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### **What's Your Name? The Sociological Perspective**

Names seem individual and a part of our own unique identity. For example, when someone calls your name, you probably look up automatically and assume they are talking about you. And, indeed, for many of us, we are the only person who we know with our exact name. I don't know anyone named Chris Salituro other than myself. However, names are not a unique trait unto ourselves. Instead, names are our first connection to community. Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of South Africa once said "A solitary individual is not possible. We come into being because a community of people came together." That community of people gives you a name and sees to it that you survive. We would not be alive if it wasn't for their influence and nurture. So, names are a great way to examine how sociologists look at the world. Many aspects of our lives that seem like individual choices or individual traits are actually guided by social forces that are larger than us. Our families, schools, religions, governments and other social institutions all influence who we are, including in ways that we don't even realize. The sociological perspective examines these influences from different perspectives.

#### **Structural-Functional Perspective**

The first perspective we will consider is the structural functional perspective. This perspective was created by Emile Durkheim who said societies have a structure made up of different systems that function to keep order in society. Just like a body has different systems such as respiratory, circulatory, digestive and nervous, a society has different systems like family, educational, religious, governmental etc... These systems keep order in society.

As you read the passages in italics below, think about these: What function does a name serve for family? What role does family play?

From Nathan Palmer's [Sociology Source](#)<sup>i</sup>,

*The story behind every student's name is a 100% personalized one. Sometimes it's a simple story (e.g. named after a TV character their mother adored) and sometimes it's a complex Rube Goldberg like series of events that lead to their naming. Regardless of how their parents came to their name, the students present their naming as a completely individual choice made by their parents<sup>2</sup>. No one ever says, "Lindsey was really popular at the time of my birth and my parents just wanted to fit in"*

*To hear students tell it the child naming process is unique from one family to the next. They seem to have perceived their relationship with their parents as one of a kind and wholly removed from the larger society. This is exactly why using child naming as an example of culture and social forces. Research by Stanley Lieberman in the book *A Matter of Taste* (summarized well in this [NYT article](#)) suggests that parents balance the desire to have a unique name for their child with the desire to not have a name that is wildly divergent from the rest of children in their culture. Most parents wouldn't name their child alkdjffsoic. However, parents want their child to be recognized as special or as a unique human being, so they also don't want to name their child something too generic or too common.*

*What emerges from this naming process is a trend. Many names go in and out of fashion; trending up in popularity and then back down. An easy way of illustrating this is to use the [US Social Security Administration's "Popular Baby Names" database](#). This easy to use website allows you to search any name and see how it ranks against the 1000 most popular baby names. For most students, their names go from out of fashion in the decades before their birth, then they become popular right around their birth, and then fall out of popularity again.*

And from [the BBC](#)<sup>ii</sup>,

*Choosing a name for a child is complicated. Not only should it sound right with the family name but future nicknames - good and bad - need to be taken into consideration. A name might honour a favourite grandparent, but it will also have a forgotten meaning to be unearthed in books, and dubious modern associations to be checked on Google.*

*Dalton Conley and his wife, Natalie Jeremijenko, were halfway through this pleasant but painstaking process when their baby girl was born, two months premature.*

*"We had narrowed down the selections to a bunch of E- names, but we couldn't ultimately decide," says Conley, who lives in New York. "Then we came up with the idea of, 'Let's just constrain the first degree of freedom. Let's just give her the first letter and then she can decide when she's old enough what it stands for.'"*

*And so, E was born. Now 16, she hasn't yet felt the need to extend her first name. "I think once you're given a name, you get used to it - it's part of you," she says. E's little brother, meanwhile, Yo Xing Heyno Augustus Eisner Alexander Weiser Knuckles, did take up his parents' offer to change his name. He added the Heyno and Knuckles when he was four, and his parents made the changes official.*

*"I have been called a child abuser online," says Dalton Conley, the author of *Parentology: Everything You Wanted to Know about the Science of Raising Children but Were Too Exhausted to Ask*. "I don't think I've saddled them with some horrible burden. They like the fact that they have unique names now."*

*Over the last 70 years, researchers have tried to gauge the effect on an individual of having an unusual name. It is thought that our identity is partly shaped by the way we are treated by other people - a concept psychologists call the "looking-glass self" - and our name has the potential to colour our interactions with society. Early studies found that men with uncommon first names were more likely to drop out of school and be lonely later in life. One study found that psychiatric patients with more unusual names tended to be more disturbed.*

*But more recent work has presented a mixed picture. Richard Zweigenhaft, a psychologist at Guilford College in the US, pointed out that wealthy, oddly-named Americans are more likely to find themselves in *Who's Who*. He found no consistent bad effects of having a strange name, but noted that both common and unusual names are sometimes deemed desirable.*

*Conley, who is a sociologist at New York University, says that children with unusual names may learn impulse control because they may be teased or get used to people asking about their names. "They actually benefit from that experience by learning to control their emotions or their impulses, which is of course a great skill for success."*

*But for the main part, he says, the effect of a name on its bearer rarely amounts to more than the effect of being raised by parents who would choose such a name.*

*A similar conclusion is reached by Gregory Clark, the economist behind the book *The Son Also Rises: Surnames and the History of Social Mobility*. Although the main focus of his research is family names, Clark has looked at first names too - specifically, the names of 14,449 freshmen students attending the elite University of Oxford between 2008-2013. By contrasting the incidence of first names in the Oxford sample with their incidence among the general population (of the same age), he calculated the probability, relative to average, that a person given a particular name would go to Oxford. (For the purposes of his research he excluded students with non-English or Welsh surnames.)*

*He notes that there are more than three times as many Eleanors at Oxford than we might expect, given the frequency of that first name among girls in the general population, and Peters, Simons and Annas are not far behind. Conversely, there is less than a 30th of the expected number of Jades and an even smaller proportion of Paiges and Shannons. An Eleanor is 100 times more likely to go to Oxford than a Jade.*

*However, there is no evidence that it's the names causing such a marked discrepancy, rather than other factors they represent, Clark says. Different names are popular among different social classes, and these groups have different opportunities and goals. "That's something that's emerged in modern England that didn't exist around 1800," he says. When he re-ran his study, but*

*this time looking at students attending Oxford and Cambridge in the early 19th Century, he found the correlation between names and university attendance far less marked. First names simply weren't the social signifiers they are now.*

*What's happened since then is a move towards unusual, even unique, names. Before 1800, Clark says, four first names referred to half of all English men. In 2012, according to the Office for National Statistics, the top four names (Harry, Oliver, Jack, Charlie) accounted for just 7% of English baby boys (and the picture was much the same in Wales). Similarly in the US, in 1950, 5% of US parents chose a name for their child that wasn't in the top 1,000 names. In 2012, that figure was up to 27%.*

*As late as the 18th Century, it wasn't uncommon for parents to call multiple children the same name - two Johns for different grandfathers, for example. Now parents increasingly look for unique names or spellings of names. As Jean Twenge points out in her book *the Narcissism Epidemic*, Jasmine now rubs shoulders in naming lists with Jazmine, Jazmyne, Jazmin, Jazmine, Jasmina, Jazmyn, Jasmin, and Jasmyn.*

*As baby names become a matter of choice rather than tradition, they reveal more about the people doing the choosing. An example of this is the growing ease with which one can guess whether a person in the US is black or white. Roland Fryer and Steven Levitt point out that in California in the years running up to 2003, around 40% of black girls were given names that weren't bestowed on a single white girl in the state.*

(S1) 1.1 What functions do names serve for families? How do families use names to raise children? How does this maintain stability within society? Use data from the reading above to provide evidence to support your claim.

(S3) 1.2 What are the reasons you or your classmates stated for why you are named what you are? How are these reasons an example of social institutions creating stability and order within society?

Stanley Lieberson was a respected sociologist from Harvard who studied trends and fashions. He used the Social Security Names database to study how names spread in popularity. His research is an example of how the social institution of family creates stability. The naming of new babies is not simply personal; families influence each other. Read [this NY Times](#)<sup>iii</sup> article about Lieberson then try your own research with the data.

*WHATEVER happened to Lisa, Mary, Karen, Susan and Kimberly?*

*On top in the 1960's, they've been shoved aside by Emily, Madison, Hannah, Ashley and Alexis. Those were the most popular names for American girls born in 2001, according to data released last week by the Social Security Administration.*

*As for Michael, David, John, James and Robert -- the top five for boys in the 1960's -- only Michael remains. The others have been replaced by Jacob, Matthew, Joshua, and Christopher. (The lists are at [www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames](http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames).)*

*Nobody runs ads to persuade parents to choose Emily or Joshua for their newborns. No magazine editors dictate that Ryan is the new Michael.*

*But names still shift according to fashion. Once-popular names seem tired and out of date, new ones exciting. Old-fashioned names, like Emily, take on the allure of vintage clothing. Style revivals happen in names, too.*

*Contrary to what many critics of markets believe (and many fashion industry executives wish), fashion isn't a predictable commercial phenomenon driven by manipulation and advertising. Fashion -- the process by which form seems exhausted and then refreshed, without regard to functional improvements -- exists even in completely noncommercial "markets."*

*In "A Matter of Taste" (Yale University Press, 2000), Stanley Lieberson, a Harvard sociologist, analyzes how tastes in names shift. In the process, he sheds light on how fashion works.*

*Economists usually assume that tastes don't change. To explain shifts in demand, they look for changing relative prices. That approach imposes disciplinary rigor -- "tastes changed" could too easily explain just about anything -- but it makes accounting for fashion hard.*

*Professor Lieberman offers an explanation even an economist can accept. The taste for names or sounds may change, but those changes reflect underlying preferences for novelty, conformity and divergence.*

*Name choices, like clothing choices, reflect the desire to be different, but not too different. The ideal balance varies, and new fashions begin with innovators who want to stand out. If the innovations have the right aesthetic appeal, they spread to people who aren't as nonconformist.*

*"There must have been some people starting off with Madison," Professor Lieberman said in an interview. "That type of person is no longer naming their kid Madison."*

*Parents who today pick Madison for their daughter's name, he said, "would not have given the same name, the same sounds, earlier because it was a weird name."*

*Indeed, Madison didn't show up on the lists until the 1980's, when it was the decade's 539th most popular name. Three of last year's top 20 girls' names -- Madison (No. 2), Taylor (No. 12), and Brianna (No. 18) -- weren't in the top 1,000 in the 1960's. (Taylor was 865th for boys.)*

*Like designers who experiment with new ideas, parents have to choose babies' names without knowing exactly what other parents are choosing. The result is a complex, often surprising, dynamic.*

*Parents frequently find that the name they "just liked" is suddenly common, expressing aesthetic preferences. Professor Lieberman became interested in names after he and his wife named their first daughter Rebecca, only to find there were little Beckys everywhere.*

*Like hemlines, names don't bounce around randomly. Newly popular names tend to build on what has gone before, exploring the aesthetic possibilities of certain styles. "People are in effect branching off an existing set of tastes," Professor Lieberman says.*

*Beginning in the late 1960's, for instance, names beginning with La became popular for African-American girls. The first to hit the top 50, Latonya, was a play on the existing name Tonya. Latanya and Latasha similarly built on older names. "But then the La's developed a life of their own," Professor Lieberman notes, leading to brand-new names like Latoya and Latrice.*

*Although some ethnic names remain distinctive, those differences tend to dissipate over time. Today's list of top boys' names shows the influence of Latino immigrants -- Jose is No. 30, Luis No. 44, Carlos No. 55, Jesus No. 66 -- and the 1960's list reflects earlier Irish and Italian immigrants (and the influence of Catholic saints' names more generally). Over a relatively short period, however, immigrant families begin to select names from the general pool.*

*Professor Lieberman cites data from Illinois matching mothers' ethnicity with popular names. From 1985 to 1988, Jose was the fifth-most-popular boys' name among Mexican-American mothers. But it followed Michael, Daniel, David and Anthony.*

*Contrary to common assumptions about how fashion works, names don't simply trickle down from high-income, well-educated parents to lower-income, less-educated parents. Newly popular names tend to catch on with everyone at about the same time, and they spread both up and down.*

*Whether names or clothes, fashion reflects the primacy of individual taste over inherited custom. The freer people feel to choose names they like, rather than names of relatives or saints, the faster names go through cycles. Boys' names, which tend to be more influenced by custom, change slower.*

*The turnover, Professor Lieberson says, "is much faster now than it used to be," and a smaller proportion of all names are concentrated among the most popular. So there's a constant need for new names, as formerly unusual ones become too common.*

*"It will become apparent in a few years that there are tons of Madisons, and people will act accordingly," he says.*

*Maybe Saige (No. 939) or Ximena (No. 894) will be the next Madison. Or maybe Virginia, No. 391 today but No. 7 in the 1920's, is due for a revival.*

(S1) 2.1 What are some of the claims that Lieberson made? What was his reasoning?

Now, examine the data that Lieberson used. Go to the [SSA Baby Name Database](#)<sup>iv</sup>.

(S2) 2.2 Choose one of his claims and see if you can find data to support it. Explain your findings below.

(S2) 2.3 Now search the database for different patterns. Try to identify at least one pattern. Some ideas you might consider: choose a name and analyze it over time, can compare different years, compare different genders, etc... Explain your findings and the supporting data below.

All of the above is an example of how functional sociologists view society and how order and stability are maintained. However, sometimes institutions are out of balance and they create disorder. This is a state of dysfunction. Read the following and look for how studying names might show dysfunction in society?

From PBS<sup>v</sup>,

*When people come across Michelle-Thuy Ngoc Duong's name, they often see a stumbling block bound to trip up their tongues. The 17-year-old sees a bridge, one that spans her parents' journey from Vietnam to the United States. It's a bridge connecting the U.S.-born teen to Vietnamese culture, a bridge to understanding.*

*"My name is where I come from," Michelle-Thuy Ngoc said. "It's a reminder of hope."*

*A junior at Downtown College Prep Alum Rock High School, a San Jose, California-based charter school, Michelle-Thuy Ngoc (pronounced 'knock twee') is among the students backing "My Name, My Identity," a national campaign that places a premium on pronouncing students' names correctly and valuing diversity.*

*The campaign—a partnership between the National Association for Bilingual Education, the Santa Clara, California, County Office of Education, and the California Association for Bilingual Education—focuses on the fact that a name is more than just a name: It's one of the first things children recognize, one of the first words they learn to say, it's how the world identifies them.*

*For students, especially the children of immigrants or those who are English-language learners, a teacher who knows their name and can pronounce it correctly signals respect and marks a critical step in helping them adjust to school.*

*But for many ELLs, a mispronounced name is often the first of many slights they experience in classrooms; they're already unlikely to see educators who are like them, teachers who speak their language, or a curriculum that reflects their culture.*

*"If they're encountering teachers who are not taking the time to learn their name or don't validate who they are, it starts to create this wall," said Rita ('ree-the') Koblí, an assistant professor in the graduate school of education at the University of California, Riverside.*

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— Rita Koblí, assistant professor at UC Riverside

*It can also hinder academic progress.*

*A divide already exists between many English learners and immigrant students and their native English-speaking peers. Despite a national increase in the overall graduation rate, the dropout rate for foreign-born and immigrant students remains above 30 percent, three times that of U.S.-born white students.*

*Before transitioning into K-12 administration, Santa Clara County Superintendent Jon Gundry taught middle and high school English as a second language classes for 16 years. Many of his students were newcomer English learners and he made it a priority to learn the proper pronunciation of each student's name on the first day of class.*

*"I was their first connection to a new culture, a new country," Gundry said. "As a teacher, I felt that if I didn't make an effort to pronounce their name correctly, it showed I didn't care about who they were."*

*Rendered Invisible*

*Effort is the biggest obstacle to learning how to correctly pronounce a person's name; teachers have to want to do it, said Jennifer Gonzalez, a former teacher and author of the education blog Cult of Pedagogy. To even suggest that a child's name is difficult to pronounce is problematic, she said.*

*"Even the word 'difficult' is a pretty loaded word," Gonzalez said. "It's only difficult because it's culturally different."*

*As a kindergarten student in 1950s Brooklyn, Carmen Fariña, a native-Spanish speaker, had a teacher who marked her absent every day for weeks because she didn't raise her hand during roll call. The teacher assumed Fariña was being defiant, but the future New York City schools chancellor never heard her name called; the teacher had repeatedly failed to pronounce it correctly, including rolling the r's. "Mispronouncing a student's name essentially renders that student invisible," Fariña said during a keynote address at the National Association for Bilingual Education annual conference in March.*

*Kobli produced a study with Daniel Solórzano, a professor of education and Chicano studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, on microaggressions, the subtle slights that are painfully obvious and hurtful to the person receiving them, but unintended and unnoticed by the person saying them. The work, "Teachers Please Learn Our Names! Racial Microaggressions and the K-12 Classroom," is littered with stories of students who endured shame, anxiety, or embarrassment, and sometimes a mix of all three, when their names were called in class.*

*There's the tale of a Portland, Oregon-area student with a traditional Chinese name who had her name garbled by a vice principal during an honors ceremony. Set to present the student with an award, the principal laughed at his mistake, drawing chuckles from the audience. To avoid embarrassment, the student slumped in her seat, refusing to rise to receive the prestigious award. She later skipped her graduation. The mispronunciation wasn't an isolated event. Having endured years of slights, she felt the need to become invisible long before the principal's laughter marked the tipping point.*

*The woman, who went on to become an educator, changed her first name to 'Anita.'*

*"If someone mispronounces your name once as a high school student, you might correct them," said Kobli, whose parents immigrated to the United States from India. "But if this has been your entire existence in education, what do you do?"*

*Kobli's own brother had a teacher mispronounce his traditional South Asian name, Sbarad ('shu-rudth') as Sharub during a ninth grade class. The teacher and the students decided it was easier to call him Shrub, and it stuck for the rest of high school. The nickname forced him to check part of his identity at the door.*

*Michelle-Thuy Ngoc didn't always embrace her full name, figuring that it would make other people uncomfortable. For years, she ignored the Vietnamese half of her first name, simply going by Michelle. The order in which Vietnamese names are spoken differs from English. "I came to accept [my full name] over time," she said.*

*Building Bridges*

*If students have teachers who share their cultural backgrounds, they're more likely to hear their names pronounced correctly. But while the diversity of the nation's public school student body has exploded in the last few decades, the number of African-American, Latino, and Asian teachers hasn't kept pace.*

*Gonzalez, a former teacher in school districts in Kentucky and Maryland, said she often observed a 'these people' attitude from her mostly white female colleagues.*

*"They approached it like, 'It's your fault for having a weird name,'" Gonzalez said.*

*To some degree, Gonzalez understands the struggle students face. She grew up with a Russian surname, Yurkosky, that befuddled teachers and classmates. She said it rhymes with "her-pots-ski," minus the "t" sound in pots.*

*"But I did not experience all the other stuff and other ways that a person can feel discriminated against," said Gonzalez, who is white.*

*Kobli, a former Oakland Unified School District teacher, recommends that K-12 educators identify and expand their cultural limits and recognize the influence they wield over a student's sense of self. While frustration or confusion may seem like a natural response when a teacher faces an unfamiliar name, it can leave a "lasting impact on the way that child sees themselves and their culture," the study's authors argue.*

*Butchered names are not just a problem for English learners and immigrants; students from a number of cultural backgrounds have their names garbled or ridiculed. Hawaiian and African-American students, with names that link to their ancestry, also shared stories of how constant mispronunciations made them feel uncomfortable with their names.*

*Mocking Names?*

*In an extreme case, a teacher in Wayne Township, New Jersey, lost her tenure status and job in 2015 for mocking a student's name on Facebook. Several letters in the student's name spelled out a profane word, legal documents show.*

*More often, the mocking is more direct and reflexive: laughing off pronunciation, asking the student to take on a nickname, or making a spectacle of their name, Kobli said.*

*"It matters what you do when you're in front of a child and struggling with their name," Kobli said. "Is it framed as my inability to say someone's name or is it framed as the student doing something to make your life more difficult?"*

*Michelle-Thuy Ngoc attends Downtown College Prep, a 210-student high school that primarily serves first-generation, low-income Latino students.*

*"We're taking the time to understand each person's story," said assistant principal Moises Bubain. "It's as simple as starting with a name."*

*As part of a social media campaign, the "My Name, My Identity" initiative is seeking name stories with the #mynamemyid hashtag. The push is personal for Yee Wan, the national association's president and the director of multilingual education services for the Santa Clara County, California, office of education.*

*Wan came to the United States as an adolescent English learner, and almost immediately faced pressure from instructors to adopt an "American name" to replace her given name, which means "warm friendship" in Cantonese.*

*Gundry and Wan developed "My Name My Identity" after hearing a principal share a story about his effort to build connections with English-language learners in school, then feeling the push fall flat when he mispronounced the students' names at graduation.*

*"As educators, we have the power to bring awareness to valuing diversity ... so that all of our students will feel included," Wan said.*

(S1) 3.1 How does this article provide evidence for dysfunction in society?

(S3) 3.2 How might you apply this to your own life? For more info, you might want to visit the [My Name, My Identity website](#)<sup>vi</sup>.

## Conflict Perspective

The second perspective that sociologists look at is inequality. This perspective developed out of the influence of Karl Marx. He studied the inequalities in industrial Europe and how those inequalities affected individuals. For example, Marx found that a working class person lived an average of 25 years less than a wealthy person. The following passage is an excerpt from an article in the BBC about names and how they may be related to inequality.

*The implications of this clearer signaling of class and race are striking. In a study from 2003, called Are Emily And Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan sent nearly 5,000 CVs in response to job advertisements in Chicago and Boston newspapers. The CVs were the same, but half were given fake names that sounded like they belonged to white people, like Emily Walsh or Greg Baker, and the other half were given names that sounded African American, like Lakisha Washington or Jamal Jones. The call-back rate from employers was 50% higher on the "white" names than the "black" names. The effects were noted even for federal contractors with "affirmative action" policies, and companies boasting they were "equal opportunities" employers.*

*The researchers inferred that employers were using first names to discriminate unfairly against black candidates, perhaps at an unconscious level. Those same prejudices might also come into play at the interviewing stage, but a black applicant called Greg Baker, who receives an invitation to an interview, has at least got his foot in the door.*

*There is also striking evidence of names triggering different outcomes for schoolchildren.*

*David Figlio, now at Northwestern University, analysed the scores of some 55,000 children in a school district of Florida. Instead of just distinguishing between "white" and "black" names, he codified what aspects of names meant that they were more likely to belong to black children and children from low-income families. This allowed him to create a sliding scale, which went, for example, from Drew to Dwayne to Damarcus to Da'Quan. Figlio found that the further along this scale he went, the worse the school test scores and the less likely the student was to be recommended for the schools' programme for "gifted" students. Strikingly, this held true for brothers within a family, and even - although the sample size was small - for twins. Figlio believes that the fault lies with the expectations of schoolteachers and administrators - at schools with more black teachers, the effects were less marked.*

*In separate research, Figlio used the Florida school data to show that black boys who are given names more common among girls are more likely to develop behavioural problems when they reach puberty. The problems increase significantly when there are girls in the same year group with the same name.*

*If names do affect their bearers' chance of success, it may not always be because of the reactions they cause in other people (the "looking-glass self"). Psychologists talk about "implicit egotism", the positive feelings we each have about ourselves. Brett Pelham cites the concept in explaining his finding that individuals called Virginia, Mildred, Jack and Philip proliferate in Virginia, Milwaukee, Jacksonville and Philadelphia - he believes they are drawn to live there. Another intriguing 2007 paper, entitled Moniker Maladies, found that people's fondness for the initials of their names could get in the way of success. Leif Nelson and Joseph Simmons analysed almost a century of baseball strikeouts and found that hitters with the initial K had a higher strike-out rate ("K" denotes a strike-out in baseball). They also found that graduate students with the initials C and D had a slightly lower grade point average than A and B students, and A and B applicants to law school were more likely to go to better colleges.*

(S1) 4.1 How does the above passage illustrate a conflict perspective of sociology? Cite the author's claims and evidence below.

## Symbolic Interaction Perspective

The third important perspective of sociology is known as symbolic interaction. It is the way people interact based on shared meanings or symbols. So, for example, a name isn't just a random set of syllables. It has meaning. And it can be interpreted by people differently. Read the attached reading from Cerulo and Ruane. Additionally, you can listen the Freakonomics podcast episode called, [How Much Does Your Name Matter](#)<sup>vii</sup>?

(S1) 5.1 What are the different meanings that names hold? How do these meanings affect people?

(S3) 5.2 If you have a nickname that is more "American" than your original name, why? Additionally<sup>viii</sup>:

- Does altering of a family name to a more "American-sounding" name have any benefits to the individual? Does the alteration of names exemplify assimilation?
- Does assimilation have any costs to the individual, such as cultural devaluation and family history?
- Does anyone whose name has been altered feel any enduring, negative self-perception or shame?
- Are there any potential benefits to name reclamation?

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<sup>i</sup>Palmer, Nathan. *Teaching Social Forces With Baby Name*. Sociology Source. [The Society Pages](#). September 19, 2011. <https://thesocietypages.org/sociologysource/2011/09/19/teaching-social-forces-with-baby-names/>

<sup>ii</sup>Kremer, William. *Does A Baby's Name Affect It's Chances in Life?* [BBC News Magazine](#). April 11, 2014. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26634477>

<sup>iii</sup>Postrel, Virginia. *Economic Scene; How Can the Marketplace Gauge Fashions? Consider What to Name the Baby*. [NY Times](#), 2002. <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/05/23/business/economic-scene-can-marketplace-gauge-fashions-consider-what-name-baby.html>

<sup>iv</sup>Social Security Administration. *Get Ready For Baby*. <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/>

<sup>v</sup>Mitchell, Corey. *A Teacher Mispronouncing a Student's Name Can Have a Lasting Impact*. Education Week. [PBS Newshour](#). [https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/a-teacher-mispronouncing-a-students-name-can-have-a-lasting-impact?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=pbsofficial&utm\\_campaign=newshour](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/a-teacher-mispronouncing-a-students-name-can-have-a-lasting-impact?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=pbsofficial&utm_campaign=newshour)

<sup>vi</sup>*A Declaration of Self*. Santa Clara County Office of Education <https://www.mynamemyidentity.org/>

<sup>vii</sup>Wells, Katharine. *How Much Does Your Name Matter?* Freakonomics Radio Podcast. April 8, 2013. <http://freakonomics.com/podcast/how-much-does-your-name-matter-a-new-freakonomics-radio-podcast/>

<sup>viii</sup>Rabow, Jerome, Keisha E Payne, and Zachary Philyaw. 1. "The "What's in a Name?" Exercise." Class Activity published in *TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology*. Washington DC: American Sociological Association. (<http://trails.asanet.org>)



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## Student Response Sheet

What's in a Name?

(S1) 1.1 What functions do names serve for families? How do families use names to raise children? How does this maintain stability within society? Use data from the reading above to provide evidence to support your claim.

(S3) 1.2 What are the reasons you or your classmates stated for why you are named what you are? How are these reasons an example of social institutions creating stability and order within society?

(S1) 2.1 What are some of the claims that Lieberson made? What was his reasoning?

Now, examine the data that Lieberson used. Go to the [SSA Baby Name Database](#)<sup>viii</sup>.

(S2) 2.2 Choose one of his claims and see if you can find data to support it. Explain your findings below.

(S2) 2.3 Now search the database for different patterns. Try to identify at least one pattern. Some ideas you might consider: choose a name and analyze it over time, can compare different years, compare different genders, etc... Explain your findings and the supporting data below.

(S1) 3.1 How does this article provide evidence for dysfunction in society?

(S3) 3.2 How might you apply this to your own life? For more info, you might want to visit the [My Name, My Identity website](#)<sup>viii</sup>.

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(S1) 4.1 How does the above passage illustrate a conflict perspective of sociology? Cite the author's claims and evidence below.

(S1) 5.1 What are the different meanings that names hold? How do these meanings affect people?

(S3) 5.2 If you have a nickname that is more "American" than your original name, why? Additionally<sup>viii</sup>:

Does altering of a family name to a more "American-sounding" name have any benefits to the individual? Does the alteration of names exemplify assimilation?

Does assimilation have any costs to the individual, such as cultural devaluation and family history?

Does anyone whose name has been altered feel any enduring, negative self-perception or shame?

Are there any potential benefits to name reclamation?

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## Data in Sociology Class

### Data: Research and Evidence<sup>viii</sup>

- 4 Student accurately interprets data in unfamiliar contexts.
- 3 Student accurately interprets data in familiar contexts.
- 2 Student accurately interprets aspects of data in familiar contexts.
- 1 Student accurately interprets aspects of data in familiar contexts with support.

#### Success criteria:

- a. Students can connect the data to real world applications associated with jobs and future occupations and/or areas of study<sup>viii</sup>.
- b. Sci ACC: I can accurately interpret data in unfamiliar contexts<sup>viii</sup>
  - Success Criteria - Conditions for Success:
    - i. Identify patterns/trends/comparisons/cause and effect
    - ii. Interpolate/Extrapolate- make predictions
    - iii. Drawing conclusions that match the pattern mathematical relationships
    - iv. Evidence: Patterns/Trends/Comparisons - How does the data change or not change?
    - v. Reasoning: How do the data connect to the variables in the claim? What does the evidence mean? What are the data measuring?
    - vi. Reasoning: How does the evidence support the claim?
    - vii. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.<sup>viii</sup>
    - viii. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Here are some sights for exploring data:

(ICPSR) [Data from Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research](https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/)  
<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/>

[Pew Research Center](http://www.pewresearch.org/)  
<http://www.pewresearch.org/>

[NORC's General Social Survey](http://gss.norc.org/)  
<http://gss.norc.org/>

[Census Bureau here](https://www.census.gov/) or [here on my blog](https://sociologysal.blogspot.com/2017/08/us-census.html).  
<https://www.census.gov/> or <https://sociologysal.blogspot.com/2017/08/us-census.html>

[Data from U of Michigan's Monitoring the Future - Data on Teens and behaviors, attitudes, values](https://sociologysal.blogspot.com/2017/08/monitoring-future-data-on-teens-and.html)  
<https://sociologysal.blogspot.com/2017/08/monitoring-future-data-on-teens-and.html>

Data from U of Michigan's Monitoring the Future - Data on Teens and behaviors, attitudes, values  
<http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/>

Monitoring the Future is an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of American secondary school students, college students, and young adults. Each year, a total of approximately 50,000 8th, 10th and 12th grade students are surveyed (12th graders since 1975, and 8th and 10th graders since 1991). In addition, annual follow-up questionnaires are mailed to a sample of each graduating class for a number of years after their initial participation. The Monitoring the Future Study has been funded under a series of investigator-initiated competing research grants from the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#), a part of the [National Institutes of Health](#). MTF is conducted at the [Survey Research Center](#) in the [Institute for Social Research](#) at the [University of Michigan](#).

[National Center for Education Statistics](#)

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<https://nces.ed.gov/>

[Data from Brookings Institute](#)

<https://sociologysal.blogspot.com/2017/07/brookings-institute.html>

Homepage:

<https://www.brookings.edu/>

Social Issues:

<https://www.brookings.edu/topic/social-issues/>

Data on: Children & Families, Crime & CRMJ, Demographics & Population, Drug Trafficking & Policy, Environment, Gender, Immigration, Income Inequality & Social Mobility, Poverty, Quality of Life, Race and Ethnicity, Retirement, Pensions & Social Security.

[Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality](#)

<https://inequality.stanford.edu/>

[Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

<https://www.bls.gov/>

School discipline [data](#)

<https://ocrdata.ed.gov/DistrictSchoolSearch#schoolSearch>

The [Gender Pay Gap from the Washington Post](#) explains the dynamics that lead to unequal pay for women.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/business/women-pay-gap/?utm\\_term=.d10172c5c394](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/business/women-pay-gap/?utm_term=.d10172c5c394)

Mass shooting data sets:

[Mass Shooting Tracker](#)

[MotherJones data set](#) of all school shootings.

[TribLive list of all school shootings](#) for the last 50 years.

[Dollar Street is a website](#) from Gapminder that compiles pictures from around the world. You can sort the data by income, country or by the category such as bedrooms, or toothbrushes.

<https://www.gapminder.org/dollar-street/matrix?lowIncome=26&highIncome=15000>

[Where college grads move.](#)

<http://s.bl-1.com/h/cn2P52dx?url=https://www.wsj.com/graphics/where-graduates-move-after-college?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1>

Baby name [database from SSA.](#)

<https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/>