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Naming Practices in South America

JOHN BREGENZER *

ABSTRACT—On the basis of previous investigation of modes of address and social structure, this study attempts to show that certain naming practices in South America are related to indicators of a postulated individualism-communalism continuum of the societies. The results suggest a relationship between some naming practices and a continuum based on mean size of the local community.

Among studies of the relationship between language and society, three postwar works, *Language in Culture* (Hoijer 1954), *Language in Culture and Society* (Hymes 1964a) and *The Ethnography of Communication* (Hymes) (1964b) indicate the nature of the field.

It is a field without a generally-accepted name, as Hymes notes:

"Ethnolinguistics," "psycholinguists," "sociolinguists"—these, and the old standby, "language and culture," are the chief terms by which one or another common cause between linguistics and other fields, especially anthropology, has come to be known in the period since World War II. "Linguistics" itself would do, of course, if linguists generally would agree to such a scope for the discipline. This seems unlikely, however, and composite terms are likely to prevail wherever something of concern both to linguists and others is in question. (Hymes 1964b, p. 2)

Historic Resemblances

It is not, however, a new area of study. A seventeenth-century work which resembles contemporary approaches in its cross-cultural documentation is George Fox's argument for abandoning the use of two words for "you" whose usage was determined by relative social rank. He argues that this usage is unbecoming a Christian society, and supports his argument by citing seven "pagan" societies which have this distinction. It is ironic that although Fox perceived this relationship between language and society, and although the English language did change to the use of one pronoun of address, he and the Quakers adopted egalitarian "thou"—the form which was dropped from the language. (Cited in Brown and Gilman 1960).

Recent focus of the field has been on modes of address and social structure. Evans-Pritchard argues that "names and titles of address . . . symbolize a man's social position in relation to the people around him. The status of the speaker to the person addressed is readily recognized" (1948). Brown and Ford show how the use of first name versus a title and last name in American-English address indicates a relation between two speakers

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(1961). Foster examines the relationship between speech forms and perception of social distance in a Mexican village, concluding: "Speech forms reflect two principal types of social relationships, which may be called 'institutional' and 'variable'" (1964). Guemple shows how name-sharing is related to kinship terms and social relationships in an Eskimo society (1965).

In "The Pronouns of Power and Solidarity" (Brown and Gilman 1960), the authors argue that when two pronouns of address are present in a language, the forms are used non-reciprocally to indicate a relationship in which one person has power over another, and reciprocally to indicate a solidarity relationship. From this it may be postulated that societies with relatively elaborate social stratification would tend to have more than one pronoun of address, while societies with relatively simple social stratification would tend to have only one pronoun of address. In a worldwide sample of 44 societies, this relationship appeared statistically significant (Bregenzler n.d.).

The results of this study have led to a search for other linguistic correlates of social structure. It seems likely that when there are different kinds of relationships between persons, the persons involved must indicate to each other at the onset of interaction the kind of relationship in which they are engaged. Language can express a relationship, and "Modes of Address" is language used at the onset of interaction.

Goodenough, in "Personal Names and Modes of Address in Two Oceanic Societies," (1965) writes:

It is evident that before the introduction of European and Japanese names in Truk, *no two persons ever had the same personal name . . .* (In Lakalai) nearly everyone shares his name or names with someone else . . . Truk's naming and address customs compensate in another way for the suppression of individuality in Truk's social system . . . In Lakalai the public values emphasize individual achievement.

This observation is a major element in the formulation of the more general hypothesis of the present study.

The Hypothesis

Relatively individualistic societies tend to have naming practices which indicate respect for individuals. Relatively communalistic societies tend to lack such practices and tend, instead, to have practices which compensate for suppression of individuality.

Representation of the Hypothesis

	NAMING PRACTICES	
	Respect	Compensation
Communalistic Societies	o	x
Individualistic Societies	x	o

x: many societies expected
o: few societies expected

Definitions

"Individualistic Societies" are defined for the purpose of this study as societies possessing one or more of the following characteristics:

- Relatively low mean size of the local community.
- Relatively simple social stratification.
- Relative unimportance of agriculture.
- Nuclear families and nuclear family households.
- Nomadic settlement patterns.
- Relatively low level of political integration.

"Communalistic Societies" are defined for the purpose of this study as societies possessing one or more of these other characteristics:

- Relatively high mean size of the local community.
- Relatively elaborate social stratification.
- Relative importance of agriculture.
- Lineal or extended families and households.
- Sedentary settlement patterns.
- Relatively high level of political integration.

Method

The hypothesis is examined in South America by the method of controlled comparison. Eggan prefers a "utilization of comparative method on a smaller scale" because the results can be matched with comparable studies, and because it avoids too great a degree of abstraction (1954, pp. 747-48). Since this is taken to be an exploratory study, it is felt that regional limitation produces a more manageable number and variety of naming practices than would a worldwide investigation.

Testing the hypothesis involved three steps: data collection, coding, and statistical treatment.

The data on naming practices were collected primarily from the Human Relations Area Files. Category 551. "Personal Names," was consulted. Sixteen societies were present, classified as South American. Because the Inca society was not present, the Aztec was substituted as an example of a "high civilization." An eighteenth society, the Siriono, was added because excellent data on its naming practices is available in Holmberg's ethnography (1950).

Information on these eighteen societies, which constitute the sample, was placed on file cards. Initially, cod-

ing the data involved deciding which practices of those present indicated respect for the individual and which indicated compensation for suppression of individuality. Then each society was rated for presence or absence of the practice.

Indicators of Respect

The following practices, with an example for each, were judged to indicate respect:

UNIFORMITY OF NAMES—Names are generally borne by more than one person. Araucanians: Government workers urged the Indians to adopt more distinctive names, whereupon the Araucanians promptly took such names as struck their fancy. Many assumed the names of the surveyors and officials who were working among them. (Titiev 1951 p. 19)

FEW CHANGES OF NAME—Names generally remain unchanged for the lifetime of an individual. Nambicuara: The boy is given a name (at puberty) which he will keep for life. (Oberg 1953 p. 103)

NAME TABOOS—Persons have names which are widely known, but generally avoided in address. Tehuelche: Even in conversation concerning each other, they managed to avoid "naming names" as strictly as so many honorable senators, though for no reason I could discover. (Bourne 1874 p. 150).

NICKNAMES PREVALENT—Nicknames are defined as names which refer to physical or behavioral characteristics of an individual. Mention of presence of such names counts as prevalence. Cayapa: Sooner or later in its babyhood some act or circumstance connected with its life will appeal to the members of the family as particularly ludicrous or interesting. Its name is thereupon changed, it being called by the name of this act or circumstance to the almost total exclusion of its baptismal name. (Barrett 1925 p. 319).

TEKNONOMY—Parents are addressed as "Father (or "Mother") of So-and-So," or persons are usually addressed by citing their relationship to someone. Callincgo: They have no names, and they ordinarily call a man son of so-and-so, as Jews were accustomed to do. (DuTerter 1667 p. 11)

DEATH CHANGES—When a person dies, some people change their names or their use of names. Goajiro: At the death, others of the same name change theirs, at least in the area of the habitual home of the dead man's relatives, in order to prevent that name being used in their presence, as this would involve a compensation payment. (Pineda 1950 p. 22)

Compensating for Suppression

Practices judged to indicate compensation for suppression of individuality include:

DIVERSITY OF NAMES—Very few persons bear the same name, or names unlike existing names are preferred. Miskito: Foreigners traveling on the Mosquito Coast are frequently asked by the Indians to name

their youngest child. It is often difficult to find a name which is acceptable to them as they do not want any which is already found in the region. (Conzemius 1932 p. 104)

MANY CHANGES OF NAME—Names are often changed for reasons other than someone's death. Abipon: The Abipons change their names as Europeans change their clothes (Dobrizhoffer 1822 p. 444)

ACHIEVED NAMES—A person's name is changed when he gains prestige through some accomplishment. Tupinamba: For every foe a man kills, he takes a new name. The most famous among them is he that has the most names. (Souza 1851 p. 308)

NAMING AFTER FAMOUS OR WEALTHY INDIVIDUALS—Persons of families not famous or wealthy are named after famous or wealthy persons. Talamanca: For the most part, the names were taken from individuals who caught their fancy, even though not known personally. (Stone 1962 p. 27)

Much of the rationale for this classification is based on Goodenough's study of naming in Truk and Lakalai (1965), cited above. Another basis for making judgments is the idea that "the extreme form of respect is one of avoidance" (Schusky 1965 p. 55). Any avoidance of a person's name is considered a form of respect-avoidance. For the classification of changes of name it is reasoned that if a person is to have distinctive name, it is likely also to be permanent.

Application of Statistics

The statistical treatment involved two phases. First, each of the naming variables was tested against each of the social variables by the use of two-by-two tables and the Fisher test (following Siegel 1956). Published ratings of the social variables were utilized: *World Ethnographic Sample* (Murdock 1957) and *The Ethnographic Atlas* (Ethnology 1962-present). In all of the statistical work, there were these assumptions: probability of .05 or less is significant; the model used is correct; the measurement requirements are satisfied.

Second, a Guttman scale was constructed which ranked the societies according to the prevalence of respect in their naming practices. This scale was tested against the social variables with the Mann-Whitney U test.

Results

The significant results of this study are contained in the accompanying tables.

Assessment of the Results

This study indicates that in South America there are significant relationships between naming practices and mean size of the local community. The results indicate that naming taboos and prevalent nicknames tend to be found in small communities, famous names in large ones. Further, a ranking of the societies by amount of respect for the individual shown in naming practices correlates significantly with mean size of the local community—the

most respect being shown in societies with small communities.

It is logical that respect and compensatory naming practices should correlate with community size. If small communities are regarded as "folk societies," Redfield's comment becomes relevant:

In the folk society all human beings admitted to the

TABLE I: Relation of Prevalent Nicknames and Community Size

	123	4568
Nicknames Prevalent	Araucanians Goajiro Jivaro Miskito Mundurucu Nambicuara Siriono Tapirape Tehuelche Yahgan (10)	Cayapa
Nicknames not Prevalent		Aymara Aztec Tupinamba

p < .005 (one tailed, by table)

123: Community size of 199 persons or less

4568: Community size of 200 persons or more

TABLE 2. Relation of Famous Names and Community Size

	1234	568
Famous Names		Aymara Aztec
No Famous Names	Araucanians Goajiro Jivaro Miskito Mundurucu Nambicuara Siriono Tapirape Tehuelche Yahgan (11)	Cayapa

p < .05 (one tailed, by table)

1234: Community size of 399 persons or less

568: Community size of 400 persons or more

TABLE 3. Relation of Name Taboos and Community Size

	123	4568
Taboo	Araucanians Goajiro Jivaro Miskito Mundurucu Nambicuara Tehuelche Yahgan (8)	
No Taboo	Siriono Tapirape	Aymara Aztec Cayapa Tupinamba

p < .025 (one tailed, by table)

TABLE 4. Guttman Scale of Respect in Naming

Scale Type	Death Changes	Taboos	Nicknames
I Goajiro	X	X	X
Miskito	X	X	X
Nambicuara	X	X	X
Yahgan	X	X	X
II Araucanians	O	X	X
Callinago	O	X	X
Jivaro	O	X	X
Mundurucu	O	X	X
Talamanca	O	X	X
Tehuelche	O	X	X
III Abipon	O	X	O
Tapirape	O	X	O
IV Caingang	O	O	X
*Cayapa	O	O	X
Siriono	O	O	X
V *Aymara	O	O	O
*Aztec	O	O	O
*Tupinamba	O	O	O

Coefficient of Reproducibility: .96

* Community Size of 200 Persons or More
p < .001 (by Mann-Whitney U Test)

society are treated as persons; one does not deal impersonally ("thing fashion") with any other participant in the little world of that society . . . The smallness of the folk society and the long association together of the same individuals certainly is related to the prevailing personal character of relationships. (1947 pp. 301 and 306)

"Dealing personally" results in attention to the person and the personality with whom one is dealing. This attention is evidenced in frequent use of nicknames. Naming practices indicative of respect for the individual are certainly more appropriate here than where one deals "thing fashion."

If, on the other hand, a large community is characterized by impersonal treatment of individuals, a parent can give a child the name of a famous person without implicating the famous person, and thus do it for reasons of magic only.

The hypothesis that naming practices are related to an individualism-communalism continuum is not clearly supported, but certain naming practices do appear to be related to a continuum of community size.

Suggestions for Future Research

It might be useful to test the relationships in a cross-cultural sample. Such testing might shed more light on the nature of the relationships by ruling out or confirming biasing factors peculiar to South America.

It is possible that a mistake may have been made in formulation of the hypothesis of this study. Perhaps the social side of the postulated relationship was not measured closely enough. "Cultural complexity" and "communalism" are not identical concepts, yet the indicators selected for the individualism-communalism continuum do not clearly delineate the two. It might be well to limit studies to such fields as "language and social stratification" or "language and community size."

The naming practices which did not correlate with any

of the social variables also could be further investigated. The non-significance of number of different names and number of name changes may be due to inexact data. Teknomy may be more indicative of importance of parenthood in a society, or of importance of kinship bonds than of expression of respect through avoidance of personal names.

Conclusion

Modes of address have long been recognized as related to social variables. Certain naming practices, as modes of address, appear from the results of this study to be related to a social variable—mean size of the local community.

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