For the Love of *Karen*: A Socio-onomastic Investigation into Prejudice and Discrimination Targeting *Karen* and its Name-Bearers

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Abstract

Recent years have seen the proliferation in the use of the personal name *Karen* as a term of derision. While much has been written in the popular media about the complex socio-political issues surrounding this development, comparatively little consideration has been given to how the millions of real-life people named *Karen* have been affected by this development. After providing background information about the etymology, spread, and changing popular perception of *Karen*, this article presents the results of a mixed-method online survey of 681 respondents named *Karen* or one its variants. Using a combination of open-ended questions and standardized psychometric scales (the Everyday Discrimination Scale, Hypervigilance Scale, and PTSD Checklist for the DSM-5), this Participant Action Research investigated the frequency, severity, and location of prejudice and discrimination experienced by the respondents and the devastating effects this widespread namism has had upon their everyday lives. The findings of this investigation are placed within the broader context of toxic name-calling. The article ends with concrete suggestions for future research into the personal and societal harms caused by namism.

Keywords: anthroponymy, socio-onomastics, prejudice, discrimination, bias, psychology, Karen, namism

> This is MY NAME. It is the first thing I heard whispered to me by my mother. It is the first thing I learned to spell with a crayon on construction paper. It is the thing I searched for in gift shop displays of keychains or mugs. It is what I wrote on every school paper, what I have been called by friends and lovers, grandparents and teachers. It is a sacred thing, someone's name, and it has been taken from me. I would never deadname someone, or mispronounce someone's name. But my name has been taken from me.
>
> Study Respondent

Introduction: Name Prejudice and Discrimination

One of the very first weapons that children learn to use to injure others is name-calling (Crozier & Dimmock 1999; Nansel, et al 2001; Levy 2004; Rosenblath et al 2004; Levine & Tamburrino 2013; Hashem 2015). Far from harmless, there is much experimental, survey, and anecdotal research that demonstrates that name-calling can cause severe immediate and long-lasting injuries to its targets (Crozier & Skliopidou 2010; Dube et al 2023). It has been found, for example, that, in comparison to their peers, children who endure severe or prolonged name-calling and other forms of bullying exhibit higher rates of school absenteeism, academic underachievement, depression, social withdrawal, anxiety, and self-harm including substance abuse, suicide ideations, attempts, and completion (Olweus 1993; Batsche & Knopf 1994; Nansel et al. 2001; Juvonen, Graham, & Schuster 2003; Bucchianieri et al 2014; Tucker et al 2016; Thomas et al. 2016). Although no young person is immune, research has demonstrated that children and adolescents from already marginalized communities (e.g., immigrants, ethnoracial and/or religious minorities, LGBTQ+, the disabled, the Indigenous) are the targets of pernicious name-calling with greater frequency and severity than their age cohorts (Eva & Chapman 2014; Liu & Lin 2023; Fisher, Cassidy, & Mitchell 2017).

Given these findings, it is somewhat of an anathema that name-calling amongst children continues to be trivialized by so many adults. One reason for this widespread ignorance may be the simple fact that many adults actively engage in name-calling themselves. Nowhere is this antisocial behavior more apparent than in online communications. Behind the shield of anonymity, many adult internet users experience a form of disinhibition so extreme that they all too readily forget or ignore even the most basic rules of politeness. As even the casual observer can attest, internet users regularly enlist the most vile and incendiary terminology that their lexicons have to offer in hopes of maximizing their number of clicks, likes, followers, and/or subscribers. In the resulting linguistic landscape that has emerged both online and off, where diversity, equality, and inclusion are increasingly vilified, name-calling has become commonplace.

A common form of name-calling involves the misappropriation of a personal name with previously neutral to positive associations to target an entire community. This strategy has a long history in the US lexicon. Take, for example, the nickname *Yankee* which some etymologists theorize was derived from the personal name *Jan Kees*—a pejorative nickname used by the English to disparage the Dutch settlers living around the Hudson River during the US colonial period.[1] While this original term of derision has long since been adopted as a term of national pride, this sociolinguistic process of amelioration and reclamation does not always occur.

The US American lexicon is filled with personal names that have been misused as a slur. Examples include *Abraham* and *Hyman* which have been weaponized to form the anti-Semitic slurs *Abe* and *Hymie* (Antisemitism Policy Trust n.d.). The names *Guido, Fritz, Paddy* [←*Patrick*], and *Mick* [←*Mac/Mc*Name] have been used to target immigrants and naturalized citizens with roots in Italy, Germany, and Ireland. *Pocahontas* has been used as a term of derision for Native Americans.[2] And, for US Americans with African ancestry, one can find a wide variety of personal names that have been fashioned into epithets, each designed to denigrate differently. While *Rastus* and *Sambo*, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Tom,* and more recently *Uncle Thomas* (inspired by the highly controversial US Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas) have all been used to attack African Americans believed to exhibit White subservience, the name *Sapphire* has been used to label African-American considered to be unruly, aggressive. On the other side of the racial divide, since the late 19th to the early 20th centuries *Miss Ann* and *Mr. Charlie* have been used as pejoratives in the US, especially within the African American community, to label a hostile racist White person (Oxford English Dictionary n.d.). One of the newest names to join this ignominious group is *Karen*.

Much has been discussed in the popular media about the rise of *Karen* as a slur (Attiah 2020; Bates 2020; Dittum 2020; Lewis 2020; Nagesh 2020; Romano 2020; Williams 2020; Dvorak 2021; Brady, Christiansen, & Hiltz 2023). Within the academic community, there has been much written about the sociopolitical and cultural issues surrounding the use of this personal name in racialized discourse (Armstrong 2021; Maragh-Lloyd 2021; Grajeda 2022; Negra & Leyda 2021; Brady 2023; Hamad 2024; Ruby 2024). However, curiously, comparatively little has been published on the modern usage of *Karen* from the academic discipline specifically devoted to the scholarly investigation of names and naming: onomastics. This oversight is unfortunate as onomastics is uniquely poised to provide important insights into the current dysphemistic use of *Karen*.

Towards that end, this article begins by providing a short introduction to the etymology of *Karen* and its cognates. It then offers a concise description of the misappropriation of this personal name as a slur in popular US American discourse. The article then turns its attention to presenting the results of an original piece of socio-onomastic research designed to assess the impact that the widespread use of *Karen* as an epithet has had on its name-bearers. As the results of this investigation will show, this form of name-calling has had many negative consequences on the well-being of persons named *Karen*. The article concludes with suggestions for future research into prejudicial attitudes and acts of discrimination

Background: A Brief History of *Karen*

As is often the case, the exact derivational path of this personal name is difficult to reconstruct. However, based on the historical records which experts have been able to assemble, it is generally agreed that its origins begin in the Greco-Roman Empire and with the learned woman of Alexandria. Originally called Αικατερίνη or Εκατερίνα, today, she is better known in the English-speaking world as *Saint Katherine* (Walsh 2007, 1). According to Christian lore[3], during her short lifetime, Katherine was renowned for her uncommon beauty, intelligence, and faith. These attributes, along with the allure of strengthening political alliances, led the Emperor Maxentius to select her as his son's future bride (Simon 2012). Much to Maxentius's displeasure, however, Katherine politely refused. When promises of power and riches failed to entice Katherine to relinquish her virginity and Christian faith, the Emperor resorted to threats and intimidation, but to no avail. Katherine's steadfastness reportedly increased not only her own popularity, but also that of Christianity. Among the many converts she inspired were Porphyrius, the Captain of the Emperor's Imperial Guard, and Maxentius's own wife, the Empress Faustina. Incensed, the Roman ruler ordered the queen be tortured. However, as legend has it, each time, the virgin's life was saved by divine intervention. In the 15th century, the Augustinian friar John Capgrave wrote *The Life of Saint Katherine*, a religious narrative of the young woman's life. In the following lines, Capgrave describes the emperor's consternation to Katherine's resolve (quoted from Wagner 2024, 112).

> How long schall we this which this susteynes?
> How long schall we suffyr this cursidenes?
> To all good leveres it Schuld be very peyne
> To hear a woman with swch sturdynesse.

> How long shall we be forced to suffer this witch?
> How long shall we suffer this cursedness?
> For all men of good faith it is truly painful to be made to endure a woman of such infernal
> obstinance. (English translation by author)

Despite being defamed as a witch in consort with the devil, and her body be broken at the wheel, Katherine remained resolute. The emperor responded by ordering her beheading. On the day of the execution, another

miracle reportedly occurred. After the henchman's sword landed, Katherine's severed neck produced a stream of pure milk, a symbol of the virgin martyr's chastity. The name *Katherine* is believed to have been derived from the Greek term "καθαρός" or "katharós", meaning 'pure'.

Over time, the legend of Saint Katherine spread and a veritable cult grew around the religious martyr, making the patron of scholars, young women, and the ill one of the most popular saints in the Middle Ages (Walsh 2007; Simon 2012; Stollhans 2017). During this time, the Greek form of her name was transliterated into Latin to produce *Ækaterina* or *Ekaterina*. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, vernacular variants of these names became national onomasticons throughout Europe. Examples include *Kat(h)arine, Katrin(e)* (Germany); *Katrien, Katrijn* (Holland); *Catherine* (France); *Catalina* (Spain); *Caterina* (Portugal); *Yekaterina* and *Katerina´* (Russia); *Katarzyna* (Poland); *Katalin* (Hungary); and *Kaarina* (Finland) (Hanks, Hardcastle, & Hodges 2016). These national variants then went on to generate a number of short forms that later became names in their own right. For example, in the United Kingdom, several derivatives can be found in the various language of the Isles: in English, *K/Cate, K/Cathy, Katie;* in Irish Gaelic, *Caitlín*; in Welsh, *Catrin*; and in Scots Gaelic, *Catriona* (Charnock 1882; Hanks, Hardcastle, & Hodges 2016). Similar development took place in Scandinavia where *Katherine* generated several popular shortenings which eventually became names in their own right. These include the Swedish and Norwegian name *Karin* and the Danish variant, *Karen* (Duden 2021). Through immigration, these names were then successively introduced to the United States where they eventually became perennial favorites in the nation's onomasticon.

According to the US Social Security Administration (SSA), in 1906, *Karen* first appeared amongst the top 1,000 most frequently given names for female children, reaching a rank of 940. The name reached its zenith in popularity in 1965, when a record-number 32,867 baby girls, representing 1.80 percent of the total number of female births officially recorded in the US, were named *Karen*. It was also in this year that *Karen* became the third most-popular name given to female children in the US. For ease of comparison, Table 1 presents SSA data for each of the six most common variants of *Karen* in the USA.

Table 1: The Top 1,000 Most Frequently Given Variants of Karen on the SSA List (SSAL)

SSAL Entry			Highest SSAL Popularity				SSAL Exit		SSAL Duration
Variant	Year	Rank	Year	Rank	No. of Births	% of Births	Year	Rank	Years
Caren	1941	943	1957	484	388	0.018	1978	892	37
Carin	1965	958	1970	799	175	0.010	1977	906	12
Caryn	1948	881	1965	421	492	0.027	1988	817	40
Karyn	1942	934	1964	394	607	0.031	1983	821	41
Karin	1936	924	1967	276	948	0.055	1989	963	53
Karen	1906	940	1965	3	32867	1.799	2020	823	114

As shown above, *Karen* is the most-popular spelling variant in the cluster, entering the top 1,000 list earlier and remaining on the list 2.6 times longer than the overall set average duration of 49.50 years. By comparison, *Karin*, the second most popular variant in the cluster, never reached higher than rank 276 at the height of its popularity in the States, and only managed to stay on the SSAL a little over half a century (i.e., 53 years).

As table 2 also demonstrates, by the 1990s, most of the name cluster had already disappeared from the SSAL, making way for a new generation of names for female children (e.g., *Jessica, Ashley, Emily, Sarah, Samnatha, Amanda, Brittany, Elizabeth, Taylor,* and *Megan*).It would take three more decades before *Karen* followed suit. This means that well before *Karen* became used as an epithet, the personal name and many of its closest variants had already experienced a substantial decline in popularity. In other words, although the widespread antipathy against *Karen* has most certainly done little to increase its perceived attractiveness, it would be incorrect to say that this sociolinguistic development is the reason for the name's drop in frequency. Generally speaking, the bell-shaped rise and fall of *Karen*'s popularity is not at all surprising. This pattern is displayed, in fact, in many of the name's onomastic cohorts. To illustrate this fact, using SSA national data, Table 2 provides a rank-ordered listing of the twenty-five most popular names given to female children born in the US during the 1960s.

Table 2: SSA Data on the Top 25 Names for US born Female Children in the 1960s

Rank	Name	Entry	Exit	Duration	Rank	Name	Entry	Exit	Duration
1	Lisa	1937	2023	86	14	Pamela	1925	2011	86
2	Mary	1900	2023	123	15	Lori	1946	2001	55
3	Susan	1900	2020	120	16	Laura	1900	2023	123
4	Karen	1906	2020	114	17	Elizabeth	1900	2023	123
5	Kimberly	1946	2023	77	18	Julie	1900	2023	123
6	Patricia	1900	2019	119	19	Brenda	1925	2017	92
7	Linda	1900	2023	123	20	Jennifer	1938	2023	85
8	Donna	1900	2010	110	21	Barbara	1900	2023	123
9	Michelle	1938	2023	85	22	Angela	1900	2023	123
10	Cynthia	1900	2023	123	23	Sharon	1925	2016	91
11	Sandra	1913	2021	108	24	Debra	1934	1998	64
12	Deborah	1900	2023	123	25	Teresa	1900	2023	123
13	Tammy	1947	1998	51					

Among the 25 names listed above, the average duration on the SSAL was 102.92 years with *Tammy* having the shortest duration of 51 years; and *Angela, Barbara, Cynthia, Deborah, Elizabeth, Julie, Laura, Linda, Mary,* and *Teresa,* and demonstrating the greatest longevity of 123 years. Seen from this vantage point, *Karen's* duration does not appear to have been artificially abbreviated, remaining on the SSAL a respectable 114 years. Instead, its eventual disappearance from the top 1,000 most-popular names in the USA would seem to be a common and natural process of attrition experienced by most personal names that were once popular in the 1960s. However, unlike its onomastic peers, *Karen* has also undergone a widespread, sustained, multi-media assault.

Despite being fairly recent, there is considerable debate over the exact origin of the use of Karen as a pejorative. Nevertheless, there appear to be a few events which language observers often mention as being key.[4] These include a 2016 Nintendo advertisement featuring an annoying character named *Karen*; the 2017 creation of the misogynist subreddit FUCKYOUKAREN in which a male user ranted about his ex-wife; and the 2019 outbreak of the COVID pandemic and subsequent lockdowns during which millions turned to the internet to not only express their fear, but also vent their frustration over persons who endangered others' lives by refusing to follow public health restrictions. Then, in 2020, this powder keg of emotions exploded when the world watched in horror as George Floyd was murdered by police in broad daylight. As Civil Rights leaders were quick to assert, what made Mr. Floyd's brutal homicide unique was not that it happened, but that it had been captured on camera. Seemingly to prove this point, social media soon swelled with homemade clips exposing shocking examples of so-called "White privilege". Table 3 below displays the labels of some of the most (in)famous of these clips.

Table 3: Labels of Popular Social Media Clips Featuring Personal Names

1	Airplane Amy	6	ID Adam	11	Pool Patrol Paula
2	BBQ Becky	7	Jogger Joe	12	Racist Roslyn
3	Bus Berater Brenda	8	Lawnmower Lucy	13	Road Raging Randy
4	Burrito Bill	9	Loud Music Maggy	14	Wake up Suze
5	Candybar Cora	10	Permit Patty	15	Walmart Mary

As shown above, the names for each one of these memes is constructed in much the same way. The first element usually consists of a descriptor for either the situation in which the incident occurred or the action taken by the antagonist. The second element is a personal name which alliterates with the first element (e.g., **BBQ Becky,** **Jogger Joe, Pool Patrol Paula**). In addition, the personal names chosen tend to enjoy particular popularity for the demography of the antagonist in the film. This feature is important as the ethnoracial association of the name is pivotal for the success of the sociopolitical critique. The effect would have been completely different if other names had been used. What if, for example, *Jogger Joe* had been *Jogger **Juan**; Loud Music Maggy* was *Loud Music **Malik**; Lawnmower Lucy* was *Lawnmower **LaTonya**;* and instead of *Airplane Amy* it had been *Airplane **Ahmed**?* As these hypothetical examples show, the personal names featured in table 4 serve an important communicative function by indexing the ethnoracial identity, gender, and age, of the antagonist. As Bucholtz 2016 observed: "names are not merely referential forms that pick out individuals [. . .] they are also [. . .] indexical forms, with social meanings that are intimately tied to the contexts of their use". (274)

With that in mind, there are any number of other personal names that could have been chosen to serve as societal indexes. The variety of names displayed in Table 3 proves that point. And certainly in the past, there have been a long list of other female personal names that have been selected for public ridicule, for one reason or another. Older readers might well remember, how difficult it was for women in the States who happened to have the names *Cathy, Nancy, Debbie, Jane,* and *Nelly,* during the time when the phrases "Chatty Cathy",

"Negative Nancy", "Debbie Downer", "Plain Jane", and "Nosy Nelly" were common. A name other than *Karen* might very well have been selected as the next in line for public derision had it not been for the aforementioned factors which brought it into the spotlight where it has stayed.

This trend is clearly reflected in the development of the aforementioned subreddit. Just two years after its introduction, it reportedly reached 190,000 followers. Three years later, in 2021, that number had exploded to reach nearly 2 million. Similar developments can be seen throughout social media. Whether in TikTok, Reddit, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, or X, messages and images of hate featuring the personal name *Karen* are widespread online. The same can be seen offline. So is the phenomenon that an entire cottage industry of *Karen* merchandise has emerged. From t-shirts to baseball caps, coffee mugs to linens, there are countless items on the market today that prominently display *Karen* as an epithet. A sampling of the US trademark applications for such products is shown in Table 4.[5]

Table 4: Applications to the United States Patent and Trademark Office for Wordmarks featuring Karen

	Wordmark	Product Type	Status	Serial No..	Filing Year
1	Karen Meet Kamala	Notebooks, Stationery	Abandoned	90322373	2020
2	Anti Karen Club	T-shirts	Abandoned	90309663	2020
3	Not Today, Karen	T-shirts	Abandoned	90012210	2020
4	Karen Too Much	Shirts	Abandoned	90017169	2020
5	I Wish A Karen Would!	Graphic T-shirts	Abandoned	90000556	2020
6	Ok, Karen	Wines	Abandoned	79293542	2020
7	Don't Be a Karen	Shirts, Hats, Face Masks	Abandoned	90034480	2020
8	Calm Down, Karen. It's just a Feeding Tube.	Graphic t-shirts	Registered	88629936	2020
9	KARENBUSTERS	T-shirts	Registered	90001237	2020
10	Respect the Drift Karen	Stickers and Hats	Abandoned	90699289	2021
11	Sorry Karen … Kamala Beat You to It!!	Undergarments, Footwear	Abandoned	90626565	2021
12	Hey Karen	Cat Litter	Accepted	98627599	2024
13	GET FUCKED KAREN	Clothing	Accepted	97884939	2023
14	FORK KAREN	Shirts, Sweatshirts, Hats	Pending	98732435	2024
15	STOPKAREN	Musical Sound Recordings	Pending	98587730	2024

The listing above is not exhaustive. Admittedly, there were a few non-eponymous applications for wordmarks that were on the other side of the spectrum. These included the live registered wordmark for "Unapologetically Karen" (serial number 90600723) as well as a live and pending application for the wordmark "Good Karen" for an entertainment company. However, these types of wordmarks were by far the exception rather than the rule.[6]

The extremity of anti-Karen merchandising is exemplified by the company *"Get Fucked Karen" which sells a wide assortment of apparel, household goods, stickers, decals, and food items—each with misogynistic product names. Examples include candy clusters named *Cluster Fucks*; a spice mix called *Spicey Bitch Rub;* a long line of streetwear with slogans like "Get Kancer"; and a black dildo billed as "the ultimate Karen silencer". According to the company, this "unique package" is "the only way to shut up a Karen" and so that she can *"REALLY fuck herself".[7]

There are those who might be tempted to dismiss the significance of such messaging by saying; "it's all in good fun". However, humor is not always benign and can be effectively used to denigrate, humiliate, belittle, threaten, ostracize, and control others (DiCioccio 2012). Indeed, there is compelling psychological research which has shown a link between aggressive humor and the "Dark Triad" or "Dark Tetrad" (i.e., narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism) (e.g., Veselka et al 2010; Martin, et al. 2012; Torres-Marin, Navarro-Carrillo, & Carretero-Dios 2022; Zhu, Ou, & Zhu 2022; Li et al 2023). Though seemingly simple, aggressive humor serves multiple pragmatic functions for the interlocutors involved. In the case of anti-Karen aggressive humor, for the JOKESTER, it provides an opportunity to effectively attack a target while providing a possible excuse should they be held responsible for causing harm (i.e., "I didn't mean any harm".); for BYSTANDERS, it also offers deniability of responsibility for any harm done (i.e., "We were just having fun".), while discouraging them from interceding on behalf of the victim, lest they become a target themselves; and for the TARGET, it places them between the proverbial "rock and the hard place", either they accept the derision as a price of remaining in the group; or they defend themselves and potentially risk confirming the group's negative stereotype that they indeed have no sense of humor. Even if the TARGET manages to lodge a counter attack using humor aimed at the original JOKESTER, there is still the possibility that the successful defensive will be interpreted by others as offense. Although some observers in the mass media have acknowledged how unfair it is that millions of people named *Karen* have been placed in this untenable position, more often than not, they conclude that the ends justify the means and people named *Karen* will just have to accept that is the way things are right now (Dvorak 2020; Attiah 2020).

Linguistically speaking, the word "Karen" has expanded its function and meaning. Before 2015, it was (1) one of a number of popular personal names derived from the Greek term "katharós", meaning 'pure'; (2) an ethnonym for an Indigenous group of peoples in Myanmar; (3) a set of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken at the border of Myanmar and Thailand: Taungthu, Bew, Geba, Pwo, and Sgaw. Since 2015, "Karen" has gained an addition meaning as an epithet used to label a White person, typically female, who is perceived as being abusive, rude, self-entitled, and prejudiced.[8] For people named *Karen*, the fact that their name is being misused as a slur is disturbing enough. However, the bad news does not end there. For a certain segment of language users, Karen has become a kind of scarlet letter, marking the bearer as being unerringly and automatically racist, uneducated, shrewish, deceitful, and deserving of hatred and ridicule. As nonsensical of this prejudice may be, there are individuals who, operating upon this entirely irrational belief, feel justified in threatening or even attacking people named *Karen* with verbal, emotional, and/or physical abuse. The purpose of the current investigation is to determine how people named *Karen* have been affected by this name-based prejudice and discrimination.

Research

Methodology

The research model adopted for this investigation fell under the rubric of "Participatory Action Research" (PAR). Explained briefly, PAR involves scientists and community stakeholders working together in an egalitarian partnership to conduct research to address real-world problems within the larger community (Ahmed & Palermo 2010; Bonney & Dickinson 2012; Vaughn & Jacques 2020; Culum 2021). For the current PAR investigation, the researcher collaborated with Karens United for Respect (KU4R)[9], an international non-partisan organization dedicated to raising awareness about the destructiveness of name-based prejudice and discrimination. More specifically, the author and KU4R sub-committee co-designed a research project to examine the phenomenon of anti-*Karen* namism. This project resulted in the design and implementation of four different complementary online surveys, each targeting a different audience: (1) adults named *Karen* or one of its variants; (2) friends, family members, and close associates of persons named *Karen* or one of its variants; (3) members of the general public who use or have used *Karen* as a term of derision. The current article presents the preliminary findings gathered from the first audience using a mixed method approach.

In the qualitative segment of the investigation, survey-takers named *Karen* or one of its variants were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions about their personal experiences with anti-*Karen* prejudice and discrimination. These questions were jointly developed by the PAR collaborative. In the quantitative segment, the survey collected data on the respondents' demographic background and the frequency, severity, and location of their exposure to namist motivated prejudice and discrimination. In addition, empirical data regarding the possible emotional, cognitive, and behavioral effects of this exposure were also collected using a series of standardized measures psychological measures selected by the PAR collaborative. Given the present length restrictions, this article will limit itself to reporting findings from only three of those psychometric tests.

The first is the "Everyday Discrimination Scale" (EDS) (Williams et al. 1997). The EDS is a nine-item scale designed to measure the frequency and severity of respondents' experience with prejudice and discrimination in their everyday lives. Measurements are based on a 6-point likert scale which ranges from "Almost Everyday" to "Never". Since its introduction in the late 1990s, the EDS has been found to be a reliable and valid self-report measure of microaggressions across a wide range of ethnoracial, cultural, age, gender, sex, and SES groupings (Williams et al 1997; Krieger et al. 2005; Kim et al 2014; Harnois 2022; Lawrence et al 2022; Feng, Cheon, Yip, & Cham 2021). For this investigation, the respondents' individual scores were tabulated across all nine items. These aggregate scores were then divided into three EDS sub-groups corresponding to low, medium, and high.

The second psychometric scale used for this investigation is one that is often used in tandem with the EDS. Called the "Heightened Vigilance Scale" (HVS), this tool uses a six-point likert scale from "Very Often" to "Never" to measure the degree to which respondents manifest hypervigilance in anticipation of potential prejudice or discrimination. As much compelling scientific evidence has demonstrated, persons who have been the target of prejudice and discrimination frequently display elevated levels of anticipatory awareness to protect themselves against potential attack. For respondents who completed this measure, individual HVS scores were calculated. Using this range of summary scores, the respondent pool was then sub-divided into three tiers— low, moderate, and high—for ease of comparison.

The third standardized psychometric used in the investigation was the "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist for the Diagnostic Statistical Manual, 5th Edition" or "PTSD Checklist for DSM-5" (PCL-5). The PCL-5 is a 20-item measure that asks participants to indicate on a 5-point likert scale from "Not at all" to "Extremely" how often over the past month they have experienced symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress. After culling surveys where two or more of the scale items had been skipped, the summary PCL-5 scores were tabulated for each of the remaining surveys. The highest possible severity score for this measure was 80, and the lowest was 0. In line with the recommended scoring procedure, the data set was then sub-divided into two groups: those with and without a high likelihood of post-traumatic stress. The cut off between these two sub-groupings was set conservatively at 33 points, such that aggregate PCL-5 scores over that numerical threshold were interpreted as having a high PTS potential and those under that marker, having a comparatively low potential.

After selecting the above-mentioned measures and developing a set of original questions for the qualitative segment of the investigation, the PAR collaborative conducted a pilot test and then refined the structure and design of the online survey. After this initial phase was completed, the survey was officially released to the public and the PAR collaborative worked together to invite potential respondents to take part. At the close of the survey, a total of 521 persons had completed the quantitative segment of the investigation and 160 completed the qualitative segment. To protect respondent confidentiality, only the primary researcher had access to the responses received. To guard against any potential conflict of interest, the researcher was also solely responsible for the statistical analysis and preparing the scientific report of the findings. The current article presents the investigatory results directly related to the following two research questions: (1) How often and where did the respondents encounter negative prejudice and discrimination in reaction to their personal name?; and (2) How, if at all, did those everyday encounters with anti-*Karen* namism affect them?

Findings

Demographic Results

One of the first questions posed was how each respondent spelled their name. This data was collected in hopes of determining whether the self-reported frequency, types, and locations of anti-Karen namism varied with the spelling variant used. However, as the following pie-chart illustrates, the preponderance of one orthography made it impossible to reliably make such statistical comparisons.
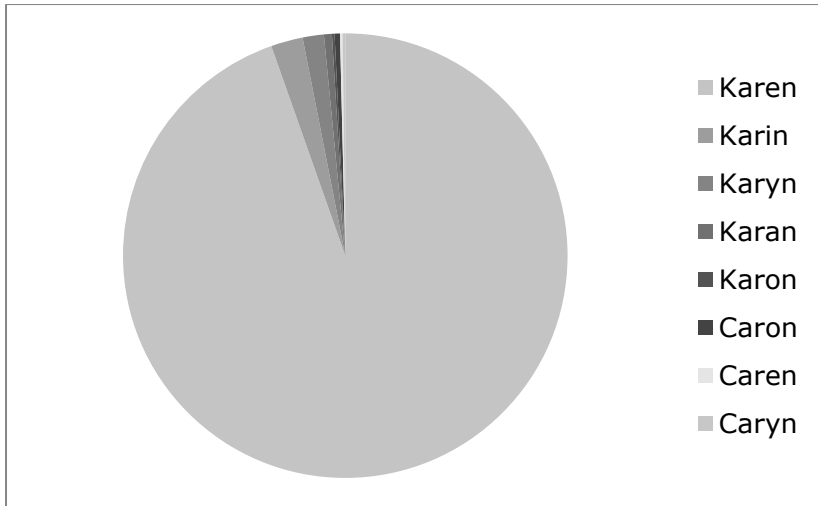
Graph 1: Spelling Variants of Respondents' Names by Percentage

As can be clearly seen above, the overwhelming majority (94.60%) of the respondents indicated that their name was spelled *Karen*. The remaining 5.40% used one of the seven other variants. This imbalance may have been an artefact of KU4R association. The fact that *Karen* appears in its organizational name might have attracted study participants whose name had the same spelling; or in the reverse, it might have dissuaded persons who spell their name differently. Alternatively, the disproportionately large percentage of participants with the name *Karen* may indirectly indicate that persons with this spelling experience anti-Karenism more often or feel it more acutely than people whose name is spelled differently. Without further investigation, it is impossible to do more than speculate.

However, the strength of this orthographic skew was particularly surprising given the international diversity of the people who took part in the investigation. In the table below, the 11 countries of residence that the participants reported are listed.

Table 5: Respondents' Places of Residence by Percentage

	Place of Residence	%		Place of Residence	%
1	United States	75.87	7	Spain	0.40
2	United Kingdom	12.68	8	Malta	0.20
3	Canada	9.61	9	Italy	0.20
4	Australia	5.52	10	Philippines	0.20
5	Belgium	0.20	11	United Arab Emirates	0.20
6	Denmark	0.20			

The respondents were also asked to indicate their nationality. However, given the apparent conflation of citizenship, ancestry, and ethnoracial identity exhibited by the international pool of survey-takers, only the results from the place of residence question are reported here. The residency data is of particular importance though as it provides the social and geographical context for the reported experiences with namism. As shown in table 4 above, 98.16% of the survey participants were located either in North America (85.48%) or in the United Kingdom (12.68%).[10]

Anglo-American residency was not the only demographic feature that the majority of the respondents had in common with one another. Of those who answered the questions on ethnicity and race, 97.63% indicated that they were non-Hispanic and 96.52% classified themselves as being White. In the qualitative segment of the investigation, many of the survey participants who did not fit this profile made a special, entirely unprompted, point of calling out the prejudice that all persons named *Karen* are White racists with social privilege. Below is a sampling of some of these responses:

> Being an islander born to migrant parents, I am a minority yet I have to just 'accept' that my name is being trashed all for the sake of diversity, and to undo white privilege and the advancement of minorities???

It makes me feel erased, unheard, undervalued. I've often had to fight to be heard. Being born into a low-income immigrant family, the opportunities that I've had have been less— and there have always been people or establishments taking advantage of the less fortunate, the less educated, and people without any connections/resources. I'm astonished at how many people find it okay to use my name, not only as a condescending, demeaning word; but also to assume that only white people belong to it. I have asked people whether I should have been named something more culturally appropriate to my Mexican heritage such as 'Maria' [. . .]. It is insane to think that many people are fighting against racial discrimination, however in the process of doing so; they have ruined the people whose name is Karen and are not white. We exist and now we're being laughed at for having a name that was given to us out of love.

I'm Black and I have to repeatedly deal with people laughing and pointing at my name expecting me to join in the festivities of this smear campaign [. . .]. The 'She's A Karen' campaign is a huge fishing net that is scooping up all Karens and berating us, calling us names as if we're unfit to be in public or unqualified for human discourse because it is meant to shun us or tell us to shut up because we are, after all, 'A Karen'.

NOTHING POSITIVE HAS COME OUT OF THIS!!! That cannot be said enough. There are too many women who bleat on about how now they understand what it feels like to be in a hated group. I'm Jewish and was bullied as a child to the point of considering suicide. [. . .] I DO NOT NEED A FUCKING REFRESHER COURSE IN HATRED.

I fought for civil rights and marched and was spit on by KKK members, and we are a mixed race family. We fought hard against racism. Many of my generation in the 60s and 70s worked for civil rights and some were killed doing so. [. . .] Karen has been my name and identity for 67 years, so it is very difficult to change my name now [. . .]. I cringe when I hear the name Karen, or when I say it, since I know the reactions.

In the quantitative segment, amongst the 510 survey-takers who felt comfortable reporting their sexual orientation and gender, 94.90% indicated that they were heterosexual and 100% selected the gender classification "female". When asked to indicate their age, a greater diversity was noted, with the ages ranging from 26 to 85. However, by far, the bulk of the participants (69.71%) indicated that they were between 46 and 65. This means that the birth year for the majority of the women in the survey was between 1959 and 1978, the exact period in which *Karen* experienced its zenith as a popular personal name for female children born in the USA.

With regard to their current family constellations, 76.13% reported that they had at least one child, with 50.10% having between two and three children. Nearly three out of four classified themselves as being either married or in a civil union (63.93%), or unmarried but in a committed relationship (10.01%). The rest of the respondents were either single (11.18%), divorced/separated (9.80%), or widowed (4.90%). When asked to indicate their highest level of education attained, the survey-takers had a remarkably varied background.

Table 6: Respondents' Self-Reported Highest Level of Education Completed

Level	Percentage
High School	16.56
Associates	15.86
Bachelors	37.63
Masters	21.27
PhD/MD/DDS/RN	5.52
Postdoc	0.82
College Certificate/Trade Certificate	2.04

Overall, the survey-takers distinguished themselves as a highly educated group of women. Although data was not gathered on the participants' specific occupation, based on the write-in responses that were provided, it appeared that a substantive proportion were employed in the health sciences or social sciences, in professions where empathy, compassion, communication, and a willingness to serve their community are a must.

Psychometric Results

Everyday Discrimination Scale (EDS)

After culling the questionnaires where the measure was incompletely answered, the individual scores for the remaining 418 questionnaires were then tallied to generate the cumulative scores, arithmetic means, and standard deviations for each item in the EDS. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 7: Respondents' Mean Item Scores and Standard Deviations on EDS

Item		Mean	SD
A	You are treated with less courtesy than other people are.	2.71	1.05
B	You are treated with less respect than other people are.	2.70	1.47
C	You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.	1.72	1.57
D	People act as if they think you are not smart.	2.07	1.73
E	People act as if they are afraid of you.	1.28	1.55
F	People act as if they think you are dishonest.	1.53	1.65
G	People act as if they're better than you are.	2.40	1.66
H	You are called names or insulted.	2.51	1.61
I	You are threatened or harassed.	1.78	1.60

As shown above, the form of discrimination which the respondents reported experiencing the most often in response to their name was being treated with less courtesy and respect. This was followed by being called names or insulted. On average, these kinds of encounters were rated as occurring a few times a month. As the commentary from the qualitative portion of the investigation demonstrates, for many of the respondents, the verbal attacks hurt so much that many of the respondents described having a visceral reaction to the bullying.

> Negative Karen comments on social media feel like **a physical punch in the stomach** and make me feel fearful. I'm afraid to comment in a public group for fear of nasty comments aimed back at me.

> I get a lot of comments at work from customers because I wear a name tag. I've had people laugh in my face because of my name. The hurt is undescribable because it feels so personal. I've had nightmares about it. I've never told a soul how it hurts**. It's like a dagger to my heart** every single time I hear a 'Karen' slur or see a meme.

> **I cringe** when I have to introduce myself to new people.

> I am afraid to speak out or express an opinion. **My heart aches** when asked my name. [Emphasis added]

In addition to the kinds of everyday negative experiences described above, as often as a few times a year, the participants reported being threatened or harassed by others who discovered their name. In a separate part of the quantitative segment of the investigation, information was gathered about the specific kinds of abuse the participants had suffered in reaction to their personal name. Here the extent of the problem became disturbingly clear. The four most common forms of verbal/emotional abuse which the participants indicated they experienced sometimes or frequently were the following: (1) being laughed at (76.90%); (2) being sneered at (68.9%); (3) being yelled at (32.70%); and (4) being verbally threatened (23.10%). As one respondent explained, the threat is real: "I wish people understood that the Karen rhetoric is dangerous. People talk about killing, raping, stabbing, shooting real Karens; then they justify the hateful rhetoric by saying Karens deserve it".

The empirical results buttress this assertion. In total, 6.90% of the participants indicated that they had been frequently or sometimes shoved, hit, punched, of kicked by another person who learned their name was *Karen*. Approximately 2.40% sometimes experienced having an object thrown at them in reaction to their name; and 1.30% indicated that they had frequently had that happen; and 2.00% of the participants reported that they sometimes or even frequently had had someone spit on them when they found out their name was *Karen*. Sadly, the disturbing findings do not end there. When asked about their social circle,16.90% reported that their family and friends had also been verbally threatened and 12.30% had been the victim of physical attack. Thus, like other forms of discrimination, the bigotry can become so intense that it can motivate acts of hatred against people who are associated with the primary target of their prejudice.

The overall EDS average was determined (18.70) and then used as a basis to sub-divide the set of summary scores into low, moderate, and high sub-sets. Of the 418 participants who completed the EDS measure, 179 or 42.82% were in the low sub-grouping, meaning that the severity and frequency of the discrimination they reportedly experienced in their everyday life were reportedly low. The second sub-grouping had moderate EDS scores ranging between 19 and 36 points. There were 161 out of the 418 participants (38.52%) who fell into this moderate EDS level. The remaining 78 participants had a cumulative EDS score of 37 or higher. Thus, 18.66% of those who completed the EDS measure reported experiencing discrimination the most often and severe. This finding is sobering when one considers the large body of research that has established a strong link between elevated EDS scores and adverse physical and psychological outcomes such as stroke, hypertension, obesity, respiratory illness, as well as pain, depression, and anxiety (Krieger & Sidney 1996; Williams et al. 1997; Pascoe & Richman 2009; Paradies 2015; Hunte & Williams 2009; Williams & Mohammed 2009; Earnshaw et al. 2016; Yang & Henderson 2024).

When asked where they experienced anti-*Karen* prejudice or discrimination, the top four most commonly reported settings were the print media (e.g., newspapers and magazines) (27.60%); television programs (28.40%); retail products (28.8%), and social media (77.30%). The places where name-based derision occurred the least often were religious gatherings (38.00%), amongst friends (52.60%), and in the company of family members (53.40%). According to the 519 survey takers who completed this segment of the questionnaire, it was in these three settings that they "Rarely" or "Never" experienced prejudice or discrimination in reaction to their name. While these findings are encouraging, it is still rather sobering that even in spaces where people would ordinarily expect to feel completely protected and accepted, persons named *Karen* may still experience harmful and hurtful name prejudice. As one participant explained, though less frequent, these attacks can hurt just as much if not more: "The worst part was family and friends telling me to not be 'a Karen'".

Heightened Vigilance Scale (HVS)

In view of the EDS findings, the results of the HVS were not surprising. In this measure, the respondents were asked to consider the day-to-day experiences with reactions to their name which they reported in the EDS and then indicate how often they engaged in the following precautionary behaviors.

Table 8: Respondents' Mean Item Scores and Standard Deviations on HVS

Item		Mean	SD
A	Think in advance about the kinds of problems you are likely to experience.	2.86	1.14
B	Try to prepare for possible insults before leaving home.	2.33	1.32
C	Feel that you always have to be very careful about your appearance to get good service or avoid being harassed.	2.40	1.36
D	Carefully watch what you say and how you say it.	3.11	1.15
E	Carefully observe what happens around you.	2.88	1.19
F	Try to avoid certain social situations and places.	2.56	1.35

Putting together the results above, it seems that even before the participants are in a social situation where they might experience namism, they have already invested time and energy in trying to plan how to respond if they are attacked. Once in the anticipated social situation, they apparently are still unable to relax and remain instead constantly on guard—monitoring everything they do and say, lest they inadvertently confirm others' negative beliefs and steeling themselves for any attempt to publicly humiliate, insult, or belittle them. Though initially beneficial, if left unchecked, such anticipatory stress can become chronic and maladaptive, resulting in a series of psychological, cognitive, and physical symptomology (Clark, Benkert, & Flack 2006; Sawyer et al. 2012; Hicken, Lee, Movenhoff, & Willimas 2014; Lewis, Cogburn, & Williams 2015; Tené, et al. 2015; Smith et al. 2020). These negative health outcomes include social anxiety, panic attacks, rumination and perturbation, sleep disturbances, depression, suicide ideation, as well as pathological changes to the cardiovascular, digestive, and immunological systems (William & Mohammed 2009; La Viest et al 2014; Himmelstein, et al. 2015; Keum & Li 2022; Choo, et al 2024). In the comments below, a survey taker powerfully describes just how all-encompassing and debilitating this conditioned hypervigilance can be:

> I hate introducing myself, hearing, saying and reading my name. I brace myself for negative comments when I encounter my name online, in the news and when hearing or saying my name in public. I feel hurt when people use Karen disparagingly IRL [in real life] and on line and I have become hyper-vigilant in general about it, scanning headlines, posts and comments as a (failed) method of gaining control over the situation. Still, I feel gobsmacked, assaulted and humiliated when I accidentally let my guard down and am confronted with a

Karen insult in real life or on the internet. I get nervous when I notice something in politics, popular culture or the news that will likely trigger another wave of public hate for Karen. This happens pretty regularly. I have become a lot less social because I don't want to deal with jokes about my name or worrying that people are thinking about the issue but not saying anything. I feel embarrassed by what's become of my name and experience a lot of shame about it. [. . .] People have outright guffawed when I've explained the pain behind my name change so I avoid places where I know I will run into acquaintances. I don't know if I'll ever be the same after experiencing the shock of having my name destroyed in real time. I didn't realize how integral one's name is to one's identity until Karen became universally maligned. I have become acutely aware of mob mentality and have lost faith in people to not succumb to it. My overall sense of joy and trust has diminished and been surpassed by jadedness and a dull sadness.

The prevalence and severity of this hypervigilance was clearly reflected in the overall HVS scores for the 479 respondents who completed this segment of the survey. Only 72 (15.03%) of these survey-takers were found to have a relatively low HVS scores, ranging between 0 and 8. Nearly twice that number, 142 (29.65%), were determined to have a comparatively moderate HVS scores, falling between 9 and 16 points. That means that no less than 55.32% of the survey-takers were found to have high of heightened vigilance with HVS scores ranging from 17 to 24, where 24 is the highest score possible.

PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5)

The HSV findings take on even more meaning in combination with those obtained for the PCL-5. After culling the questionnaires where 2 or more items on the measure were left unanswered, the scores from the remaining 467 surveys were assessed. In total, 291 out of the 467 (62.31%) participants who completed this portion of the survey achieved a score equal to or more than this numerical threshold of 33. This means that approximately 6 out of 10 of the survey-takers showed symptoms consistent with Post Traumatic Stress. This finding mirrors the results of the EDS. Here too, ca. 6 out of 10 survey-takers reported experiencing moderate to high frequency and severity levels of everyday discrimination in reaction to their name. These findings are supported by research which has established a link between perceived discrimination and PTSD (Matheson et al. 2019; Sibrava et al 2019; Brooks Holliday et al. 2021). In the participant comments provided below, the real-life impact of this distress is readily apparent:

I physically get sick or shake if I dwell on the subject too much. I cry a lot and then am angry that I am not even allowed to cry according to the meme. I am just supposed to take it and/or die. [. . .] I have had nightmares. I have no real support systems since no one understands, not even religious leaders. I hate that there is no escape from it. It can be found online, in books, magazines, movies, TV, commercials, radio, stores, restaurants, in social gatherings, and even at home. [. . .] I have attempted suicide in part because of what has happened to my name.

I was starting to have a little bit of suicidal ideation too—not thinking about methods, but just feeling like, if everyone hates Karen and it's better for all things "Karen" to be gone, as they say, maybe the world would be better without me. It sounds crazy to me now that it got that bad [. . .]. I was on the phone with my best friend crying and asking whether she really thought the world wouldn' t be as good without me in it; [. . .] somehow I had seen so many things saying "Kill all Karens" and "Don't be a Karen" and "All things Karen must be burned with fire" and so forth that I just absorbed it to a degree that I find really shocking now. After that phone call with my friend, I realized I needed professional help to cope.

I am depressed, anxious, suicidal, and have trust issues. Since the meme became really ugly and relentless in 2020, I have cried nearly everyday. I have thought about killing myself many times. In fact, I am wreckers with my health and honestly have checked out in life. I no longer care about much of anything and certainly don't like people. I have nightmares. I physically shake and my stomach churns over some if the things I read or if I have to meet new people. I keep to myself and haven' t really met new people. I don't want people to say my name in public. I have doctors use a different name for me. I won't watch or read any new recent shows, movies, or books. I have been looking for work for 2 years and can't find anything. Any time anything goes wrong in a social interaction, I wonder if it was because of my name. I am embarrassed. I try

> not to complain or give my opinion. I have been silenced. People ask for my opinion or to help, and I say I am too busy or am out of ideas. I don't want to be around people. I am terrified of making a mistake or saying the wrong thing. I am afraid my "friends"" are laughing at me behind my back. [. . .]. I have tried talking to friends, but most don't want to hear it, and those that do really can't help anyways and end up saying stuff that makes it worse.

Widely considered a gold standard, the PCL-5 is roundly accepted as a robust measure for post traumatic stress (Wortmann et al 2016; Bovin & Marx 2023). High scores on this measure have been linked to a wide range of psychological symptomology including elevated rates of distress, depression, anxiety, and suicidality (Sawyer et al. 2012; La Viest et al. 2014; Himmelstein 2015; Choo et al 2024). Given the concerning results obtained in this investigation, the PAR collaboration took active steps to help safe-guard the health and welfare of the study participants. For example, emergency contact numbers and addresses for persons at risk of self-harm were provided to all research respondents and contact details of the researcher were given as well. This information was also widely shared throughout the KU4R network. In addition, several informal support sessions were organized. During these meetings, questions could be posed and experiences shared in a safe environment. The researcher, who is also trained in suicidology, also agreed to meet individually with persons who requested a private session.

Discussion and Conclusion

As with any study, this investigation is not without its limitations. In particular, the relative homogeneity of the respondents' name variant as well as their demographic characteristics (e.g., place of residence, gender, biological sex, sexual orientation, and ethnoracial identity) may have inadvertently skewed the results. For this investigation, the vast majority of study participants fit the following description: an educated White, non-Hispanic, middle aged, woman named *Karen* who was married or in a civil union, the mother of between 1 and 2 children, and residing in the US. Given the fact that anti-Karen prejudice and discrimination also negatively impacts people who do not fit this profile, it is strongly suggested that future investigations consider the use of purposive sampling to help ensure a more diverse participant pool. The necessity for this research is underscored by the linguistic productivity of *Karen* as a slur. To date, it has already generated the following forms: "Gay Karen", "Black Karen", "Male Karen", "Asian Karen", "Jewish Karen", and "Indian Karen". Ironically, the proliferation of these forms makes abundantly clear just how ridiculous it is to assume that someone's personal name, whatever that name may be, is a sure indicator of that person's behavior, background, politics, or personality. As the author wrote in Nick (2022):

> Anti-Karen attitudes have become so widespread that many people with this name have found themselves the repeated target of verbal, emotional, and physical abuse. The damage caused by such name-based prejudice is not to be underestimated. Whether *Mohammed, Ignatz, Fatih, or Luigi, Sung-Yee, Karen, Keesha,* or *Ravi*, using personal names to pass judgement about another person's character is as discriminatory as using their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender, or nationality (60).

Although written four years ago, the use of *Karen* as an epithet has not only continued but expanded. In view of that fact and the terrific harm such namism can cause, it is strongly suggested that more research be conducted on *Karen* and other maligned personal names (e.g., *Alexa, Benjamin, Corona, Ken, Mohammed*). Such research is crucial for helping to identify the socio-onomastic processes involved in these trends. In addition, more psychological studies are required to determine the effects of bearing stigmatized names.

Where the present investigation is concerned, the psychometric tools used relied on self-reporting to measure prejudice and discrimination. This means that the results obtained reflect the participants' subjective experiences. A powerful complement to this work would be research methodologies that can provide objective empirical evidence of discrimination in real-world settings. Such research could, for example, build upon the plethora of research demonstrating that the future success (or failure) of applications for employment, housing, educational opportunities, and potential romantic partners may be significantly affected by the applicant's personal names thanks to underlying evaluator prejudices (Erwin 1993; Hargreaves, Coleman, & Sluckin 1983; Erwin 1995; Erwing & Calev 1984; Bertran and Mullainathan 2004; Smith et al. 2005; Carpusor & Loges 2006; Gaddis 2017; Gueguen 2017; Ge & Wu 2023). The recommended research would also expand upon the body of evidence demonstrating the power of personal names to trigger prejudices about name-bearer's appearance, attractiveness, competence, intelligence, popularity, etc. (Tajfel 1969; Young et al. 1993; Gaddis 2017). Future onomastic investigations that employ controlled experimental methods can provide much needed information.

This recommendation should not, however, be taken to mean that studies utilizing self-reported data are somehow inherently inferior or tacitly unreliable. If that faulty premise were accepted, one would also have to reject generations of ground-breaking science that has relied on psychometric self-reports to document discrimination and prejudice and their traumatic consequences (Harnois Bastos, Campbell, & Keith 2019; Yang & Henderson 2024). Instead, the current call for alternative research methodologies is made in response to the complexity of the issues at hand. The current socio-onomastic investigation is only the beginning. There are many pressing questions which still need investigating. Where the name *Karen* is concerned, it is important to discover whether there might be substantive differences in the experiences of persons whose name is spelled *Karan, Karon*, *Karin, Karyn, Carin, Caran, Caryn*. What advantages and disadvantages do people report who have elected to change their name in an effort to escape name-based prejudice and discrimination? What cross-cultural differences or similarities exist for people whose personal names have been misappropriated for societal debates (e.g., *Benjamin, Ken, Chad, Kevin*).

Whatever methodology is chosen to answer these and other important questions, it is imperative that the people behind the numbers always be remembered. While heeding this maxim is always important, it is essential when investigating persons with potential trauma. Ultimately, research that disrespects people's unique perspectives, experiences, opinions, and emotions can cause irreparable harm to not only the study respondents, but also the broader community—widening the already perilous gulf which currently exists between science and society.

It is recognition of this fact that motivated the adoption of the Participatory Action Research model which champions conducting science with and not on members of the community (Vaugh and Jacquez 2020). In retrospect, the PAR model proved essential to the success of this research project. From designing, refining, and piloting the initial research design to inviting potential respondents to complete the survey and share their personal stories, the scientific cooperation with the KU4R community was exceptionally positive. However, it was not only their contributions to the scientific process that made this experience exemplary. Their individual and collective wisdom, kindness, compassion, intelligence, sensitivity, and courage were also deeply appreciated. It was truly an honor to have worked with such a special circle of women.

Are xenophobia, homophobia, racism, classism, ageism, ableism, ethnocentrism, misogyny, nationalism and all other forms of hatred, supremacy, intolerance, and entitlement problems in our society? **Yes!** And they have been for millennia. Do we need new words to describe these problems? Maybe. But, using the personal name of an individual or group of people to do so and then denying the harms caused by that misappropriation only exacerbates the underlying problem of being willfully blind to the suffering of others. The goal of the Civil Rights Movement is not to reverse the system so that the people who were once oppressed now become the oppressor. It is the very system of discrimination, intolerance, and hatred which we must work together to end. We must become steadfastly intolerant of intolerance in all that we do and say.

> "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own".
> Audre Lorde

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No AI Tools or Technology were used to conduct the research or write the article.

Notes

[1] For more theories on the possible origins of "Yankee", see The American Heritage Dictionary n.d.

[2] In 2017, this racist term was repeatedly used by the then President of the United States to insult Senator Elizabeth Warren after she revealed her Native American heritage. For more see Bush (2017).

[3] For detailed discussion of the life of St. Katherine, see Walsh (2007); Head (1995); Winstead (2024).

[4] It has been theorized that one of the reasons why *Karen* was chosen was backlash against Hilary Clinton, whose two campaign assistants were Karen Dunn and Karen Finney and were known as "The Karens" (Harpaz 2001).

[5] This listing excludes eponymous applications where the wordmark was identified as being a part of the business owner's actual personal name.

[6] It is interesting to note that no such wordmarks were found featuring alternative spellings of the name (e.g., *Karin, Karyn, Caryn, Keryn*). This finding seems to buttress a personal observation that in forms of written communication, this negative trope appears to be most strongly associated with the orthographic form *Karen*.

[7] The website for the company: https://getfdkaren.com/

[8] Although this additional sense has not yet appeared in dictionaries for standard American English, this usage has already been used in official legislation; namely, California's proposed "C.A.R.E.N. Act". The awkward acronym stands for "Caution Against Racially Exploitative Non-Emergencies" and was introduced by San Francisco politician Shamann Walton. For more on this proposed legislation, see Chiu (2020); Peedikayil (2023). The official press release for the Act can be found here: https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/2020_10_20 PRESS RELEASE_ CAREN ACT PASSES.pdf

[9] Karens United for Respect, https://www.karensunited.com/

[10] Of the sub-set of respondents who indicated that they resided in the United Kingdom, 56.46% listed a specific country: (1) England (37.10%); (2) Scotland (9.68%); (3) Ireland (4.84%); and (4) Wales (4.84%).

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