Naming Practices in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa

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A survey of the naming practices of the three main linguistic groups of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (Xhosa, Afrikaans and English) showed clear differences among the groups regarding the naming of babies and the namegivers, and also provided evidence of ongoing change and cross-cultural influence among the groups. From these patterns we suggest that in a post-apartheid South Africa, which offers increasing opportunity for interaction across cultures and languages, naming patterns are in a process of change, the directions of which are only beginning to be determined.

'n Ondersoek van die naamgee-praktyke van die drie hooftaalgroepe in die Oos-Kaap Provinsie van Suid-Afrika (Xhosa, Afrikaans en Engels) het duidelike verskille vir die onderskeie groepe openbaar: die name wat vir babas gekies word en wie die naamgewers is, verskil. Hierdie verskille dui op 'n proses van verandering en inter-kulturele beïnvloeding tussen die groepe onderling. Uit hierdie naamgeepatrone word afgelei dat in post-apartheid Suid-Afrika, waar daar toenemende geleenthede vir interaksie tussen tale en kulture bestaan, naamgeepatrone besig is om te verander. Dit het pas moontlik geword om die rigting van die veranderingsproses te begin vasstel.

Naming and culture

One of the many ways in which language and culture go hand in hand concerns the naming process—how different cultures select and assign names. It has become evident that personal naming practices interact in significant ways with various patterns of social and cultural organization and can be keys to broader cultural changes, in view of their intimate connections with values, traditions, hopes, fears and events in people's lives. (See, e.g., Beattie 1957; Alford 1987; Herbert and Bogatsu 1990; Suzman 1994).

When one names a baby and a word is consciously chosen to refer to a specific child, that word has enormous potential symbolic power. As well as identifying (and classifying) a particular person, the chosen word can be used to send a message, to express a wish, hope or prayer, to resonate with the past and with selected national and religious groups, or simply to sound good. Naming is a linguistic act which reveals the complexities of social relationships, roles and statuses.

Here we report on a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic study in naming patterns in the communities living in and around Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Our aims were several: we wished to compare naming practices across the three main linguistic groups in the province (Xhosa, English, and Afrikaans), and among the three main racial groups (white, colored, and black).[1] Furthermore, we aimed to examine trends with regard to namegivers, the numbers and types of names given and the reasons for these choices. We also incorporated, as secondary concerns, an analysis of second names, politically-related names, the use by Xhosa informants of "English" names, the use of and rationale behind nicknames and the roles of such factors as birth order, gender and geographic location (urban/rural) in the giving of names.

<div align="center">Linguistic Aspects of Naming</div>

Language is primarily a system of signs, not symbols (Finegan and Besnier 1989), and in Western society naming is primarily a system of reference, not symbolization. Words act as a sign system, and differ intrinsically from symbols, which bear some likeness or logical link to their referents. Proper names differ from common nouns in that the reference of proper names is unique in picking out specific people, places or institutions as opposed to the loose and relatively vague set of referents of common nouns (despite their core semantic component). Thus we distinguish between the lexicon and the onomasticon, containing the list of proper names which are typically capitalized (in the languages concerned). While proper names conform to the phonetic patterns of specific languages, they are generally not listed in dictionaries and are normally not translated.

Thus while the vast majority of common nouns in any language have significance and include in their denotation a somewhat vague specifica-

tion of the typical characteristics of the class of objects to which they refer, in relation to the total linguistic system to which they belong, proper nouns stand apart since they typically lack this meaning *per se*, acting instead as referring expressions which speakers in a community mutually agree to use in order to refer to unique and specific referents (Alford 1987, 59). Although certain proper names may, over time, develop connotations for speakers (many of which may be shared in the case of high-profile people or places such as *Mandela* or *Cape Town*), this is not generally true of most proper names. *James, Jacobus* and *Luntu* do not have "meaning" in the same way that *book, boek* and *incwadi* do in their respective languages. (The first item in each set is English, the second Afrikaans and the third Xhosa).

However, while all proper names serve a referential function, cultural and linguistic groups differ in the degree to which proper names are also viewed as meaning-bearing, and one of the aims of this study was to investigate this aspect of naming.

Methodology

A questionnaire soliciting information on names, namegivers, and the reasons for giving particular names, as well as related demographic information, was drawn up in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. Copies were distributed to children in their first year in a range of different primary schools in Grahamstown which cater to various linguistic and cultural groups. Schools included English-medium private schools, Model C English- and Afrikaans-medium schools, House of Delegates Afrikaans-medium schools and Department of Education and Training Xhosa primary schools.[2] Each of the 742 questionnaires was accompanied by a prepaid reply envelope and 427 were returned (a 57.5% return rate). The school attended by the child and self-report of home language were used as a basis for categorization into linguistic and ethnic groups.[3] In the case of new-born infants, the questionnaire was administered personally by two fieldworkers[4] who were employed and trained to interview mothers of new-born babies in the maternity ward of the local hospital and during visits to local post-natal clinics. There were 110 of these interviews.[5]

Results

The criteria of race and language establish four primary groups of respondents: white English speakers (89 respondents), white Afrikaans speakers (28), colored Afrikaans speakers (165), and black Xhosa speakers (245). These are shown in table 1. There were no white Xhosa-speaking or black English-speaking informants, and, in view of the small numbers of colored English informants (4), colored Xhosa informants (2) and black Afrikaans informants (1), these were excluded from subsequent analyses.

Table 1. Respondents, by Racial and Linguistic Group

	White		Colored		Black		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	Total
English	89	76	4	2	0	0	93
Afrikaans	28	24	165	96	1	0	194
Xhosa	0	0	2	1	245	99	247
Total	117		171		246		534

Table 2 shows the numbers and percentages of the four primary groups in terms of who named the child. These show several important cross-cultural differences related to differences in delays in naming among the groups.[6]

Table 2. The Namegivers

	White				Colored		Black	
	English		Afrikaans		Afrikaans		Xhosa	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Father	16	18	7	25	28	17	57	23
Mother	14	16	8	28	80	48	101	41
Both	59	66	13	46	29	18	53	22
Grandmother	0	0	0	0	6	4	21	9
Grandfather	0	0	0	0	5	3	3	1
Other Relative	0	0	0	0	10	6	8	3
Non-Relative	0	0	0	0	5	3	1	0
Total	89		28		163		244	

There were 110 new-borns included in this study. At the time naming information was gathered (usually within three days following birth), only one of the 26 white babies had been given no name. However, 3 of the 8 colored babies had no name and 30 Xhosa babies (40%) were nameless. There are several possible reasons for the relatively late naming of Xhosa babies, including the role played by the meaning of names in Xhosa communities, where one must wait to see what happens at the birth, what sex the child is, what it looks like and how people feel after the birth before one can choose a name. An additional factor could be economic: a high birth rate and consequential straitened circumstances could result in a decrease in the significance of the birth, which would account for the fact that only 7 (23%) of the unnamed babies were first-borns. Xhosa mothers suggested further reasons for the delay in naming, especially the significant role of the mother-in-law. Their comments included: "The child will be named by the grandmother; therefore does not have a name", "I am not responsible for naming the child", and "They'll name the child at home."

The Namegivers

The names were given by a number of different people: parents, grandparents (especially the grandmother), other relatives, and even non-relatives. The role of the parents as namegivers is exclusive in the white families, while a variety of namegivers is more common in colored and black families. Differences between parental and non-parental naming between whites and non-whites are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Naming by Parents and Others

	White	Non-White
Parents	117	348
Non-Parents	0	59

$p < .001$

Reasons for Choice of Names

After consulting relevant literature, including Thipa 1986; Neethling 1988; Herbert and Bogatsu 1990; and Suzman 1994, the following categories of names were established (when more than one reason was given, the name received a double classification):

Commemorative

    1. The child was named after a family member.

    2. The child was named to remember or honor someone special, usually an admired friend or personal acquaintance. (*Benecia*: "the name of my best friend at school").

    3. A name was inspired by a famous person, perhaps the name of a singer or filmstar, an historical personality, a fictional hero or heroine or a religious personality. (*Brenda*: "Omdat ek van Brenda Fassie se songs hou" 'because I like Brenda Fassie's songs', *Margaret*: "After St. Margaret of Antioch", *Daley*: "Vernoem na Britse triathlon atleet Daley Thompson" 'named after British triathlon athlete Daley Thompson', *Tertius*: "Ek het baie van die radio-storie Strandlopers gehou, en Tertius was die hoofkarakter" 'I really liked the radio serial Strandlopers, and Tertius was the main character', *Katherine*: "I liked Kate in *Taming of the* Shrew").

Meaning

    1. The namer was aware of the importance of the meaning of the name in general, and deliberately selected the name with that meaning in mind. (*Danika*: [the meaning was not stated by the respondent and is unknown to the authors, yet the respondent stated] "The meaning of the name was important", *Chwayita*: "Means joy - when she was born I was filled with joy because my wishes of having a baby girl were fulfilled", *Chiara*: "Italian for light").

    2. The meaning records circumstances (physical or social) about the pregnancy and/or the birth. (*Auguleen* [derived from *August*]: "Omdat sy in Augustus gebore was" 'Because she was born in August', *Zukisa* 'be patient': "We planned before we have this child", *Thobani* 'obey': "There was quarrel between the family even when the mother came from the hospital with the baby so the name was given", *Xolelwa* 'be forgiven': "The mother had her child unexpected, so we said the child's mother must be forgiven", *Liyanda* 'it is developing': "Linda means 'wait', that's why we gave her the name, because we were waiting for her").

    3. The name makes a social comment on the growth and composition of the family, the number of children, the number of sons or daughters, the time of waiting or the role the child will play in the

family in future. (*Anele* 'we are enough', *Awonke* 'we are all here': "He was born last and we felt that all of us are now here; we are saying to the Ancestors and to God that is now enough", *Siyanda* 'we are developing': "Because he is our second son so we are developing", *Sinazo* 'We've got them [girls]', *Unathi* 'you are with us': "We wished to have a girl and at last we have got a girl", *Zanele* 'enough girls' [there were 8 children (4 girls) in this family]).

4. The name encodes hopes and wishes for the child. (*Khayalethu* 'our home': "When he is grown up he must know that he must work for his home and look after his parents when they are older", *Fundiswa* 'be taught': "I'd like her to be educated", *Thobile* 'with good conduct').

5. The name has a religious or symbolic role, expressing thanks to God or the ancestors for the child. (*Ayabonga* 'to thank', *Bongani* 'thanks to God', *Siyabulela* 'we thank').

Tradition

Tradition is upheld in giving the name. (*Gareth*: "We wanted to give our son a Welsh name", *Lawrence*: His great Grandfather was a Captain Lawrence O'Toole. I like the idea of continuity, linking my son to the past", *Nobathembu*: "It is our clan name", *Sivuyile*: "Traditional in our clan", *Lushaan*: "Omdat sy oupa 'n Moslem of Maleier is" 'Because his grandfather is a Moslem or Malay'). Often such names reflect an obligation to conform to certain social or religious requirements, to please certain racial or linguistic groups or certain individuals. (*Sonya*: "We belong to the new Apostolic Church... The Head is our Chief Apostle... He said we must name her Sonya, after his wife", *Rocqinee*: "It is an Indian name because of our Indian background").

Politics

Unlike simple commemoratives, these names make political statements. (*Rolihlahla* 'drag a tree branch' [Mandela's name]: "ter ere van Nelson Mandela" 'in honor of Nelson Mandela', *Siphamandla* 'give us power': "Because the child was born during the violence" [during the Eighties there was massive black resistance to apartheid which resulted in frequent violent conflict], *Langa* 'the sun': "Both I and the child's father were in detention when the child was born; my father called him *Langa* because 'the sun doesn't go down without any news').[7]

Originality

The name goes against expected tradition and the namegiver explicitly aims to be different or creative. (*Anchen-Marie*: "Not a family name at all", *Megan*: "I don't believe in family names and I just wanted something different from the normal run of the mill", *Kerryn*: "Chose it because it is slightly unusual", *Clirice*: "Dis uniek" 'it's unique').

Personal Taste

The namer simply "liked" the idea or the sound of the name—a very frequent comment. (*Chavandria*: "I do like the sound of the name—sounds like a bird sound", *Chesire* "We liked the sound of the name when we heard it in a film", *Thandiswa* 'there to be loved': "The child used to be Zimasa, but as the time went by we decided to change to Thandiswa. We just liked its sound").

Linguistics

The name was created by blending or chosen because of (meta)linguistic factors such as the need to avoid a nickname or abbreviation, the ease of pronunciation and/or spelling, the length of the name and the initials in combination with the surname. (*Davidene* [male]: "Pa se naam is David en 'n vriendin...se naam is Dene" 'Father's name was David and a friend's...name was Dene', *Devan*: "Kombinasie van ouers se name" 'combination of parents' names', *Jake*: "Wanted a short name", *James*: "We have a particular aversion to fancy names—wanted a strong simple name that couldn't be abbreviated", *Esterlynn*: "Omdat sy op Paasmaandag gebore was...as dit 'n seun was sou die naam Eastin was" 'Because she was born on Easter Monday.... If it had been a boy, the name would have been Eastin', *Lou-Rika*: Mother Rika, grandfather Lourens, *Jamie* [female]: Granny's name was Jeanette Madelief", *Daneel*: "'n Verbuiging van die oupa se naam Daniel" 'a contraction of the grandfather's name Daniel' [the last three names were also classified as "commemorative"], *Chade*: "Changed from Chante, originated from the name of the popstar Sjade").

Appearance

A number of informants claimed that their children "just looked like" the name. (*Jo-Zane*: "Omdat dit 'n gepaste naam vir die kind was" 'Because it was an appropriate name for the child', *Elizabeth*: "She

looked like an Elizabeth—even at birth"). In other cases the name records a personal/physical characteristic of the child and emphasizes individuality. (*Charmion*: "She was so tiny at birth and looked like a charm, that's why I decided to give her that name, which means joy", *Ilse*: "Dit is kort en het net by haar gepas. By geboorte was sy 'petite' en die naam was sinoniem met haar" 'It is short and just suited her. At birth she was petite and the name is synonymous with her', *Zintle* 'beautiful': "Beautiful last girl, even if she is not beautiful").

Table 4 summarizes the reasons for choosing particular names. Table 5 shows the primary categories of naming and the frequencies among the major groups (reduced here from four to three by combining white English speakers and white Afrikaans speakers, since these groups showed essentially the same patterns of naming).

Table 4. Reasons for Name Choices

| | White | | | | Colored | | Black | |
| | English | | Afrikaans | | Afrikaans | | Xhosa | |
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Commemorative								
Family	41	25.5	10	26.3	30	26.1	32	11.9
Friend	7	4.3	2	5.3	9	7.8	9	3.3
Famous Person	6	3.7	3	7.9	9	7.8	1	0.3
Subtotal	54	33.5	15	39.5	48	41.7	42	15.6
Meaning								
General	9	5.6	2	5.3	2	1.7	46	17.1
Circumstances	0	0	0	0	4	3.5	34	12.7
Social	0	0	0	0	1	0.9	51	19.0
Hopes and Wishes	1	0.6	0	0	1	0.9	14	5.2
Religious	1	0.6	0	0	0	0	20	7.4
Subtotal	11	6.8	2	5.3	8	7.0	165	61.4
Tradition	18	11.2	5	13.1	9	7.8	8	3.0
Originality	9	5.6	2	5.3	1	0.9	2	0.7
Politics	0	0	1	2.6	1	0.9	4	1.5
Personal Taste	56	34.8	9	23.7	37	32.2	43	16.0
Linguistic Factors	9	5.6	4	10.5	8	6.9	2	0.7
Appearance	4	2.5	0	0	3	2.6	3	1.1

It should be noted that meaning was significantly more important for Xhosa speakers (table 5) than it was for English or Afrikaans speakers; more than 60% of all Xhosa names were meaning-based compared with no more than 7% for the other groups. Conversely, names among the white and colored speakers (English and Afrikaans) were much more likely to be chosen as commemoratives or because parents simply liked the names.

Table 5. Major Categories of Names

	White		Colored		Black	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Commemorative	69	41	48	47	42	16
Meaning	13	8	8	8	165	64
Tradition	23	14	9	9	8	3
Personal Taste	65	38	37	36	43	17
Total	170		102		258	

$p < .001$

The reasons for these patterns undoubtedly have to do with the cultural and social traditions of the groups involved. The strong patrilineal tendency among white parents (both English and Afrikaans speakers) in commemorating the name of the grandfather or the father is in direct contrast to the matrilineal trends which we found among the Xhosa speakers, where the grandmother and mother tend to be honored. The names of more than 70% of all Xhosa babies who received family names recorded the matrilineal line (table 6). Commemorative naming is closely linked to tradition, and tradition was explicitly mentioned as important by far more white informants than other-than-whites. Certain kinds of unspoken traditions manifest themselves in the trends in naming among Xhosa speakers: the tradition of the grandmother advising on the name, the tradition of using a name to comment on the growth and composition of the family and on the future role of the child, and the tradition of incorporating into the name some sign regarding the circumstances of the child's birth. Although Xhosa parents did not state that they were following a tradition (as was the case when many white

parents chose to explain their choice of names), their very choices reflect a powerful tradition, perhaps even stronger than that followed by the English and Afrikaans informants.

Table 6. Children Named After a Family Member

| | White | | | | Colored | | Black | |
| | English | | Afrikaans | | Afrikaans | | Xhosa | |
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Father	6	14.6	3	30	8	26.6	3	9.4
Mother	5	12.2	0	0	2	6.6	4	12.5
Grandfather	15	36.6	5	50	6	20.0	3	9.4
Grandmother	8	19.5	2	20	8	26.6	19	59.4
Other Relative	7	17.0	0	0	6	20.0	3	9.4
Total	41		10		30		32	

Commemorative names, especially those honoring family members, were especially characteristic of first-born children. Among white speakers, English and Afrikaans, while one in four names overall honored a family member, more than one in three did so among the names given to first-borns. The patterns among colored and black speakers showed no such differences. Furthermore, male children were more than twice as likely as female children to be given commemorative family names in English- and white Afrikaans-speaking families. (Colored Afrikaans speakers showed essentially no difference and for Xhosa speakers the pattern was reversed with more than twice as many females as males having names which commemorated family members, as shown in table 7).

Table 7. Family Commemoratives Among First-borns

| | White | | | | Colored | | Black | |
| | English | | Afrikaans | | Afrikaans | | Xhosa | |
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Grandfather	11	17.5	6	15	6	7.5	2	1.6
Grandmother	4	6.3	2	10	2	2.5	10	8.0
Father	4	6.3	5	15	5	6.5	2	1.6
Mother	4	6.3	4	0	4	5.0	1	0.8
Total	23	36.4	17	40	17	21.3	15	12.0

We had thought that, among Xhosa informants, political concerns might be evident in name choices (see Herbert 1993; 1995 in this respect). Surprisingly, however, politics did not seem to be an important consideration among Xhosa parents: only 1.5% of Xhosa informants referred to politics in explaining their name choice, a very low percentage in view of their having named their children in a time of heightened political awareness in South Africa. Personal and social aspects of naming were more important for all informants and overrode other concerns.

English and Afrikaans speakers frequently claimed that their choice was made primarily because they "liked the name" (English 34.8%, white Afrikaans 23.7%, colored Afrikaans 32.2%, Xhosa 16%—table 4, "Personal Taste"). This distribution indicates a greater degree of freedom in name choice, which, in conjunction with trends regarding "originality" and creativity strongly suggests tighter constraints on naming among the Xhosa speakers, who are following different rules of naming, thus alternatives simply do not present themselves. English and Afrikaans speakers (particularly the white informants) enjoyed greater freedom in name choice, and showed the most originality in naming.

In this connection the number of names chosen for specifically linguistic reasons is perhaps relevant as well, because experimentation with names for linguistic reasons also suggests a certain level of freedom and originality. In this regard the idiosyncratic spelling of a number of names deserves comment. Are parents who select *Tracy* and not *Tracey* making a conscious choice? Or are they aware of only the variant they select? Leslie Dunkling (1991, 22) cites the case of an insistent father who wanted *Evon* (not *Yvonne*) for his daughter through a desire for originality, and not ignorance of alternatives or of the "standard" form. From these data, it appears that among white parents such choices involved a measure of deliberate linguistic license, often the invention of new names or the blending of more than one name, often for the purposes of commemoration. In several other-than-white responses, however, the spelling of some names mirrored pronunciation, which suggests more a degree of illiteracy than desire for originality, e.g., *Berlinda, Silia* (Celia?), *Sendra* (Sandra?), *Shedrik* (Cedric?), *Grais* (Grace?).[8]

Name Uniqueness

    Table 8 shows patterns of duplication of names in the data. Of the 89 children of white English-speaking parents, there were six cases of name duplication and one of triplication. None of the 28 white Afrikaans names was repeated, but among the colored Afrikaans and Xhosa there was a much higher occurrence of repetition of names. In addition to these identical duplications, there were cases of common root name mor-

Table 8. Frequency of Name Usage

# of Occurrences	English	Colored Afrikaans	Xhosa
Two	Amy (f)	Brenda (f)	Amanda (f)
	Dylan (m)	Chantelle (f)	Ayanda (f)
	Gareth (m)	Christolene (f)	Linda (f)
	Michael (m)	Daley (m)	Luvuyo (m)
	Natalie (f)	Eugene (m)	Mawethu (m)
	Patrick (m)	Franklin (m)	Melikhaya (m)
	Richard (m)	Jacqueline (f)	Nokulunga (f)
		Leon (m)	Ntombozuko (f)
		Lucan (m)	Olwethu (f)
		Mario (m)	Phetoxolo (m)
		Melissa (f)	Sinazo (f)
			Sivuyile (m)
			Thulani (m)
			Vuyiseka (f)
			Xolani (m)
			Zikhona (f)
			Zintle (f)
			Zukisani (m)
Three	Samantha (f)	Chevandre (f)	Anele (m)
		Riaan (m)	Luyanda (m)
		Ricardo (m)	Luzuko (m)
			Unathi (f)
Four			Mandisa (f)
			Nkosinathi (m)
Five			Nandipha (f)
			Siyabulela (m)

phemes in sets of names among all groups, e.g., English *Andrew* (m) ~*André* (m), white Afrikaans *Daneel* (m) ~*Daniele* (f), *Stephanus* (m) ~*Stephen* (m), *Johannes* (m) ~*John* (m), and Colored Afrikaans

Rochantei (f) ~ *Roché* (m), *Angelino* (f) ~ *Angelo* (m), *Davidene* (f) ~ *David* (m). Among the names of Xhosa children were 12 cases of a root of a word being used in a number of different forms, nominal or verbal. *Themba* 'hope' appears in *Thembainkazi, Thembalethu, Thembelani, Thembela, Thembani* and *Thembile; thandi* 'thank' occurs in *Thandiswa, Thandeka* and *Thandi; ntombi* 'girl' occurs in *Ntombomzi, Ntomboxolo, Ntombizodwa, Ntombovuyo,* and *Ntombozuko.* Name uniqueness, therefore, appears to be related to population demographics: the more people there are in the group, the higher the likelihood of name duplication. This finding runs counter to Alford's (1987) suggestion that in smaller-scale, less complex societies, name uniqueness is fairly common, with this pattern giving way to a stock of conventional names in complex social systems.

Multiple Naming
The frequency of occurrence of second (middle) names showed a strong tendency for white English-speaking parents to assign second names to all their children, with this trend decreasing through colored Afrikaans speakers to Xhosa speakers. In the case of English and Afrikaans speakers, male babies tended to be assigned second names more often than females, confirming patrilineal tendencies within these groups (table 9).

Table 9. Children with Second Names

| | White | | | | Colored | | Black | |
| | English | | Afrikaans | | Afrikaans | | Xhosa | |
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	41	46.1	12	42.9	56	34.3	50	20.2
Female	31	34.8	4	14.3	41	24.9	65	26.3
Total	72	80.9	16	57.2	97	59.2	115	46.5

$p < .02$

The Use of Schoolnames or English Names by Xhosa parents
    In addition to their primary name, Xhosa children are often given an additional English or "school" name. In these data, about 40% of Xhosa children had an additional English name. The parents of the other

60% indicated that either their children would be given no additional
name, or that they were unsure whether to give an English name or not,
or they left the additional name section on the questionnaire blank. It is
our impression that giving an additional, English name is more common
in rural than in urban areas. However, since the number of our rural
informants is small, no firm conclusions can be drawn.

Nicknames

We were interested to see if an appreciable number of children in
the sample had nicknames, and, if so, the reasons the nicknames had
been given. Table 10 shows that more than half of the children had
nicknames. The reasons for their being given are shown in table 11.

Table 10. Nicknames

	Overall N	N with Nicknames	% with Nicknames
White English	76	40	52.6
White Afrikaans	15	5	33.3
Colored	160	89	55.6
Black (Xhosa)	171	106	61.9
Total	422	240	56.9

Table 11. Reasons for Nicknames

	White		Colored		Black	
Meaning	N	%	N	%	N	%
General	2	4.7	4	7.1	7	7.8
Personal	9	20.9	22	39.3	45	50.0
Social	1	2.3	7	12.5	3	3.3
Event	1	2.3	9	16.1	5	5.6
Endearment	13	30.2	7	12.5	10	11.1
Meaning total	26	60.4	49	87.5	70	77.8
Phonetic	14	32.6	7	12.5	19	21.1
No reason	3	7.0	0	0.0	1	1.1

Although there were no statistically significant differences among
the groups, incidence of nicknames and the reasons for their being given

are instructive. More than 90% of the nicknames were explained and the reasons can be classified as one of the following:

Appropriateness

The meaning of the nickname was felt to be "appropriate" for the child.

1. The name comments on a personal characteristic of the child such as physical appearance or personality.(*Koekie* 'cupcake', *Tiekie* 'tickey' [a small coin], *Tokkie* [from Afrikaans *toktokkie* 'little beetle'], *Eekhorinkie* 'little squirrel' were all given to physically small children; *Nontuku* 'mole', because the child "had small eyes"; *Curlylocks, Kasta:* "Omdat hy self van kustard hou" 'Because he likes custard', *Niesie* 'Sneezy': "Sneezed a lot as a baby", *Snoopy:* "He was curious", *Goggie* [from Afrikaans *gogga* 'insect']: "Intrigued by insects", *Kekkelbek* 'cackle-mouth': "Talkative", *Mahamba* 'hurried': "Can't be still in the house", *Hondjie* 'puppy': "Hy was baie lief vir hondjies" 'He adored puppies').

2. The name makes a social comment about the child's role in the family or society. (*Boetie* 'little brother', *Sussie* 'little sister', *Oumeid* 'old woman': "Omdat sy die eerste meisie in die familie is" 'Because she is the first girl in the family', *Ouboet* 'older brother': "Omdat sy jonger broer moet leer weet om sy ouer broer to berspekteer [sic]" 'Because his younger brother must learn to respect him', *Oubaas* 'old master': "Hy het hom soos a groot man gedra en nie geglo dat 'n dag omgaan sonder sy beker koffie nie" 'He behaved like a grown man and believed that a day couldn't go by without his mug of coffee'). Several nicknames commented on the apartheid system in South Africa. (*Klerling* [sic] 'colored': "Sy het nie identiteit nie" 'She has no identity', *Oubaas:* "Volgens die kleur van sy vel. Hy is baie wit van kleur" 'Because of his skin color. He is very white', *Ampurbaas* 'almost master', *Koelies* [a derogatory term for Indians]).

3. The name reflects a significant event in the child's life. *Bonnie:* "Haar baba kombersie het die etiket 'Bonnie Baby' opgehad. Sy was net so sag soos haar kombersie" 'Her baby blanket had the label 'Bonnie Baby'. She was just as soft as her blanket', *Eve:* ("Gerald se nickname is Eve omdat hy op Christmas Eve gebore is" 'Because he was born on

Christmas Eve', *Flenky:* "When she was a baby we compared her with a Flenkynut which was a chocolate and we used to buy her that chocolate").

4. Endearment was frequently mentioned as a reason, and evident in the name itself, e.g., *Sweetheart, Chicken, Sausage, Presh* (Precious) *Angel.* Although humor was encoded in many names (*Pork Chop Pie:* "because he tastes good", *Dillybug, Wingnut, Vuurhoutjies* 'matches', *Poeksie* [connotes squat shortness], *Pockels* [connotes clumsiness], informants never mentioned humor as such, and these names were classified under the heading "endearment" in view of their playful and generally positive connotations.

Phonetic Derivation

Usually an abbreviation of the proper name, phonetic derivation includes word-play and derivatives based on childlike pronunciations of the first names. (*Jossie* from Jocelyn, *Lizbet/Lielie* from Elizabeth, *Dientjie* from Haydene, *Tisha* from Letitia, *Ettie* from Etienne, *Lalie* from Lawrence).

One would expect to find considerable freedom in the coinage of nicknames, and this seems to be borne out by these data. The trends in naming patterns for first names are generally not repeated for nicknames. Many Xhosa namegivers, for instance, enjoyed the freedom of playing with sounds, while still tending to let names reflect meaning. In all groups, most nicknames were highly personal, individualistic and affectionate, reflecting the role such pet names typically play within families. The lower frequency of "endearing" names among other-than-white groups may well reflect socio-economic circumstances within communities where children put additional strain on resources.

Discussion

Differences in the patterns of naming can be seen among both linguistic groups and racial/cultural groups.

Linguistic Groups

English Speakers

When we examine the data in terms of the language groups, it is clear that English-speaking informants in this study conform to descriptions of English naming practices elsewhere (Alford 1987;

Dunkling 1991). While restricting themselves to "traditional" English names on the whole, informants were seldom aware of the etymological derivation ("meaning") of the names they had chosen,[9] and tended to be more whimsical and indulgent in name selection than the other groups. Personal taste ranked highest (more than one name in three was given because parents just "liked it"), closely followed by names given in order to serve a commemorative or history-keeping function (again about one in three), most often in the case of first-born (especially male) children.[10] On the whole, English speakers seemed to enjoy the greatest degree of freedom in choosing names for their children.

Afrikaans Speakers

Afrikaans people still have a tradition of honoring the grandparents by naming their children after them in strict sequence, and this trend emerges quite strongly for both white and colored informants (about 40%). However, it competes with several alternative motivations for naming, foremost among them being the choice of names on the basis of personal taste (between one in three and one in four for both white and colored Afrikaans speakers). Linguistic reasons for names ranked third for all Afrikaans parents, and many of these names were unusual, often derived from the world of movies and magazines, and involved blending, fanciful spelling, and names with "foreign" flavors such as *Chrismarlene, Ghenevva* and *Lechay*. Smit (1990, 194-98) suggests that these naming practices are especially true of lower socio-economic groups and this study tends to support this assertion, showing as it does a distinct preference for such names from colored Afrikaans informants, who tend to have lower socio-economic status at present (see also Jenkins 1994). Other trends among the Afrikaans informants were naming children after people other than family members and allowing non-parents to have a hand in the naming.

Xhosa Speakers

These data tend to confirm Herbert and Bogatsu's (1990) view that there is a slowing down of the history-keeping function of naming among Africans, with many of the names relating instead to social and more personal aspects of either the namegiver (particularly the mother) or the child. Parents or grandmothers were the primary namegivers, and it is quite clear from the data that for most Xhosa speakers (more than

60%) names still bear meaning of some kind and have a message to impart—a major distinguishing feature which is also noted by Koopman (1979, 152-66) and Dickens (1985, 16-66). Surprisingly large numbers of informants gave as a reason for their choice that they "liked the name" or "liked the sound of the name." A close third was the choice of names for commemorative (history-keeping) reasons. All other factors played a negligible role. While late naming of new-borns was evident, the data also suggest an increasing tendency among many parents to discuss possible names for children before they are born, a trend which runs counter to tradition.

Cultural Groups

Language and culture in most cases overlap, with the notable exception of white and colored Afrikaans groups, where white Afrikaans speakers typically use a standard form of Afrikaans and colored speakers use a non-standard form. There were some notable differences between white and colored Afrikaans informants, and in several cases one gets an impression that the colored informants (historically a combination of white and black) have taken on certain customs from each group: they lean toward black practices in their greater preference for incorporating meaning in names, but towards white groups in following their personal taste and enjoying a degree of poetic licence in experimenting with names.

Another area of difference is in the frequency of names. Name uniqueness was noticeably lower among black informants. The use of English names in this group is also clearly on the decline, among urban informants in particular (see Dickens 1985, 149-59). Gender-based differences are evident and are seen both in who names the child and in the numbers and types of names given: white groups were distinctively patriarchal, contrasting strongly with matriarchal trends which emerged from the black data, with mothers having a greater input into the naming process. Both colored and black groups placed far greater emphasis on personal and emotive factors in naming, but black parents displayed tighter constraints overall, with less innovation.

Conclusions

Despite apparent freedom when selecting a name for a child, people are actually constrained by a range of rules: linguistic, cultural,

traditional and religious. While names (particularly nicknames) cannot be legislated completely, social cooperation is essential if the name is to be successfully used, and patterns of name choice reflect the degree to which groups conform to these constraints. The rare cases in which namers assert their independence and flout linguistic and cultural expectations often underlines the strength of these expectations for others. Thus a name can be a striking statement or a bland compliance with expectations, an expression of cultural pride or reconciliation, or a rejection of tradition.

Ongoing research into naming practices provides valuable insights into the interaction between linguistic, social and cultural forces. Post-apartheid South Africa provides an especially rich resource base for research into naming and the changing traditions of naming, since it now offers increasing levels of contact across social, cultural and linguistic boundaries.

Notes

1. In the Eastern Cape, about 56% of the population are Xhosa speakers, 30% are Afrikaans speakers and 12% are English speakers. English speakers are predominantly white, Xhosa speakers are predominantly black and Afrikaans speakers are divided between white (31%) and colored (69%) (Coetser 1994). We should note that ethnic labels are problematic and should not be read as primitives but rather as post hoc descriptive tags. No ethnic group is neatly defined and these are pan-ethnic terms, loosely referring to a fairly wide range of people. In this report, "black" is used to refer to people who are mother-tongue speakers of Xhosa, and "colored" refers to people of mixed ethnic descent, typically white and black, who are also often referred to as "brown" and who tend to be mother-tongue speakers of Afrikaans. While both terms are acceptable in most socio-political contexts, they may have unfortunate negative connotations and should be used advisedly. "Non-white" or "other-than-white" distinguishes blacks, coloreds and Indians from whites, and the latter is the preferred term.

2. English-medium private schools are independent schools, free from state control and typically very expensive and elite; they have admitted other-than-white pupils since the early 1970s, long before state-controlled schools did. Prior to 1990, all state-controlled schools were divided along racial (and linguistic) lines: white schools were run by the Department of Education and were typically either English-medium or Afrikaans-medium; black schools were under the Department of Education and Training (DET) and educated children in one of nine indigenous African languages up to grade 5, after which either English or Afrikaans became the medium of instruction; colored schools (usually Afrikaans-medium) were under the

House of Delegates, and Indian schools (English-medium) were under the House of Representatives. In 1990 state schools were opened to all races and were recategorized according to the amount of financial support they received: most formerly whites-only schools became "Model C" schools, receiving a high level of state support, yet requiring parents to pay fairly high fees as well. These schools maintained their former language policies regarding medium of instruction. Most of the House of Delegates and DET schools became fully state-aided, with fees kept very low.

3. Xhosa questionnaires were accompanied by duplicate English questionnaires, and many parents chose to respond in English.

4. The authors would like to express their sincere thanks to Liezel Vermeulen and Busisiwe Mdlankomo for their careful interviewing of mothers at local hospitals. In addition, thanks go to the sisters at the local post-natal clinics, who also assisted with the completion of questionnaires.

5. The questionnaire was slightly different for hospital interviewees, to allow for the fact that nicknames would not be in existence at this early stage.

6. Numerical discrepancies in the tables result from the fact that some informants failed to provide certain information in some cases.

7. Langa township was the scene of brutal atrocities against marching protesters in 1985.

8. Sometimes a name was written a second time on the questionnaire with a different spelling, e.g., Angaline ~ Angeline, Jenifer ~ Jennifer.

9. Those who mentioned that "meaning" was important generally didn't elaborate on what the meaning of the name was.

10. In the case of a fourth child the parent wrote "This is the name of a grandmother not yet used for one of the other children."

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