

Memories

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It is interesting to see how people came into onomastics. Looking over the membership of the American Name Society, we certainly see many members with unusual names. But are there more unusual names than one finds in other organizations? Was having an unusual name the reason for some people to become interested in names? I, with a first name of Edwin, might be one of those. In addition, I am one of those who changed his surname.

ANS members are a diverse group. They represent many academic fields. Some have no academic affiliations and are in the professions, business, and other occupations.

I came into onomastics in an unusual way. In 1967 when I came to teach at Fredonia I became re-acquainted with Walter Schultze, whom I had known before when we were both at the Albany unit of the State University of New York. Among his assignments was supervision of the Fredonia College computer center. He explained that he had a programmer for faculty research but that she did not have any tasks. Did I have anything to do? I immediately thought of several possibilities using the semantic differential.

The semantic differential is a measuring instrument developed by Charles E. Osgood, a psychologist, in the early 1950s at the University of Illinois, where I was a graduate student. It provides a way of plotting ideas, concepts, and perceptions in a three-dimensional space. The three basic dimensions of the semantic differential are evaluation (good-bad), potency (strong-weak), and activity (active-passive). Back in 1967, the statistical techniques were fairly cumbersome, even for plotting the associations of a single individual.

I understood it was theoretically possible to plot the perceptions for a group, but as far as I knew, it had never been done because of the tremendous number of computations involved. I thought it was worth a

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try, but what was I going to have people rate? I wanted something with which people were familiar. My first thought was of dance bands, but I soon dropped that idea. Next, I thought of rating first names, believing that since there had already been several studies of names, any new results could be related to these. Further, the names would be spread over the three dimensions of evaluation, activity, and potency.

But which names should be chosen: classic names, the most popular names, or a mixture? People are interested in popular names but rating popular names alone would create a possible disadvantage in that the names would be all clustered together when a model was created. So, to get a better spread, I designed two studies, one of the most popular names and a second representing a cross-section of names.

The *Journal of Psychology* published the results in 1971. Fredonia had an excellent public relations office, and the director, Jeff Nelson, put the story out on a national wire service, which was published in a Syracuse newspaper. Shortly after that, Kelsie Harder wrote to me describing the American Name Society and inviting me to join. I did.

Back in the 1970s, ANS was very informal. The friendly atmosphere of the meetings impressed me when compared to those I had attended in my own and other disciplines.

The International Congress of Onomastics Sciences met at Ann Arbor in 1981. I attended and presented a paper. There were many outstanding onomasts there, including Elsdon C. Smith and Jaroslav B. Rudnýčkyj, the cofounders of the American Name Society, Bill Nicolaisen, Béla Kálmán, and Cleveland Evans, who was then a graduate student in psychology. He showed me his master's thesis on names and I encouraged him to do further work and I am pleased to say that he has certainly fulfilled the promise I noticed then.

During this time, Kelsie Harder, then editor of *Names*, was my mentor, encouraging me to do book reviews and to referee manuscripts. He invited me to be guest editor for a special issue of *Names* on social science contributions to onomastics. As part of that project, I developed a history of social science contributions to names.

After my experience as editor of that special issue and after some further experience in onomastics, I decided to compile an annotated bibliography on personal names and naming. Although Elsdon Smith had compiled a bibliography in 1952, I realized that many publications had

come out since then. Furthermore, while I was reading manuscripts for *Names*, I noticed that many authors were not familiar with similar or related work and, therefore, some studies were unnecessarily duplicated. The first of my bibliographies, *Personal Names and Naming*, was published in 1987; the second, *More Names and Naming*, in 1995.

Kelsie Harder had nominated me to the editorial board of *Names*. When Tom Gasque took over as editor (and after him, Edward Callary), I continued on the board. Tom and I worked well together. He was amenable to suggestions. As I look over my experience with ANS, I can see that I felt frustrated that names research did not have the status that I felt it deserved. In my own psychology department at Fredonia, I sensed that my research was felt not to be really psychological. It was not until Joseph Kasof published in 1993 his article "Sex Bias in the Naming of Stimulus Persons" in the prestigious *Psychological Bulletin* that research on names became acceptable in my department. What Kasof had shown in his evaluation of 230 published reports on sexism was that the research was confounded by favoring males over females in the selection of names which were used as stimuli. These biases were positively correlated with outcome measures. Kasof had demonstrated that the bulk of the studies was negated because the investigators had not paid enough attention to the names used. They had given high prestige names to males and low prestige names to females. Then, the "scientists" had concluded that men were superior to women. Bias and prejudice were at work. While my earlier research was somewhat vindicated, I had already retired!

In looking over my association with onomastics and the American Name Society, I find that I had four major motivations:

1. I wanted to make onomastics more respected as a discipline.
2. I wanted to develop annotated bibliographies.
3. I wanted to encourage research in areas not previously explored.
4. I wanted to publish the CIA papers on names.

Onomastics as a Discipline

Tom Gasque and Ed Callary were supportive in many ways. Some of the changes I suggested were small things. For example, readers will notice that in the current issues of *Names* each article and book review is given a proper citation, that is, each is identified by volume number,

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issue, and pages on the first page. These citations were not always in our issues. I am sure that people had photocopies or offprints of articles and did not know where they came from.

A second improvement we made was with indexes and abstracts. Looking at the inside cover of *Names*, you will see over a dozen places where *Names* is either indexed or abstracted. This means that authors who publish in *Names* are assured that their work will appear in databases. These agencies did not begin to index *Names* automatically. Each one had to be contacted individually and shown that it would be advantageous to include *Names*. I would like to see *Names* included in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index; unfortunately, the editor of AHCI feels that not enough people publishing in other journals have cited articles in *Names*.

Another change, one made with the support of people such as Don Lance, Wolf Ahrens, Sheila Embleton, and André Lapierre, was to have program committees do blind evaluations on the abstracts that had been submitted for conferences and then make comments. These abstracts appeared in the programs.

Bibliographies

Earlier, I mentioned compiling two bibliographies on personal names. Is there a need for another one in the future? I am not sure. There may be. *Onoma* ceased doing bibliographies in the past few years. While there is talk of an online international bibliography, nothing has developed at this time. Current online databases such as FirstSearch and UnCover are good but incomplete. I have collected over 3000 additional items for a possible third bibliography. Beside the two general bibliographies, I have published one on nicknames and another on Jewish names.

Research

After completing a substantial amount of research on stereotypes of personal names, I tried to do some work on areas that had not been investigated. This led to my work on names of sports teams, names of WW II B-29 bombers, names of Arabs and Jews in Israel, Latvians, Lithuanians, Russians, Russian Jews, and Georgian Jews.

CIA Papers

In the course of searching the OCLC database, I ran across several items on names prepared by the CIA but not available in libraries

because they were classified. So, I began a long process of getting them declassified. It dragged on for years. Finally, I appealed to my local congressman, Amory Houghton. Through the intervention of his office, I eventually wound up with 35 CIA papers. These papers run from 35 to 450 pages depending on the language and country. Currently, I am preparing these papers for publication.

Conferences/Meetings

One of the things I have liked most about my association with names organizations is going to meetings. I have attended a great many, not only those of the American Name Society but those of the Canadian Society for the Study of Names. I have enjoyed the presentations and the camaraderie. One particularly memorable colleague was Lurline Coltart.

Lurline was a wonderful woman with a great deal of spirit. She was devoted to ANS. She set up the onomastics collection at El Paso that bears her name. Don Orth attended many, many meetings not only of ANS but of CSSN and ICOS. I remember his coming to my presentations at ICOS. Although really a place name person, he came to my papers on personal names. André Lapierre and I have also attended many meetings in many places. He not only gives me the benefit of his comments on onomastics but has taken me jogging. Grant Smith is another regular who has done a great deal for ANS. Currently, he is the North American representative on the ICOS Board. Helen Kerfoot has been one of the boosters of ANS and has been a mainstay of the CSSN. She has always been ready for a field trip. Don Lance and I have had a close association for years. We have traveled (and put up with one another) from the East Coast to the West Coast, to Alberta and Jerusalem; Don is a fine mind and a generous soul.

International meetings in such places as Leipzig, Quebec City, Trier, Aberdeen, and Santiago de Compostela have provided an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with colleagues from other countries. I met two people at these congresses with whom I later co-authored articles—Laimute Balode of Latvia and Alvydas Butkus of Lithuania.

I have had a great deal of personal satisfaction and benefit from my association with onomastics and the American Name Society. I was able to serve as program chair and as president. It has been a pleasure to work with and serve the organization.