Our Names in the Computing Age

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United States: Personal; Middle; Family

Latin America/Spanish: Personal; Middle; Patronym; Matronym

South India: Personal; Family; Village [2]

Japan: Family; Given

Hungary: Family; Given

China: Family; First character; Second character [5]

Iceland: Given; Father's given *-son/dottir*;

Pakistan: Given; Father's given

Nuer (Sudan): Maternal given; Paternal given; Clan; Ox; Nickname(s) [7]

- **Reference function**: A linguistic token that identifies an individual. ("Who is that? That is John.")
- Names help us select people from our "social database" in order to view the full "entry".
- **Social Function**: But names do more than refer to a human entity.

"Sir?" said Harry. "I've been thinking...sir—even if the Stone's gone, Vol-, I mean, YouKnow-Who—"
"Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself."   *(J.K. Rowling)*

Connecting and Individualizing Functions

- **Connecting Functions**: Personal names place you in a social, linguistic, ancestral context (We-Identity)

- **Individualizing Functions**: Parents choose a name to evoke some desired quality in a child; a name is what makes You You! (I-Identity)

- The forename-surname paradigm captures this contrast, although this may be modified, for example when a child's given name is the name of an ancestor.

Finch, Janet. "Naming names: kinship, individuality and personal names". In: *Sociology* 42.2 (2008)

A Need for Standardized Naming Practices

- Modern governments require organized data about its populations to carry out large-scale plans.

- Need to quickly and accurately identify individuals; reference function of names has become more important.

- Surnames narrow the chances of misidentification and provide information about an individual's family and ancestry.

Scott, James C., Tehranian, John, and Mathias, Jeremy. "The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname". In: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44.1 (2002)

The rise of the permanent patronym is inextricably associated with those aspects of state-making in which it was desirable to distinguish individual (male) subjects: tax collection (including tithes), conscription, land revenue, court judgements, witness records, and police work. (Scott, Tehranian, and Mathias [6])

The problem of naming and identification can be expressed generally. Let us imagine a police official (it could be a tax collector or a conscription officer) who is trying to locate a specific, unique individual. Assume further that he is faced with a situation not unlike that of a small English village in 1700, but with *no* surnames, let alone fixed, patronymic surnames. Take a comparatively simple case of a village with, say, 1,000 males bearing only one of eight names which are, for the sake of this initial case, perfectly evenly distributed across the (male) population. How likely, in this case, is our police official to collar the man he is after? If he knows he is looking for a "Henry," there will be 125 "Henrys" in this village and 124 of them will be the wrong "Henry." Without local assistance and under the assumption, for the sake of argument, that he actually knows the 'true' given names of all villagers, he will almost surely fail. What if we imagine that all males in this village have *two names*, which vary independently? In this case, the chances that the police official will grab the wrong "Henry" are much reduced, but still substantial, as there will be about 15 "Henry Thomass," 15 "William Jamess," etc. Once we move to *three names* (also varying independently), it is likely that the police official will get his man half the time on average. The opacity of the villagers to outside identification is reduced radically by the use of each additional identifying name.

- Digital society is accelerating the degradation of names' social function.
- Large-scale digital communication (ie. globalisation) is levelling the

Thus Spake Lord Zuckerberg

Facebook is a community where everyone uses the name they go by in everyday life. This makes it so that you always know who you're connecting with. Your name can't include:

- *Symbols, numbers, unusual capitalization, repeating characters or punctuation.*
- *Characters from multiple languages.*
- *Titles of any kind (example: professional, religious).*
- *Words or phrases in place of a name.*

(Facebook)

What names are allowed on Facebook? [8]

California

- 29% of California's population speaks Spanish in the home. *Detailed Languages Spoken at Home and Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over for States: 2009-2013* [1]

- However, English was declared the official language by a 1986 ballot referendum; the legislature has the power to enforce this provision by law.

- Accordingly, the Office of Vital Records prohibits the use of non-English characters in birth certificates; likewise for drivers licenses. [4]

- A 2017 bill to allow diacritical marks passed both houses of the legislature but was vetoed by Governor Brown because computer upgrades were expected to cost millions of dollars.

- Mǎ Chěng's (马骋) given name is not one of the 32,252 characters recognised by government computers in China.
- In 2009, *New York Times* reported that Chinese government was introducing new ID cards;
- "Miss Ma and at least some of the 60 million other Chinese with obscure characters in their names cannot get new cards — unless they change their names to something more common." [3]
- At the time of the article, Mǎ solved the problem by obtaining a temporary ID card every three months.

- Hawaiian woman Janice Lokelani Keihanaikukauakahihuliheekahaunaele won a battle with the state government in 2013 to have her full name included on her driver's license.

- Her lengthy surname is her deceased husband's complete name.

- Hawaiian is one of two official languages in the State of Hawaii, the other being English.
  Over the last 22 years I have seen…the culture of Hawaii being trampled upon and this policeman treated my name as if it was mumbo-jumbo. (Janice "Lokelani" Keihanaikukauakahihuliheekahaunaele)

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Solutions and Strategies

- Unicode
- Passports
- More

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