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LAKESHA AND KUSHAWN: A CULTURAL LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO AFRO-AMERICAN ONOMASTICS

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a cultural linguistic study of Afro-American naming patterns from the 1960's through the present. I show that personal name choices are reflective of the cultural-historical influences present at the time that any given name choice is made. In the Afro-American community this influence is reflected in the manifestation of an entirely new pattern of names which are herein labeled as 'constructive'. Constructive names are formed by the use of one or more 'freefixes' and will be shown to be illustrative of the Afro-American desire for ethnic identity collectively and individually.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of onomastics is generally relegated to sociology. Occasionally there will be passing interest in linguistics or history. In fact some of the best research in historical onomastics has been done by the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA)[1] in their desire to use authentic names from the times they reenact. Given names have generally been examined in anthropology only in passing. Naming rituals may be noted in a larger ethnography, an interesting piece of trivia such as naming babies for the days of the week might be recorded[2], but in general there has been little interest in onomastics in anthropological research. I believe this is a grave oversight. The fact that use of personal names is one of the few cultural universals is not only interesting but it is insightful. Personal names are the one social fact in which the active pool changes daily due to the addition of names from new births and removal of names from deaths. Theoretically, an in depth study of names could observe changes in naming choices daily. Obviously such a pursuit would be impractical with a few billion individuals to monitor, but examined even on a small scale, names effectively act as a cultural barometer. Shifts in cultural mood which eventually lead to changes on a much grander scale can be mirrored by studying the personal names given to the children.

In fact I believe that an examination of personal names can illuminate the patterns of change within a cultural grouping better than any other independently

evaluated trait. While I must note that to date there is little prior research substantiating such a bold statement, I am not alone in forming this opinion. In 1970, Wilbur Zelinsky, a human geographer, made a similar statement. He felt that personal names were the *ideal cultural metric.* Zelinsky's work will be addressed in detail in the Literature Review section of this study, but one statement is critical to understanding the import of the work of this thesis. "In the realm of cultural anthropology there has never been any attempt to explore fully the function and significance of personal names or to consider the fact that conferring names on people (and pets) is one of an extremely limited number of cultural practices (along with the incest tabu, formalized expressions of shame or modesty, and the use of fire) that appear to be followed among all human groups" (748). Thirty years later, his statement remains true.

There is a wide range of naming patterns. In some cases, such as here in the United States, parents have relatively unlimited choice in the names they give their children. In other situations, constraints are placed on naming. Ashkenazi Jews will not name their children after the living while Sephardic Jews generally name their children after the grandparents living or not. However, it would seem likely that a shift in naming patterns especially in a group with prescriptive naming would parallel a broader change.

This study will address how changes in naming patterns are reflective of larger cultural changes within the population being studied. More specifically, this thesis will examine Afro-American naming practices and the many changes that have occurred since the civil rights movements of the late 1950's and early 1960's. This paper will examine linguistic changes within the naming practices to help develop a pattern of naming that reflects the historical (and current) changes within the Afro-American

culture over the preceding forty years. However, this is in no way an historical study of the Afro-American culture. This is a study of the personal names given throughout the last half-century. The history is of interest for this research merely as a point of reference to illustrate the close relationship between naming patterns and cultural change. Consequently there is no review of literature from a historical perspective. Relevant citations are however addressed throughout the body of this thesis.

The data discussed is the result of original research conducted by the author, either in the direct answer to questions of this thesis, or in an earlier pre-study presented in a paper in 2005. There were no previous papers available on this direct topic by any author in any field. Most studies on Afro-American onomastics have been directed to small local populations. This research looks at the United States as a whole. The research presented here is new ground and the possible applications for future pursuits are endless.

[1] Information provided by the SCA and its members is abundant and will not be included in the references for this thesis. However, there are hundreds of websites and several publications with information on names and related topics, generally reflecting naming patterns in Europe during the medieval times.

[2] Day names are a West African tradition and are frequently discussed by authors on African naming traditions. These will be discussed in more detail in the literature review section of this paper.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In an effort to provide a relatively comprehensive review of African-American onomastics it is prudent to begin with a selection of works regarding onomastics in general which will provide a foundation for those items specifically addressing the topic at hand.

Why Names

Wilbur Zelinsky, who I quoted briefly in the first chapter, sought in his work as a human geographer to find what he called *an ideal cultural metric.* He felt that would be useful to "search for some single index that is quite responsive to the identity of the invisible heart of a culture" (1970, 744). This metric would contain significant information about the culture; there would be no awkward or special gaps of occurrence, in fact he preferred something with a one-to-one correspondence with every "culture bearing unit". It would be possible to retrieve information past and present without excessive effort and this information would resist change. It should not be overly difficult to count or measure this item and it must not be contaminated by non-cultural factors (744). He felt that almost everything previously studied failed to meet these criteria. It was Zelinsky's proposition that personal names were the closest reality of an ideal cultural metric. After reporting his findings he concludes that "it would be useful to

compare female with male name patterns, to crosstabulate name against age, to examine ethnic and racial variables, to have a look at relationships among social class, education, political class and naming behavior..."(769). Zelinsky felt that names not only reflected the overall cultural heart, but could be used to understand a great deal more about what is going on within the culture on many different levels.

Other authors approach names quite differently. Leonard R. N. Ashley (1989) provides a fairly comprehensive reader on names that is intended for a general readership. Incorporated among the varied lists of names on topics ranging from given names to fortune telling with names is the occasional insight: "Regarding blacks, it is wrong to assume that only recently have *Hatties* and *Jemimas* given way to *LaToyas* and *Genelles*", only to say moments later that the Black Power and Black Muslim movements did just that (13). His proof for both statements: more lists. This book was chosen for this review as it is fairly representative of many of the books available on naming patterns. A step beyond the baby name books, *What's in a Name* still provides little information useful to scholarly pursuits.

More serious studies tend to focus their effort on particular aspects of naming. Richard L. Zweigenhaft (1983) sought to determine if giving children unusual first names had negative psychological consequences for the children. This study is statistically detailed looking at issues such as individuals preferences toward common or unusual names, unusual names in males and females, and unusual names among upper-class people who "are socialized generally to think of themselves as special" (266). While there are obviously problems with names intended to cause ridicule, Zweigenhaftg states that "unusual names, thoughtfully chosen and given in contexts

which suggest they are special or distinctive rather than weird or odd, can have positive effects" (269). This is an important point, especially since most of the African-American naming literature concerns exclusively unusual names.

Göran Kjellmer (2000) provides an interesting view of names of United States Congressmen examined chronologically. This takes us a step beyond the lists that merely show what names are popular in a given year by showing what types of names were in fact characteristic of a given period. He shows that monosyllabic names which were rare prior to the 1860's represent 52% of the names of the 1950's (153). This is a critical leap in thinking in the literature, going beyond the names themselves to the patterning of the name forms. He also analyzed the differences in male and female names looking at syllabic length, stress, and the [i] type phoneme; illustrating differences in all three categories (156.) Thus, Kjellmer shows that change in naming patterns has linguistic markers as well.

In general, given names research tends to be relegated to an isolated article here and there by a great variety of researchers. Even *Names*, the journal of The American Name society, is more often filled with articles concerning surnames and place names than forenames. The exception to this is the work of sociologist Stan Lieberson. Lieberson's work (along with that of several co-authors) is focused around analysis of large databases of names from several regions of the country, however the bulk of his name studies come from names in Illinois. His book *A Matter of Taste* (2000) is a thorough examination and compilation of years of study. He addresses at some length nearly all of the issues touched upon above: chronology, gender, uniqueness, social class and ethnicity.

Lieberson believes that personal names are fashion. That individuals change name choices according to what feels right similar to the way they would change out of last years clothes. "Fashion has both an individual and an aggregate dimension. Individual responses can vary; for some, simply to learn that something *is in fashion* is to give that item an aesthetic attraction" (2000, 32). I will address the issue of names as fashion in greater detail in Chapter 6. Lieberson work stands as an excellent analysis in a field where such data is sparse indeed.

Afro-American Overview

J.L. Dillard's *Black Names* (1976) is probably the closest thing there is to a primer for Afro-American onomastics. It is cited without fail by everyone writing on any aspect of the topic. While his treatment of personal names is only a few pages long, his insights provide a critical foundation of understanding. He points out that the naming practices inspired by the Black Muslim movement were often combinations of Xhosa and Swahili languages. However, "Xhosa and Swahili are well known to be spoken essentially outside the areas from which any large numbers of slaves were taken, and historically this onomastics searching for roots looked rather embarrassingly like the pseudo-Ethiopianism which had long afflicted Black movements..." (18). Of course as he points out authenticity was not necessarily the most important element in choosing these names.

African traditions, particularly the use day names (one of 14 names given based on gender and day of birth) is discussed as one of the few survivals of naming practices to occur after slavery. Dillard tells us that day names frequently became surnames when

the freed slaves chose for themselves (23). In the search to choose African names for their children Black parents looked in part to prominent African figures such as former President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. Dillard states:

> Perhaps the average Black parent who named his child Kwame was unaware that the name means 'Saturday'... but the superficial inadvertence could not completely mask the significance of a recurrent pattern: Whatever the rationale for doing so, Black Americans were once again giving their children a name which had been given in Africa before the slave trade, which was given during the slave trade, and which survived well into the periods of slavery and Emancipation (18).

It is interesting to see a mixture of African names from places and traditions both related to and unrelated to direct slave trade surfacing together in the 1960's with varying degrees of historical validity.

Roots, by Alex Haley (1976) was no doubt responsible at least in part for the perpetuation of use of African (or at least African-like) names among the population. Even a flogging could not stop a declaration of intense pride of identity: "I am Kunta Kinte, first son of Omoro, who is the son of the holy man Kairaba Kunta Kinte" (214). And while the saga has been in part proven to be a work of fiction, the images of identity remain.

The desire to name children with African names has continued among the Afro-American population to this day. Books such as those by Julia Stewart (1993, 1996) provide parents searching for unique but authentic African names with detailed information of name meanings and origins. Stewart details some of the traditions of African names while providing thoughtful insights into some name choices. "One method of fighting off evil entities believed to cause death is to allot children ugly or

deceptive names" (1996, 8). The examples she provides mean *a large ant* and *tail of the dog*. This suggests perhaps a reason for knowing the origins of the name chosen.

On a more serious note, the search for identity through the use of personal names seems but a smaller part of a larger cultural identity crisis discussed by Obiagele Lake (1997).

> Beginning in the slave era and throughout the centuries, preferred names for people of African descent have included "Negro", "colored", "black", "Afro" and "African-American", and "African". From the long list of names we have been subject to (and have subjected ourselves to), it is clear that the naming of people of African descent has long been an important issue. (263)

She discusses in detail the origins and usage of each of the names listed above. She also briefly touches upon both trends on which this thesis is focused in regards to given name practices. "The use of African personal names by Black Nationalist groups underscores their perception of names and political ideology as coterminous (266)"; and regarding distinctive names such as LaTosha "Although these are not African names they represent an effort to choose names that distinguish African American people as a distinct group" (266). There is a clear connection between names and ethnic identity.

A study conducted by Daniel and Daniel (1998) shows that recognition of personal names extend beyond the effect of identity on the individual carrying them. They state that "Personal names are connected to cultural phenomena such as personal and collective identity, social class distinctions, religious affiliations, positive and negative character traits, and practically every human virtue" (471). They conducted a study to determine if African-American names were viewed differently by African-American and White[1] children. In this study of 4 and 5 year olds it was determined that African American children did not really differentiate between African American and

White names when it came to positive or negative attitudes. The White children did. While they caution that this could in fact be because White children were less familiar with the African American names, there is still evidence to support that racial stereotyping based on given names can be present in children as young as 5 years old.

Name Studies

The focus of this section of the literature review is the four studies that directly influenced the direction of this research. These four studies were not chosen as representative of some wider sampling of research in Afro-American onomastics. They are in fact the entire available body of research. They will be addressed chronologically as frequently they quote and build upon each other.

P. Robert Paustian's article *The Evolution of Personal Naming Practices among Blacks* (1978) is a small step beyond the work of Dillard which was published two years earlier. He in fact discusses several of the practices noted previously in this literature review such as day names, and deliberately using unappealing names to fool death. He gives in fact a much more detailed review of these varied practices with examples of how they manifested themselves in America. However, like most of the works preceding his, his discussion is little more than lists of a handful of examples of each case. Paustian makes an important observation:

> When large numbers of blacks began moving to the northern industrial areas during the First World War and afterward, surnames became a necessity. Service in the armed forces and work at jobs where Social Security numbers later became obligatory contributed to a stabilization and regularization of personal names (190).

Unfortunately Paustian does not provided data to back up this assertion, but I believe it to be basically correct. He goes on to predict that personal naming practices of African-Americans would continue to merge with the general population patterns. Yet, even as he was writing this article the paths were sharply diverging.

In 1993, Pauline Pharr published the first statistical analysis of Afro-American naming trends that I have been able to locate. Her work concerned those names that she considered to be *coined*, a term she defines as "one which has no etymology" (400). Her research focused around high school graduates in Riverhead, New York between 1940 and 1990. Pharr's study showed two interesting trends: first, the number of coined names dramatically increased. Of females born from 1922-1931 only 2.2% had coined names[2] but of those born between 1982 and 1985 79.4% were reported to have these names. While the numbers were much lower for males 0%- 13.4% the increase was still significant (401).

The second trend she noted was that "black Americans seem to prefer coinages clustering around conventional African or Arabic names" (406). Since she only gives two examples, the Swahili name *Shani*, and the Arabic name *Aisha* it is difficult to determine if this is significantly true; however, in asserting this she illustrated a pattern critical to the furtherance of this study. These names were now reflected as prefixes *Sha-* and suffixes *–isha* in the names she called root creations (402). This use of suffixes and prefixes in personal names will be discussed in depth as this thesis progresses.

In 1994 Stanley Lieberson and Kelly S. Mikelson looked at what they termed *distinctive* names.[3] In this article, terms such as distinctive, unique and invented seem to be used almost interchangeably. Like Pharr the authors noted the increase in usage of

names considered to be *unique.* While also looking at the sounds behind the names, the focus of this article is in part to see if the sounds reflect gender. They do in fact find that many sounds such as –a in the ending position is almost always gender associated (feminine in this instance). "The fact that invented names do convey gender tells us much about the bounds of creativity. However, we should not gloss over the fact that an extraordinary association exists between name and gender" (940). They conclude that cultural expectation of gender specificity of names "restrict the linguistic structure of innovations in names" (945). What names can be created is gender determined.

Kerrigan Black's *Afro-American Personal Naming Traditions* while not as statistically intensive as Pharr's or Lieberson and Mikelson's is an examination of unusual names in Richmond, California.[4] He notes, as does Pharr, that there are specific prefixes and suffixes attached to many of the unusual names. (He calls these markers). He notes the use of –ette, -elle, la- and le- specifically (112). Black tells us:

> Black names have served a very useful and crucial function in out history, for they have often impaired a sense of dignity in a society in which life and circumstances have often been undignified, pride when we were told we had nothing to be proud of, and a sense of specialness in a country where Black children were not considered to be very special (109).

This, of course, agrees with the sentiments of Zweigenhaft discussed earlier.

Black's article has an afterword written by Cleveland Kent Evans. In this Evans uses the term *created* to discuss the names that are made "by combining fashionable prefixes and suffixes together" (122). It is the prevalence and patterning of this practice on which the body of this thesis will focus.

[1] Terminology used within these reviews mirrors the terminology used by the author(s) of the articles and may at times be inconsistent with that used in the body of this thesis.
[2] This calls into questions some of the very early articles on African-American names which anecdotally and derogatorily discussed unusual names from this and surrounding time periods.
[3] In an earlier paper Lieberson and Bell (1992) use the term unique and beyond the title that is the term he seems to prefer in this paper as well.
[4] Unusual is not defined by Black. I can only assume that these were names he personally thought were unusual by some unknown standard. The article is fairly recent and included on his list are names such as Nikki and Pamm which I personally would not consider unusual at all. Also in the afterword it is noted that this paper was likely written in the late 1970's and was published posthumously.

CHAPTER 3

DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES

There are three primary concerns with studying Afro-American names that need to be addressed in order to understand some of the issues this thesis seeks to research. The first is a problem of definition, the second a question of depth, and the third an issue of methodology.

The Problem with being Unique

As noted briefly in the previous chapter, there are many different terms used when discussing Afro-American names: unique, unusual, coined and created among them. In fact, there is no general consensus for the name of the ethnic group we are addressing. For the purposed of this paper the ethnic group will be called Afro-Americans. Why that and not some other? Simple pragmatics: at UNLV there is an Afro-American Studies Program. Since Afro-American is the preferred term of the university, this is the term used herein.

So, what term best fits the study of names described herein and why? First I wish to address the ambiguities of the previously introduced terminology. Many different words have been used to describe the Afro-American names that stand out from those in mainstream popular culture. Pharr (1993) refers to them as coined; Black (1996) and Paustian (1978) call them unusual; Evans (1996) states they are created; Lieberson and

Bell (1992) discuss them in terms of being unique. While any of these labels can easily be used to describe the phenomenon observed, problems in definition arise. How can coined or created words be determined by looking at a list of names that is largely removed from its cultural context? Who determines what is unusual? Any two researchers looking at the same list would undoubtedly highlight the patterns somewhat differently.

Lieberson and Bell (1992) provide a good working definition for the term unique suggesting it be used to illustrate those names occurring only once in their database. However, their database is considerably larger than mine. Even with over 800 names in my database most would still be unique using this standard. It then becomes necessary to find a way to evaluate Afro-American names among varied population sizes that consistently produce verifiable data.

After thoroughly reviewing the literature it seemed that the prefixes and suffixes used to form these names were the key. The focus of this research is an analysis of one specialized type of "unusual" name that I will define as "constructive" due to their structure.

Constructive names have in common the use of specialized prefixes and suffixes such as *Sha-* and *–eeka* in the earlier example. These prefixes and suffixes function very differently from the way they would be expected to function in the English language. Normally suffixes and prefixes would be bound morphemes. They need a morpheme or root to exist: *-ing* does not occur freely. It must be attached to a root word. In mainstream names this pattern holds true. Common name suffixes such as *–y* used in diminutives is attached to a root name Timmy, Tammy, Tommy. Feminizations such as

–ette are the same, as in Georgette. There are no commonly used prefixes in traditional US names, most prefixes that occur are isolated names taken from surnames with attached prefixes that mean of, from, or son of. While these prefixes and suffixes do not totally stand alone, they do not need a root. They can attach to a simple consonant or to each other. Evans (1996,122) made note of this also: "Lakeisha names are created by combining a prefix such as *La-, Sha-, Ja-, Shan-, Ty-, De-, Ka-, Qua-, or Na-,* with a suffix such as *–ana, -oria, -ae, -iqua, -isha,* or *–ique*, usually linking them with some consonant." The use of these specialized prefixes and suffixes, which will be denoted as *freefixes* from this point forward, has transformed Afro-American naming practices beyond simple etymology.

Constructive names are valuable because they eliminate a portion of the subjectivity involved in determining what is unusual. The freefixes used in the construction of the names are readily identifiable. However, one caution must be noted. It is not always possible to determine if a name is constructive based on spelling alone. Clues such as internal capitalization or punctuation which set off the prefixes can be very useful. For example the name Va'nisha can now be seen to have not only the common constructive suffix *–isha*, but also the prefix *Va-* connected by the letter *n*. This illustrates the free nature of the prefixes and suffixes discussed in the definition above.

Constructive names will be shown to be effective as a method of studying Afro-American naming patterns since the 1970's. In addition to reflecting patterns of unusual name use as denoted in previous studies without the ambiguity of terminology, study of these names can be analyzed along multiple lines of interest: gender, income, education, region, and decade among others.

A Question of Depth

Probably the most striking difficulty with the earlier available studies is that they are confined to very small areas of the country. It is very difficult to discern patterns of change among a nationwide population from a patch of names from source in New York, another in California and another in Illinois. In fact, it would be impossible to argue that this is representative of the whole at all. Yet, that is all the data that is currently available: a bit from here and a bit from there.

While change in naming patterns in New York may give a hint of a bigger pattern, simply combining the results of all of the previous studies is insufficient. It is critical that a nationwide study be conducted which looks at the same issues over the same periods of time. Researchers tend to jump to conclusions from smaller samples, that is very risky. In one article that I read and dismissed, the author said that unusual names were a Black Southern tradition, but there was no data from the south in the article at all. The only way to positively identify nationwide patterns is in fact by sampling the entire country.

Issues in Method

With the exception of Pharr (1993) who discussed a conversation with one informant, none of the studies on Afro-American names spoke to the givers of the name at all. In fact, it is almost as if knowing why someone chose a name has no value whatsoever. Lieberson states: "People cannot always tell us why a name appeals to them. It's easy to see why. First, they are almost certain to have unclear notions about the broad social conditions that are necessary prerequisites for their behavior; second, often

they have no clear idea of what there is about a specific name that makes it appealing to them – they just *like* it" (2000:26). While it is possible that there exists a person who picks a name out of a vacuum, because it just sounds good and truly has no clue what is going on in the world around them, I truly do not think that this is the general state of things. Now I am not implying that everyone naming a child sits and thinks about being 1/3 Irish and in a lower socio-economic status than the mother in the next hospital bed. I am saying though that I have yet to meet someone who named their child with no awareness of the norms and expectations of the world around them.

When I named my daughter MaryElizabeth Ann I did so for a myriad of reasons. The combination first name was founded on not wanting her called Mary. The Ann was a place holder in the middle name space forcing the system to acknowledge her entire first name. I wanted a name that was unique, yet traditional and mainstream at the same time. I wanted something that could give multiple options for nicknames so if she ever hit the age she hated her name she had plenty to choose from: Mary, Elizabeth, Ann, Liz, Liza, Beth, BethAnn etc. In fact she managed to attain a nickname that did not occur to me at the time of naming *Mea*: her initials. The point being, I thought about all this years ago, long before I knew anything about names. I think everyone goes through some process of selection and elimination of names and are aware, at least on some level, of the reasoning behind it. Theses choices are not made in vacuity. Understanding the reasoning process of at least some of the individuals involved in naming would provide depth for the raw statistical data.

Almost every researcher evaluated here attained the names they analyze from a list. A database of census names can tell me whether or not constructive names or

African names are being used among the Afro-American population for the years of the census, but it can never tell me why specific names or name categories are on it. That is the most important gap in the research this thesis intends to fill. Not only will I discuss the statistical variances in Afro-American naming patterns, but I will begin to explain some of the reasons for them.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer many of the issues posed by the literature as discussed in previous chapters it is helpful to create a geographically diverse database, while maintaining the ability to assess the role that fluctuations within the larger cultural pattern have on the individuals within the community. It is not enough to look at naming patterns in a small community setting since it cannot be argued that these are representative of Afro-American naming practice across the nation. Databases of names provided by the Social Security Administration or various state records office do not alone provide sufficient information to allow for an accounting of naming patterns.

A review of the literature and a pre-study for this project suggested the following research question be addressed:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in Afro-American naming patterns dependent on: gender, region, birth year, income, or education?
2. What impact do any of the statistically noted differences actually have on naming choices?
3. Do major cultural attitudes and events parallel changes in naming patterns?

In addition the data gathered will be used for a linguistic analysis of the names that are otherwise deemed 'unusual'.

In order to answer these questions a nationwide study was conducted asking respondents to fill out an internet survey. The survey (see Appendix 1) was created and maintained on Freeonlinesurvey.com and accessed by a link from a website I designed for that purpose. No personally identifying information of any kind was asked of the respondents. In addition, no tracking information of any kind was recorded by the survey site. All questions were optional and the participants could stop answering the questions at any time during the survey process, or answer only the questions they chose.

Respondents were volunteers who accessed the survey website by clicking on a link posted on public message boards (primarily boards hosted by MSN and Yahoo). There was no remuneration provided as all participants remained anonymous. The survey was posted in two basic phases. The first, in which postings will were made on general parenting and grandparenting boards in order to create a control group from the general population of the United States, and the second, which specifically targeted Afro-American boards in order to gain a statistically relevant sample. These boards were generally cultural boards and not specific to parenting or naming due to small availability of such sites. Since this was a voluntary survey and not a random one it is possible that some portions of the population may not be adequately represented (for example there were very few respondents who had not completed high school); however, I believe that the survey response was of a sufficient size that this is not overly problematic.

The posts read: "Hi. I am a Master's student in anthropology doing research on why we pick the names we do for our children. So, if you have named a child, I would really appreciate it if you would take my survey. The survey collects no personal

identifying information and takes approximately 5 minutes to complete." The first posts were listed under the heading "Children's Names". In the second phase the message remained the same but the heading of the post was "Afro-American Names". The link was posted under the body of the message. That link took them to a webpage with a link to the survey. The survey period ran from September 2005- January 2006.

The gathered data will be analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The following chapter will look at the statistical patterns of the naming process, and provide context for the reasons behind the naming process given by the respondents.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Survey Information

A total of 462 respondents completed the survey. However, some of these surveys were not complete. In many instances this did not matter as it was still possible, for example, to gather sufficient information on patterns of naming by income, with other categories left blank. Incomplete surveys were omitted from the results of this study for one of three possible reasons. First, surveys were eliminated if they did not provide a given name for the child. Since names are the very essence of this study, those surveys were of no value. Second, surveys were eliminated from analysis if they did not provide ethnicity. While it is possible that I could have placed them in the control group, I did not want the results of that groups accidentally skewed if a large portion of the unknowns were Afro-American (which is in fact likely since during the last three survey months I posted only on Afro-American boards.) Finally, surveys were eliminated if a state of birth was not provided. I am concerned at this point in time only with names of individuals born in the United States. However, it is quite likely that non-US citizens frequent the boards on which I posted and possibly responded to the survey. So in order to maintain consistency of data, responses were considered only if they supplied a given name, indicated ethnicity and provided a birth state. 433 surveys were determined to meet the necessary criteria providing a total of 874 individual names (See Appendix 2).

The surveys were then broken into three groups for the purposes of the analysis that follows: Afro-American, Bi-racial[1], and Other (Non-Afro-American). Generally the Bi-racial group was left out of the statistical analysis due to the small sample size, but results are discussed where appropriate. The figure below illustrates the distribution of ethnicity in the survey population.

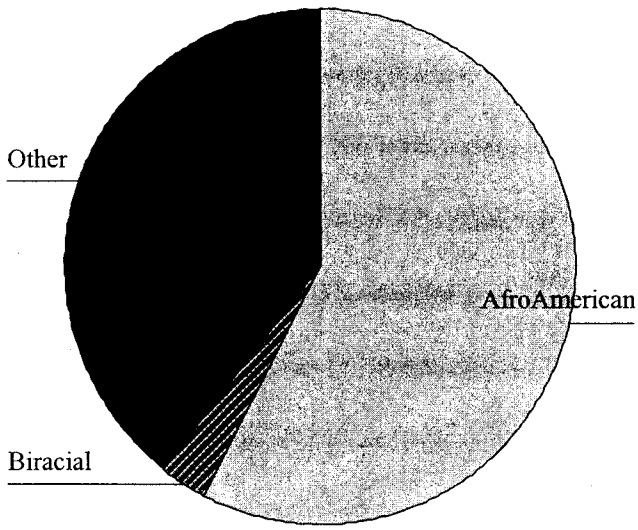


Figure 1: Distribution of Ethnicity

Constructive Names

The analysis I will undertake at this time addressing the entire survey population concerns the use of the constructive names discussed in the previous chapter. It is critical to know if the use of these names belongs exclusively to the Afro-American population or, at the very least, if the usage of these names is statistically significant. When a Pearson Chi-square is performed it becomes clear that in the United States use of constructive names is in fact extremely different between the two populations ($p<.0005$,

Φ=2.60). A glance at Table 1 shows the disparity in expected values. In fact only one Non-Afro-American (or Bi-racial) individual was given a constructive name.[2]

ETHGROUP * CONSTRUC Crosstabulation

			CONSTRUC		
			yes	no	Total
ETHGROUP	AfroAmerican	Count	79	423	502
		Expected Count	47.4	454.6	502.0
	Other	Count	1	344	345
		Expected Count	32.6	312.4	345.0
Total		Count	80	767	847
		Expected Count	80.0	767.0	847.0

Table 1: Expected Count of Constructive Names

When looked at as a percentage 15.7% of Afro-American names in this database are constructive while only .3% of the Other names are. The Bi-racial names still need to be examined. Initially I expected to see a percentage somewhere between the two groups illustrated above, but in fact that is not the case. The Bi-racial names were constructive 14.3% of the time: far more closely mirroring the Afro-American population's pattern.

Since it will be later shown that income and economics are a factor in using these constructive names, it is critical to eliminate that as a factor in the results listed above. The survey population of Afro-Americans and Other category was essentially identical (p=.978). The Afro-American population was more highly educated than the white population (p=.007).[3] So it is safe to determine that use of these names by Afro-Americans is not due to their lower socio-economic status.

Now that we know that these names are directly affected by ethnicity, it is important to determine if the pattern of constructive naming varies within the Afro-American population itself.

Gender

In the reviewed literature it was noted by Lieberson and Bell (1992) and Pharr (1993) that unusual names are more often given to females, and it holds true for the general U.S. population as well as the Afro-American population. In order for constructive names to be a useful tool for analyzing naming patterns among Afro-Americans it is critical that they not only provide new information, but in fact support the data already verified by other researchers. So it would be expected at this point that constructive names would be more often given to the daughters. This is in fact the case among the survey population ($p<.0005$, $\Phi=.254$); or from another angle 24.9% of females had a constructive name compared to 6.4% of the males.

Socio-Economics

It has been speculated by multiple authors[4] that socio-economic status would affect the rate of use of unusual names. In order to test this I asked the participants questions concerning income and education status to see if either or both affected the decision to use constructive names. I removed the individuals in the population whose incomes were unknown for the first test and those with unknown education levels for the second. This does in fact give slightly different groups of names as an individual might answer either of the above while omitting the other.

In respect to constructive name choice income does indeed have an effect ($p=.001$, $\Phi=.212$). As you can see by the expected counts in Figure 3 below, generally participants whose income was under $40,000 a year used these names more frequently than would be expected and those whose income was over $40,000 used them less frequently. However, this is not a completely clear distinction as usage is in fact slightly higher than expected among the $60,000-$80,000 income group. Looking at these trends in respect to educational values may assist in making a better general statement.

INCOME * CONSTRUC Crosstabulation

			CONSTRUC		
			yes	no	Total
INCOME	Under $20,000	Count	7	17	24
		Expected Count	3.6	20.4	24.0
	$20,000-$30,000	Count	11	35	46
		Expected Count	6.9	39.1	46.0
	$30,000-$40,000	Count	17	62	79
		Expected Count	11.9	67.1	79.0
	$40,000-$60,000	Count	11	90	101
		Expected Count	15.2	85.8	101.0
	$60,000-$80,000	Count	15	65	80
		Expected Count	12.0	68.0	80.0
	Over $80,000	Count	8	121	129
		Expected Count	19.4	109.6	129.0
Total		Count	69	390	459
		Expected Count	69.0	390.0	459.0

Table 2: Expected Counts: Income

Education level was also seen to have an effect on constructive name choice ($p=.002$, $\Phi=.203$). The differences in respective counts, seen below in Figure 4, were along similar lines to that which was found in regards to income. However, the dividing line was much neater. Those with Bachelor's degrees used constructive names exactly

the number of times that would be expected if usage was evenly distributed among educational levels. However, all the participants with an Associates Degree or below used constructive names for their children at a much higher level than anticipated by chance and those with at least some graduate school used them significantly less than would be expected.

The overall implications of both analysis point to a strong association between income, education level and the choice of constructive names.

EDUCATIO * CONSTRUC Crosstabulation

			CONSTRUC		
			yes	no	Total
EDUCATIO	High school or GED	Count	5	21	26
		Expected Count	4.1	21.9	26.0
	Some college	Count	31	129	160
		Expected Count	25.3	134.7	160.0
	Associate's Degree	Count	19	48	67
		Expected Count	10.6	56.4	67.0
	Bachelor's Degree	Count	15	80	95
		Expected Count	15.0	80.0	95.0
	Some graduate studies	Count	1	37	38
		Expected Count	6.0	32.0	38.0
	Master's Degree	Count	7	83	90
		Expected Count	14.2	75.8	90.0
	Doctorate	Count	1	23	24
		Expected Count	3.8	20.2	24.0
Total		Count	79	421	500
		Expected Count	79.0	421.0	500.0

Table 3: Expected Counts: Education

Regionality

While it has been speculated by several researchers that these names may have begun in the southern United States, there is little data available to support that claim. Unfortunately, the size of my data base does not allow me to look at occurrence of these

names state by state over the intervening 40 years. However, I divided the country into five basic regions to see if these names occur more prevalently in one area or another.[5] In fact when Pearson's Chi Square is performed it appears that region of birth does in fact effect this naming pattern, however the strength of the relevance is weaker than in the previous tests (p=.004, Φ=.133). When we looked at the expected counts in Figure 5, there is an interesting pattern. Only two regions appear to vary a great deal from what would be expected.

REGION * CONSTRUC Crosstabulation

			CONSTRUC		
			yes	no	Total
REGION	Northwest	Count	1	17	18
		Expected Count	2.8	15.2	18.0
	Midwest	Count	20	95	115
		Expected Count	18.1	96.9	115.0
	Northeast	Count	17	169	186
		Expected Count	29.3	156.7	186.0
	Southwest	Count	11	40	51
		Expected Count	8.0	43.0	51.0
	South	Count	30	102	132
		Expected Count	20.8	111.2	132.0
Total		Count	79	423	502
		Expected Count	79.0	423.0	502.0

Table 4: Expected Counts: Region

While there is a variation in the Northwest, that may possibly be due to the lower sample size in that portion of the country. The Midwest and the Southwest are reasonably in line with what would be expected if there were no regional variation. The South however, has significantly more constructive names than would be expected and the Northeast significantly less.

Time

Lieberson and Bell (1992) noted that they felt that the shift in unusual name use was a current trend not an archaic reflection of customs from the past (547). I believe this to be true. I do not believe that constructive names appeared as a naming form prior to the 1970's. It becomes crucial then to analyze the use of constructive names through time. The size of the database was not sufficient to analyze the use of constructive names by individual years, so it will be examined by decade. In the 1960's there were only 2 names that could be considered constructive LaVon (1960-F) was most likely a unique spelling of a common name. Rayvon (1969-M) seems to be the first name in the survey that is an actual construction.[6] With the low sample size from the 1960's these two names represented 4% of the sample born in that decade. By the 1970's there was a decided shift toward the use of these names. 19.5% of the names from the 1970's were constructive. In fact an even clearer line can be drawn prior to 1974 only 6.7% of the names were constructive; from 1974-1979 27.4% of the names were constructive. Something had changed.

The popularity of these names continued in similar fashion. In the 1980's, constructive names accounted for 17.9% of the names in the sample. In the 1990's 14.7% of the names were constructive and in the 2000's 18.0% of the names were.

I believe these numbers to be higher in actuality, because I did not include most cases of the suffix *–on* in my analysis because it is very difficult to distinguish the linguistic properties as definitely constructive in every case without dealing with stress patterns and I cannot address that with the data collected. An example of the difficulty can be seen in the name Devon. If phonetically pronounced *deven* with the stress on the

first syllable it is unlikely that this is constructive. However, were the pronunciation of this name *devan* with the stress on the second syllable then it would be likely that we had freefixes *de-* and *–on* connected by the root letter *v.* Adding *–on* to the database would have increased the number of constructive names, especially for males, but I opted for the more conservative figures in cases where the pronunciation of the name could not be used to distinguish its linguistic properties.

African Names

Another aspect of 'unusual' names which cannot be overlooked is that of African names. Some individuals specifically choose names for their children that they believe to be African names. Most commonly these names were cited by the respondents as being either Muslim or as Yoruba names. It is difficult to verify if all of the name listed as African are in fact such[7]; however, I do want to note that 15.15% of names chosen by Afro-American families with incomes over $80,000 are choosing names said to be African. So while these families may not favor constructive names they do choose names that would appear 'unusual' in a general name study. A discussion of these names will be expanded upon in the next chapter.

Phonology

Some researchers, such as David Figlio (American School Board, 2005) have suggested that one factor significant in "low-socio-economic" names is low-frequency consonants like z or q. Pharr (1993) looked at k and t among others as being selected for coined names. I analyzed usage of the individual letters q and k for both the control and

Afro-American names. Use of q was not significant (p=.693) when analyzed by ethnic group, and for k it was even more pronounced (p=.922). I analyzed usage again using the entire population based on income. For k there was difference by income (p=.017); however when expected values were examined it was not the type of division expected. In fact the $20,000-$30,000 income group exclusively used k more frequently as opposed to seeing this occur in all three lower income categories as was noted in the constructive names. The usage of q was too infrequent to analyze in this way, but in this database nearly half (6/14) instances of the use of q were in the $30,000-$40,000 income group.

Summary

The data above shows that constructive names have, since the early 1970's, been used widely by the Afro-American population in the United States, and for the most part used exclusively by that population. It also shows that these names are favored for daughters of lower income/ lower education households. Now the question must be asked why? What happened in the early 1974 or before to create and perpetuate such a unique pattern of naming? And why does it vary socio-economically?

[1] For the purpose of this thesis Bi-racial families are those who specifically designated themselves as such by selecting other on the survey and then stating that they were half Afro-American and half any other ethnicity.
[2] This individual was a Caucasian female born in 2003. The family education level was high school and the income level was under $20,000. It is shown later that several of these factors influence the choice of constructive name among Afro-American families.
[3] In the United States women and minorities are generally paid less for the same jobs. So it is expected that since incomes are the same among the sample, the education level of the Afro-Americans is higher.

[4] Dillard, Evans and Lieberson all state that lower socio-economic classes are more unlikely to use unusual names. This was an extremely common assumption in a great deal of the available literature. However I was unable to find where this assumption was empirically tested in any of the literature reviewed.

[5] Assigning regions was in fact a little arbitrary. However see Appendix 3 for a map of the regional divisions.

[6] The suffix –on in fact poses some difficulties which are not easily resolved. Only very rarely did I include –on as constructive in this data base. When I did it was because spelling or punctuation specifically set-off the syllabic structure in such a way to suggest a *freefix*.

[7] I used both of Stewarts books and several online engines which provide nationality information for names and was only able to verify three names besides the ones that had come from rulers. One was a day name and the other two were twin names from the Yoruba.

CHAPTER 6

ADDING CONTEXT

This thesis is not an historical study. However, it is impossible to begin to understand the emergence of constructive names as a partial response to a changing identity of Afro-Americans without understanding the timbre of the times. Puckett (1975) and Black (1996) both stated that they felt that trends in Afro-American naming in the 1950's were beginning to come more and more in line with those of general naming practices. They seemed to believe that this would continue to be the case. If it is taken at face value that this slow assimilation was representative of naming patterns from the end of slavery through the 1950's it would follow that that patterning would continue until no distinction could be made between the two groups. However, as the previous chapter has shown naming patterns among Afro-Americans are significantly different than the balance of the population and do not reflect a slowly merging assimilation of patterns.

Unfortunately, the one question statistics can rarely answer is why. They are great for displaying patterns and trends; they let researchers know if they are on the right page and seeing something that is real and verifiable. They should not, however, stand alone. Constructive names did not emerge, and do not continue in a vacuum. The survey format used in this study while allowing opportunity for respondents to volunteer information does not solicit the kind of responses personal interviews do. Many

respondents give just the bare information requested and volunteer no additional data at all. So, the responses quoted here are significant in that the comments that follow came directly from the respondents who wanted me to understand why they made the choices they did.

A Walk in Time

It is impossible and unnecessary to explore the entire Civil Rights movement at this juncture. There are few Americans who never heard of Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks. The late 1950's and early 1960's were a tempest filled time with many trying to simply exert rights they supposed had already been granted. Every aspect of what it was to be "Black" and to be an American came into question. There were many voices, many mantras, all calling identity into question.

One voice was that of Malcolm X. In a speech entitled "A Mental Resurrection" he spoke the following words:

> We believe the Black man should be freed in name as well as in fact. By this we mean that we should be freed from the names imposed upon us by our former slave masters. Murphy is not your name. Jackson is not your name. Smith is not your name. Bunch is not your name. Powell is not your name. That's the white man's name. Those names go with blue-eyed people. Those names go with blonde-haired people. Those names are not for Black people. Your names come from the East. You are from the East. You should have some good names, some holy names, some names that don't connect you with the white man, but names that connect you with God. (Richardson, 1992)

It was 1962 and this was just one of a multitude of speeches encouraging Afro-Americans to take back their names. In this case it was directed most likely at members of the Black Muslim movements, but the targeted audience is not of critical importance,

everyone was listening. In 1964 Malcolm X adopted the name El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz and in 1965 he was shot.

Political arenas were not the only forum for this call for change. In 1965 heavy weight boxer Cassius Clay announced himself as a member of the nation of Islam and changed his name to Cassius X which was later changed by Elijah Muhammed to Muhammed Ali.[1] Black Muslims, Black Power advocates, members of the Black Panthers and other groups were all taking new name openly in public forums. In 1971, another major sports figure Lew Alcindor changed his name to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, amid great controversy.

Statements from parents naming their children in these times openly echo the change in naming patterns that was being played out in the public arena. In 1963, Family 380, had a son. They named him Donald Jr. In 1971 they had twins who they named Taiwo Ayodele and Keinde Akeindele: "(The) twins were given African (Yoruba) names that signify twins, first and second born. I didn't want my children to carry slave names. I have since changed my name to an African name".[2] Not an isolated incident by any means. Other family also changed their name choices based on the times. Family 390 named the daughter Veronica Yolanda in 1962, by 1973 things had changed and the son was named Kalomo Yero. The respondent stated "I had begun to identify with my African Heritage." African names were not the only reflection of the times, one mother (Family 6) named her son Joshua Malik: "1970 was after the deaths of Martin and Malcolm. Time for a warrior like Joshua to get us into the promised land."

Of course influences of the times stretched beyond the immediate years, in 1996 Family 397 named their daughter Nyzeire Assata, who was named in part after exiled Black Panther Assata Shakur (nee JoAnne Chesimard).[3]

As the turn into the 1970's brought pockets of violence along with slow, but improving quality of life for the Afro-American people the quest for identity continued. Not all Afro-Americans identified with the Black Muslim groups. Many of the powerful activists of the 60's were Christian, in fact a substantial number were Baptist. Taking African names did not appeal to everyone, after all many had no ties remaining to Africa. It is at this point in time that I think the first of the constructive names, generated initially perhaps through name combinations and borrowing of sounds, began to be associated as specifically Afro-American. As the previous data showed, there was a drastic increase in these names in 1974, which initially I found difficult to account for. There was not a significant political event that year to account for it. No major assassinations or historical turns of events such as Lieberson (2000) noted with the name Jacquelyn in 1963.

Before I began the search for a specific year for the rise of constructive names, I assumed it would be easily found. I expected it to be 1977. That year *Roots* appeared as a mini-series on national television. I assumed this would be the catalyst, because for a change to occur that was this dramatic something significant would have had to reach a large portion of the population. When the date was three years earlier than I anticipated I began digging. There had to be something. It was not until I ordered an original copy of the 1976 hardback by Alex Haley that I found the likely answer. On the copyright page it

states: "A condensed version of a portion of this work first appeared in *Reader's Digest*. Copyright©1974 by Reader's Digest Association, Inc."

In May and June 1974 *Roots* was given to the American public in two parts. Reader's Digest has the largest circulation of any magazine in the world[4]. There is no doubt that *Roots* in its earliest form reached the hands most Americans regardless of income, education, age or state of residence. It appealed to the masses in a way that the writings of the political movements could not. The power of popular media should not be underestimated. A mother from Georgia, naming her baby in 1999, over twenty years after the *Roots* phenomena wrote:

> My husband performed that rite that Kunta Kinte performed in that movie "Roots". He took her to an open field, held her up to the heavens and proclaimed "Behold, the only thing greater than yourself." He then spoke her name to her in her ear, and she became the first person to hear her name spoken aloud. Now all of our children have this rite performed seven days after they are born (which annoys registrars at the hospital).

I have no doubt that the jump in constructive name use occurred because of *Roots*. These names were out there, had been for five or more years and belonged to about 1 in 20 kids. Isolate names that fit the constructive pattern, such as LaToya Jackson's[5] and LeVar Burton's[6], a prominent actor in the *Roots* miniseries, were in the public ear. *Roots* did not create constructive names, but it was the catalyst for their sudden prominence.

Instead of having a single event spike, like an assassination or political speech, *Roots*, in varied forms, lasted for several years. This helped sustain use of these names past the fad stage. Other popular culture icons aided this as well. Aisha is an Arabic name often noted as being a common root for 'unusual' Afro-American names. The "-isha" suffix is particularly strong for females and has many allographs. In 1977, Family 405 named their little girl Aisha Paulae, the reason: "Stevie Wonder's daughter

was named Aisha". Stevie Wonder's *Isn't She Lovely* celebrating the birth of his daughter was a chart topper. "Life and love are the same. Life is Aisha. The meaning of her name."[7] Similar to the statements on the name Kwame earlier, it is impossible to know which parents that chose this name for their daughters knew the origins of the name Aisha and which ones simple chose that name or others that sounded similar simple because there was now a definite pop-cultural association with this name and love.

The 1970's were a time when political movements and pop culture both sent Afro-Americans the message to find out who you are as a people and as individuals. They were encouraged to use their own names. By the end of this decade constructive names are entrenched. After a decade of use and acceptance constructive names become blended with other naming patterns. These names become more than just ethnic names. They become family names; naming your baby after your sister keeps the naming pattern alive. Constructive names become associated with celebrities and sports figures: Keyshawn, Terrell, and DeShaun. Forty years after their arrival as a significant naming trend there is no doubt these names are readily identifiable as Afro-American names; which of course calls into question whether being ethnically identified in this way is a good thing or not.

In 1969, the first son of Family 413 was named Kymo: "It sounded ethnic and (I) wanted his race to be a conscious significant part of his identity for himself as well as others." As I have illustrated this type of ethnic identification is fairly representative of the late 1960's, but a decade later, the same parent makes a very different choice:

> In 1981 I was older and more experienced and realized that an ethnic sounding name might prevent my daughters from being accepted in schools as well as prevent their resumes from even being considered by employers. This was when "women's lib" was in full force and white women were taking full advantage of their "minority" designation and actively "stealing" jobs from Black men. I was extremely frustrated with the prospect of the future when better jobs formerly filled by Black men would be "held" for white women... As opposed to the supposedly double whammy Black women were supposed to receive for being Black and a minority. I knew white people would always hire from their home base first. With a name like Tiffany and Julia they (twins) would at least have a chance of being considered when reviewing resumes.

This is not the only family to have a similar reversal. Some families specifically noted choosing names that did not sound ethnic so their children would have a better chance at interviews. While I do not have any data on whether individuals with names more readily identified as Afro-American actually get fewer interviews than traditional names, it is clear the concerns of the parents have shifted somewhat in the ensuing decade. I do however believe that this concern of name discrimination is why far fewer male children are given constructive (and otherwise unique names).

The X-Factor

It should not come as a surprise that Malcolm X has had a huge influence on the naming of Afro-American children for decades. In this survey alone there are two direct namesakes: Malcom Xavier from 1982 and Malcolm X-avier from 1987. "Since we tend as a people to abbreviate the middle name, I knew he'd be known as Malcolm X as well" (Family 154). And there is no doubt the parents of Israel James PXXXXton were making a statement with his name.

However, on a more humorous note, I was reminded by Family 409 who named their son Xzavier Rodney Lee in 1998 not to jump to conclusions. "Xzavier is from Professor Xavier of the X-men". There's more than one X in the world.

[1] General biographic information on Muhammed Ali is readily available. There is a host of information on most sports websites, Wickipedia and his own personal website http:///www.ali.com.

[2] Family 380's first son was born in Alabama.The twins were born in Ohio. The respondents income and education level were $60-$80,000 a year with a Master' Degree. These names are authentic Yoruba names listed among other places in Stewart (1996).

[3] Assata Shakur was pulled over and shot in 1973. She was jailed and charged with murdering a police officer and spent over six years in prison, eventually escaping and moving to Cuba. For more information see www.assatashakur.org.

[4] The circulation information on the front of the May 1974 edition said that over 30 million copies of the magazine were purchased monthly.

[5] La Toya Jackson (1956), sister of the Jackson 5, who became a hit maker of her own in 1980, does not in fact have a constructed name. Her name is two separate words La and Toya. However, the popularity of the prefix La and the construction of later Latoya's were undoubtedly influenced by her presence on the scene during these years.

[6] LeVar Burton (1957), who played Kunta Kinte on *Roots*, was well renowned at this time. However, LeVar is a stage name. He was born Levardis Robert Martyn Burton, Jr. in Germany.

[7] I got these lyrics from www.lyricsfreak.com, but there are many similar sources.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Names provide identity: personal identity, ethnic identity, cultural identity. The names we choose for ourselves and for our children are not casual. They are imbued with meaning, with who we are. As one respondent said, "I firmly believe that when you call someone's name, you are reaffirming what that name means and speaking it into that persons life." Names tie us to a heritage beyond ourselves.

With careful analysis it is possible to show patterns in naming that are reflective of a larger cultural awareness of that identity. Names rooted in the past, rooted in who we are, and who we are becoming. Constructive names are a manifestation of the changes in Afro-American identity in the United States throughout the last forty years. Since constructive names have definite linguistic properties they are useful as a tool to aid in the evaluation of that change without the ambiguity of a searchers subjective judgment.

Analysis of constructive names shows that naming patterns are not uniform across ethnic groups, gender, or socio-economic classes. Many factors play a role in which names are chosen for children. Changes in the use of these names can be shown through time and space, reflecting the decade and location of the birthplace of the child.

It is critical that these changes be monitored as they continue to evolve. Constructive names are a new form of name unique to the Afro-American community.

They are not African names. They are not *white* names. They are uniquely constructed by a people who are striving to create and maintain a unique identity within a larger population. Dr. Obiagele Lake (1997) stated: "With the post-modern emphasis on race as a non-existent category, it becomes more important to emphasize the significance of an African or African-American identity since identity is about survival" (266).

While issues of identity go beyond the name, there is no possibility of disconnecting one from the other. The identity struggles facing the Afro-American population continue to be reflected in the choice of names for their children. Whether to choose an African name, a constructive (Afro-American) name, or a *white* name will be a struggle that continues for some time. Issues of education, economics, visible and invisible racism, and ethnic heritage all come into play.

An Unanswered Question

While the use of African names by the Afro-American population was never a research question in the collection of this data, it was a choice commonly noted by the participants in their responses. The data collected for this thesis can not determine statistically whether there is a clear distinction between use of these names and socio-economics. The problem is two-fold. First, once use of these names is sub-divided the samples are too small to get statistically significant results. Second, it is extremely difficult to distinguish, in most cases, between an African word and an African name. For example one parent wrote "Asha is Swahili and it means full of life." While that may be a valid translation of Asha, it does not in fact prove that it is a name native speakers of Swahili use. I can name my daughter *Full of Life* in English also, but that is not a

standard name or name form. The sheer number of African languages make discerning such differences an extremely difficult task, even assuming the respondents are supplying correct translations. Which leads to the difficult task of sorting the actual names of multiple African populations; and to verifying the place these African nations holds in the making of identity for the Afro-American respondents.

From a linguistic perspective additional research is warranted on what variations of freefixes make legal constructions of names. Are there, for example, phonological constraints?

Additional Research Opportunities

It would be valuable to take this study a step further and look at some of the socio-economic factors that are influencing these choices. Why are the more educated families tending toward African names and away from constructive names? Why, when as Lieberson puts it "It costs no more in dollars and cents to name a daughter *Lauren* or *Elizabeth* than it does to name her *Crystal* or *Tammy*" (2000,24) do these clear differences exist? This survey most likely did not reach the lowest socio-economic groups and gathering data from those segments of the Afro-American population would aid in answering this question.

Another question that may fall along those lines would be to see if there is truly a regional difference among name choices separate from socio-economics and determine if perhaps there is an area of the country where these names predominantly originated. This could be achieved by focusing on specific regions or by collecting a larger sample population than this study generated.

The final thing I would like to suggest is that in a future study some percentage of the interviews move from the anonymous survey format, so that better answers can be given to the question of why some of these choices are made. I would like to be able to contest Lieberson's statement that the general population is unaware of the social forces around them as they name their children. Also, an interview format would eliminate ambiguity in phonology.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY

1. How many children have you personally named? (It's okay if someone else helped.)
2. The following questions refer to the first child you named. Is the child male or female?
3. In what year was the child born?
4. In what state was the child born?
5. What is the child's full given name? (Please no last names: Jacob Rashaun NOT Jacob Rashaun Johnson.)
6. What were the reasons you chose this name? Mark all that apply. A) Family Name (For any family member) B) Famous Name (For any historical or political persona) C) Popular Name (For any television or sports persona) D) Ethnic Name (Name chosen for any ethic ties past or present) E) Religious Name (Name Chosen for a religious figure or religious beliefs) F) Just Liked It (No reason beyond liking the name) G) Sound (Liked the way the name sounded with other names) H) Other.
7. Please take a moment and explain any of the above choices. If Jacob Rashaun was named for his dad and a baseball player, explain that here.
8. Is there a person story attached to naming this child that you would like to share? If yes answer here.
9. Is there another child you would like to add?
10. The following questions refer to the second child you named:
    (Repeat Questions 2-9 for second child.)
11. The following questions refer to the third child you named:
    (Repeat questions 2-9 for third child.)
12. If there are any additional children you have named please list them here in the following format: Lisa Nicole – 1976—Virginia; Marcus Allen – 1982—Virginia
13. Is there a story you would like to share attached to any of the above named children?
14. All of the question in this section are for classification purposes and do not have to be answered if for some reason you are uncomfortable doing so. Do you consider yourself: A) Caucasian/White B) Hispanic C)Asian D) African-American/Black E) Other
15. Is you average household income: A) Under $20,000 B) $20,000-$30,000 C) $30,000- $40,000 D) $40,000-60,000 E) $60,000-$80,000 F) Over $80,000

16. What is your education level? A) Did not complete high school B) High school or GED C) Some college D) Associate's Degree E) Bachelor's Degree F) Some graduate studies G) Master's Degree H) Doctorate
17. Are you affiliated with a religion? If so please enter that religion in the box.

APPENDIX 2

NAMES

Aaron Henry IV	Aaron Ithamer	Abbie Sharon Kathleen
Abigail Lauren	Abigail Erin	Abigail Erin
Abraham Ash	Acelynn Bianca	Adam Joseph Ryan
Adam Zachary	Adam Rashad	Adeline Christine
Adib Rashad	Adria Patrice	Adrian Isaiah
Adrian Rene	Aidan Matthew	Aiden Abigail
Aina Marie	Ainsley Raine	Aisha Paulae
Aizaiya Rene	Ajah Monet	Akirra Zykia
Alan Michael	Albert Keith	Alesha Camille
Alex David	Alex	Alexander Dane
Alexandra Kristina	Alexandro	Alexis Capris
Alexis Irene	Alexis Paige	Alexzander James
Alfred Amenzogbenu	Ali'Yah Ronnesha	Alis Diane
Alita Ree	Allan Malik	Alli Keeling
Alonzo Francis Tenille	Alyssa Starr	Alyssa Faith
Amanda Sophia	Amanda Jane	Amari
Amber Nicole	Amber	Amelia Sue
Amethyst Rosewynde	Amina Khrystine	Aminah Leigh
Amir Hakim	Amiri Gueka Farris	Amy Elizabeth
Andrae John Phillip	Andre Anthony Jr	Andrea Denise
Andrew Manuel	Andrew Steven	Andrew Allen
Andrew Wilcox	Andrew Dean	Angel Bryana
Angela Hazel	Aniyah Simone	Anna Belle
Anna Maria Faith	Anna Sophie	Annabelle Chelsea
Anne Caroline	Antoinette Marina	Antonio Maurice
Arianna Makayla	Ariel Simone	Ariel
Arielle	Arrianna Lishea	Aryanna Chinell
Asa Garrett	Asha Juanita	Ashley Elise
Ashley	Ashley Marie	Ashton Zikohl
Atif Hassan	Atiya Monique	Aundrea Monique
Ava Leilani	Ava Catherine	Ava Grace
Ava Elise	Avery Camille	Avery Davis
Avery Lauren	Ayanna Giselle	Ayanna Khoureen
Boroskie James	Bradley Joseph	Bradley Joseph

Braeden Dallas Dale
Brandi I'keisha
Brandon Antwan
Breckin Timothy
Brianna Antoinette
Brittany Allia
Brody Andrew
Bryce Alan
Cailyn Dawn
Caleb Joshua
Cameron Antonio
Carensa Trinity Anne
Carman Renee
Casey James
Cedric Frank
Chanel Latice
Charles Harrisom
Charlotte Ann
Chaz Lee
Cheo Melik
Chloe Patrice
Christopher Michael
Christopher Wallace
Christy Shnaerica
Clay Raleigh
Colin
Connor James
Corey Jefferson
Courtney Jenna
Cullen James
Daiaunne Leix
DaMario Larnell
Daniel Lawrence
Daniel Evan
Darcy Anne
Darien Crawford
Davian Gilberto
David Leon
David John
Deborah Renee
Deena Rochelle
Delaney Tiara
Derek Anthony
Desiree Monique
Devin Emanuel
Deyjon Antonio
Branden Leigh
Brandon Scott
Brandon Hayze
Brian Wayne
Bridget Norah
Brittney LaShawn
Bryan Scott
Brynn Lei
Caitlin Diana
Calvin Jarrin
Cameron Lamont
Carl Anthony
Carolyn Nicole
Casey Terrell
Chad Miles
Charles Norman Jr
Charlize Annette
Chase Malone
Chazman Everett
Cheryl Lynn
Christina Shari
Christopher Orlando
Christopher Lee
Clarissa Lea
Colby Jae-Griffin
Colleen Claire
Connor Stephen
Cornelius Antonio
Courtney Regina
D'Nari
Daijah
Damian Daunte
Daniel Robert
Danielle Eden
Daria Joyce Kiyoko
Dashanti
David
David Wayne
Davonte La'shay
Declan Kennedy
Delacey Alexander Shaquil
Dennis Eugene
Derek James
Devan Isaiah
Devin Patrick
Dianna MariaVictoria
Brandi Janel
Brandon Rion
Breana Lynn
Brian Mikael
Brittany Michelle
Brittney Dominique
Bryan Riley
Caden Phillip
Caleb Xavier
Calvin Joe
Candace Tiye
Carlos Duwan
Carolyne Alicia
Catherine Colleen
Chance Geronimo
Charles Warren
Charlotte Joie'
Chassidy Raychelle
Chelsea Kristine
Chloe Jada
Christopher Allen
Christopher
Christphor Jerome
Claudia Elizabeth
Colin James
Collette Creesta
Connor Brennen
Corrina Leigh Ann
Crystal Renee
Daetriel LaChar
Dakota Mason
Daniel James
Daniel Anthony
Daphane
Darian Lamont
Dasiny Shenyel
David Leon
David Laron
Deana Marie
Decxavier
Delainey Bernadette
Denver Colton
Derwin
Deverelle Chevonne
DeVonne Karla
Dominic Douglas

Dominic Gabriel
Donna Therese
Donovan Maxwell
Dylan Clay
Ebony Elise
Egypt
Eleanor Lynette
Elinor Louise
Elizabeth
Elyse Nicole
Emily Maree
Emma Elizabeth
Eric Andrew
Eric Andre Clay
Erica Nichole
Ernest Antonio
Ethan Leo
Evelyn Mae
Fiona Ren
Gabriel Lucius
Garrett Louis
Giselle Marie
Gregory Laurence
Hailey Allison
Hanford Alexander
Hayleigh Alexis
Henry
Hope Angelica
Imani Nailah
Ira Robin
Isaac Lee
Isiah Marquise Parran
Ivory
Jackson Alexander
Jacob Andrew
Jacy
Jaden Anthony
Jair Isaiah
Jamaica Shantay Yanna-Li
James Emanuel
James Schaefer
Jamison Catherine
Jared Christopher
Jaskson Tyler
Jason Seattle
Jason Quinn
Dominic Joseph
Donnell Thomas
Drewell Marquise
Earl Boyd
Edward Peter
Eileen Coletta
Elijah Cried
Elisabeth Lynn
Elizabeth DeAnn
Emiliana Mae
Emma Morgan
Endiah
Eric Lamont
Erica
Erin Elizabeth
Ernest Antonio
Eugene III
Evette Frezell
Frederik Louis Jr
Gabrielle Teresa
George
Grace Anneliese
Gregory Idris
Hakim Hassan
Harrison Timothy
Heather Marsha
Hilary Anne
Ian Anthony
Imori Louis Cyd
Irelyne Grace
Isabel Felicity
Isobel Mari
Jabari Thabiti
Jacob Christopher
Jacob Andrew
Jada Shanice
Jaelin Scott
Jakera Meyanna
Jamari Jaeden
James Robert
Jamilah Iman
Jammal Jax
Jared Ryan
Jasmine Nicole
Jason Itzik
Jason Scott
Donald Jr
Donovan Mitchell
Dykhiya
Eboni Akeyia
Edward Thomas Jr
Eleanor Jane
Elijah Demacordo
Elisabeth Janelle
Elizabeth Margaret
Emily Louise Elizabeth
Emma Mae
Ephraim Lewis
Eric Jordan
Erica Nicole
Erin Marie
Ethan Jack Kevin
Evan Richmond
Felicia Nicole
Gabriel Stephen
Gabrielle Sharee
Gianna Dai
Graydon Bradley
Hailey Brie
Halim Shakur
Harry Lorton Bennett
Helen Elizabeth
Honor Genevieve
Imani Dameron
Indica Willow
Iris Soliel
Isaiah Alexander
Israel James PXXXXton
Jack Walker
Jacob Forrest
Jacquelyn Natasha
Jade Cassidy
Jaila Imani
Jaleecia Kayanna
James Reid
James
Jamilla Ayana
Jaquelyne Nelson
Jarri Quentin
Jasmyne Love
Jason Stuart
Javari Daniel

Javonna Tinee
Jenna Nicole
Jennifer Lynn
Jerrika Lynne
Jevon James
Johari Elizabeth
John Clarence
Jonathon Howard III
Jordan Van
Josambi Kuwon
Joseph William
Joseph
Joshua Kristian
Joy Monique
Julia Megan
Julian Neal
Justin Monroe
Kaedence Elizabeth
Kaitlyn Nicole
Kameron DeAndre
Karissa Rose
Karyssa Paige
Katherine Nicole
Katherine Josephine
Katrina Michelle
Kayla Marie
Keela Camille
Keinde Akiendele
Keith
Kellyann Jade Laura
Kenneth
Kevin Anthony
Khalid Mustafa Muhammed
Kieran Ashton Edrich
Kimya Imani
Konata Ayinde
Kristine LeeAnn
Krysten Imani
Kyara Jeanne
Kylie Noelani
Lachaz Monique
Lamont Terrance
Lauren Ann
Lauren Camille
Leila Lin
Leo Sebastian Coe

Jayden Bomani
Jenna Sydney
Jeremy Joseph
Jessica Elizabeth
Jewel
John Page
John David
Jordan Dash
Jordan Edward
Joseph F
Joseph James
Josephine Rosamel Anne
Joshua Christopher
Joy Elaine
Julia Anne
Jurrien Khamani
Kaamel Nuri
Kaelyn Jewel
Kalere Chenoa Ninita-Ruth
Kameron Alex
Karneil Isaiah
Kataya
Katherine Ophelia Leanne
Katherine Margaret
Katrina
Kaylyn Danielle
Keenan Taylor
Keishawn Wakee
Keith Michael
Kendall Craig
Kenneth Rodney
Kevin Andrew
Kia Nichelle
Kimberly Marcell
Kinceston David
Krashun Daevion
Kristine Therese
Kurt Alexander
Kyle Andrew
Kymo
Ladasha Liberty
LaShana Shunte
Lauren Ashle
Lawrence Jesse
Leland Ernest Endicott
Leonardo Enrique Jr

Jelani Marcel
Jennifer Dianne
Jeremy Ryan
Jessica Ann
Jewell Louise
John Salahdin
Jonathon ames
Jordan YvonneVictoria
Jordan DeShay
Joseph Anthony
Joseph Anthony
Joshua Malik
Joshua Phillip Peter
Julia Renee
Julia Isabella
Justin Donald
Kaden Dale
Kaheri Shemsa Benu
Kalomo Yero
Karen Marie
Karson Nicole
Katherine Elizabeth
Katherine Alexis
Kathryn Elizabeth
Katy Elizabeth
Keegan Clay
Keiara Sade
Keith Leslie
Kelly Cherisse
Kennedy Cain
Keondre Zavier
Keymani Rafeeha Simms
Kiara Clarice
Kimberly
Kofi Jamil
Kristian Damian
Kristopher Joseph
Kyanna Asia
Kylie Eliza
Kyona Layel
LaKesha Nieks
Laura Dionne
Lauren Rachel
Leah Jones
Lenay Marie
Lesley Ann

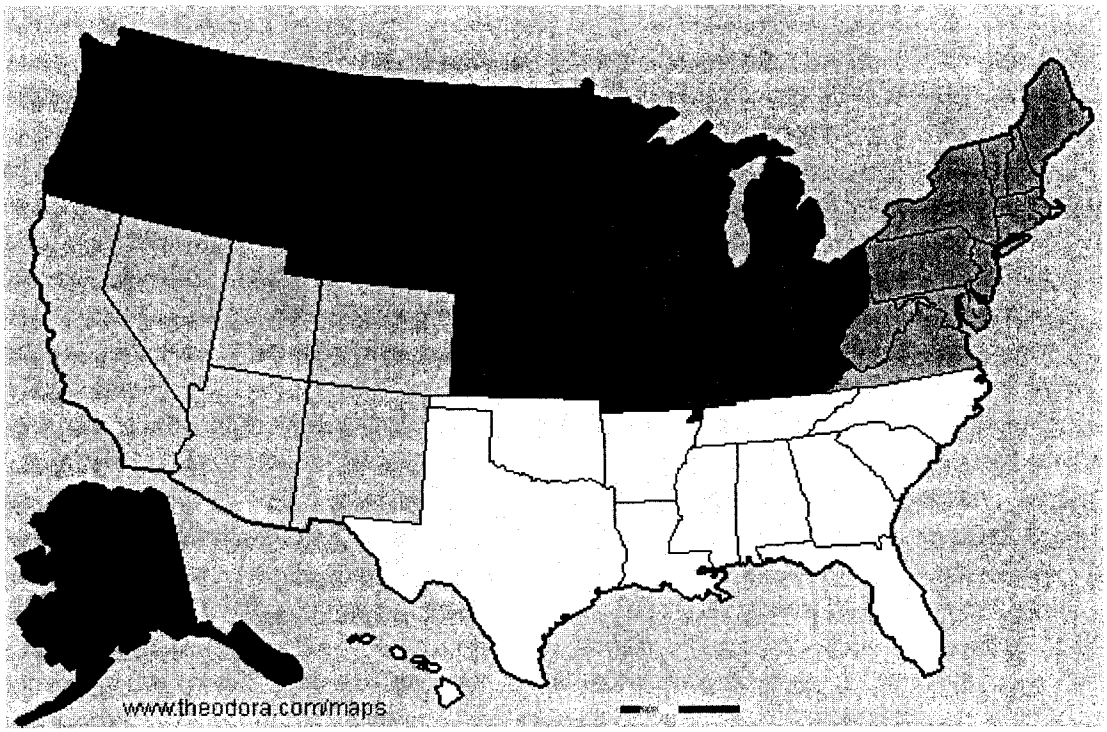
Leslie
Lexi Vee
Lisa Caroline
London Rose
Lorenzo Maurice
Lyric Alaya
Maddison Lynn
Maitlyn Sage
Malcolm Xavier
Mandy Rana
Maria
Mariah Ki'erra
Marissa Ann
Marlon Dakota
Mary-Kather Pearl
Mary Morgan
Matthew Steven
Matthew Brennan
Maya Elisha
Mechelle Suzette
Megan Alexia
Menelik Aswad Jafir
Mia Grace
Michael Joseph
Michala Claire
Mikalia Alexis
Monique Danielle
Morel Leroy
Myles Reginald
Nakima Takaisha
Nashaya Yenise
Natalie Emiko
Natasha
Nefertari Imani
Niambi
Nicole Arda
Nora Adelaine
Nyzeire Assata
Omari Jamahl
Osama Seth
Patrice Dara
Paul KuShawn
Pejh Sabri
Phillip Maurice
Quanisha Ebony
Rachel Joyce
Leslie LaRay
Liam Mychal
Lloyd Jr
Lorelei Violet
Luca Grace
Maatii Karimah
Madelyn Abigail
Makeda Jocara
Malcom X-avier
Marcus Talon
Maria Alexandria
Mariah Lynn
Mark
Marquise Tyshon
Mary Quindara
Mason Alexander William
Matthew Anthony Bailey
Maxwell Zane
Mbabefo Azikwe
Megan Angela
Meghan Renee
Mercedes Sydne Shiann
Miakia Resha
Michael Warren
Michaline Lucinda
Miriam Rachel
Monique Irene Leevora
Morgan Noelle
N'yinde Amaari
Nalani Janine
NaShonda Leia
Natalie Marie
Natasha Renee
Nefertiti Lee
Nicholas Casmir
Noah Quinn
Novalea Faith
Olivia Cameron
Onaje
Padraig Pearse
Patrice Marie
Paul Eugene
Perry Nolan
Phoenix Rose Yemaja
Quateria Robertson
Rachel Anne
Levi Nathaniel
Lily Catherine
Logan Malachai
Loren Rachelle
Lunden Phillip
Mackenzie Lynn
Madison Leigh
Makinde' Richard Adisa
Malcom Dion
Margaret Shree'
Mariah Simone
Mariah Winter
Mark Anthony
Martavious Kuamayne
Mary Kathleen
Mateo
Matthew Vincent
Maxwell Harrison
McKenna Pauline
Megan Latonya
Melissa Renee
Mercelia Ronae
Michael
Michael Joshua
Michelle Elaine
Monica LeAnne
Montel Jazz
Mukkarah Akira
Naima Adanna
Naprie Anjali
Nasya Danae
Natasha Lee
Nature Javier
Nevada Everett
Nicholas Aaron
Noelle Marche
Nyle Jillian
Olympia Demita
Oren Savion
Pamela Denise
Patrick John
Paul Eldon
Peter Roosevelt IV
Poppi Diane
Quin Stephanos
Rachel Marie

Rachel Elnora
Raeanna Kateri
Randall Clay
Randall Patrick
Randall Vaughn
Rashad Ahmad
Rashid Ameer
Raygen Olivia
Raymond Umoja
Rayvon David
Reagan Hannah
Reagan Alan
Rebekah Elizabeth
Rebekah Ashley
Reginald Barnes
Reginald Maurice
Reginald Aaron
Renee Alexis
Rhiannon Eileen
Ricardo Josam
Richard
Richard Thomas
Richard Anthony
Riordan Patrick
River Jude
Robert Andrew
Robert David
Robert James
Robyn Lynne
Roderick Maurice
Rodney Aaron
Rodney Donnell
Rodney David Jr
Roger Anthony
Roland Bradley
Ronald Alexander
Ronald
Ronnie Toran
Ronnie Eldores Jr
Rosalinda Denese
Rose Ophelia
Ross Cornell
Rowan Annaleah
Roxanne Louise
Ryan Nathaniel
Ryan
Ryan Andrew
Ryan Michael Robert
Ryan Nicolas
Ryleigh Marie
Saabira Haniya
Sabrina Veronia
Sabrina Gabrielle
Safisha Nzingha
Sage Lucille
Saige Mackenzie
Salena Sharell
Samuel Robert
Samuel Tabor
Samuel Owen
Sanu Saa Tchaas
Sarah Beth
Sarah Marie
Sarah Marie
Savanna Rayne
Scott Ian
Scott Lee
Sean Charles
Sean Michael
Sean Michael
Sebastian James
Sedrick Elias
Sena Barbara
Senbi Ankh Menu
Seosaimhthin Meadhbh
Seth Vernon
Shaffon Michelle
Shahiem Jaqua
Shai-Liyah Va'Quisha
Shakur Nuri
Shalyse Ajani LaJan
Shamesheia Michelle Xaveria
Shanae LaPree
Shane Patrick
Shanna GloriaPatrice
Sharline Machelle
Shatonjia Lynette
Shaunice Jada Louise
Shawn Alexander
Shawna Renee
Shawna Aurora
Shayla Jenyce
Sheeka Danai'
Shelly Louise
Shequita Kebrina
Shiloh Emmanuelle
Shiloh Alexandro
Shimai Victoria Lynn
Shiquita Shanta
Shirley Rebecca
Sidney
Sierra Monae
Simira Breauna
Simon Ambrose Nash
Sincere Makii
Soliel Ky
Solomon Alexander
Solomon Amir
Sonia LaVon
Sophia Maureen
Sophia Elizabeth
Sparkle
Spencer James
Spencer Henry
Stephanie Michelle
Stephanie Lynn
Stephen Robert
Stephen Walter
Stephen Francis
Sterling Edward
Sterling Renee
Steven Reed
Steven Thomas
Sunseray
Sydnei Page
Sydney Rachele
Sydney Danielle
Sydney Nicole
T'Salla Ja'Lien Amani
Taimak
Taiwo Ayodele
Takebb Antwan
Tamara Gabrielle
Tanuelle Demetria Nicole

Tanya Sante'
TaShonda Renae
Teal Heather
Teresa Chimene
Terrell Lamar
Terry Anthony
Thomas Wallace
Tiara Shaye
Tiffany
Tomaro Kiros
Tonyce D'Quel Rene
Tracey Elaine
Tracy Nicole
Trevon Patrick
Treyson Damar
Tristan Patrick
Tsai-Yah Berecha
Tyler Jacob
Va'nisha La-neil
Veronica Te'Kendra
Vivian Ida
William Benjamin
William Armand
Wintre' Noel
Xavier Lloyd
Yanique Jasmine
Yvonne Bernadette
Zachary Taylor
Zaria Nyela Christian
Tanyaunatin Shele
Tatum Devon
Temera Nicole
Terese Marquarite
Terrence Scott
Teryl DaNese
Tia Johari
Tiera Jade
Tiffany
Tonya Jasmine
Torri Lynn
Tracy Marie
Trenton Marcel Jr
Trevor Jermaine
Trinna Michelle
Troy Derrick
Ty
Tyler Anthony
Venus Kelsie
Victoria Brooke
William Henry II
William Randall
Willie Johnson
Wyatt Michael
Xzavier Rodney Lee
Yazmyne Trinity
Zachary Ignatius
Zane Austin
Zsa-Zsa Ayanna
Tari'a
Tavian Ameer Carlos
Teniade Morenike
Terrance Lamont
Terrence Kendall
Teryn Paige
Tianna Marie
Tiffany Amelia
Titus C
Tonyce Demetria
Toyia Makeba
Tracy LaMae
Trenton DaMond
Trevor Leon
Tristan John
Tru Amore'
Tyler James
Tyneisha Chavon
Veronica Yolanda
Violet Emily
William Jr
William Arthur
Willie James
Xavier Warren
Yahri
Yemoja Katherine
Zachary Ira
Zari Taniel

APPENDIX 3

US REGIONS



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Thesis Title: Lakeisha and KuShawn: A Cultural Linguistic Approach to Afro-American Onomastics.

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr.George Urioste, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. John Swetnam, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Rainer Spencer, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. David Beisecker, Ph. D.