This paper is concerned with the relationship of linguistic forms to social structure and cultural values. It centers on the use of personal names, in address and in the form of graffiti, among two groups of black students in an urban American high school. I collected the data in New York City, between mid-September and mid-June of the 1970-71 school year, while engaged in a study of informal leadership among students at what is here called the Annex of Central High School.

The Annex accommodated seven hundred ninth grade pupils, ninety-five percent of whom were black and Puerto Rican boys and girls, ranging in age from thirteen to fifteen years. The staff was predominantly white. Pupils came to the Annex from a number of feeder schools in East, West and Central Harlem and, after spending the freshman year at the Annex, entered tenth grade at the parent school.

In what follows I examine variations in the use of names, both in address and in graffiti, in two groups of students, known to their classmates as The Bosses with the Hot Sauces and The Lovers (or The Sisters of Black Culture). Then I discuss the social and cultural
implications of the naming patterns identified and, finally, suggest some further lines of study related to the research described here.

**Pupil-teacher address**

The mode of address used between pupils and teachers conformed to the pattern Brown and Ford (1964) have described for American English. Pupils addressed teachers by Title plus Last Name, Title alone (e.g., Teacher) or the omnibus You (which let pupils avoid either of the preceding alternatives). They received First Name in return. The three choices available to pupils represented a scale of increasing social distance between themselves and teachers. A fourth form, used between male teachers and male students in informal settings (during basketball practice, for example, or on field trips away from the school), involved the reciprocal exchange of Last Names, with students omitting Title.

**Pupil-other adult (non-teacher) address**

On entering the field I asked pupils to call me by my first name. But for two months, during which they tested me in a variety of ways, they addressed me according to the pattern for teachers. Some used Title plus First Name (e.g., Miss Linda), some used Title alone (e.g., Lady) and some resorted to the You form. In return, I addressed them by their first names.

After two months, members of the Bosses and the Lovers, two of the dominant hangout groups in the school, decided I was acceptable. The following events completed my initiation into these groups and marked
a change in my status.

On Black Solidarity Day many black students stayed out of school. But core members of the Bosses and the Lovers, who normally cut several classes daily to hang out together in interstitial corners of the Annex, came to school. They expected, correctly, that the staff would honor the semi-official holiday by letting them do as they pleased.

Gathering in the lunchroom, they spent the morning playing records, singing and dancing. By noontime they had attracted a sizable audience of students and staff. Suddenly Jackie, a leading member of the Lovers, asked me if I knew how to dance. I said I did, a little, though not nearly as well as she and her friends. Her companion, a youth known as Sabata, grinned at me and held out his hand, saying, "Come on, Miss Linda, check it out!" At that, Jackie tapped my shoulder lightly and said "Bet". My observations of the students' use of the term "Bet" suggested that she was daring me to accept Sabata's invitation. I took his hand and we started to dance.

After a while Sabata's steps grew faster and more intricate and, to the delight of the audience, I began to falter. Laughing and thanking him for the dance lesson, I said I had to get back to work. "Hey!", Sabata shouted gleefully after me as I left the lunchroom, "there go the dancer!"
The next day several Bosses and Lovers greeted me with "Hey, Dancer, what's happenin'?" From then on they addressed me as Dancer, or by my first name alone. Later some began calling me Lois Lane, after the girl reporter in *Superman*, one of their favorite television programs.

Although my age and ethnic background disqualified me from full membership in the Bosses or the Lovers, I had now become an honorary member. Further participation in their activities indicated that, by taking Jackie's dare and dancing with Sabata, I had publicly demonstrated that I met the main criteria for membership in hangout groups; namely, the ability to amuse or entertain others, and a readiness to take risks. I had risked no more than making a fool of myself, perhaps, by attracting scornful comments from students or arousing the disapproval of some teachers. But my performance had amused the audience and apparently satisfied Sabata. He announced my new status by bestowing a nickname on me and his friends acknowledged my initiation into their groups by using that nickname to address me. Later, after I had consolidated my position, they added another.

**Pupil-pupil address**

Pupils addressed each other reciprocally, using first names, often in diminutive form, and a variety of nicknames. Few teachers knew their students' nicknames and those who did tended to refrain from using them in address. Indeed, students discouraged teachers from addressing them by nicknames by laughing at such attempts or retreating
into a sullen silence.

The students' nicknames seemed to me analogous, in form and function, to the Nuer calf and ox names that Evans-Pritchard (1964) described. That is, they reflected the bearers' personal and/or social attributes (or at least those to which they aspired) and expressed structural relationships between speakers. Some examples appear in the following section; others can be found in the appended glossary.

In sum, the use of names in address indicated degrees of social distance among students, between students and teachers, and between students and the writer. The accompanying chart summarizes the linguistically marked social distances among pupils and between them and the adults in the school.

**GRAFFITI**

The Bosses and the Lovers wrote their names and nicknames, with great care and artistry, on their clothing and personal possessions, on desk-tops and in the pages of Slam Books, and on the schoolhouse walls. They also inscribed them on public buses, on billboards and buildings and, by preference, on the outside of subway trains. Names and nicknames occurred singly, clustered together and, on occasion, in lists beneath the group names.

There were two distinct classes of nicknames. Those in the first class corresponded to positions in the group. Peripheral members
of the Bosses, for example, used their first and last initials as nicknames: K.D. stood for Keith Dennis; K.K. for Kevin Kendall. I noticed that these initials never appeared on public lists under the Bosses' group name. But Keith had written The Bosses on the inside cover of his notebook, placed his initials directly underneath and added the nicknames of the seven core members of the Bosses below.

Core members of the Bosses did not use their initials as nicknames. Instead, rank and file members had nicknames that stemmed from and reflected their personal qualities: Spider for a skinny-framed, long-legged youth; Cowboy for a youth with bowed legs who always wore a cowboy hat and so on. Leading members, in contrast, nicknamed themselves after their heroes from the commercial culture of comic books, movies or television. Sabata was chosen by a youth who admired the daring revolutionary of the movie Viva Zapata; Goldfinger was selected by a boy who had been impressed with that particular movie character's ruthless exercise of power.

The Lovers' nicknames resembled the Bosses' nicknames but, in keeping with the relatively looser structure of the girls' group, marked no rank distinctions. Cola was the nickname of a lively, bubbly girl; Dusty described a rather light-skinned one and so on. But Jackie, the leader of the group, was known as Asia and, before long, she bestowed similarly exotic sounding names on her co-members. These
constituted a second class of nicknames which reflected identification with African and other black cultures.

Asia, whose black culture nickname marked her entrance into a sect known as the Five Percenters, described her initiation into the sect in the following way:

My boyfriend, he Five Percenter and, you know, he brung the whole story down to me. So he say, "Why don't you get yourself together, sister, and stop bein' in the whitey world. Go back to your own world." Like that. So I asked him what was he talkin' about. He said, "Let me show you." (A description of how Jackie gets her first Afro haircut follows). And then he told me that my name just don't suit as a Five Percenter. Like, you know, they'll say "Asia", maybe "Jemel", maybe "Siwana". And like the boys, they'll have like "Armel" or you know, "Ra-Kee", yeah, "Kusan", you know, all Arabian names like that. Like in the olden days there was people that believe in Allah or Ali. You gotta learn Swahili too.

Sometimes the Bosses and the Lovers inscribed their names as follows:

| Harold as Lefty | Larry as Goldfinger |
| Katie as Cola | Jeanne as Dusty |
| Spider 117 | Theresa as Tea of the Lincoln |

Sometimes the "as" form appeared in the reflexive. One found Cola as Katie alongside Katie as Cola; Goldfinger as Larry next to Larry as Goldfinger. When asked what the "as" signified, informants explained impatiently, "It means that sometimes I'm Katie and sometimes I'm Cola, that's all." Street numbers, such as 117, and the
names of housing projects (e.g., the Lincoln) served as surnames, distinguishing Spiders and Teas in particular hangout groups from their counterparts in other groups on other blocks.

In contrast, black culture names never appeared in conjunction with street numbers or the names of housing projects. Although they sometimes appeared in the "as" construction, they did not occur in the reflexive form and, as the year progressed, tended more and more to appear alone. The following message, inscribed on the desk of one of the Lovers, suggested a possible reason for the differences in names expressed in graffiti:

Libby was her name
And dick was her game
Libby was a pussy
But Libby died 500 years ago
That name don't exist no more
Libby as Makeba

DISCUSSION

I now wish to consider the following questions:

1. How do we account for the students' emphasis on naming?
2. What are the implications of variations in the use of the "as" form, and of the correspondence between types of nicknames and relative standing in the Bosses?
3. What, if any, relationship exists between the students' preference for writing their names on subway cars and the cultural values held by the writers?

The emphasis on naming, which may be typical of adolescents in some societies, reflects concern with identity. What seems to me likely, however, is that such concern on the part of black
Americans stems from their experience with whites who tend to deny the individuality of blacks. An encounter described by black psychiatrist Alvin Poussaint (1967) provides a moving example:

Once last year as I was leaving my office in Jackson, Miss., with my Negro secretary, a white policeman yelled, 'Hey, boy! Come here!' Somewhat bothered, I retorted, 'I'm no boy!' He then rushed at me, inflamed and stood towering over me, snorting, 'What d'ja say, boy?' Quickly he frisked me and demanded, 'What's your name, boy?' Frightened, I replied, 'Dr. Poussaint, I'm a physician.' He angrily chuckled and hissed, 'What's your first name, boy?' When I hesitated he assumed a threatening stance and clenched his fists. As my heart palpitated, I muttered in profound humiliation, 'Alvin.' He continued his psychological brutality, bellowing 'Alvin, the next time I call you, you come right away, you hear? You hear?' I hesitated. 'You hear me, boy?' My voice trembling with helplessness, but following my instincts of self-preservation, I murmured, 'Yes, sir.'

If white men have treated black men as an undifferentiated mass of "boys", it may have been adaptive for the latter to become several boys, each with a different name. For names, which belong to the realm of clothing, can be put on and taken off like costumes, permitting the bearer to display different identities on different occasions and for different purposes. Like the forms of black speech that Kochman (1969) has identified - rapping, shucking, jiving, gripping, sounding and signifying - names can be used "to project personality, assert oneself or arouse emotion" for the purpose of manipulating and controlling people and situations.
The "as" phenomenon, together with the correspondence between types of nicknames and positions in the Bosses suggests that hangout groups form a continuum of varying degrees of interconnectedness: from loosely structured play-groups to tightly knit, hierarchically organized gangs. At the playgroup end of the continuum individuals express simultaneous identification with the social worlds of family and peer group by taking their own initials for nicknames and by using the "as" form, especially in the reflexive. At the gang end of the range, where loyalty to the peer group overrides other loyalties, expressions of dual identification would disappear.

The expression of names in graffiti relates to the cultural values of the Bosses and the Lovers in at least two ways. One reflects the value of risk-taking; the other reflects the influence of television which probably affected the Bosses and the Lovers more than any medium in the wider society. We have seen that readiness to take risks is a criterion for membership in a hangout group. The greater the risks taken, moreover, the more prestige an individual acquires. I believe that core members of the Bosses and the Lovers preferred writing their names on the outside of subway trains because this was an extremely dangerous activity, involving potential risk of electrocution. Further, by writing on speeding subways which carried their names throughout the city, the Bosses and the Lovers were, in a sense, creating their own form of television for themselves and their fellow citizens to see. And, indeed, they spent hours on station plat-
forms waiting to see their names, and those of their friends, pass by.

In conclusion, I hasten to acknowledge that the parts of the picture I have presented here need much more data for their confirmation. It seems likely, however, that the study of naming, long an area of anthropological interest (cf Hymes, 1964, Part V for an extensive bibliography on personal names), will repay the efforts of anthropologists working in urban settings. One obvious extension of the research described in this paper, for example, would be a comparison of the naming patterns among the Bosses and the Lovers with those used by Puerto Ricans of similar age and socio-economic background. Data from Thrasher's (1927) famous study of Chicago youth gangs, as well as from an article by writer-teacher Herbert Kohl (1969), suggest that similarities in naming will outweigh differences. Another line of research is suggested by Asia's account of how she received her black culture nickname. The last line of her narrative seems to link the taking of a black culture name to the study of Swahili. A comparison of the syllable canon and distribution of phonemes in black culture names with those of Swahili or other African languages should interest not only linguists but also anthropologists concerned with the general process of cultural borrowing and innovation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Friendly</th>
<th>Informal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lin Liya</td>
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"Lively and social, friendly and outgoing, and easy to get along with."

"Centers of high school."
A GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND NICKNAMES

The Bosses
Bobby as Sabata
Larry as Goldfinger
Toby as Big T.
Tyrone as Smokey
Harold as Lefty
Tommy as Spider
James as Cowboy
Keith as K.D.
Kevin as K.K.

The Lovers
Jackie as Asia
Jeanne as Dusty or Jemel
Katie as Cola or Ebony
Sharon as Hashina
Ruby as Sharmain
Eva as Ching or Keisha
Sylvia as Sister or Sheika
Julie as Biggie or Uganda
Roselee as Latissa
Clara as Cookie or Tawana
Theresa as Tea or Gerursur
Venus as I-esha
Libby as Makeba

Nicknames used by others

Boys:
Bobo the Motion
Mandrake the Magician
Animal
Killer
Slick
Sly
Snake
Jaguar
Stay High
Black Boy
Country
Popeye
Dealer
Speed
Spade
E.J. Home
Money

Girls:
Diamond
Foxie
Muffin
Poopie
Dizzy
Freshie
Apache
Eyes
Buttons
Sleepy
Lonely
1. My thanks to the staff and students of the Annex of Central High School in New York City for tolerating my presence, however unwillingly, for an entire academic year. Special thanks to the Bosses and the Lovers for letting me share a part of their lives and teaching me much that I will not soon forget.

I am grateful to Professor Richard Howell, in whose seminar in sociolinguistics I presented an earlier version of this paper, for introducing me to Brown and Ford's (1964) paper on address in American English and urging me to get out of the library and into the field. Professors William Labov, Sally McLendon and Harvey Pitkin gave me many suggestions and ideas that I have tried to weave into the paper; I hope they will be as generous in forgiving its shortcomings. It is a pleasure to thank my colleagues, Dr. Muriel Hammer and Ms. Sue Makiesky, for giving me many helpful suggestions in commenting on the final draft of this presentation.

2. The name of the school and the names of its occupants have been changed in order to protect informants from identification.

3. My observations of the Bosses and the Lovers' use of their group names suggested that they encompassed the following meanings: toughness, independence, sexual virility and the ability to use drugs and liquor without losing self-control or becoming addicted.

4. Slam Books, or Slang Books, are school notebooks containing questions about sexual attitudes and experiences, the quality of social life in various housing projects, the relative popularity of current songs, dances and the like. They also contain invitations to evaluate one's parents and peers. A student who wishes to circulate a Slam Book simply writes his or her name and nickname on the cover, numbers twenty or thirty lines on the first page and asks others to sign in. Those who do so contribute opinions and answer the questions that follow, labeling their comments with the number that appears next to their names on the first, or Sign-In page.

5. An evaluation of nicknames expressed in graffiti requires ethnographic information on the writers since some individuals invent initials for nicknames which are not based on their own first and last names.
6. Students either did not know or would not tell me what the name Five Percenters stood for. However, a black teacher at the Annex said that it came from the following expression: "Eighty-five percent of the niggers out there is Uncle Toms; ten percent ain't worth shit; and we the five percent that's gonna save the others."

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