

# Shall I Name Her “Wisdom” or “Elegance”? Naming in China

GE GAO

*San José State University, CA, USA*

Naming practices are significant communicative acts. Given names convey aspects of identity, social circumstances, and cultural conditioning. In this study, several issues regarding naming practices in China are considered. The results show that given names possess multiple levels of meanings, including parental expectations, birth circumstances, lineage, parental affection/love, commemoration, and gender qualities. Although the impact of a given name on a person’s everyday life is viewed as mostly symbolic, a given name is believed to have the power of motivating and inspiring individuals. Good given names are meaningful, bear parental wishes, hopes, and love, and are pleasant to hear.

**KEYWORDS** Chinese names, *hao ting*, masculine/feminine names

Names are an important part of our personal and social identity. Differences regarding who are involved in the naming process, why a particular given name is picked, and what names are more desirable for males than for females and vice versa present themselves a suitable domain for meaningful cultural analyses. The purpose of this study is to explore and examine naming practices in China, specifically Han Chinese<sup>†</sup> personal given names. First, research on naming and concepts related to naming will be reviewed to set the foundation for the study and to guide the current analysis. Next, the methods will be discussed, followed by a reporting of the findings that emerged from responses to survey questions. Finally, in the conclusion, the significance of the study will be addressed.

In China and elsewhere, personal family names embody family lineage and tend to remain the same generation after generation. In contrast, personal given names are continuously contemplated and debated within families, and they inform us about the larger social and cultural context in which they are situated. Wang and Micklin (1996) indicated that given names in China reflect periods of social change. Before the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, given names were relatively stable. The most commonly chosen names were fortune, richness, longevity, virtue, brilliance, jade, flowers, elegance, preciousness, and chastity. After the founding of

the People's Republic of China in 1949, many names were chosen to reflect social and political events at the time such as *jianhua* 建华 "build China," *jianguo* 建国 "build country," *yuanchao* 援朝 "aid Korea," *wenge* 文革 "cultural revolution," and *weidong* 卫东 "guard Chairman Mao." Do contemporary Chinese given names continue to reflect social and political events?

Names often bear social and personal significance. Given names in Israel are subject to changes in fashions and values, and they reflect the historical context and social attitudes towards a particular group (Dinur *et al.*, 1996). Similarly, Suzman (1994) reported that Zulu children's names mirror values and attitudes within particular social contexts. Many Chinese believe that names influence their destiny, and giving a good name is a good start in a child's life (Chu, 1997). B. Zheng (1993) showed that given names embody an ideal, a faith, a will, a wish, a virtue, or a love for the family, ancestors, hometown, and country. Pina-Cabral and Lourenco (1994) observed that, in Macao, Chinese given names emphasize personal meanings as compared to Portuguese and other given names. These studies highlight the need for further examinations of Chinese naming practices, and they provide insight for the current analysis.

Gendered naming is the most pronounced social practice relevant to the findings in this study. In English-speaking countries, female names often end in vowels, whereas male names end in consonants. Female names also are different from male names in the name length (Barry and Harper, 2000; 2003). Abel and Kruger (2007) reported that gender stereotyping is reflected in the names parents pick for their children. Their research on naming dogs showed similarities in gender stereotyping in both human and dog names. Earlier research on Chinese names indicated that male and female names use different characters<sup>2</sup> to convey different meanings. Chinese male names use characters that convey greatness, wisdom, loyalty, filial piety, wealth, rank, bravery, and hard work; whereas Chinese female names contain characters that suggest gentleness, beauty, preciousness, graciousness, and other similar attributes (Cao, 1991). Cao's research findings, however, are only accessible to Chinese readers. In another study published in Chinese, Chinese men favored names that contain characters denoting nation, sea, army, forest, river, bravery, brilliance, and strength; whereas fragrance, beauty, elegance, jade, jasmine, serenity, and orchid were the preferred characters of Chinese women (Che, 1991). These studies show that gendered naming in China goes beyond the simple gender differentiation, and it introduces, reinforces, and fosters masculinity and femininity. Bem (1993) stated that masculinity and femininity are cultural constructions and, arguably, gendered naming in China helps individuals internalize and personalize these cultural constructions. Bem continued to argue that, when individuals gradually internalize the cultural lenses of gender, they become motivated to construct an identity that is consistent with them. In this case, Chinese girls would gradually identify with gentleness, whereas Chinese boys with wisdom.

In sum, naming practices are significant communicative acts in cultures. Given names convey meanings about identity, social circumstances, and cultural conditioning. In this study, several issues revolving around naming practices in China are examined. More specifically, the following research questions are addressed: 1) Who

is involved in the naming process? 2) What are the meanings of given names? 3) How important is a given name? 4) What are the reasons for Chinese to like/dislike their names? 5) What is considered as a good name? and 6) How do male names differ from female names? What are the most preferred male and female names? These questions might appear to be exercises in common sense, but they reveal underlying meanings of everyday events, and they represent preliminary, yet important, efforts in providing an empirical inquiry and validation of naming practices in contemporary urban China.

## **Method**

### ***Respondents***

One hundred and three Han Chinese voluntarily participated in the study. Among them, 32 respondents were recruited from a research branch of a chemical corporation in Beijing, and 71 were parents of the fifth-grade students in an elementary school in the eastern part of Beijing.

### ***Procedures and measurement***

A survey questionnaire was used to elicit information about naming practices in China. The questionnaire was constructed in Chinese, and its content and the choice of words was pre-tested with two native Chinese speakers in Beijing for clarity, comprehensibility, and accuracy. A relative of the author who worked at a chemical corporation in Beijing was responsible for distributing and collecting questionnaires in that organization. The principal of a local elementary school was approached by the author and agreed to ask her fifth-grade teachers to distribute and collect questionnaires among their students. The students took the questionnaire home to complete.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included questions such as “What is the meaning of your given name?” “How do you like your name?” and “What do you consider as good male and female names?” Respondents were instructed to give detailed answers and to be as thorough as possible. The second part solicited questions of demographics.

### ***Data analysis***

Data were processed and analyzed in three stages. In the first stage, the author went through all the questionnaires to get a holistic sense of the responses received. Demographic information and answers to closed-ended questions were coded and entered into a data file. In the second stage, responses to open-ended questions were compiled in Chinese, and themes that emerged were categorized. Categories were formulated based on respondents' own definitions and assigned meanings, thus minimizing the bias of imposed categories by the author. To illustrate, the word “meaningful” was given as a reason for one's likes and dislikes of a given name; it hence became a category. Finally, responses and categories were carefully matched after repeated readings of the data. Quotes used to support the present analysis were translated into English by the author for purposes of presentation here.

## Results and discussion

In this study, given names were found to possess multiple levels of meanings, including parental expectations, birth circumstances, lineage, parental affection/love, commemoration, and gender qualities. Although the impact of a given name on a person's everyday life is viewed as mostly symbolic, a given name is believed to have the power of motivating and inspiring individuals. Chinese also believe that names ought to communicate desirable gender attributes. That is, male names should denote masculine qualities, whereas female names should express feminine qualities. Furthermore, a common set of criteria emerged for judging the quality of a given name. Being meaningful, bearing parental wishes, hopes, and love, and *hao ting* 好听<sup>3</sup> "pleasant to hear" are the top three choices. In the following section, results concerning each research question will be presented and support will be provided.

### *Namegivers*

Fathers, both parents, mothers, and paternal grandfathers named the vast majority of the newborns (79%). More specifically, Chinese fathers were the primary namegivers, followed by both parents and the mother (see Table 1). These results show that naming is mostly the undertaking of the immediate family, and Chinese fathers are still regarded with reverence in naming their offspring. In addition, the diminishing role of the paternal grandfather in the naming process is quite evident.

### *Meanings of given names*

In this study, a given name bears parental expectations, birth circumstances, lineage, crystallization of parental affection/love, commemoration, and a sex marker (see Table 2).

Parental expectations capture an overwhelming majority of the given names (60%). Chinese parents aspire to their children's great prospects. This yearning is especially

TABLE 1  
NAMEGIVERS

Namegiver	Number	Percentage
Father	43	35.5
Parents	25	20.7
Mother	18	14.9
Paternal grandfather	10	8.3
Paternal aunts	6	5.0
Maternal grandfather	5	4.1
Maternal eldest aunt	3	2.5
Paternal grandmother	2	1.7
Maternal grandmother	2	1.7
Other*	7	5.6
Total	121	100

\*Less than one percent from each category.

TABLE 2  
MEANINGS OF NAMES

Meanings	Number	Percentage
Parental expectations	66	60
Birth circumstances	25	23
Lineage	12	11
Other (crystallization of parental affection/love, commemoration, and a sex marker)	7	6
Total	110	100

\*Less than one percent from each category.

pronounced in the underlying symbolic meanings of given names. In this study, Chinese characters that connote bright future, intelligence/knowledge, strength/courage, success, personal character, being the best, youth, health, personality, beauty, happiness, and wealth were selected to convey parental expectations. Ample examples are indicative of the expectations, such as bright future (“My name suggests ‘to shine.’ My parents expect me to have a bright future and a magnificent life”), intelligence/knowledge (“His name means intelligence. That’s my wish for him”; “We named her ‘ocean.’ We hope our child will grow up to have the breadth of knowledge as wide as the ocean”), strength/courage (“His name means ‘to make a roc’s flight to 10,000 *li*里’ [*li*= 500 meters or about one third of a mile]. We want his name to give him strength and motivation”), success (“My name connotes impressive. My parents expect me to make remarkable achievement in my career”), personal character (“His name means generosity and honesty. I want him to be an honest person”), being the best (“Ridgepole and beam is my name. They hope that I can be a pillar of the state”), youth (“Youth is my name. To be youthful is their wish for me”), health (“Stronger than the city wall is his name. Having a good health is our wish”), personality (“My name means high and lofty. My parents hope that I will have an open personality”), beauty (“Precious jade is my name. Their wish is that I will be as beautiful as jade”), happiness (“Joy is my name. It wishes me a happy and joyful life”), and wealth (“Get rich is my name. That’s my parents’ wish for me”).

Birth circumstances also are important in understanding the meanings of Chinese given names. Many Chinese names commemorated the special birth circumstance (23%), evident in statements such as, “The sun was rising when I was born, so I was named ‘the rising sun’” and “I was chubby and light-skinned, so they named me ‘snow’.” Birth circumstances in conjunction with parental expectations also characterized Chinese given names. For example, “I was born in the year of the tiger, so I was named ‘tiger.’ My parents wish me to be full of vigor [like a tiger] and to be strong and self-reliant.”

Furthermore, a given name expresses lineage. In this study, only a small percentage of names fell under this category (11%). In Chinese culture, the use of a certain character in one’s given name might be dictated by one’s genealogy, which predetermines an array of characters suitable for the male and female offspring of different generations. Louie (1998) indicated that this practice of “ranking in rows” (*pai hang*

排行) is uniquely Chinese and was originally designed to identify a man in the hierarchy of his family and clan. The generation name reveals both horizontal and vertical relationships in the family and clan. “The concept of names as a means of identifying family ties seems to exemplify the Chinese taste for a balanced, symmetrical, and hierarchical view of things” (Louie, 1998: 52). In this study, there were given names predetermined by one’s genealogy, such as, “My name is from our genealogy.” Given names expressing sibling lineage appeared to bear parental expectations. To illustrate, “I share one character with my brother and sister. My name implies that I will succeed when I grow up. My parents wish the three of us to unite and to love one another.” Names that express sibling lineage are difficult to find nowadays in urban China due to the “one family one child” policy, thus making the use of genealogy a past practice.

In addition, a given name symbolizes the crystallization of the parental love by using the mother’s surname as the given name. In this case, a child’s name is a combination of both parents’ surnames such as *hu* (father’s surname as the child’s surname) and *hua* (mother’s surname as the child’s given name). A given name also is commemorative. For example, “My name was derived from the name of my father’s hometown.” A given name is a sex marker as well, such as, “We named her quietness and elegance because she was a girl.” In this study, very few names fell under these categories (6%).

The meanings of Chinese given names are both diverse and symbolic, and they embody the wish of a better and brighter future for the new generation. The findings of this study demonstrated that given names have been restored to make personal rather than political statements in China since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 (see Wang and Micklin, 1996). It is also worth noting that many different layers of meanings (e.g. parental expectations, gender stereotyping, birth circumstances) were interwoven in the naming practices in China, and they show a level of complexity involved in naming a child.

### ***Importance of given names***

Respondents shared examples of both concrete and symbolic ways that given names have influenced their personal development. The open-ended responses revealed several strands of the impact. One strand consists of self-confidence, personality development, and identity formation. Another involves how names could be inspirational, give a good first impression, create a sense of indebtedness, and point to the future. Another describes how names could also have adverse effects.

Boosted self-confidence was recurrent in the present analysis, and there are many examples of the impact of a given name on self-confidence, such as, “When I encounter setbacks and difficulties, I know I will be able to overcome them because my name [forever spring] predicts that my life will be as beautiful as the spring season.” This self-enhancing quality of Chinese given names has a positive impact on the development of the Chinese self-concept, self-confidence, and self-esteem. As we know, in Chinese culture, an important aspect of a person’s socialization is learning to be humble and modest (Gao and Ting-Toomey, 1998). Given names enable Chinese to feel good about themselves, and to feel special, gifted, and unique.

The impact on personality development also was recurrent as shown in the following remarks: “I have a boy’s personality because of my name [ocean]. I like to play

those games that are stimulating.” “I have a cheerful, sanguine, and tolerant disposition just like my name [farsighted/open-minded].” To some, given names were an important source of their personal identity, such as, “I want to be just like my name” and “My name is my identity.” Arguably, a person can form, develop, and cultivate an identity that is consistent with his or her name. In this case, naming is no longer a symbolic, but a concrete and substantive act that can be transformative. Several respondents reported that their names have transformed their lives.

Furthermore, a name can inspire, give a good first impression, create a sense of indebtedness, and allude to one’s life path. “When I didn’t do well on a test, I thought of my name [wisdom as deep as the sea] and I’d make an effort” is an example of the inspirational impact of given names. A name could also be a source of good first impression, such as, “Others tend to think that my name is nice and it fits me. Their first impression of me often is good.” Repayment, a prevalent concept in Chinese interpersonal relationships, also is visible in Chinese naming practices. As one respondent put it, “Given that my parents have high hopes for me, I will do my best to repay them.” In this case, a given name is not merely a form of identification; it embodies the close relational tie between the two generations, and it manifests the deeply embedded cultural values of indebtedness and repayment. To some, a name could also make predictions about one’s life, as one respondent stated, “I can sense from my name that I’ll be leading a wandering life.”

In addition to the positive impact of given names, responses also revealed the adverse impact on a person’s life, including a given name as a source of ridicule, false perception, and psychological burden as shown in the following statements, “My classmates laughed at my name and they gave me nicknames.” “Others have a biased view of me even before they meet me. It affects their chance of getting to know me better.” An inability to live up to parents’ expectations can create difficulties for some. To illustrate, “My name suggests that my parents have high aspirations for me. When I fail to do well at school, I feel pressured. I feel I owe them.”

The concrete impact of given names, however, did not resonate with all respondents. In contrast, some respondents felt that a name only plays a symbolic role in a person’s life and one’s future largely depends on variables such as personal effort, ability, external environment, family background, education level, diligence, and luck. The principal contributing factor in a person’s future is personal effort. To illustrate, “A name is only a symbol. One’s future depends on one’s effort, external conditions, and luck.” This example indicates that transformative naming practices entail not only picking a name, but also the ongoing talk about the meaning of the name, and how one might internalize it and use it as a motivating factor in one’s personal development.

### ***The likes/dislikes of one’s name and a good name***

The majority of the respondents indicated their liking of their names, even though some liked their names more than others (71% checked “strongly like” and “like” categories). In the open-ended responses, eight reasons (both individual and a combination of reasons) for the likes of a given name emerged (see Table 3). They are: 1) meaningful; 2) bearing parental wishes, hopes, and love; 3) *hao ting* 好听 “pleasant to hear”; 4) inspirational; 5) a reflection of personal attributes; 6) easy to remember; 7) not easily duplicated; and 8) appropriate for the sex of the child.

TABLE 3  
THE REASONS FOR THE LIKES/DISLIKES OF A GIVEN NAME

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Reasons for likes		
1. meaningful	18	37
2. bearing parental wishes	11	23
3. <i>hao ting</i> "pleasant to hear"	7	14
4. inspirational	4	8
5. personal attributes	3	6
6. easy to remember	2	4
7. not easily duplicated	2	4
8. sex appropriate	2	4
Total	49	100
Reasons for dislikes		
1. <i>su</i> "vulgar or in poor taste"	4	27
2. easily duplicated	4	27
3. sex inappropriate	2	13
4. difficult to write	2	13
5. <i>bu hao ting</i> "unpleasant to hear"	2	13
6. a tongue twister	1	7
Total	15	100

The notion of "meaningful" as a measure of a well-liked given name is evident in the responses, such as, "I like what my name represents." Names that bear parental wishes, hopes, and love also are liked because they express the emotional bond between the two generations as demonstrated in the following remark, "I'm very grateful to my parents for giving me this name, and it brings happiness and peace to my life." *Hao ting* 好听 "pleasant to hear" is another measure of a well-liked name, and many respondents explained that they often liked a name because it pleases the ear, and it sounds good.

In addition, one's personal liking of a given name involves the inspirational quality, such as, "My name inspires me to improve myself continuously and to succeed." Finally, to have a name that cannot be easily duplicated was perceived as a very important measure. Duplication is a very practical and realistic concern in China, given the large population and the limited number of surnames that is available. In Beijing, for example, some names were duplicated in thousands. Duplicated names are causing hardship and distress in places like banks and public security offices, and parents are advised to broaden their perspective in naming their offspring (Y. Zheng, 1999).

Only a very small percentage (5%) of the respondents disliked their names. Respondents reported six reasons for their dislike of a given name (see Table 3). Those reasons include: 1) *su* 俗 "vulgar or in poor taste;" 2) easily duplicated; 3) inappropriate for the sex of the child; 4) difficult to write the characters; 5) *bu hao*



ting 不好听 “unpleasant to hear;” and 6) a tongue twister. *Su* and “easily duplicated” are the two most common reasons given for a disliked name. The meaning of *su* is personal. *Su* could mean “too conventional,” “poor taste,” “uneducated,” or “rural.” An in-depth study of what constitutes *su* could be a fruitful area of future research.

Clear sex differences are desired in given names. Several respondents indicated that a girl should have a girl’s name and a boy should have a boy’s name. Consistent with previous research in the United States (e.g. Abel and Kruger, 2007; Barry and Harper, 2003), gender stereotyping is reflected in Chinese names. Arguably, a key function of a given name is to mark sex differences. The absence of sex-differentiated pronouns in Chinese spoken language might also account for the pronounced need for gender naming. Furthermore, given names that require multiple strokes to write are not welcome. To illustrate, it is much easier to write 兰 (5 strokes) than “蕊” (15 strokes). It is reassuring to know that the reasons for the likes and dislikes of a given name coincided with what constitutes a good name. The recurring nature of these findings suggests the prominence and validity of those criteria in Chinese naming practices.

### **Male and female names**

Respondents provided clearly defined criteria for evaluating the best male and female names. *Yang gang zhi qi* 阳刚之气 “masculine quality” stood out to be the desirable attribute in male names in *almost all* sixty valid responses. The “masculine quality” was defined as having soaring aspirations, a sense of superiority, solid nature, bravery, strong determination, and a sense of achievement, and many Chinese characters convey such masculine meanings. In this study, respondents listed characters that are among the best male names, and they include *gang* 刚 “toughness,” *qiang* 强 “strength,” *peng* 鹏 “roc,” *feng* 峰 “summit,” *jian* 剑 “sword,” *jun* 军 “armed forces,” *jian* 健 “vigor,” *lei* 磊 “rocks,” *jie* 杰 “outstanding person,” *wei* 伟 “greatness,” *zhi* 志 “will,” *jiang* 江 “ocean,” *tian* 天 “sky,” *fei* 飞 “to fly,” *long* 龙 “dragon,” *bo* 博 “abundance,” *kai* 凯 “triumph,” *feng* 锋 “the cutting edge of a sword,” *chao* 超 “exceed,” *hu* 虎 “tiger,” *yong* 勇 “bravery,” *ming* 明 “brightness,” *yu* 宇 “universe,” and *xiang* 翔 “to soar” (see Table 4 for the top ten characters). For example, two well-known Chinese athletes’ names are among the list, Yao Ming 明 “brightness” (the famous NBA basketball player), and Liu Xiang 翔 “to soar” (the world record holder of 110 meters hurdles event).

In contrast, “feminine quality” stood out as the desirable attribute in female given names in *all* fifty-eight valid responses. The “feminine quality” was defined as possessing a set of female characteristics, such as, *wen jing* 文静 “gentle and quiet,” *wen rou* 温柔 “gentle and soft,” *wen ya* 文雅 “elegant and refined,” *mei li* 美丽 “beautiful,” *chun jie* 纯洁 “pure,” *jiao nen* 娇嫩 “tender and lovely,” *ke ai* 可爱 “lovable,” and *huo po* 活泼 “lively.” Chinese characters that denote “beauty” such as *li* 丽, *man* 曼, *jia* 佳, *luan* 媛, *juan* 娟, and *xiu* 秀 were favored in this study. Beautiful flowers such as *mei* 梅 “plum” and *rong* 蓉 “lotus,” aromatic flowers and grass, as well as beautiful gems such as *jin* 瑾 and *xuan* 璇 were listed as among the best female given names (see Table 4 for the top ten characters).

These findings showed that given names not only serve as a sex marker, but, more importantly, they communicate desirable male and female traits in Chinese culture. As Bem (1993) argued, the division between masculine and feminine permeates every aspect of human experiences. Naming practices are no exception. Naming plays

TABLE 4  
THE TOP TEN BEST CHARACTERS FOR MALE AND FEMALE NAMES

Best characters	Frequency and percentage	Rank
Male name characters		
<i>gang</i> 刚 "toughness"	19 (32%)	1
<i>qiang</i> 强 "strength"	17 (28%)	2
<i>feng</i> 峰 "summit"	9 (15%)	3
<i>peng</i> 鹏 "roc"	6 (10%)	4
<i>jian</i> 剑 "sword"	6 (10%)	4
<i>jun</i> 军 "armed forces"	6 (10%)	4
<i>jian</i> 健 "vigor"	5 (8%)	7
<i>lei</i> 磊 "rocks"	5 (8%)	7
<i>chao</i> 超 "exceed"	5 (8%)	7
<i>zhi</i> 志 "will"	3 (5%)	10
Female name characters		
<i>jing</i> 静 "quiet"	7 (12%)	1
<i>li</i> 丽 "beautiful"	7 (12%)	1
<i>na</i> 娜 "elegant"	6 (10%)	3
<i>ya</i> 雅 "elegant"	5 (9%)	4
<i>fang</i> 芳 "fragrant"	5 (9%)	4
<i>ling</i> 玲 "lively"	5 (9%)	4
<i>lan</i> 兰 "orchid"	4 (7%)	7
<i>jie</i> 洁 "pure"	4 (7%)	7
<i>jia</i> 佳 "beautiful"	3 (5%)	9
<i>yue</i> 悦 "happy and lively"	3 (5%)	9

a part in "transforming male and female children into masculine and feminine adults" (Bem, 1993: 138). Gendered naming contributes to the formation of gender identities and gender roles, and it reflects the social construction of the meanings of masculinity and femininity in Chinese culture. The findings of this study revealed that a Chinese male's identity is closely associated with toughness, strength, power, and greatness. In contrast, a Chinese female's identity is coupled with her physical appearance and the gentle disposition.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study are important because they help us understand the most basic, yet fundamental, aspects of naming practices in contemporary urban Chinese families. Several useful insights can be gleaned from the present study. For example, names can be transformative; thus, names can be used to motivate individuals. Names also communicate the wishes and dreams of the name giver. These wishes and dreams, to a large extent, reflect the attitudes and beliefs of a culture. Future research needs to continue this line of inquiry because a given name is more than a name.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insights and suggestions.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> According to the Chinese census of 2005, non-Han Chinese consist of over nine percent of the population. Naming practices among non-Han Chinese might vary from those of Han Chinese.
- <sup>2</sup> A character is pronounced as a single syllable, and it has a basic meaning such as *jian* 建 “build” or *guo* 国 “country.” Chinese given names typically contain one or two characters.
- <sup>3</sup> When there is no equivalent English counterpart, the Chinese term is used.

## Bibliography

- Abel, Ernest L. and Michael L. Kruger. 2007. “Gender Related Naming Practices: Similarities and Differences Between People and Their Dogs.” *Sex Roles* 57: 15–19.
- Barry, Herbert and Aylene S. Harper. 2000. “Three Last Letters Identity Most Female First Names.” *Psychological Reports* 87: 48–54.
- Barry, Herbert and Aylene S. Harper. 2003. “Final Letter Compared with Final Phoneme in Male and Female Names.” *Names* 51: 13–22.
- Bem, S.L. 1993. *The Lenses of Gender: Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Cao, Z.Y. 1991. “Problems in the Naming Practices of Chinese Hans and Solutions.” *Language, Society, and Culture*. Ed. Applied Linguistic and Writing Research Institute (in Sociolinguistics Department). Beijing: Language Press (in Chinese), 472–481.
- Che, A.N. 1991. “An Analysis of the Duplication of Names in the Han Nationality.” *Journal of Lanzhou University (Social Sciences)* 19(2): 138–146. (in Chinese)
- Chu, Henry. 1997. “Unusual Names Are Unlike Li.” *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, A1, A14.
- Dinur, Rachel, Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi and John E. Hofman. 1996. “First Names as Identity Stereotypes.” *The Journal of Social Psychology* 136: 191–200.
- Gao, G. and Ting-Toomey, S. 1998. *Communicating Effectively with the Chinese*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Louie, E.W. 1998. *Chinese American Names: Tradition and Transition*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
- Pina-Cabral, Joao de and Nelson Lourenco. 1994. “Personal Identity and Ethnic Ambiguity: Naming Practices among the Eurasians of Macao.” *Social Anthropology* 2: 115–132.
- Suzman, Susan M. 1994. “Names as Pointers: Zulu Personal Naming Practices.” *Language in Society* 23: 253–272.
- Wang, Zhigang and Michael Micklin. 1996. “The Transformation of Naming Practices in Chinese Families: Some Linguistic Clues to Social Change.” *International Sociology* 11: 187–212.
- Zheng, B.Q. 1993. *Chinese Names and Chinese Culture*. Beijing: The People’s University Press. (in Chinese)
- Zheng, Y. 1999. “Ten Thousand Wang Shuying and Several Thousands of Liu Jianguo: Too Many Duplicated Names in Beijing.” *Shopping Guide (Electronic Version)*, July 6, p. 11. (in Chinese)

## Notes on contributor

Ge Gao, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at San José State University, San José, CA. Her research interests involve cross-cultural and intercultural communication. Her publications have appeared in academic journals and book chapters.

Correspondence to: Ge Gao, ge.gao@sjsu.edu.