streets listed below in rank order:

Rank			
13	Park	31 Washington	62 Lincoln
15	Cedar	42 Alder	67 Pine
19	Maple	57 Main	70 Cherry
27	Sunset	61 Fir	83 Highland

only *one third* of that state's streets are numeric whereas *half* of the street names of North Dakota are numbers. This compares with 21% for South Dakota, 13% for Montana and 0.3% in Massachusetts (three streets per thousand).

The fact that a person's street address in the Dadamowa region is so frequently a number is usually attributed by strangers (New Englanders) and foreigners (Britishers) to the lack of imagination of the indigenous population. The fact that it was an Easterner, William Penn, in Philadelphia, who began the practice is well known (Mencken 81) but would not console any far-Easterner, such as British writer John Field, who commented in 1980:

> The movement, or drift, towards impersonality has sometimes affected the naming process itself. Following some foreign examples, and perhaps applying a too ruthless administrative logic, authorities have occasionally used a numerical sequence for the designation of roads [in the Greater London area of England] (158).

But impersonality is in the eye of the beholder: one might as well say that numbering people's actual *homes* is the height of impersonality—but the practice is so overwhelmingly dominant in the Western world that this crime of depersonalization of individual abodes is not perceived as

Table 1. Top 50 street names in each state (ranked by frequency).

RANK	MA	MT	ND	SD	WA
1	Park	2nd	2nd	3rd	3rd
2	Maple	3rd	3rd	2nd	2nd
3	Highland	4th	4th	4th	4th
4	Oak	5th	5th	5th	5th
5	Pleasant	1st	6th	7th	6th
6	Elm	6th	7th	6th	10th
7	Pine	7th	8th	8th	1st
8	Main	8th	9th	1st	8th
9	Washington	9th	10th	9th	7th
10	Chestnut	10th	11th	11th	9th
11	Lincoln	11th	12th	10th	11th
12	Cedar	12th	14th	12th	12th
13	Prospect	13th	13th	13th	Park
14	School	Park	15th	14th	14th
15	Walnut	14th	16th	Main	Cedar
16	Spring	15th	17th	Park	13th
17	Grove	Main	18th	Dakota	16th
18	Cross	16th	19th	15th	19th
19	High	Highway 93	20th	16th	Maple
20	Hillside	River	Main	Lincoln	18th
21	Forest	Montana	21st	Oak	15th
22	Orchard	Airport	24th	Maple	17th
23	Central	Cottonwood	22nd	Spruce	20th
24	Summer	Central	23rd	Elm	21st
25	Adams	17th	25th	Sunset	24th
26	Church	18th	26th	Washington	22nd
27	Franklin	Washington	Park	17th	Sunset
28	River	Highway 22	7th	Cedar	28th
29	North	Pine	36th	Pine	26th
30	Sunset	Railroad	34th	18th	40th
31	West	19th	35th	Ash	Washington
32	South	Cedar	Dakota	Jefferson	25th
33	Laurel	Mt. View	28th	20th	27th
34	Mill	21st	31st	Summit	33rd
35	Willow	Sunset	32nd	Railroad	43rd
36	Warren	22nd	Elm	Walnut	23rd
37	Cottage	Frontage	30th	19th	31st
38	Woodland	Highland	Central	Circle	32nd
39	Birch	Lincoln	29th	Grant	38th
40	Pond	Maple	33rd	Jackson	44th
41	Union	Aspen	Cherry	West	50th
42	Linden	B	Lincoln	21st	Alder
43	Meadow	Clark	Spruce	Birch	35th
44	Winter	Hill	40th	Broadway	30th
45	Charles	Ponderosa	River	Highland	36th
46	Clark	Riverside	Willow	Madison	29th
47	Lake	Willow	37th	Ridge	37th
48	Green	Yellowstone	38th	Adams	42nd
49	Fairview	Juniper	39th	Aspen	45th
50	Pearl	Madison	41st	Cottonwood	46th

such. Moreover, it is sufficiently practical and efficient for people to appreciate it. Numbered streets are also practical, but they are not dominant in all regions of the United States: the fact that they compete with personal and other names for streets makes efficiency only one criterion for selection among several. But the major reason for choosing or not choosing numerical sequences has to do with the physical layout of the town itself, as Field notes despite his aversion for numbers as names:

> Numerical sequences are not suitable for most urban layouts in this country [England]; unless the streets are arranged in a grid, the sequence will not be clear, and if Fourth Avenue, for instance, is next to Ninth Avenue and opposite Twelth Avenue, the stranger visiting the area will be bewildered (159).

The argument, then, is that the stranger (whether from London or Boston) is accustomed to one naming pattern, and that old towns and cities which grew by accretion into mazes of street patterns (especially in their downtown areas) cannot function well with numbered streets. The argument can be extended by its converse: that numbered streets are well suited to a grid system and to areas which are developed rapidly. Thus, one might expect that grids would appear in new developments of all areas, in England or the New England suburbs as well as in the nothern and western states.

The assumption that numbered grids reflect some kind of "ruthless administrative" pattern is misleading. For example, there are several areas in the State of Washington where streets go beyond 300th street. Clearly, inventing names in an arbitrary way for such a huge number of streets would have been if not impersonal, at least artificial and inconvenient, both for the locals and for travelers. In short, there exist two kinds of naming that are related to two kinds of settlement, a process explained by John Algeo:

> In the early nineteenth century, it was usual for settlement to precede naming. [. . . For example] the first streets in Athens [Georgia] were laid out in the early 1800s, but it was not until 1859, three generations later, that names were officially chosen. . . . Thus developed the commemorative, functional and descriptive names—the classic sort of name in earlier Athens, as in earlier America generally.
>
> Today the order of events has been reversed. Now naming precedes settlement. Typically, a developer subdivides a large plot of land into residential lots, lays out the streets and paves some of them, and gives names to his creations, which become the official designations of those streets before there are any people living on them. . . . [A]nd the streets are likely

> to be indistinguishable from one another in appearance; but the streets have names. . . . The result is the new naming pattern for streets (94-95).

Grid Patterns

This new naming practice thus enables the creation of *grids*. There are several consequences to the choice of the grid pattern : On the model of Washington, D.C. (Mencken 82), it offers the opportunity to set up streets in four quadrants with the meeting point of the two main streets as the point of departure for some parallel streets and for the numbering of street addresses. Examples from the four Dadamowa States appear below.[4]

Montana

Butte: The two central streets that determine the grid are Park Street and Main Street – the two most common street names in Montana if we exclude numbered streets (see Table 1). However, Butte does not have a numbered grid system. Instead the old mining town has a pattern of metal and mineral names for the streets running parallel to Park Street and a state-name system for those avenues or streets running parallel to Main Street. Those north are named *Avenue*, those south are *Street*). Facing the railroad track (and Silverbow Creek) there is also, as in Philadelphia, a Front Street with a 1st Street running parallel to it. In short, the layout of the town follows the natural and functional landmarks: large roads (Park Street is Highways 91 and 10), rivers, and railroads.

Billings: The railroad track divides Billings into two halves. Parallel and north of the track is Montana Avenue; parallel and south is Minnesota Avenue. Those are the two central streets of the town. There are two *1st Avenues* (*2nd*, etc.), one running north and one south of the railroad track. Perpendicular thoroughfares are also numbered. They begin in the northeastern part of Billings and cross downtown around 24th Street. Each perpendicular thoroughfare is, of course, a *Street*, whereas the thoroughfares parallel to Montana and Minnesota are *Avenues*. As they cross Montana or Minnesota Avenues, the streets acquire a prefix: either *N*(orth) or *S*(outh).

North Dakota

Bismarck: Main Avenue (i.e., U.S. 10 & 83) is followed by two named thoroughfares, Broadway and Thayer Avenue, and alphabetic Avenues: Avenue A, etc. Numbered streets are perpendicular.

Fargo: Numbered avenues run north-south and numbered streets east-west. The city could easily have been divided into four quadrants (NE, NW, SE, SW), but this system is not used. Instead, the city is divided into North and South. Front Street serves as the central line for the definition of avenues (1st Avenue N. and 1st Avenue S.).

Minot: Minot, however, has four quadrants defined by the Cartesian coordinates of Main Street (north-south) and Central Avenue (east-west). There is, therefore, a 9th Avenue NW which becomes 9th Avenue NE and a 3rd Street SE that become 3rd Street NE – as each crosses its respective coordinate.

South Dakota

Aberdeen: Main St. divides the city into East and West sections while the Milwaukee RR. is the dividing line between North and South street numbering. Streets to the West. of Main St. are numbered from 1 upward. East of Main St. names prevail. Both street and avenue numbering run in even hundreds, first block E. of Main St. or W. being designated with numbers from 2 to 100, the following blocks run in even hundreds.

Washington

Vancouver: has thoroughfares named *Streets* that criss-cross, but in one direction the names are numbers and in the other they are letters of the alphabet.

Downtown Seattle has numbered avenues in one direction and named streets in the other. The named streets tend to be after Presidents or trees: e.g., Main, Washington, [Tesler Way], Fir, Spruce, Alder Streets.

In these five States, the grid system is the norm, but, whatever the reason may be, it is not applied in a mechanical way. General regularities can be seen in semantic groupings, and they are summarized in Table 2.

We offer the following as summary observations:

Table 2. Major semantic domains of frequent streets.

DOMAIN	MA	MT	ND	SD	WA
Numbers	0 ["1st street" ranks 79th]	21 [of 50 are numbers]	40	21	44
"Main" Streets	Park Main Central	Park Main Central	Main Park Central	Main Park Broadway	Park Main --
State	--	Montana	Dakota	Dakota	[Washington]
Presidents	Washington Lincoln Adams Franklin	Washington Lincoln	Lincoln	Lincoln Washington Jefferson Grant Jackson Madison Adams	Washington
Trees & Bushes	Maple Oak Elm Pine Chestnut Cedar Walnut Laurel Willow Birch Linden	Cottonwood Pine Cedar Maple Aspen Ponderosa Willow Juniper	Elm Cherry Spruce	Oak Maple Spruce Willow Cedar Pine Ash Walnut Birch Aspen Cottonwood	Cedar Maple Alder Elm
Sunset	Sunset (rank 30)	Sunset (35)	Sunset (80)	Sunset (25)	Sunset (27)

(a) The primary street is most frequently called *Main* or *Park* in all five states. However, *Central* is also common usage.

(b) The grid pattern is dominant.

(c) *Streets* and *Avenues* are usually perpendicular to each other. No other generic is ordinarily selected for the grid (see the Manhattan street model), even though *Road* is the most common term in Montana and the second most common in Washington State.

(d) Numbers and letters of the alphabet do not criss-cross as frequently as one would expect if a "ruthless administrative" rule had been applied. Numbers, however, are the norm for at least one of the two directions of the grid. (There may be more than two directions to a grid because new grids can be added at an angle to the old grid, as is the case in Seattle.)

(e) The second set of thoroughfares in a grid is usually named from one of three categories (or even a mix thereof): trees, founding fathers and presidents (and local heroes or politicians), and states. In the last case, the most common state to be named is the home state: *Montana* in Montana, *Dakota* in the Dakotas. In the case of Washington State, the American practice of rarely stating first names when naming streets makes it impossible to know whether the President or the state is being referred to. Paradoxically, there is no cumulative effect: in the State of Washington, the name *Washington* is less common than in Massachusetts, Montana, and South Dakota.

(f) As indicated by Table 3, a consequence of the grid system is that directionals frequently function as prefixes (*North 3rd Avenue*) or suffixes (*3rd avenue N.*). This is not a necessary consequence of the grid pattern, and, indeed, some towns use grids without adding directionals. However, the two are clearly correlated, as is obvious from the fact that Massachusetts has a few points of the compass but does not have a single street using a compound directional (Northeast, Southwest), since those are apparently used exclusively when a town is divided into quadrants.

North Dakota and Washington are the two states that have the most dominant grid systems: almost half of North Dakota's streets (48.6%) carry a directional suffix as do over one third of Washington's streets (37.2%). Moreover, the proportion of compound directionals (i.e., those that are used in grids divided into quadrants) is clearly dominant in those two states, with the percentage of compound directionals like *Northeast*, or *Northwest* well over twice as common as the simple directionals (*North* or *South*).

Table 3. Single and compound directionals in street name generics(as percentage of all streets within state).

	MA	MT	ND	SD	WA
North	0.05%	2.0%	5.0%	0.8%	1.0%
South	0.05%	2.4%	6.0%	1.0%	2.8%
East	0.1%	1.7%	5.2%	1.7%	5.5%
West	0.1%	3.2%	5.9%	1.8%	2.4%
Subtotals:	0.3%	9.3%	22.1%	5.3%	11.7%
Northeast	--	0.9%	5.4%	2.1%	7.2%
Northwest	--	1.1%	7.4%	1.8%	4.1%
Southeast	--	0.6%	6.4%	2.0%	9.5%
Southwest	--	1.2%	7.4%	2.4%	4.9%
Subtotals:	--	3.8%	26.6%	8.3%	25.7%
Totals:	0.3%	13.1%	48.6%	13.5%	37.2%
Freq:	283	1,431	1,879	640	19,662
Total Streets in State:	88,988	10,914	3860	4738	52,808

Note: Percentages being rounded off, the final totals may differ by a decimal point from the sum of the partial percentages.

Dominant Generics

Generics and Specifics

George Stewart (20) observes that the generic-specific distinction is typical of place names cross-culturally, the word "generic" being "ap-

plied to the term that indicates the "class" as with *City* in *New York City*. The distinction between generic and specific is not as constant as one might assume: *Hill*, *Bluff*, *Terrace*, and *Boulevard* (among others) appear as specifics as well as generics. *Park* is one of the most frequent specifics and a not infrequent generic. Generics (*Street*, *Road*, etc.), although they appear in the official designation of the overwhelming majority of street names—*Washington Avenue*, *Oak Drive*, (but *Broadway* only)—may be omitted on street signs and, regionally, in everyday speech (Fairclough 233-234).

Although occasionally omitted, street generics are probably the most numerous single category of toponymic generics. From his study of geographers' maps, Meredith Burrill (226) concluded that there are approximately 750 natural generics in the United States. Taking this figure to be reasonably accurate, there is a disproportionately large number of street generics: over two hundred. Like other toponymic generics they show regional and geographical specializations: Louisiana has many *Bayous* and Massachusetts has none, either in its topography or its toponyms. States that are not on the ocean rarely have *Beach* as a generic: Massachusetts and Washington use the generic (even if rarely) whereas the other three States never use it. Out of the 216 street generic names used in the United States, the number each State uses is a diminishing function of its total number of streets. The difference between the Dakotas is not significant, since each one of the four extra generics in North Dakota is only represented once in the State.

--Massachusetts:	76 different generics and	88,988 streets
--Washington:	65	52,808
--Montana:	49	10,914
--South Dakota:	30	4,738
--North Dakota:	34	3,860

While the absolute number varies with total streets, the distribution of generics in all five States examined is broadly comparable, although the smallest state, North Dakota, distinguishes itself by the high frequency of its most common street toponyms. We indicate below the number of the most frequent generics needed to go beyond the 50% and the 90% marks:

--Massachusetts:	2 generics =	60% of total,	7 generics =	91%
--Montana:	3 =	61 %	6 =	92%
--North Dakota:	2 =	72%	5 =	91%
--South Dakota:	2 =	59%	6 =	91%
--Washington:	3 =	59%	7 =	94%

As a point of comparison, note that the most common specific toponym—the *Park* in *Park Street* or the number in *1st Street*—appears between 0.2% and 3.3% of the time, with the latter "high" instance being the previously noted special case of North Dakota.

--Massachusetts:	Rank 1 =	Park=	0.4%
--Montana:	Rank 1 =	2nd =	1.0%
	Rank 14=	Park =	0.3% (first non-numerical name)
--North Dakota:	Rank 1 =	2nd =	3.3 %
	Rank 21 =	Main =	0.7% (first non-numerical name)
--South Dakota:	Rank 1 =	2nd =	3.3%
	Rank 15 =	Main =	0.7% (first non-numerical name)
--Washington:	Rank 1 =	3rd =	0.4%
	Rank 13 =	Park =	0.2% (first non-numerical name)

As a further point of comparison, it can be noted that *Smith*, the most common American surname, represents a mere one percent of the population and that the first *thirty* surnames represent only *ten* percent thereof. The smaller set of common first names provides a second point of comparison: out of the 265,000 children born in New York State in 1986, 32% of females and 44% of males had a name taken from the first twenty-five most frequent names.

However, there are cultures where the distribution of personal names resembles the distribution of generics. This was true in Europe in the Middle Ages; and today in South Korea, the five most common names (*Kim*, *Lee*, *Park*, *Choi*, and *Chong*) represent over 55% of the population.[5] Clearly the distribution of street generics is far more concentrated than that of personal names in contemporary Western cultures, but there are also significant differences in the number of names various cultures use so that, on the one side, a personal name in Korea seems closer to

the function of our generic and, on the other, one may expect that generics occasionally play the role of names. In other words, generics and specifics are not mutually exclusive, a point made clear in the case of given names by their use as synonyms of "person" and a variety of other notions both in English (Partridge) and French (Guiraud 105-115), for example.

Take the case of *Park*. It is the most common (or the second most common) non-numerical name in all five States. It is likely that because of the prevalence of parks in small towns there will be streets leading to or adjacent to a park that are called *Park Street*. This use of the landmark as a descriptor explains many of the top fifty names in our corpus (e.g., *Church*, *School*, and more abstractly *Main* and *Central Streets*). In addition *Park* seems to describe landscaped central dividers in avenues like Manhattan's *Park Avenue*. One may perhaps assume that this kind of usage easily leads to mixed uses—*Parkway*, a not infrequent top-20 generic (see Table 3) incorporating both the specific and the generic. Further, *Park* itself, by becoming a descriptive type of street, frees the specific slot for other names. (See also Fairclough [226] for a different rationale.) The important point is that frequent street generics (e.g., *Hill*) are also often frequent street specifics; this issue needs to be more fully discussed than is at present the case in the toponymic literature.

Omission of the Generic

Finally—although, for a variety of reasons, we have not yet been able to restructure the U.S. Postal Service's tapes so that we may estimate accurately the number of streets that carry no official generic at all—it is clear that *the absence of generic* is itself an important category, accounting possibly for between 0.2% to 1% of the items in the non-directional generic slot. Like towns and cities, certain streets omit the generic altogether: this seems to occur, for example, with letters of the alphabet. In other, more common cases, specifics that incorporate the generic *-way* (the best-known example being *Broadway*) do not require another generic. In comparable fashion, towns have incorporated the suffix -to(w)n or *-ville* (although etymologically *ville* did not *originally* mean "town").

In some respects the omission of the generic is the standard practice for toponyms (cf. Stewart 22): one rarely needs to say "the City of Chicago" or "the River Rhine," but these are possibilities so that it is

not unexpected if the frequency of use of generics differs regionally and crosslinguistically. In the case of streets, however, it may be that their homonymy with the personal and placenames from which they often stem discourages the omission of generics under many circumstances and in many sociolects.

Street, Road, Avenue, Drive

The main generics in all five states are *Street*, *Road*, *Avenue*, and *Drive*. *Street* does not appear in the first rank in two cases (see Table 4), but when it is not first it is second. The fact that *Avenue* is first with *Street* close behind in North Dakota is possibly due to the grid system that is so common in that state. *Drive* is a prototypically American generic, and its lowest rank is five while its highest is three (with a 17.5% frequency in South Dakota).

Road appears first in Montana, ahead of *Street*. It might be argued that the ratio of originally non-urban over urban locales in the state helped increase the percentage of *Road*s in Montana. But why not then in the Dakotas? This use of *Road* may also reflect, as Webster's dictionary notes, the use of *Road* within towns for "arterial street names." However, in Massachusetts it seems that the dominant use of *Road* is simply as a synonym for *Street*, even though Mencken, in his lengthy study on proper names in *The American Language* argues that the English "use *road* for urban thoroughfares, which is very seldom done in America" (300). *Street* itself is frequently used for arterial roads like Route 16-Washington *Street* (Wellesley, MA). Perhaps the influence of British English in New England also partly explains the frequency of *Road* in New England – but this is hardly likely in the case of Montana despite the Western migration of people and names (Leighly).

There are regional preferences in the use of *Lane*, and *Way*: In the Dadamowa region, these names seem to be more often given to larger thoroughfares (cf. Seattle's *Tesler Way* cited earlier). This usage is puzzling for *Lane* but might be expected for *Way* since it is associated with major thoroughfare names like *Broadway* and *Parkway* and also with words like *highway*, *thruway*, *freeway*, etc. Overall, little is known about the *use* of generics. A first step is to establish, as we have done, which generics are, in fact, dominant.

Table 4. Top 23 street name generics (ranked by frequency with listed percentages).

RANK	MA		MT		ND		SD		WA	
1	street	35.7	road	24.0	avenue	36.1	street	36.1	street	22.7
2	road	23.1	street	21.3	street	35.7	avenue	23.2	road	18.3
3	avenue	12.4	drive	15.4	drive	12.5	drive	17.5	avenue	17.7
4	drive	7.4	avenue	14.6	court	4.0	lane	5.1	place	10.8
5	lane	7.1	lane	13.7	road	2.5	road	4.9	drive	9.6
6	circle	2.6	court	3.0	lane	2.5	court	4.5	court	8.8
7	terrace	2.4	place	1.6	place	1.7	place	3.0	lane	6.3
8	court	2.3	way	1.5	circle	1.6	circle	2.5	way	2.6
9	place	2.0	circle	1.4	blvd	0.5	blvd	0.9	circle	0.8
10	way	1.9	trail	1.1	loop	0.4	trail	0.8	blvd	0.7
11	park	0.5	blvd	0.8	trail	0.3	pass	0.2	loop	0.4
12	extension	0.4	loop	0.6	way	0.3	way	0.2	highway	0.3
13	square	0.3	highway	0.1	estates	0.2	estates	0.2	terrace	0.2
14	path	0.3	square	0.1	terrace	0.2	ridge	0.1	trail	0.1
15	blvd	0.2	terrace	0.1	cove	0.2	terrace	0.1	parkway	0.1
16	parkway	0.2	crossing	0.1	park	0.2	park	0.1	extension	0.0
17	trail	0.2	estates	0.1	parkway	0.2	hill	0.1	heights	0.0
18	hill	0.1	ridge	0.1	village	0.1	loop	0.1	park	0.0
19	highway	0.1	park	0.0	mall	0.1	heights	0.0	view	0.0
20	heights	0.1	pass	0.0	manor	0.1	mountain	0.0	key	0.0
21	row	0.1	extension	0.0	plaza	0.1	path	0.0	plaza	0.0
22	run	0.1	hill	0.0	point	0.1	parkway	0.0	square	0.0
23	plaza	0.1	heights	0.0	expwy	0.1	square	0.0	mall	0.0

	MA	MT	ND	SD	WA
Cumulative Percentage:	99.5%	99.5%	99.5%	99.8%	99.7%
Number of Generics by State:	75	49	34	30	65

Dominant Naming Patterns of Specifics

Letters and Numbers in Street Names

The eight dominant categories of specifics are grouped in Table 5. Judging from the categories discussed earlier in relation to the top fifty names of the five states, one would expect that the major street-naming strategy in the Dadamowa region is the use of numbers. That this is indeed the case is clear from Table 5. However, letters of the alphabet are surprisingly rare, perhaps because one cannot go beyond twenty-six streets and, in the vast expanses of the Dadamowa area, such a small set is seen as potentially insufficient.

Natural and Social Landscape

The second most common set of naming practices reflects the geography of the area—with, for example, terms like *Lake*, *Hill*, *Creek*, *Valley*, *Beach* (followed by a generic) being the most common geographic terms in the State of Washington. In the same general category—under "human geography"—we include socially defined nature and landmarks. In rank order, for the State of Washington, the category includes:

--Park	--Division	--Terrace	--Mill
--Garden	--Railroad	--Orchard	--Village

Parks, orchards, and gardens are typically humanized stretches of the natural landscape. Mills and railroads are typical *landmarks* that go beyond the management of nature. "Division" is a typical surveyor's term that characterizes states like Washington where the mapping of the territory was a historically major enterprise.

Usually those names were bestowed upon the streets in slow descriptive fashion (see the Algeo excerpt on Athens quoted earlier), but one important institution stands out: the University. American universities often have unique names (not only *University of* ... followed by the name of the state but often such names as *Harvard* or *Yale*). Such names are usually found in small sets in suburbs—especially but by no means exclusively those inhabited by academics. Particularly when the names are *Harvard* or *Yale*, the goal of the namer seems to be to establish the high status of the streets so called.

Table 5. Top eight semantic domains for street names (with frequency of occurrence indicated by percentage of streets within state).

	MA	MT	ND	SD	WA
Alphanumerics	**1.0%**	**13.8%**	**51.1%**	**21.5%**	**33.5%**
Numbers	0.7%	13.2%	50.2%	21.1%	32.3%
Letters	0.3%	0.6%	0.9%	0.4%	1.2%
Natural/Social Landscape	**14.5%**	**15.8%**	**8.0%**	**12.0%**	**10.2%**
Geography	8.4%	11.1%	3.9%	6.8%	7.3%
Human Geography	5.1%	4.5%	3.3%	4.6%	2.6%
Universities	1.0%	0.2%	0.8%	0.6%	0.3%
Plants	**6.6%**	**5.9%**	**5.0%**	**8.1%**	**4.4%**
Trees	5.3%	4.7%	4.5%	6.8%	3.6%
Shrubs /Flowers	1.3%	1.2%	0.5%	1.3%	0.8%
Personal names	**9.6%**	**5.0%**	**2.3%**	**5.3%**	**4.6%**
First or Last	**9.2%**	**4.8%**	**2.2%**	**5.2%**	**4.4%**
Writers	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Artists	0.06	--	--	--	0.04%
Presidents etc.	**5.4%**	**3.0%**	**3.4%**	**6.9%**	**2.3%**
Presidents	2.4%	1.9%	1.8%	3.7%	1.5%
History	1.9%	0.7%	0.9%	1.4%	0.5%
Indians	1.1%	0.4%	0.7%	1.8%	0.3%
Placenames	**0.9%**	**2.1%**	**1.4%**	**3.1%**	**0.9%**
States	0.6%	1.7%	1.2%	2.2%	0.7%
Cities	0.3%	0.4%	0.2%	0.9%	0.2%
Animals	**0.9%**	**2.2%**	**1.0%**	**2.2%**	**0.7%**
Land	0.1%	1.0%	0.4%	0.6%	0.2%
Air	0.7%	1.2%	0.6%	1.5%	0.5%
Water	0.1%	0.003%	--	0.1%	0.03%
Varia*	**3.6%**	**2.1%**	**2.6%**	**3.7%**	**1.4%**
Color	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Compass Points	0.8%	0.4%	0.5%	0.8%	0.2%
Evaluative	0.5%	0.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%
Greek Terms	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.4%	0.1%
Months	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.01%
Seasons	0.6%	0.1%	0.01%	0.1%	0.1%
Precious Stones/ Metals	0.3%	0.3%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%
Religion	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Highways/Routes	0.1%	1.3%	0.5%	0.6%	0.4%
Self-Descriptive	0.9%	0.6%	1.1%	0.9%	0.4%
Percentage of Patterned Streets:	**43.6%**	**51.9%**	**76.3%**	**65.0%**	**59.1%**

* "Greek Terms" refers to Greek letters (e.g., "Omega") and gods (apparently referring to military and other missiles, e.g., "Apollo"). "Religion" includes, for example, saints. Highways dominate in the Dadamowa region, routes in Massachusetts. "Self-descriptive" refers, for example, to curved streets called "Curve.")

Plants

The third major category is that of plants: trees, shrubs, and flowers. They vary regionally, so that whereas *Cottonwood* appears only fourteen times in Massachusetts (under 0.1%), it occurs thirty times in Montana (0.3%) which has only one eighth of its number of streets. In fact, in that state, it is the most common tree name, ahead of *Pine*, *Cedar*, and *Maple*. The main plant names for each state are listed in Table 2 (but see also Table 6). Plant names often occur in sets of parallel streets.

Personal Names

Personal names cover both first names and last names. Last names have tended to be bestowed upon streets to commemorate heroes great and small (including, for example, winners of Olympic medals) and politicians. They are not usually found as sets. First names, however, are used by realtors and developers when they need to name a set of streets, whether they are parallel or not.

Presidents, Founding Fathers, History, Indians

Among last names, there is a category, that of presidents, that is often found in series of parallel streets. These are not infrequently mixed, in Dadamowa, with founding fathers and state names. Occasionally, other major symbols of the nation and of its past (history, Indians) also appear—but the latter more often occur as a constant but unlocalized theme of low but significant frequency.

Placenames

States (beginning with one's home state) are a frequent basis for names of parallel streets, but the pattern is not a major one. Names of the major cities of the United States are also chosen on a regular but infrequent basis. (For smaller local towns used as street names, see the section on **Affixes**, below.)

The last three categories discussed above present many problems for the toponymist dealing with the categorizing of tens of thousands of street names:

—Is *Washington* the State or the Father of the Nation?

—Which president is *Adams*, since American street names rarely include the mention of a title or first name?

—Is *Adams* one of the presidents, a governor, a local hero? (It is a sufficiently common name to have been borne by many famous people.)

—Does *Green* refer to the color, a plant, greenery, the village green, or a famous person named *Green*?

The methodological problems are especially acute when dealing with the intersection of personal names and placenames. As a consequence, we have not included any statistics on towns as street names, but they do play a significant role. Similarly, writers or artists can hardly ever be recognized in America except when their names are relatively unique (*Mozart*, *Van Gogh*). Even so, whether local authorities can be thought of as having named many streets after a particular person or not, the result of the American naming system is that very few people are ever likely to know after whom or what a street is named (Ferguson). In other words, from a sociolinguistic perspective, only the broad categories of personal name and placename or special sets of adjacent names such as presidents and states are likely to be perceived as such.

Animals and Varia

Animals constitute the last major category of street names—with birds (the most prominent members of the animal kingdom in an urban setting) the dominant subclass. Like most other categories, animals often appear in new developments as a theme for the naming of a set of streets.

Affixes and the Greening of America

Although they are well known, prefixes and suffixes are rarely discussed in connection with streets. Yet they constitute an overall semantic class covering up to thirty percent of street names. For example, a whole subclass of street (and other placenames) is composed of affixes describing the beauty of a location (see Table 5 under **Varia**): e.g., *Bellevue* and *Lakeview*; some prefixes, like *Old* and *New* are not bound to the word following them, but they play a comparably evaluative role; a high proportion of suffixes are typical of town and city names (*-ton*, *-ville*, *-burgh*, *-caster*, etc.), thus suggesting that a correspondingly high number of streets are named after local towns. Not infrequently streets are named after the towns to which they lead.

Affixes may also make a difference in our perception of the frequency of street names. Although *Maple* appears in first place in Massachusetts and in second in South Dakota and Washington, it is probably not perceived as being as frequent as *Oak* or especially *Pine* because it does not as easily become a prefix or a suffix. Thus, in the State of Washington it seems that *Maple* and *Pine* are approximately equal in number (at ranks 2 and 3 of trees). But, as shown in Table 6, if we add the occurrences of *Pine* as prefix and suffix (and its appearances as a plural), there are approximately twice as many instances of *Pine* (299) as of *Maple* (153). A short list of typical prefixes for *Pine*, *Oak*, and *Maple* appears below. Starred items indicate that the name is frequently found in the corpus as two separate words (on the model of *Oak Hill* and *Oakhill*). Words that combine with *Maple* are the ones that combine with *Pine* and *Oak*, but their frequencies are low or they appear as double names (*Maple Ridge Road*) and not as a prefixed name (no **Mapleridge Road*).

Pinewood	Oakwood	Maplewood
Pinehill*	Oakhill*	Mapleton
Pinegrove*	Oakridge*	Maplehill*
Pinehurst	Oakhurst	Maplehurst
Pinecrest	Oakcrest	Maplecrest
Pinedale	Oakdale	Mapledale
Pineview*	Oakview*	Mapleview
Pinetree*	Oakland	

The category of plants and plant affixes deserves a fuller discussion than is possible here. For instance, affixes such as *wood* and *green* rank high in the State of Washington (the most populated of the four Dadamowa States):

--Prefix

wood: 0.4% of all streets
green: 0.3% of all streets

--Suffix

wood: 1.5% of all streets

Clearly *wood* and *green* play an important role in toponyms, and particularly in street names, cemetery names (Zelinsky), apartment names (Minton), even names of suburbs (Schwartz). [6] *Green* could in a few cases be a patronym, but Table 6 shows that it appears rarely alone (its

Table 6. Prefixes, suffixes, and free-standing specifics for selected trees and their superordinates. (absolute frequencies rather than percentages have been used in this table to provide more precise means of comparison within states.)

MA		MT		ND		SD		WA	
Trees									
pine	490	pine	59	oak	13	oak	30	maple	143
oak	430	tree	17	maple	9	pine	30	pine	108
maple	341	maple	16	pine	5	maple	19	oak	83
wood	136	oak	13			wood	6	tree	58
tree	94	wood	10			tree	4	wood	37
woods	18	woods	2					pines	2
pines	2	pines	1						
Trees as Prefixes									
wood	567	pine	1	wood	12	green	25	wood	189
green	470	wood	45	oak	6	wood	21	green	149
oak	237	green	33	green	4	pine	7	pine	52
pine	165	oak	6	pine	1	oak	4	oak	38
maple	71					maple	1	maple	10
Trees as Suffixes									
wood	2144	wood	171	wood	64	wood	119	wood	780
pine	365	pine	58	pine	4	pine	23	pine	125
pines	26	pines	6			pines	7	pines	12
Totals and new rank orders									
wood(s)	2865	wood(s)	228	wood	76	wood	146	wood	1006
pine(s)	1048	pine(s)	124	oak	19	pine(s)	67	pine(s)	299
oak	667	green	33	pine	10	oak	34	maple	153
green	470	oak	19	maple	9	green	25	oak	146
maple	412	tree	17	green	4	maple	20	tree	58
tree	94	maple	16			tree	4		

most common case is as a personal name) and far more frequently as a prefix. *Wood* is often part of a tree name (*Cottonwood*, *Redwood*, *Dogwood*), but it is also a common prefix used in neologisms that are meaningless but evocative like *Woodfield*, *Woodlawn*, and *Woodvale*. As such, *green* and *wood* are clearly related to what has been called the "greening of America"(Koegler)—the increasing use of words that refer to a formerly unspoiled natural environment in order to compensate symbolically for the increasing urbanization of the United States.

Conclusions

Washington, Montana, and the Dakotas can be characterized, when compared to Massachusetts, by one overwhelming factor: the use of the

grid system which was established before people had settled in significant numbers in those states. As a non-necessary but empirically dominant consequence, streets were named numerically in large numbers. Other solutions were conceivable—in particular, names of trees. But the names of commonly known trees being probably too few, the simplest and most practical solution was chosen: numbers.

A second consequence of the grid system is the use of points of the compass not only (as in Massachusetts) in the proper name itself (the specific) but also as a directional accompanying or occasionally replacing the generic. Finally, the frequency of *Avenue* in the Dakotas is perhaps also linked to the grid system.

Once those differences are taken into account, the major finding of our comparison between Washington, Montana, the Dakotas—and Massachusetts is that, despite the fact that our study spans a whole continent, the five states we have investigated do *not* approach the naming of streets in radically different ways.[7]

Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

Notes

1. Although States have not usually been grouped in such a fashion, city names like *Texarkana* (Texas + Arkansas + Louisiana) are well-known composite formations. Henry Heck lists a number of state border towns with such portmanteau names. For example, in Montana, *Monida* (Montana + Idaho) and, in North Dakota, *Nosodak* (North Dakota + South Dakota).

2. The Carrier Route Base Tapes (and many other "Address Maintenance Subsystems") are available free of charge from the U.S.P.S. Address Information Center in Memphis, Tennessee. A mainframe computer is required for their statistical analysis. The first author, Larry Baldwin, took primary responsibility for the organization and analysis of the data. Primary responsibility for writing the paper goes to Michel Grimaud.

3. The case of Montana shows that in a rural state the problems are more complicated: highways there function as streets. Thus Highway 93 ranks nineteenth and Highway 2 ranks twenty-eighth on our list. There also exist private roads that are not listed. In particular, campuses frequently have a rather significant yet nameless road or street system. Private roads (but not those on campuses) are referred to by the U.S.P.S. as "Foot of" or "Off" followed by the name of a public thoroughfare.

4. All of the map information for this discussion was gathered from the State Guides compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration for the States of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Washington and published during the late Thirties and early Forties.

5. The data on American surnames come from the "Report of Distribution of Surnames in the Social Security Number File, September 1, 1984" (SSA Pub. No. 42-004; April 1985). The data on New York State are made available each year by the State of New York Department of Health (Office of Public Health) in Albany. The South Korean surname data were published in the *New York Times* in 1988.

6. Whereas it seems intuitively appropriate to include superordinates like *College* or *University* when dealing with the class of universities containing *Harvard, Berkeley,* etc.—the problem of plants is more difficult: should we restrict our analysis to tree, bush, and flower names, or do we include words like *tree* and *wood* and *green*? Do we add *garden* and *meadow*? If so, why not *forest, grove,* and *field*—and a significant number of other geographical terms. Our categorization of streets will be significantly different depending upon such decisions. Fortunately those questions are not merely linguistic or logical: they are open to sociological and psychological investigation. Historical studies of related toponyms are also relevant (see in particular Koegler, Schwartz).

7. Thus, unlike the French (Ferguson) or, for instance, Mexicans (Dabbs), they do not use dates (*4-July Avenue*)—or add titles (with or without first names) when naming streets after famous people.

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NICKNAMES

The December 1990 issue of *Names* will be devoted to the study of personal nicknames. Guest Editor James K. Skipper, JR., will be happy to receive for review manuscripts on any aspect of this topic.

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