THE LANGUAGE OF CORPORATE NAMES:
HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND LINGUISTIC FACTORS IN THE
EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY CORPORATION NAMING PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation will examine the way in which technology corporation names have evolved over the past century. Throughout U.S. business history, technology corporations were receiving descriptive names like General Electric (1892) and International Business Machines (1924) and eponymous names like Pitney Bowes (1920) and Hewlett-Packard (1939). When firms started being named with slangy irreverent monikers like FatBrain (1993) and Hawaiian names like Akamai (1999), it was apparent that a significant linguistic change was underway. The choice of technology corporation names in the late 20th century signals a fundamental shift in the way that the corporate community, and possibly a larger population of U.S. English language speakers, perceived and used language.

Considering the role that corporations play in the life of most Americans, very little research has been conducted on corporate language use and linguistic practices. This dissertation will focus on names, an understudied topic in a broader study of language in its own right. The United States corporate setting brings together communities of speakers from a variety of backgrounds with multiplicities of linguistic repertoires. I will attempt to shed light on language production – in the form of corporate names – within this cultural site. Likewise, the community of practice, a diverse linguistic network that exists among the corporate employees, customers, and a broader community consisting of those impacted by corporate language and linguistic practices will be closely examined.
This cross disciplinary study relies on work that has been done in Linguistics, Anthropology, Sociology, Literary Studies, and Business Administration to explain patterns of onomastic change. Various factors are discussed including (1) increasingly crowded marketplaces; (2) trademarkability; (3) globalization; and (4) increased corporate intimacy with consumers. I will demonstrate that these changes were not random, not haphazard but involved a combination of socio-historical and linguistic factors that have interacted to bring about dramatic changes in corporate names.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

*Who hath not own'd, with rapture-smitten frame,*  
*The power of grace, the magic of a name?*  
-Thomas Campbell

1.1. The Study of Names

This dissertation is a study of the linguistic and socio-historical factors involved in corporate naming practices. I will be describing the ways in which corporate names have evolved over the past century, discussing factors that have influenced these changes, and explaining how these factors have brought about changes in corporate naming practices.

As I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Two, names and naming practices have long been studied within the fields of Anthropology, Sociology, and Linguistics. Onomastics, a cross-disciplinary field that studies names and naming practices, has emerged over the past fifty years or so. Progress in the field has been slow as interest in names and naming as a primary course of research tends not be high among scholars in their respective fields. My own interest in Onomastics is somewhat accidental; I had no interest in the study of names during my time as a graduate student, and only became interested after my professional career forced me to examine the subject more closely.
One of the things that fascinates me most about naming is the fact that it involves the creation of language itself. New words are added to languages everyday and Internet technology, which has become rampant in much of the world, has increased the numbers of new words and graphemes in the English language in a rapid and profound manner (c.f., Crystal 2001 & 2004). In Chapter Four (section 4.4.2.2) I’ll talk about the growth in use of the Internet and the World Wide Web, and the impact on language production.

As a relative newcomer to the study of names, what most surprises me is that I didn’t discover this field earlier. Onomastics touches so many things that have always interested me about language: language use, practice, ideology, and language play. Names are ubiquitous linguistic artifacts; every person that we meet has a name; streets, cities, and countries have names; cars have names, companies have names; you name it, names are everywhere. In addition to extant names that we come in contact with everyday, many of us need to come up with names, or help people come up with names for things from time to time.

Anyone who has ever tried to name their pet, whether it’s a goldfish, turtle, cat, dog, or horse, knows how challenging it can be to come up with good names and how difficult it is to decide on a final name. Coming up with a name for an academic paper or dissertation can cause unimaginable strife. When it comes to naming children, this can be exponentially more challenging, and cause many parents of newborns to reach their boiling points in a hurry. I know one couple who, after

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1 As proof, various names for this dissertation include ‘The Evolution of Corporate Names’, ‘Technology Corporation Names’, ‘A History of Technology Corporation Names’, and ‘Changing Names’, and I won’t even mention the multiplicity of subtitles that were considered.
taking several days to settle on a name for their infant son, ultimately rued their decision and bestowed him with a new name more than a week later. My wife and I actually chose one name for our son before going to sleep, and changed the name to what it is today in the morning. Names carry a great deal of linguistic, cultural, and historical baggage with them. We are wary of names that remind us of a person, place, or thing that we don’t like and we don’t like names that sound too weak or too strong, too old-fashioned or too trendy.

When it comes to corporate names, the process for determining a name may be different from the process for naming a pet or a child, but the same linguistic, cultural, and social factors come in to play, along with additional business factors. In the 19th century, it used to be that a company’s founder would simply name the company after himself or come up with a very descriptive term that referenced exactly what the company was selling. This naming practice dominated through the first half of the 20th century before it started to change. Eponymous names and descriptive names started becoming a little less common, and names that were more connotative, or at least less rigidly descriptive, came into more frequent use.

In Chapter Two I will define the category of corporate names that I will be examining. Specifically, I will be focusing on corporate names that are associated with technology companies, and I will define what this means. I will be discussing the fieldwork that I conducted over the course of the past five years during which I worked as a professional namer for a naming agency, and naming manager for a large technology company in the Silicon Valley. My research will be positioned within a large body of work that has been done in Onomastics and Linguistics.
In Chapter Three I will provide a taxonomy of corporate names. This taxonomy is intended to fit into larger proposed typologies of names, three of which will be discussed in detail. The goal here is to establish a framework within which all the types of corporate names can be explained and defined. This will serve as an important tool that will be used to explain the ways in which names have changed.

In Chapter Four I will outline the historical U.S. business setting. I will discuss early U.S. industry, and the ways in which the expansion of U.S. industry coincided with the geopolitical expansion of the United States. Some of the most important developments during this period involved the establishment of various modes of transport that allowed communications to become faster and more efficient. Starting with the telegraph and railroads, and continuing with the telephone, the automobile, air transport, and eventually the Internet, modes of communication and the spread of mass media created an environment that led to changes in the ways that corporations envisioned themselves and the ways that U.S. companies did business.

Beginning with the end of World War II and continuing through the Cold War, U.S. technology corporation names were changing in noticeable ways. I will describe the changes in depth in Chapter Four, and then in Chapter Five I will provide a detailed analysis of the social and linguistic factors that led to the changes. Starting with notions of community and individual identity, which started to fracture and reassemble in interesting ways through the 1950s, ‘60s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. By the time the Internet had come into common use and the World Wide Web was launched in the early-1990s, new notions of individuality were firmly rooted and the growth of
socially stable but geographically fractured communities were on the rise; the Internet served as the resource and the site where these new forms of community were enacted.

In Chapter Five, I will discuss the poetics of everyday language. Citing Jakobson (1960), I will make the argument that beyond the referential function of language, which has been the focus of much of the attention of contemporary linguistic study, there is a poetic function of language that needs to be better explained and understood. Corporations and marketing professionals have increasingly exploited this poetic function over the last several years in order to reach out to consumers and establish more emotional connections that lead to long-term relationships, and therefore greater sales. I will detail the ways in which marketing professionals have used knowledge of new community forms and poetics in an attempt to create emotional connections with consumers.

Of course there are several factors that are at work in the changing styles of corporate names. Difficulty in gaining exclusive trademark rights, or Internet domain names are two purely pragmatic factors that have influenced, or at least sped up the changes that we’ve observed; however, even if trademarks and Internet domain names are taken to be the primary motivation for the changes, this does not explain why names have changed in the ways that they have. The manner of change is significant, and will be explained using linguistic, socio-historical, and business-specific factors.
Finally, in Chapter Six I will discuss the ways in which social, linguistic, and business factors have come together in a period of rapid globalization to bring about a change in the way that U.S. corporations are named.
Chapter 2

Examining Names:
A Linguistic Perspective on Corporate Names

2.1. Background

2.1.1. Introduction

As the United States has grown more geographically expansive and ethnically diverse, traditional forms of community centered on religion, schools, and residential districts have become fragmented. One of the results – some might suggest that it is one of the causes – of the shift in community structures involves the growing role that corporations have come to play in the lives of most Americans. Given the fact that 65 million Americans making up a little more than half of the U.S. employment base work for corporations in the United States, and these workers spend an average of 34 hours a week at their jobs\(^1\), the corporate workplace setting and associated communities of practice are surely impacted by, and have an impact on, a wide range of everyday language use and linguistic patterns. Considering the role that corporations play in the life of most Americans, little research has been conducted on corporate language use and linguistic practices.

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\(^1\) Employment figures are based on 2003, the most recent data published by the \textit{U.S. Department of Labor}.
The study of corporate language has been approached from several different perspectives. Some have examined language in business settings, focusing on the role that gender plays in language use (i.e., Kendall & Tannen 1997; Mullany 2004) while others have looked at ways in which corporate power structures have an effect on discourse in the workplace (i.e., Vine 2004). From the perspective of the field of Linguistics, one could examine speech patterns in business settings or provide an ethnography of speaking in a workplace. Rather than looking at these issues, in this dissertation I will study corporate language by focusing on names, an understudied topic in a broader study of language in its own right. Following Sapir (1921: 207), I will approach this study with the clear understanding that 'language does not exist apart from culture.' Rather than trying to describe and explain language as many linguists have done over the past fifty years as a de-socialized abstraction, I will assume that language and the people who use it cannot be separated. The language and linguistic practices – more specifically, onomastic practices – that I will be examining are woven into the institutions and communities that produce and consume the language.

The United States corporate setting brings together communities of speakers from a variety of backgrounds with multiplicities of linguistic repertoires. I will shed light on language production – in the form of corporate names – within this cultural site. Likewise, I will examine the community of practice, a diverse linguistic network that exists among the corporate employees, customers, and a broader community consisting of those impacted by corporate language and linguistic practices.
In this study my aim is to thoroughly examine the production and consumption of corporate names since the earliest days of U.S. industry, describe patterns of change over the course of time, and explain why these changes have occurred.

2.1.2. Fieldwork

My interest in the topic of corporate names has grown out of serendipitous events in my personal life. Over the last five years, I have been entrenched in the field of my research. In 1999, I started working as corporate naming consultant in the San Francisco Bay Area. My job was to help companies come up with corporate, product, and service names. This happened to be a time of extraordinary technological innovation and rapid economic growth. The San Francisco Bay Area was the locus of much activity because cities like San Jose, Sunnyvale, Cupertino, and Palo Alto housed Silicon Valley companies where much of the growth was occurring. The Internet, which had been used primarily by government organizations and educational institutions, was rapidly becoming commercialized through the growth of the World Wide Web. Individuals and groups were creating online business specializing in various forms of e-commerce. In my work as a naming consultant, many of these new companies requested corporate names consisting of colloquial English words; however, these types of names were unavailable in relevant
trademark classes (most notably classes 9 and 42), and desired Internet domain names were either already being used or were being held ransom by cyber-squatters for enormous sums of money.

Before entering the corporate world, I had never been inside a corporate office in my life. I had never seen a cubicle work area or eaten in a corporate-subsidized cafeteria. My work experience prior to entering this foreign territory was in retail and education. As a teenager, before going to college, I worked at a grocery store, a record store and a store that sold upholstery fabrics. After graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in English Literature, I worked as an ESL teacher in Kyoto, Japan and Berkeley, California until going to graduate school in Honolulu, Hawai‘i, where I taught courses as a graduate student while completing my coursework.

I am not entirely sure why the owner of the naming agency hired me since I was so inexperienced and, as I would soon find out, completely out of my element. My best guess is that the owner assumed that my language expertise and academic background made me well suited to the creative side of producing names, and that my coursework and interest in anthropological methodology would enable me to adapt quickly to the new environment. A couple of other reasons included the facts that there were more jobs than people to fill them at the time, and as an academic I would accept a lower salary than a seasoned consultant.

2 See Appendix for more detail. Trademark law, and its effect on naming practices will be covered in more depth in Chapter Four.

3 During the height of the Internet boom, www.business.com was sold for 8 million dollars, www.AsSeenOnTV.com was sold for 5 million dollars, and www.wine.com was sold for 3 million dollars to companies wishing to conduct business under those names. The Internet domain names had been purchased and held by cyber-squatters for the explicit purpose of auctioning off these common English language names to the highest bidder.
On the first day of my new job I was thrust into a meeting with a brand new Silicon Valley company for which the agency was developing a corporate name. I could barely understand the language that was being spoken, or at least the words and phrases that were being used. Business terms such as *market cap* meaning ‘market capitalization, the amount that a company is worth based on the value of outstanding shares of stock’, *angel* meaning ‘an investor who gives an extremely large sum of money’, and even *start-up* meaning ‘a small new company that is in the early stages of conducting business’ were lost on me. I was equally unfamiliar with other business slang terms such as *net-net* meaning ‘final result’ and *offline* meaning ‘outside of a meeting’ as in ‘Sam and Nate should take this matter offline’. During meetings I would try to nod appropriately while jotting down foreign terms, which I’d ask people to define later.

The social structures were complex and seemingly well understood by others in the meeting, but not myself. For example, I would learn that there are people who have the right to talk at certain times during a meeting, and others who are only allowed to listen; there are people who have the right to interrupt while others do not; and there are people who have the right to come and go from a meeting while others do not.

The meeting, as a linguistic event, had roles for each participant, various types of speech acts that could and could not take place, and an entire code that I needed to learn. My strategy, which my boss agreed with, was to simply observe for the first few weeks, slowly inserting myself into meetings and presentations as I felt
comfortable. These few weeks would prove invaluable as few anthropologists have that amount of time to just observe actors and interactions within their setting without interacting themselves.

Over the course of the last five years I have become fluent in the language and culture of the corporate world. Although I have resisted changing my own speech patterns in these settings, I do understand the language of the corporate world and I can participate in any corporate event appropriately. Adapting to the culture was the first critical step in being able to gather, evaluate, and explain the data that makes up the content of this study.

2.1.2.1. Basic Observations

Although I had no prior exposure to, or interest in, naming and Onomastics, my rapid immersion in my new setting combined with a natural interest in language and educational background in linguistics led me to become a passionate observer and student of corporate naming practices. My first observations focused on language choice and language attitudes. I was struck by how raw and immediate people’s responses were to particular names. In some cases, they reacted strongly to the way that words sounded. Consonant clusters often rubbed people the wrong way leading one client who needed a name for a product to comment that an initial ‘cr-’ (pronounced [kr]) combination sounded ‘too harsh’. In many cases, words that had no meaning in English would remind people of real words, usually with negative
connotations. In one situation, the name ‘Savvia’ (pronounced [saëvia]) immediately made one person think of the word ‘saliva’. In another situation, we were renaming a company and one of the requirements was to come up with some Hawaiian names since the founder had been born and raised on O'ahu. When presented with our set of name suggestions consisting of several words derived from Hawaiian, one of the clients expressed dissatisfaction for the names claiming ‘that batch of names is too exotic; I’m not crazy about them and our customers would never go for it.’

In addition to observations on language choice and attitudes, I noted that there was a distinctive style of names that had begun to emerge. A great number of the names that were requested by clients were formed from Greek and Latin roots (sometimes combined in one word), and Old English words. Often the names had no inherent meaning at all. The following list typifies the names that were being created and consumed in mass quantities:

Amphion
Avio
Convivo
Crestar
Dexar
Duon
Fortius
Geon
This list was generated in 1999, and presumably none of the names were in use at that time. A quick Internet search conducted today will show that all of these names are in use by companies worldwide. Most of these companies are in the technology industry.

The fact that so many unconventional names were emerging probably had a lot to do with crowded trademark classes and depleted Internet domain names as mentioned in section 2.1.2. While this partially explains why technology corporation names changed so much in the late 1990s, the more exposure that I had and the more people that I spoke with made it apparent to me that there must have been several socio-cultural events bringing about the changes that I was observing. Perhaps the relatively sudden and dramatic changes in naming practices were due to rapid economic expansion or other factors such as immigration patterns or the end of the Cold War.

Looking back at other periods of industrial and economic expansion, I observed that corporate names had maintained a relatively consistent form over the years (see Chapter Four), but there seemed to be a couple of intervals when previously accepted norms of corporate naming were altered. The observations
during and since that time have fueled my need to investigate what may have initiated these changes and to develop a corporate name taxonomy that could help describe and explain some of the changes that I have observed. Rather than focusing on product names, which are likely to be governed by a distinct set of naming practices, I have decided to concentrate on technology corporation names, a category that will be defined in section 2.3 below.

I left the naming company in 2000 and took a job as corporate naming and trademark manager for Company X, a very large Silicon Valley firm that manufactures computer networking equipment. I held this job until September of 2004. Over the course of time that I worked for Company X it was my responsibility to create or assist in creating names for products, services, subsidiaries and everything else that the company needed a name for. During the time that I was employed with Company X, I worked steadily on the side as a freelance naming consultant for two large marketing consultancies on about a dozen naming projects and I was twice hired directly by technology corporations to develop corporate names. As part of my job providing naming expertise for Company X and in order to perform effectively on my own as a freelance naming professional, I had to maintain a keen awareness of industry trends in product and corporate naming. As a result, I continued to develop an interest in this topic, and I have become an expert on contemporary technology corporation naming practices.
2.1.2.2. Methodology

During my time in the field, I kept detailed notes on my experiences and observations and I have lists of names that were produced for most of the projects that I worked on. These useful records provide extensive details of my perceptions of the corporate world, social interactions, and general linguistic practices; however, they do not provide much in the way of detail on the historical production of corporate names. To provide the bulk of the data that I will be using in this study, I have created a corpus of technology corporation names by using Hoover’s (www.hoovers.com), an online database with comprehensive information on over 40,000 companies. I initially filtered the database to include companies (live and dead) that fit into the TECHNOLOGY category that will be defined in section 2.2.2 below. I have gone through the list to remove names that, based on my judgment, did not fit into the technology category and to add names that were not initially included in the Hoover’s search due to a corporation being dissolved because of bankruptcy or acquired by another company. In order to work with a manageable set of data, I limited my search to companies that employed at least 50 people. I view this data as a living corpus currently consisting of over 3,000 names. The corpus continues to shrink and grow depending on the rigidity of the definition of technology, the addition of newly founded corporations, and the discovery of corporations that have been left off the list or ones that shouldn’t have been there in the first place. I am not claiming that this
corpus is definitive, but it does contain a wide range of U.S. technology corporation names dating back to the 19th century. This corpus will serve as the source for the formal data represented in this study.

2.1.3. Language Change

While there are few issues on which linguists can agree, one of the accepted facts in a fragmented, sometimes contentious field is that 'it is normal for languages to change from generation to generation' (Hudson 1981: 337). A common approach within mainstream linguistics has been to support the claim that language changes over time by pointing to shifting phonetic, phonemic, morphemic, and syntactic systems. These changes, in their purest sense, are initiated by 'internal' or 'linguistic' factors as opposed to 'external' or 'social' factors (Labov 1994 & 2001); while social factors may motivate these changes and make them survive over time, there are predictable linguistic patterns that each change follows. For example, we would not expect to find a voiceless stop like [p] changing to a vowel like [æ].

Linguists understand that language change is a property of language itself and is due to complex combinations of linguistic factors combined with geographical, political and socio-cultural factors. The subfield of historical linguistics focuses on the description and explanation of language change over time. Historical linguists have established theoretical concerns (e.g., Ferguson, et al. 1966), proposed language universals (e.g., Comrie 1981), examined socio-historical dynamics (e.g., Romaine
1982) and brought to light issues in language ecology (e.g., Mufwene 2001). Until the 1960s many linguists believed that real-time language change could not be studied since change occurs at such a slow pace; however, the work of William Labov (1966, 1968, 1972, 1994, 2001) and others over the last 40 years (e.g., Bright 1976; Milroy 1980; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992) has demonstrated that by studying language variation within and among speech communities we can actually observe language change in action.

The study of language change has focused on specific linguistic structures, usually phonemes, but also lexemes and syntactic structures. The study of language change examines geographical and socio-cultural influences on change by way of accounting for non-linguistic factors that bring about linguistic change. While the linguistic facts are interesting and meaningful on their own, the changes are best understood when one factors in the manner in which the evolution transpired.

A less traditional, more cross-disciplinary approach to the study of language change involves linguistic practice. Investigating the way that speakers use language, and the way that linguistic practice evolves over time, provides further insight into language change, and the nature of language itself. Gal (1989: 356) points out that ‘the characteristic form of linguistic change in the modern era has been the coming together of languages, or rather their speakers, not only geographically (through new means of travel and communication) but within political economic systems of dependency and inequality.’ The specific type of change that she is referring to is described as follows (ibid.):
Local languages are abandoned or subordinated to ‘world languages’ in diglossic relations; newly adopted standards become differentiated into class-stratified varieties and ways of speaking; world languages develop divergent forms among the elites of former colonies. Indeed, entirely new languages – pidgins, creoles, or other syncretic codes – are formed and often stigmatized, as speakers of different languages interact and form new classes in various colonial and neocolonial urban centers and institutions.

Moving beyond pure linguistic forms, Gal describes language change that occurs in a much broader (and politicized) manner. Linguistic practice – ways of speaking – has been a growing subject of study (e.g., Gumperz & Levinson 1996), and as a result, there is a need to better understand how linguistic practice changes over time.

In addition to gaining some understanding of the ways that linguistic practice has changed over the course of time, this study will shed light on changes in language attitudes and ideologies. Throughout U.S. business history, corporations were given descriptive names like General Electric and International Business Machines and eponymous names like Pitney Bowes and Hewlett-Packard so the fact that U.S.-based corporations started using slangy irreverent monikers like FatBrain in 1993 and non-Indo-European words like the Hawaiian-based Akamai in 1999 indicates some sort of significant linguistic change. The choice of technology corporation names in the late 20th century signals a fundamental shift in the way that the corporate community, and
possibly a larger population of U.S. English language speakers, perceived and used language.

2.2. Examining Names

2.2.1. Names in Linguistic Study

The study of names as a linguistic phenomenon (e.g., Pulgram 1954; Aronoff 1981; Hopper 1990; Kirwin 2001) has received limited attention over the past century. Naming practices as a sociological and anthropological phenomenon have received a bit more focus, particularly with regard to the naming of people (e.g., Connolly 1896; Radcliffe-Brown 1922; Emeneau 1974) and geographical places (e.g., Wright 1929; Goodenough 1966; Kuipers 1984). The study of corporate names and corporate naming practices, however, has received little attention in any field, specifically within linguistics. Linguistics studies have focused on the genericization of corporate – mostly product – names (e.g., Clankie 2002) and pure description (e.g., Boddewyn 1967; Walasek 1983). Although linguistic practices within the corporate community have been studied with some frequency within linguistic anthropology (e.g., Johns 1986; Harris & Bargiela-Chiappini 2003) there has been no attention paid to the production of names within the corporate community and its relationship to language use, language change and ideologies of language within a broader social context.
Over the course of the last 100 years, lexicographers have added thousands of new words to English language dictionaries\(^4\). Words like *paparazzi*, which was borrowed from the 1968 Federico Fellini film *La Dolce Vita* (Green 1994), and *yuppie*, which originated in 1982-85 as a term to describe young urban professionals according to the Oxford Dictionary of New Words, have become standard parlance - words that are used in conversation and understood by most American English speakers today. Not surprisingly, a great number of these new terms have come from medical and technological advances. Today we can get *x-rayed* to find out if we have any broken bones or take an *aspirin* if we want to get rid of a headache. Our homes are filled with things like *VCRs, CDs*, and *DVDs*. Some of us use *PCs* and *PDAs* and when we purchase any of these items a *bar code* is scanned.

Interestingly, a large number of names added to dictionaries, referring generically to technology either started out as brand names or in some cases still are. A partial list includes the following:

1. *Xerox*

   a. I needed to make a *Xerox*.

   ‘I needed to make a photocopy.’

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\(^4\) The Oxford English Dictionary added 14,000 new words between 1986 and 1997. Since then they have continued to add over 1,000 words per quarterly update (AskOxford 2004). The 11\(^{th}\) Edition of Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary added over 10,000 new words since their last update ten years earlier (CBS News 2003).
b. I need to Xerox ('copy') the file.

'I need to copy the file.'

2. Walkman

a. Can I borrow your Walkman?

'Can I borrow your personal stereo?'

3. Google

a. I should Google ('do an Internet search on') my professor.

b. 'I should do an Internet search on my professor.'

Despite the obvious impact of corporate words and language on everyday speech, very little attention has been paid to this phenomenon from a linguistic perspective.

A study of the relationship between corporate and public linguistic practices could be undertaken in a number of ways. One approach to this study could be to try to find an explanation for why some corporate terms enter the language generically and others don’t (e.g., Clankie 2002). Another approach could be to describe linguistic and cultural practices that have entered the language through the corporate world and create taxonomies of words (e.g., Piller 1996) and descriptions of such practices (e.g., Schiller 1991; Frank 1997). I will take a much more narrow sociolinguistic approach in this study focusing on the production of corporate names
in the technology sector, describing and explaining how and why they have evolved so much over the past 100 years.

I will examine the ways in which language is produced in the corporate world by focusing on the ways in which corporate names have changed. My assumption is that there are several factors that have affected changes and variation in the types of names that corporations choose to represent themselves, including the following:

1. **Increasingly crowded marketplaces**

   Whereas there were only a handful of telecommunications companies 30 years ago, now there are hundreds.

2. **Trademarkability**

   Crowded marketplaces have made for trademark classes that have filled up; this creates a need for corporations to be more creative with their naming practices in order to differentiate themselves and gain trademark rights for their name.

3. **Globalization**

   The global marketplace and transnationalism have forced corporations to be more selective when choosing a name for themselves since names have to function effectively for multilingual and multicultural consumers in the U.S. and abroad.
4. Increased corporate intimacy with consumers

Owing to all of the points above (particularly #1 and #3), there is a greater need today to differentiate one company from another and many companies choose to do so by creating corporate names that are intended to create an emotional connection with consumers (i.e., Schmitt 1999; Gobe 2001).

In Chapter Five I will provide an in depth explanation of why corporate naming practices have changed so dramatically. At this point I’d just like to note that these changes are not random or haphazard; there are a number of factors at work.

Two important factors that are not mentioned above have to do with the notion that language varies within communities of speakers, and languages change over time. While I am unconvinced that internal linguistic factors (see section 2.1.3) drive these changes in corporate naming practices, I am relatively certain that they are constrained by them. In other words, despite the fact that changes in corporate name production cannot be predicted based on internal linguistic factors, we can make some good guesses as to how these changes will be limited and we can explain the forms that the new names have taken. There will be more on this topic in Chapter Five.
2.2.2 Focus on Technology Company Names

A comprehensive study of the evolution of all types of corporate names would be an insurmountable undertaking for one dissertation; therefore I have chosen to limit my focus to a single category of companies and their corporate names. I will focus on companies that provide technology to end-users, consumers and the people who use the products or services.

Technology companies are particularly interesting to me because they provide products and services that have a powerful impact on people’s lives. People engage directly and indirectly with the innovations provided by these companies, and the way that people live their day-to-day lives has the potential to be altered profoundly. These are the factors – the manner of corporate engagement and potential for the alteration of a consumer’s life – that make the naming practices of technology companies such a compelling topic.

Technology companies, like all other types of companies, must make a connection with end-users. Minimally, end-users have to know the origin of the product or service that they are receiving. This information serves several purposes. First, if something is defective, they have a point of reference for exchange or repair. Second, if they are happy with what they have received, then they can look for other

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5 I am distinguishing between end-users and consumers because many technology companies sell products to a small set of customers (i.e., information technology managers who buy and install hardware and software for companies and institutions), but end-users are the individuals who interact directly or indirectly with products and services. Companies and naming consultants are concerned with the ways in which end-users will interpret and consume corporate names.
products and services that are offered by the same company. For these reasons, the name is the primary source of engagement. The products and services are pure commodities unless they are associated with an identifying linguistic device, the name.

The creation of a company’s name is a critical semiotic act whereby a referent is created in order to linguistically represent the products and services that it offers and everything stands for. Today, a name like McDonald’s conjures up a range of associations for people. For some people the name might conjure up ‘a reliably fast easy meal’ while for others it might represent ‘evil American imperialism’. The Enron name used to mean ‘energy’ and maybe ‘Houston Astros baseball’ for those who knew that the name had been associated with Houston’s baseball stadium, but now for most people the name stands for the notion of ‘corporate malfeasance’. While McDonald’s and Enron have come to represent different ideas for different people, when the names were created they were intended to convey singular ideas to end-users. The McDonald’s name is part of an entire eponymous corporate-naming genre of ‘personal names’; the McDonald brothers owned the original McDonald’s hamburger stand. The Enron name is a coined word that is the result of a merger6, and while the name is said to have no meaning, the constituents are suggestive of en- from ‘energy’ and –ron from ‘electron’ or ‘neuron’. At the time that the name was

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6 (1) InterNorth of Omaha and Houston Natural Gas merged in 1985; (2) Inter- from ‘InterNorth and –on from ‘Houston’ made Interon; (3) Interon was changed to Enteron to connote the en- from ‘energy’; (4) upon learning that Enteron means ‘intestines’, the name was changed to Enron.
created, Enron surely hoped to use the linguistic association to communicate to end-users that the company was a state of the art, technically advanced energy provider.

I will limit my study to companies that meet the following criteria:

1. The company was initially established in the United States.

2. At the time that the company name was established, the company intended to offer technology products and/or services to end-users.

The term TECHNOLOGY has numerous definitions. From the Greek technologia (techne ‘art, craft’ + logos ‘word, speech, reason’), the Oxford English Dictionary provides four main entries. The fourth definition under the first entry is closest to the meaning that I intend: ‘applied attrib. to a firm, industry, etc., that produces or utilizes highly advanced and specialized technology, or to the products of such a firm’.

The notions of ‘advanced’ and ‘highly specialized’ are critical elements of my definition. Wikipedia (2004a), an Internet-based community-edited encyclopedia further defines high-technology as:

The development and application of tools, machines, materials and processes that help to solve human problems... the term technology thus often characterizes inventions and gadgets using recently-discovered scientific principles and processes.
The technology companies that I will be focusing on produce the products and services that meet the following criteria:

1. Recently-discovered technological innovations are used in the creation of the products and services.

2. Products and services allow consumers to be more efficient (either faster or more productive) and/or entertained in ways that were not possible five years prior.

The companies that I will include in this study make products and provide services to a broad community of consumers ranging from people who have no technical background whatsoever, to those that have some technical knowledge. I want to make sure that I include companies whose offerings are no more than one degree removed from everyday users. For example, the offerings of Nortel, a telecommunications equipment provider, require purchasers and users to have a high degree of technical knowledge; however, everyday users of telephones and telephone services are only one degree removed from Nortel's products and services. Companies that manufacture the parts that go into Nortel's products and companies that provide services to repair Nortel's products are removed from the everyday user by a matter of at least two degrees.
Figure 2.1. Relationship Between End-users and Technology Companies. End-users are defined as individuals who are no more than one degree removed from a company's offerings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End-user</th>
<th>Immediate Product/Service</th>
<th>One Degree Product/Service</th>
<th>Two Degrees Product/Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>Microprocessor</td>
<td>Silicon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Person</td>
<td>Cellular Phone Service</td>
<td>Networking Products</td>
<td>Parts Suppliers for Networking Products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person at Home</td>
<td>DVD Player</td>
<td>Components Manufacturer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.3. Names Defined

Corporate names often change over time and can exist in several forms that are made up of various components. The name of the networking equipment maker Cisco can be alternately represented in the following ways today:

1. *Cisco Systems, Inc.* (refers to the corporate legal entity)
2. *Cisco Systems* (refers to the company in a formal manner)
3. *Cisco* (refers to the company in colloquial language)
The automobile maker *Ford* can be represented today as follows:

1. *The Ford Motor Company* (refers to the corporate legal entity)
2. *Ford Motor* (refers to the company in a formal manner)
3. *Ford* (refers to the company in colloquial language)

A company like *IBM* has chronologically been referred to in the following ways:

1a. *Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company*
2a. *Computing-Tabulating-Recording*
3a. *C-T-R*
1b. *International Business Machines Company*
2b. *International Business Machines*
3b. *IBM*

In all of the cases above, the first example of the set is an example of a name that serves to refer to the legal corporate entity; I will call this the **LEGAL NAME**. The second example of the set is an example of a name that serves to refer to the company in a formal manner in all communications to the general public; I will call this the **FORMAL NAME**. The third example of the set is an example of a name that is most commonly used to refer to the company in a simple manner; I will call this the **SIMPLE NAME**.
In the case of *IBM*, there are two sets of names for the company, which regardless of the name change, still refer to a single entity or sense. I will not delve deep into notions of sense and reference as this is better suited to a philosophical discussion, but it is important to point out that corporate names change over time. According to Boddewyn (1967), the largest 500 U.S. corporations listed by *Fortune* in 1967 had a total of 935 names since their founding, averaging a little less than two names per firm. One company, the *Rexall Drug and Chemical Company*, had used over seven names at the time of Boddewyn’s study, although most companies had only used one or two names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Names</th>
<th>Percentage of Firms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While I will make reference to legal names when necessary and I will attend to the use of simple names as appropriate, I will be focusing on the production and consumption of formal names and the manner in which they have changed over time.

In Chapter Four, I will be describing the history of U.S. naming practices among technology corporations. As I’ve already noted, until pretty recently, names
tended to be very generic, descriptive and eponymous. I will be discussing the ways that technology corporation names started changing noticeably in the 1960s and then more dramatically after the Internet became popular. In Chapter Five I’ll be discussing linguistic and social factors involved in the changes in corporate naming practices. I will explain how contemporary technology corporation names have been produced with overt poetic awareness in order to create emotional connections with consumers by tapping into contemporary notions of style and fashion. My goal will be to provide some rationale for what I believe is underlying the changes in technology corporation naming practices.

2.3. Naming Practices

With the 1972 publication of Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédé de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle (translated into English in Bourdieu 1977), Pierre Bourdieu raises several important issues in what amounts to a critique against structuralism, which views culture as a system made up of discrete elements (i.e. beliefs and sets of rules) which form structures, patterns, and relations. For Bourdieu, experience and action are seen as constantly interactive processes that affect the makeup of social formations. Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of habitus is a form of agency that allows social actors to construct knowledge by evaluating and acting on the world. Habitus, being both a product of history and part of what produces history, is a key element of practice in that it emphasizes the idea that ‘a human actor
culturally exist and function only as a participant in a series of habitual activities that are both presupposed and reproduced by his individual actions' (Duranti 1997: 45).

I will approach the study of corporate names within a Bourdieuiian framework. The social actors within this framework are the members of the corporate speech community who have produced the names and the public speech community who consume, interpret and construct ongoing knowledge based on the discourse that is initiated with the introduction of each new name.

The introduction of a new corporate name is a form of linguistic performance which, while sharing Chomsky’s notion of performance as ‘use’ is also a reflection of Austin’s (1962) concept of ‘doing things with words’ (c.f., Duranti 1994). A critical characteristic of linguistic performance in this perspective is the idea that language has a creative poetic dimension (c.f., Jakobson 1960; Hymes 1981; Tedlock 1983). Historically, studies of linguistic performance have focused on ritualistic or dramaturgic language use; however, I am taking an approach that recognizes that everyday language production and use has a performative dimension that can be studied within a framework which links performance with two other two dimensions of speaking: indexicality and participation (Bauman & Briggs 1990).

Indexicality is the dimension of language through which words function as signs that have an existential relationship with a referent (Peirce 1955). Within this dimension, language can be understood as a conduit through which an individual social actor constantly describes, evaluates, and reproduces his or her social world. In this sense, indexicality refers to the dimension of language that, through performance,
allows language to construct experience and enables social actors to interact in a mutually constructed social space.

Participation is the dimension of language through which the act of speaking is studied as part of larger social activity. Traditionally studied through the speech community, participation involves ‘the sharing of material and ideational resources, but it does not assume an equally shared knowledge or control of such resources’ (Duranti 1997: 21). This is a crucial distinction in the study of language as communicative practice. Power relations within a community (and within larger settings) play a profound role in the way language is used by speakers. Through these three dimensions, language can be studied as a social practice that affects, and is affected by, community.

The speech community is the locus of a variety of speech events that involve participants from the community. A speech community can be broadly defined in this paradigm as follows:

A speech community is a group of people who do not necessarily share the same language, but share a set of norms and rules for the use of language. The boundaries between speech communities are essentially social rather than linguistic... A speech community is not necessarily co-extensive with a language community (Romaine 1994: 22).
This is counter to the view that a speech community consists of speakers of a shared linguistic code. This latter view can be traced back to Johann Herder (1744-1801) whose notion of one culture/nation to one language transposes very neatly with twentieth century views of speech communities, which equate community with language (c.f., Bloomfield 1933; Chomsky 1965).

A speech community within a POST-STRUCTURALIST paradigm⁷ can begin to be understood through the following definition: a speech community is:

a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use (Hymes 1974: 51).

Within a theory of practice, however, this account falls short in a few specific ways. First, a practice approach does not assume ‘shared knowledge of rules’; rather it supposes co-constructed agentive processes based on, and formative of, experience. Rules, within a practice approach, are replaced by habitus, thus providing an account of the ways that actors, guided but not ruled by history, interact with and affect each other. Second, in the same vein, a practice approach directs attention towards action,

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⁷ I will use the term POST-STRUCTURALISM to refer to approaches to language study that either avoid structuralist constructs completely (i.e. the study of language as practice), or attempt to progress beyond structuralism within an alternative framework (i.e. the ethnography of speaking).
rather than knowledge; the key notion being that community is defined by the action and habitus of its members rather than in the knowledge of a set of rules.

Within the speech community the primary focus of linguistic study is the speech event. The speech event can be defined as an activity or activities 'directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech' (Hymes 1974: 52) that constitute a community and serve as a way for people to participate in the community. In this study, I will focus on a specific type of speech event that results in the production of a corporate name. Because I cannot have possibly been present at every event that led to the production of corporate names, I will be drawing on my field experience wherein I participated in the production of several corporate names.

This study will be concerned with multiple speech communities that interrelate and form a super speech community. The corporate speech community is distinct from the public speech community in the sense that language practice within this community adheres to modes of habitus that are formed within the strictures of the community itself (c.f., Watson 1997 & 2000). The public speech community is made up of all participants in U.S. society in the broadest sense. The point is that there are multiple intersecting speech communities that exchange linguistic artifacts of cultural production at any point in time and I will focus specifically on the two that I have just defined.

The speech event that I will be focusing on within this construct consists of the naming speech event in which a company produces a corporate name. This
heteroglossic\textsuperscript{8} event, which can be temporally disjointed over several weeks or months, consists of interactions among 'socially organized persons and, in the absence of a real addressee, an addressee is presupposed in the representative of the social group to which the speaker belongs' (Volosinov 1973: 3). When the name is developed and ultimately selected, some form of dialogue (either real or constructed) takes place between speakers from each of the two speech communities. In many cases (more so in the last twenty years than before that), companies ask potential end-users for their opinions on prospective names through the use of focus groups and other means. In other cases, companies rely on extant research to try to understand how potential end-users think, and how certain linguistic forms might be interpreted. Additionally, many companies simply try to guess how potential end-users might react to linguistic forms based on anecdotal or second-hand knowledge about members of that speech community.

\textsuperscript{8} The notion of heteroglossia is attributed to Bakhtin's (1981: 428) discussion whereby 'a set of conditions - social, historical, meteorological, physiological... insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions'. The main point here is that a multiplicity of voices with a diversity of language backgrounds are involved in the corporate naming speech event.
Chapter 3

Toward a Taxonomy of Technology Corporation Names

3.1. Onomastic Challenges

For the better part of the past fifty years, the cross-disciplinary field of Onomastics has attempted to define its field of study. While most people — experts and non-experts alike — know a name when they see one, there is no standard agreed-upon definition for names. The distinction between names and other common nouns is extremely difficult to define. Consider the following NAME definitions; the first two are dictionary definitions and the last two are definitions provided in articles dealing with theories of names:


A proper noun; a word or phrase constituting the individual designation by which a particular person or thing is known, referred to, or addressed.

**Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1993)**

A word or phrase that constitutes the distinctive designation of a person or thing.
Pulgram (1954: 49)

A noun used ... in a non-universal function, with or without recognizable current lexical value, of which the potential meaning coincides with and never exceeds its actual meaning, and which is attached as a label to one animate being or one inanimate object (or to more than one in the case of collective names) for the purpose of specific distinction from among a number of like or in some respects similar beings or objects that are either in no manner distinguished from one another or, for our interest, not sufficiently distinguished.

Willems (2000: 86)

Complex signs with specific linguistic, pragmatic, logical, philosophical, semiotic, historical, psychological, social, and juridical properties.

All of these definitions succeed, with varying levels of specificity, in delimiting what it is that separates names from all other nouns; however, they fail to explain how and why some words function simultaneously as names and common nouns, or how and why some names evolve into common nouns over time.

I will not solve either of these large problems that exist within the field; however by conducting a thorough examination of a particular type of name – the technology corporation name – I will be providing information that can be used to address bigger onomastic questions over time. Through the course of identifying and
then defining categories and sub-categories in a broad name taxonomy, my goal is to provide information that will lead to a greater understanding of names and naming practices.

In addition to the lack of agreement on a definition for names, a definitive typology of names has proved elusive as well. While some scholars have proposed name taxonomies that classify all of the different types of possible names, these models vary substantially. Despite their discrepancies, existing taxonomies all have a category for corporate names and/or brand names that would serve as a top-level category for the types of names that I am investigating.

In order to address the central questions of this dissertation it is necessary to (1) provide my own definition for names; (2) define CORPORATE NAMES within the broader scheme of existing onomastic taxonomies; and (3) create a taxonomy of technology corporation names that would fit within a logical broader taxonomy of names in general. In this chapter I will address the three points above, setting the foundation for the chapters that follow.

3.2. Names

In Chapter Two I noted that the focus of this study would be on simple names. The simple name is the purest linguistic form of communication for corporations. Legal names and formal names serve slightly different purposes than the simple name. Legal names have almost no communicative value to end-users as these names are most frequently used in legal documentation and other regulatory settings.
Formal names are sometimes used in communications to end-users, but most frequently in mission statements, annual reports, letters to stockholders and official business of that nature. A corporation’s simple name is the form that is used to convey meaningful information to end-users.

In many cases, corporations attain nicknames over time. *McDonald’s* has become ‘Mickey D’s’ to many people, however the company does not use this name in communications (i.e., menus, advertising, brochures, and Web sites) in reference to itself. *Coca-Cola* attained the ‘Coke’ nickname, and then the *Coca-Cola Company* decided to trademark and adopt this name for official use. In the technology industry, many corporations have attained nicknames in the form of initialisms, whereby the initial letters of successive words in their name serve as an abbreviated form of the name. Examples of initialisms include ‘NCR’ for *National Cash Register*, ‘SGI’ for *Silicon Graphics Incorporated*, ‘HP’ for *Hewlett-Packard*. In all of these cases the initialisms have come to serve as the primary onomastic reference for the corporation to end-users.

Because names, like other words, can acquire meaning over time, it often makes sense for companies to communicate to end-users with the name that conveys the most semantic information. When a company such as *Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing* first started doing business in 1902, the descriptive name served them well; however, as their business began to diversify, the rigidly descriptive name obstructed the full range of products and service that they offered. Additionally,

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1 Note that I will be making frequent use and reuse of prominent company names (i.e., *American Telegraph and Telephone*, *International Business Machines*, *General Electric*, and *Minnesota Mining*) throughout this chapter because these iconic names are prototypical forms that are rich in U.S. business history. I ask the reader to forgive the repetitions.
employees and customers began to call the company *3M*. Although the company did not officially change their name to *3M* until 1992, they enthusiastically communicated to end-users with the *3M* name because it allowed them to easily stretch their range of offerings beyond that of a mining and manufacturing company.

Nicknames express ‘attitudes, neutral, idealizing, personalizing, jocular, derisive, ironic, sometimes condemnatory’ (Cassidy 1977), and the shortening of names, and/or nicknaming is not uncommon in the corporate world. In some cases nicknames serve to mock or chastise a company, as in the case of ‘Lousy Lou’, the nickname for *Louisiana Land and Exploration* or ‘Tin Lizzy’, the nickname for the *Ford Motor Company* (Scott 1960); however, in cases such as *NCR, SGI*, and *HP*, the nicknames served to bond end-users with the company in the same way that nicknames often bond friends with one another, residents with locales, and baseball fans with baseball teams (Gephart 1941). Companies have often chosen to use a nickname as their simple name when the nicknames have attained recognition and some degree of affinity.

The relationship between a corporation and the end-users of products and services of that corporation is a critical determinant in the corporation’s name. No matter what kind of name is chosen – a descriptive name that clearly conveys some attribute of the company, an arbitrary name that connotes something about the company, or an initialism that abbreviates a longer name – the corporation engages in a form of discourse with end-users. A *NAME*, for the purpose of this study, will be defined as a word, string of words, or an initialism that a corporation uses as its primary form of reference to end-users.
3.3. Name Taxonomies

3.3.1. Background

Since there is no definitive onomastic taxonomy, I will briefly discuss three existing taxonomies, each new one building off of the prior. Because I am studying a distinct subset (technology corporation names) within a generally accepted category (corporate names) that is accounted for in all three taxonomies, I am confident that this study will serve to provide valuable detail for any taxonomy of names that is constructed in the future.

3.3.2. Stewart and Pulgram Taxonomy

Over thirty years ago, Stewart and Pulgram (1971) proposed a ten-category classification system for names. This primitive taxonomy contained very little detail, and left a lot of room for refinement, but it appears to be the first attempt to create a ‘taxonomic scaffolding for the vast and varied universe of names’ (Zelinsky 2002: 248). The Stewart and Pulgram taxonomy can be summarized as follows:

1. Personal names;
2. Quasi-personal names (as for pets, dolls, ships);
3. Names for individualized things (e.g., marker stones or trees);
4. Place names;
5. Names of tribes, groups, etc.;
6. Names of institutions and corporations;
7. Titles, i.e., the names of books and other works of art;
8. Brand names (e.g., Coca-Cola, Vaseline);
9. Names of events in history (e.g., the Renaissance);
10. Names of abstractions (e.g., Stoicism)

This classification system provides a reasonable architecture upon which to build a greater, more detailed – and hence useful – taxonomy. Each of the category names can break down into multiple subcategories. For example, PLACE NAMES can be broken down geologically into names for land, space, and sea; land names can be broken down into names for continents, islands, and atolls; and continent names can be broken down into names for prairies, mountains, and valleys. Alternatively, the taxonomy could be approached from a geopolitical perspective such that continent names could be broken down into names for countries, which could be broken down into names for states and provinces, which could be broken down into names for cities, and so on. The goal of this type of classification and sub-classification is to try to identify categories that relate together in the most natural manner. In so doing, patterns can be identified, discussed, and explained.

Later in this chapter I will propose a taxonomic architecture for a subcategory within the high-level category of institutions and corporations suggested by Stewart and Pulgram who are not alone in specifying a specific high-level name category for
corporations. Since Stewart and Pulgram offer more of a list than a taxonomy, it is
difficult to argue with the categories that are specifically mentioned. The two
taxonomies that follow provide a greater amount of detail, if perhaps less elegance.

3.3.3. Nuessel Taxonomy

A little more than ten years ago, Nuessel (1992) published a monograph that
attempted to fill a void in onomastic literature by providing an examination of names
that could contribute to a 'uniform source of materials' (ibid: xiii). Nuessel's book is
valuable in that it provides a high-level overview to principles and topics in
onomastics that date back to Pulgram (1954), and includes references to name
thories coming from other scholars including Gardiner (1954), Zabeeh (1968) and
Algeo (1973 & 1985). Nuessel provides his own taxonomy of names that can be
summarized as follows:

1. Anthroponyms;
2. Toponyms;
3. Acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations;
4. Brand names, trade names, and nouns derived from common names;
5. Other names, e.g., code names, tropical storms, names for awards
Although the Nuessel taxonomy has half the number of categories of the Stewart and Pulgram taxonomy, BRAND NAMES is still specified as a top-level category. The technology corporation name taxonomy, which will be proposed in section 3.4, would be subcategorized under the brand names category as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1. Technology Corporation Name Categorization. Illustration of where technology corporation names would fit into a broad taxonomy of names.

3.3.4. Zelinsky Taxonomy

With keen awareness of prior taxonomic efforts, Zelinsky (2002: 253-258) provides a ‘preliminary typology of names’, which expands on the taxonomies provided by Stewart and Pulgram, and Nuessel. Zelinsky provides a great deal of
subcategorization for each high-level category, and includes references to existing research within each category and subcategory. Zelinsky's taxonomy can be summarized as follows:

1. Dieties;
2. Biota (e.g., human beings, plants, animals, other organisms);
3. Places;
4. Events (e.g., wars, hurricanes; tournaments);
5. Social entities (e.g., nations, military units, fire companies);
6. Enterprises (e.g., business firms, churches, athletic teams);
7. Artifacts (e.g., structures, vehicles, and expressive works);
8. Unclassifiable (e.g., awards, recipes, poker hands)

Within the 'enterprises' category, Zelinsky includes 'business firms', 'nonprofit enterprises', 'retail and wholesale businesses', 'churches', 'government agencies', 'radio and television stations', 'athletic teams', and 'musical, dance, dramatic and other performing groups'. I am not sure that I see the rationale for delineating between 'business firms' and 'nonprofit enterprises', or why athletic teams would be included in 'enterprises' rather than 'social entities'; there is much to debate in Zelinsky's taxonomy, but for my current endeavor I will simply focus on the fact that this taxonomy, like the two that preceded it, includes an obvious area of classification for technology corporation names. In Zelinsky's taxonomy, I would
categorize technology corporation names under business firms, which would be part of the top-level 'enterprises' category.

The three taxonomies cited contain a wide range of variation. Ranging from as little as five to as many as ten categories, sometimes including things such as acronyms and events as a top-level category, and sometimes not, these taxonomies demonstrate more disparity than consensus within the field. Despite lacking consistency, all three taxonomies share two top-level categories: names for places and names for brands. The fact that brand names are consistently identified as a standout name category indicates that this category, and by extension the category of corporate names, is worthy of attention.

In the remainder of this chapter I will present a taxonomy of technology corporation names that would fit neatly into any of the three taxonomies presented above, or any name taxonomy that would be proposed in the future.

3.4. Taxonomic Categories for Technology Corporation Names

3.4.1. Introduction

Technology corporation names come in a variety of styles, making use of real English words and morphemes, arcane English words, personal names, place names, non-English words and roots from dead languages. In some cases company names are selected based on the geographical location of the company (i.e., Texas Instruments) or the family name of the founder (i.e., Ford Motor Company). These
types of names serve as arbitrary names in the mind of the end-user in the sense that geographical locations and personal names do not initially provide useful information with regard to products and services rendered by the company; these types of names have to be imbued with meaning over time through the use of advertising campaigns and other forms of corporate communications. Some companies select names that suggest desired characteristics in order to connote certain qualities about the company. These suggestive names are not transparent with regard to the products or services rendered by the company, but native speakers of English can often pick up on the qualities being connoted. For example, the name Polycom does not denote anything about this company’s products, but the roots ‘poly-’ + ‘-com’ hint at the fact that the company provides a variety of communications products and services. Some companies, of course, select names that are perfectly transparent referential denotations of products and services rendered. Companies like International Business Machines, National Cash Register and Network Security Technologies offered products and services that were obvious at the time that the companies were named.

There are myriad reasons that specific types of names are chosen for corporations. These reasons range from socio-cultural and political to idiosyncratic and linguistic. The people responsible for choosing corporate names have always been aware that a name must communicate information to end-users. The specific type of name that ends up being chosen depends on several factors including (1) how end-users are perceived (i.e., high-income, low-income, technical, non-technical, men, women, young, old, etc.); (2) background of the person or people choosing the
name (i.e., native speaker of English, non-native speaker, exposure to monolingual/cultural communities vs. non exposure, etc.); (3) the form and style of competitors' names. I will explore these factors in more depth in later chapters.

I have discussed some of the ways in which technology corporations are named. I will now define in some detail all of the subcategories of technology corporation names. For a graphical representation of this taxonomy, see Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2. Technology Corporation Name Taxonomy.** Classification of all the types of technology corporation names that have been observed in U.S. businesses.
3.4.2. Real Words

REAL WORDS are names that consist of extant English words at the time that a company started doing business. The three subcategories of real words are defined below.

3.4.2.1. Descriptive Names

A DESCRIPTIVE NAME consists of words that clearly denote a characteristic about a company. Many companies that were founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were given descriptive names. Prominent examples include *American Telegraph and Telephone* {1885}², *General Electric* {1890}, *Radio Corporation of America* {1919}, and *International Business Machines* {1924}. Some of the terms included in these names were relatively new to English speakers (i.e., telephone and radio), so their use in corporate names at that time must have given these names (and the companies by extension) a sense of innovation.

3.4.2.2. Suggestive Names

SUGGESTIVE NAMES consist of a word or words that connote single or multiple characteristics about a company. These types of names, which can be made up of real

² When pertinent, I will include the year that a corporate name was first used publicly in brackets after the first appearance of the name in text.
words or coined words (see below), do not provide end-users with a clear understanding of the types of products and services offered by the corporation, rather, corporate offerings may be hinted at. These types of names are relatively uncommon. Examples include the following:

1. *Oracle*

   A corporation that provides database applications. The name 'oracle' suggests that this company provides some sort of wisdom, or perhaps a repository of information for end-users.

2. *Foundry*

   A corporation that provides data networking hardware. The *Foundry* name suggests that this company creates and provides something solid. The name connotes that there is a foundational element to their offerings. Data networks are at the foundation of the companies that they serve, so to their end-users this serves as a highly suggestive name.

As these examples demonstrate, there is a range in the structure of these types of real word suggestive names. These types of names can sometimes blur with the following category, and it can be a matter of judgment as to whether or not a name belongs in one or the other category; however, the distinction is necessary in order to
account for the range of technology corporation names and to explain the reasons that account for the linguistic differences.

3.4.2.3. Arbitrary Names

ARBITRARY NAMES consist of words that do not clearly denote or connote any identifiable characteristics of the corporation. Arbitrary names, which can be made up of real words or coined words (see below), are semantically opaque. They provide no insight whatsoever into the products offered or services rendered by a corporation. Examples of this type of name include the following:

1. *Apple*

A corporation that manufactures personal computers. In the last few years *Apple* has begun to provide a wider range of products including media devices. *Apple* will not say where the name came from, and in any case the name provides no information to the end-user about what the company offers.

2. *Red Hat*

This company provides software that functions as an operating system on computer devices. The name provides no information that would lead an end-user to know what this company provides.
Naming professionals sometimes talk about the tonality of a name. This is a stylistic dimension that is tied to the sound of a name for a given audience at a given time. Technology companies often try to come up with names that have an innovative or forward-thinking tone. As mentioned above, terms such as ‘radio’ and ‘telephone’ were probably innovative sounding in their day, and the same goes for names like Red Hat. When that name was introduced it was one of a kind so it made the company seem innovative.

3.4.3. Coined Words

While some companies choose to use real words from the English language, others choose to create new words. Many technology corporations create coined words, which are neologisms made up of English phonemes and morphemes, archaic English words, and non-English words and morphemes. I will provide examples in the next sections. Note that there are no coined descriptive names. Descriptive names can only be created from extant real words in the English language; the act of creating a new name through coinage disallows the possibility of descriptiveness.

3.4.3.1. Suggestive Names

Semantically, coined word suggestive names are the same as real word suggestive names. These types of names are made up of words that connote single or multiple characteristics about a company. The coined word variety is not
metaphorical as the real word variety is. Rather, coined word suggestive names tend to be made up of recognizable chunks of language which, when linked together, connote something about the corporation. Examples of this type of name are as follows:

1. Microsoft

A software corporation that makes a ubiquitous computer operating system, as well as other desktop applications. The name is coined from *micro-* meaning ‘small’ or ‘minute’ and taken here from the term *microcomputer*, which referred to small non-mainframe type computers that could be used by individual users and *-soft* which comes from ‘software’. The microcomputer emerged in the 1970s with the introduction of microprocessors developed by *Intel* (a coined word suggestive name itself), and *Microsoft* produced the software for microcomputers. While the name does not describe the products offered by the company, it clearly connotes the offerings for end-users.

2. TiVo

A corporation that manufactures digital video recorders and services that allow viewers to record, pause, and rewind live television, store

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3 Although I will not be discussing orthography in this study, it is worth noting that several companies use distinctive orthographic representations for communicative purposes. For example, by using upper-case forms for the ‘T' and ‘V' in *TiVo*, the company is providing a cue for end-users to connect TV, or television with *TiVo*. See Owen (2004) for an enlightening discussion on the original *Xerox* orthography.
dozens of programs on their devices, and create wish lists to capture desired programming. TiVo, the corporation, created a name that suggested 'TV evolution'. This connotation comes almost exclusively from the pronunciation of the word. In the same manner in which 'television' gets abbreviated as 'TV', 'TV Evolution' gets abbreviated as 'TiVo'; at least that is what the corporation is attempting to convey.

Coined suggestive names have become a very common type of technology corporation name. The reasons for this will be explored in depth in later chapters, but it should be mentioned that the increased difficulty in attaining trademark rights for new names in crowded trademark classes most certainly caused many companies to choose this type of name. While this external factor brought change in the proportion of these types of names, it is particularly interesting to note the range in style and the implications on communicative practices and changed relationships between companies and end-users over the course of the last several years.

3.4.3.2. Arbitrary Names

Coined arbitrary names function in the same manner as real arbitrary names in the sense that they do not clearly denote or connote any identifiable characteristic about the company. In the early days of U.S. industry, a specific type of arbitrary name was frequently used – the eponym. Eponyms, which will be discussed in detail
in section 3.4.3.2.1, provide a corporation with a clear sense of ownership (in the case of personal names) or geographic stability (in the case of place names).

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, corporations were relatively new entities in a country that was becoming rapidly industrialized. While personal and place names did not provide end-users with any information about company products or services, these types of names were probably intended to provide assurance that real people in real localities were responsible for the offerings.

Regardless of the specific subtype of coined arbitrary name, these names are semantically opaque \textit{empty vessels} for end users. The names need to be filled with meaning over time. If a company is effective in filling the vessel with meaning, the name can become synonymous with a specific product (i.e., \textit{Xerox}) or service (i.e., \textit{FedEx}) over time.

3.4.3.2.1. Neologisms

\textit{Neologisms} can be made up of English phonemes as shown below in example 1, English morphemes as shown below in example 2, archaic English words as shown below in example 3, or non-English words as shown below in example 4. These names are arbitrary to most end-users since there is no relationship between the name and the products or services offered by the corporation.

Corporations might choose to use these names for a variety of reasons. Since the names have no meaning to end users, the corporation can create meaning. Semantically opaque names are valuable to corporations that deliver brand new types
of products or services. In these cases, there are no descriptors for what the company offers and suggestive names for new industry categories can prove challenging. These types of names are also valuable for companies that do not want to have a name that ties them to a specific type of product or service. *Cisco* is a great example of this type of name because the company has gone from selling networking hardware in its early days to software applications and telephones today; a descriptive name or a name that suggested ‘networking’ might have limited them. In this sense, neologisms function in the same way as initials and eponyms, which I’ll be discussing next.

1. *Avaya*

When telecommunications giant *Lucent* spun off its business communications hardware and software division, they worked with a naming and branding agency called *Landor*, the same company that created the *Lucent* name after that company spun off from *AT&T*. The *Avaya* name is a neologism is formed from English phonemes. Although the name ‘was originally inspired by an ancient [Sanskrit] word for ‘unity’ (Landor 2004), that was not apparent to end-users who indicated in focus groups that the name expressed an ‘energetic, positive, and smooth’ tonality. The name denoted nothing about the company’s products, but since *Avaya* wanted to position itself as a fresh and energetic company, they chose this empty vessel name

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consisting simply of a string of phonemes that sounded good to end-users.

2. Verizon

Coined from truncated forms of the words ‘verity’ and ‘horizon’, this name has no obvious association with the company’s telecommunications offerings. The name was first used in 2000 as a replacement for the merged telecommunications companies GTE and Bell Atlantic. Although the name did not convey any useful information to end-users about the company, the word parts both have positive connotations and the name signaled a change to end-users that a stodgy government-regulated past was going to make way for this new style of corporate telecommunications. Verizon will be discussed at length in Chapter Four where I will focus on the evolution of telecommunications companies’ corporate names.

3. Lucent

When AT&T spun off their telecommunications equipment division in 1995, the new corporation wanted to be identified with change. They wanted to create some distance between themselves and AT&T, which would remain in existence as a telecommunications services company.
(Landor 1997). The *Lucent* name is an archaic English word\(^4\) meaning 'glowing with light' and 'marked with clarity' and it was chosen because it was consistent with a creative theme involving using the metaphor of 'light' to connote visionary thinking. Regardless of the intention of the name, *Lucent* functions as an arbitrary signifier for end-users with regard to the types of products offered by the company.

4. *Akamai*

The *Akamai* name, meaning 'intelligent' or 'clever' in Hawaiian, was first used in 1999 by a company that makes a distributed computing platform that allows large volumes of information to be stored across the Internet. This word was borrowed into English, and functioned as an empty vessel in English when it was first used. Over time, *Akamai* has promoted the Hawaiian meaning from time to time, but for the most part the word continues to function as an arbitrary name from a semantic perspective.

3.4.3.2.2. Initials

...
about three words long. There are so many of these three-word technology names that there is an initialism for it: TLA for ‘three-letter acronym’. Examples of these TLAs include DSL for ‘digital subscriber line’, PDA for ‘personal digital assistant’, and RAM for ‘random access memory’. There are thousands of three, four and five letter initialisms that have sprung up in the technology industry.

As a result of the penchant to abbreviate names, many corporations have attained monikers that are initials formed by the first letters of multiple successive words. In some cases a corporation will initially launch their business using a set of initials as their simple name but in most cases, long company names get abbreviated over time. *American Telegraph and Telephone* has become *AT&T*, *Radio Corporation of America* has become *RCA*, and *International Business Machines* has become *IBM*. In most cases it is nearly impossible to ascertain exactly when initials started being used as a company’s simple name. In any case, the advantage for longstanding companies to shift to initials from narrow descriptive names is clear in most cases. *Radio Corporation of America* started making televisions in the 1950s so their spelled-out corporate name was a hindrance to them, while *RCA* was not. *International Business Machines* still makes machines, but a decade ago they began to promote themselves more strongly as a company that provides business services and solutions, not just machines and devices; their spelled-out corporate name was a hindrance as well. Regardless of how or why initials become used as corporate names, there are two sub-types of this category that I will describe below.
3.4.3.2.2.1. Initialisms

INITIALISMS are non-words from the first letters of successive words in a name. In addition to the well known technology corporation initialisms that I already mentioned such as IBM, RCA, and GE, others include MCI (Microwave Communications, Incorporated) and GTE (General Telephone Electronics). Unlike acronyms, which I’ll discuss in the next section, initialisms are pronounced letter by letter. For example:

\[
\begin{align*}
IBM &= [ai \ bi \ em] \\
IBM &= [ibem] \\
GE &= [dʒi \ i] \\
GE &= [gi] \\
RCA &= [ar \ si \ eɪ] \\
RCA &= [rka]
\end{align*}
\]

As mentioned above, most companies that are known primarily by an initialism started out with a two to five word descriptive name. Pronouncing the initial letters of the names is a shortcut – one that is consistent with naming and reference practices prevalent in the technology industry – and in many cases companies choose to use initialisms as their simple name over time.

Another form of initialism involves using numbers or other symbols to represent the initializing of first letters. Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing has long been known as 3M. This use of a number (‘3’ in this case) to indicate that the letter (‘M’) is repeated is extremely rare, but it needs to be accounted for.
Additionally, the ampersand symbol that is used in the \textit{AT&T} initialism does not interfere with the fact that \textit{AT&T} functions as an initialism for \textit{American Telegraph and Telephone}.

3.4.3.2.2.2. Acronyms

An acronym is created from initials that form a pronounceable word. Sometimes acronyms are formed intentionally by companies, and other times they spring up naturally as a result of the initial letters of the words that make up a name. This is a relatively rare type of name for technology corporation companies. It is more often found in product names or solutions. \textit{Cisco Systems}, for example, had a telecommunications ‘solution’ that they called AAVID (Architecture for Voice, Video, and Integrated Data), pronounced [$\acute{\text{e}}\text{v}^\text{i}d$].

In the wake of the federal government’s breakup of \textit{AT&T}, several new telecommunications companies were formed. One of those companies was called \textit{NYNEX}, pronounced [$\text{n}\acute{\text{a}}\text{\text{n}eks}$], which stood for ‘New York, New England, and Unknown’. The ‘X’, in this case, served as a symbol for ‘unknown’, but it also served to make the word pronounceable. \textit{NYNEU} ([naɪnu] or [naɪnɛj]) was probably deemed too difficult to pronounce, or too difficult to figure out how to pronounce based on the spelling of the acronym. Immediately upon launching the company publicly, NYNEX used the acronym as their simple name rather than the five word descriptive version of their name.
3.4.3.3. Eponyms

Corporations in many industries have used eponyms, names based on people or places, in their corporate names. Using a personal name can have the effect of alternately humanizing a corporation, while at the same time giving it a paternalistic air of authority and responsibility. Personal names tell end-users that human beings are behind the corporation and responsible for its actions. Geographical names provide locations for corporations. This has the effect of rooting corporations in a town, city, state, or country and associating the qualities of that locale with the company. Geographical names provide companies with a sense of solidity and stability.

Geographical names have remained somewhat common in the technology industry over the past twenty to thirty years. For example, Cambridge Technology, Atlanta Group Solutions, and America Online are examples of companies that have used geographical names in their corporate names. Personal names, on the other hand, have become extremely uncommon in the technology industry, but they remain common in services industries such as advertising, management consulting, accounting, and law.
3.4.3.3.1. Place Names

There are companies in just about every industry that incorporate geographical place names in their corporate names. Not far from where I live in Berkeley, California there is a market called Berkeley Bowl, a motel called Berkeley Budget Inn, a computer repair shop called Berkeley Computer Dynamics, and for those in desperate need there is a helpful agency called Berkeley Bail Bonds. These names mark the companies as belonging to a certain place. This has a benefit of helping end-users find the company, as well as providing the company with a sense of identity that may be tied to its geo-cultural identity or simply to an oppositional identity whereby companies that are differentiated based on the name of the place that they are tied to (i.e. Berkeley Bail Bonds is inherently different from Oakland Bail Bonds by virtue of the name, if nothing else). A bit further down south in Hayward, California there is a milk processor called Berkeley Farms. This name is a holdover from the days in which the company was located in Berkeley (it moved out of town over fifty years ago), but the name retains ‘Berkeley’ thus identifying the company with a place of origin, a sense of history, and perhaps loyalty to longtime customers. Even more far flung, Berkeley Technology, a financial services company, is based in London England. In this case, ‘Berkeley’ appears to be tied to the company name because a small former subsidiary of the company was named Berkeley Capital Management. Formerly named London Pacific Group, the company changed its name in 2003, after divesting interest in the subsidiary.
The point that I am making is that companies use place names to tie the company to their exact geographical location, a former location, or to associate the company with a place because of the perceived positive connotations that the place name will have for end-users. Listed below are examples of technology companies that use place names.

1. Texas Instruments

Founded in 1930 as Geophysical Service, this corporation changed its name in 1951 to General Instruments before changing it again a few months later to Texas Instruments due to confusion with another company by the same name. In many ways, Texas Instruments is the prototypical modern technology company. They make a wide range of technologies including chips, transistors, and hardware. In the 1970s, Texas Instruments was among a small group of companies that manufactured personal computers for home use. They also made some of the first digital watches that were available as well as high-powered pocket calculators, which they still make. There is nothing about the Texas name that connotes ‘technology’ or ‘innovation’ but since their preferred name was taken, changing ‘General’ to ‘Texas’ – substituting a virtually meaningless word with one that was meaningless from a technology perspective, but at least had the benefit of tying the company to their real location – does very little to change the meaning behind the name. Of course, the Texas Instruments name
could be construed, from a purely semantic perspective, as meaning ‘instruments for (the people or the place of) Texas'; however, since the standard of using place names in this manner in corporate names simply as a means to identify the location of the company had long been established, the meaning was clear. *Texas Instruments* was a company that made instruments of some sort, and they had some geographical connection to the state of Texas.

2. *Monterey Networks*

The late 1990s saw the birth of hundreds of small dynamic technology-driven corporations called ‘start-ups’. Because of limited budgets, rapid deadlines, and above all, the ultimate hope that a start-up would be acquired by a wealthy company with millions of dollars to spend, some companies did not put a great deal of effort into coming up with relevant end-user-oriented names. In the case of *Monterey Networks*, which was a Texas-based company founded in 1997 and acquired by *Cisco Systems* in 1999, the name was chosen by one of the company’s founders who liked Monterey, California and thought it was a beautiful place. Rather than the place name being associated with the geographical location of the company, in this case it was associated with an insider’s story. Names that are created in this idiosyncratic manner are sometimes meant to appeal to ‘the cult of
cliques' (Putnam 1995), a topic that will be covered in more depth in Chapter Five.

For markets, motels, and even bail bond agencies, geographical location is an important determining factor for attaining business from end-users, and therefore place names are quite common in these types of businesses. On the other hand, place names are not very common for technology corporation companies. Perhaps the reason for this is that geographical locations do not provide end-users with enough referential information about a technology company's products or services.

3.4.3.3.2. Personal Names

Extremely uncommon among newer technology corporations today, the use of PERSONAL NAMES – people's names, usually founders' family names – was extremely common in the late 19th and early 20th century. While personal names have always been common across many industries, today they seem prevalent more in specific service industries such as management consulting (i.e., Lipincott Mercer, McKinsey, Booz Allen Hamilton), accounting (i.e., Deloitte and Touche, Ernst and Young, Arthur Anderson), advertising (i.e., Ogilvy and Mather, Young and Rubicam, Leo Burnett), financial services (i.e., Smith Barney, Paine Webber), and law (i.e., Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz). The rationale for why the vast majority of these types of companies use personal names is worthy of a separate dissertation; however, common sense would suggest that there are several factors at work here:
1. The founder is the brand

In several instances, these companies are founded on the personality and the ideas of an individual. For that reason, it is important to retain the name of the individual in association with the corporation, even long after the founders are gone.

2. The partner system

Most of these companies have a system whereby employees are promoted up through the ranks using a rigid standardized titling system. The ultimate goal for many employees is to attain ‘partner’ status, which would result in the employee’s name being included in the corporate name of the firm.

3. Service equals people

In service industries of the type mentioned above, there is a sense among end-users that strong individuals have to be behind the services offered. Whether accountants are handling one’s funds or lawyers are handling one’s legal matters, the connotation of an individual or individuals at the helm of the corporation is imperative. The use of personal names in these instances reinforces and strengthens this notion.
Over the past few years, there have been more and more exceptions to this naming practice. When *KPMG* spun off a business consulting practice in 2000, they named themselves *BearingPoint*; when *Arthur Andersen* spun off business consulting practice in 2002, they named themselves *Accenture*; and when *PricewaterhouseCoopers* spun off its business consulting practice in 2002, they named it *Monday*. These names are not very traditional in this industry, and their appearance likely signals an ongoing shift in naming practices and the relationship between these types of companies and their end-users.

In the technology industry, names like *Westinghouse* {1886}, *Hoover* {1908}, and *Pitney Bowes* {1920} had been common, but in the middle of the twentieth century the use of personal names was greatly diminished. Perhaps an explanation for this phenomenon has to do with the idea that the introduction of new things to the public is better received when a personal name is associated with these new types of companies. In the same way that a signature on a document demonstrates via social contract that a person stands behind associated content, personal names demonstrate that a person (or family) stands behind associated products and services.

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5 The use of the *Monday* name resulted in ridicule and scorn, particularly in Europe where there were several negative articles published in newspapers and trade press. The name only lasted a few months, because IBM bought the company and dropped the name shortly after they went public.
3.5. Conclusions

This chapter has provided the framework for the rest of this study. The first part of the chapter reviewed some of the challenges in onomastic research. Like any research field, onomastics is fraught with dissension and diversity among researchers. Onomastics is not popular or widely studied in U.S. universities. There are no academic departments that specialize in Onomastics that I am aware of, so the field survives in a disjointed cross-disciplinary fashion. The result is that basic definitions of terms remain hotly contested, and an acceptable unifying theory of names has yet to be proffered. In recent years, several onomasticians (i.e., [Nuessel 1992], [Zelinsky 2002]) have attempted to address Algeo's (1985: 143-44) aims for a 'weak theory of names.' These aims are summarized as follows (from Nuessel 1992: 6-7):

1. Define the concept of name
2. Provide taxonomies of names
3. Deal with historical and current manifestations of names
4. Distinguish competence versus performance (Chomsky 1965: 4) in name usage
5. Differentiate onomastic theory from theories applied to related disciplines
6. Relate onomastics to the larger sphere of human activity
7. Seek universal properties in naming strategies

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6 I am not certain of the need for this distinction.
As these concerns continue to be addressed by scholars from disparate fields, in this chapter I have attempted to respond to the first two, and much of the work in later chapters will respond to the third.

The second part of the chapter defined **names** for the purpose of this study. I reasserted that the focus of this study is on simple names as defined in Chapter Two. Specifically, names were defined as words, strings of words, or initialisms that corporations use as primary forms of reference to end-users.

The third part of this chapter examined three existing name taxonomies. These taxonomies were intended to establish that corporate names are a commonly recognized category in existing name taxonomies. One contribution of this study, which was provided in the fourth part of this chapter, is to build upon these existing taxonomies by proposing a detailed taxonomy of technology corporation names.

In Chapter Four, I will examine the ways in which technology corporation names have changed over the course of the past century. I will take a look at the way in which a simple name taxonomy in the early part of the twentieth century grew in complexity as new categories of names emerged. Once a pattern of change is established, there will be a focus on specific naming events that impacted subsequent naming practices. Finally, the social and linguistic factors that influenced changes in corporate naming practices will be examined and the evolution of corporate names will be explained.
Chapter 4
History of U.S. Technology Corporation Names

A good name is better than riches.
-Miguel de Cervantes

4.1. Introduction

Corporate institutions have played an important role in the development of U.S. cultural and political history. The move towards an industrial economy and the growth in corporate institutions initiated movements of citizenry from rural settings into more crowded and diverse urban settings. Over the years, urban and suburban development have resulted in patterns of immigration that have had a major impact on the way that Americans interact with one another and with institutions of authority.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, many corporations functioned either within or in very close connection with governmental authority. Companies like AT&T were granted monopolistic rights in the telecommunications industry, RCA functioned in a quasi-governmental role with regard to the distribution of radio frequencies, and even Major League Baseball was granted an antitrust exemption by the U.S. government. Of course there were thousands of smaller and less influential corporations that were not associated with, or protected by, the U.S. government. Nevertheless, in these early stages, a defining model for a number of U.S.
corporations was the government itself. In this chapter I will discuss how this form of institutionalization had an effect on early corporate naming practices.

I'd like to point out here that the notion of TECHNOLOGY has evolved over the course of the past one hundred years. In Chapter Two (section 2.2.2) I defined technology as follows:

1. Recently-discovered technical innovations are used in the creation of the products and services.

2. Products and services that allow consumers to be more efficient (either faster or more productive) and/or entertained in ways that were not possible five years prior.

Based on this definition, a great number of the products and services offered by early U.S. corporations fell into this category. The automobile industry, for example, would not be classified as a technology industry today, but it would have been in the early 1900s. When the first automobiles were hitting the road in the U.S. these products were certainly making use of ‘recently discovered technological innovations’ and they were allowing ‘consumers to be more efficient’ than they had been before. These facts are worth noting because they provide a necessary degree of contextualization within which to evaluate corporate names. By this standard, virtually all of the earliest U.S. corporations were providing technology products and solutions.
As the century progressed, the technology category narrowed as innovation started to become more focused around specific types of technology products and solutions and 'increased efficiency' has become more relegated to specialized areas. Automobiles, for example, are not making people more efficient than they were last year or five years ago or even fifty years ago, but the Internet and associated technologies that allow people to use instant messaging, e-mail, and automated shipping and receiving among other things are making people and businesses faster and more productive than they had been in the recent past.

As the technology industry has evolved to become more specialized, corporate names of technology companies have evolved in dramatic ways as well. Following the end of World War II through the 1960s there was an expansion in the development of business and personal technologies. This expansion was partially due to the fact that the U.S. had emerged from World War II as one of the two great world superpowers so it was a time of great prosperity and growth, both in terms of the economy and the population. The U.S. military industry was expanding and this resulted in several types of innovation, including technology that ended up becoming the microwave oven and the Internet, among other things.

In the mid-1960s, we can begin to observe notable changes in the way in which some companies were beginning to name themselves. A slightly more unique style of name was beginning to emerge and this would continue through the 1970s and 1980s until the mid-1990s when technology corporation names changed rapidly, and newer styles of names proliferated and became more common than the types of names that had been standard throughout most of the century. The changes in the
types of corporate names that were used were a reflection of changes in U.S. and global culture at the time.

In this chapter I will describe changes in corporate naming practices through the past century. I will begin with descriptions of the earliest U.S. technology corporations and follow naming patterns through the Internet boom of the 1990s up to the present day.

4.2. Early U.S. Corporate History

4.2.1. Overview

The earliest British colonies in the United States were established for the purposes of business and trade. In 1606, *The Plymouth Company* and *The Virginia Company* were formed by British merchants and granted a royal charter by King James I. These companies were intended to establish settlements that would serve as trading outposts. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, colonial U.S. business enterprises involved trading of agriculture, mining, and medicine.

Following U.S. independence from Great Britain, through much of the 19th century, various types of business infrastructures were established. In 1807 Robert Fulton demonstrated his steamboat *The Clermont* (known informally as *Fulton's Folly*), which proved that steamboats could be produced and used practically and economically. The steamboat expedited trade, the movement of people, and exploration of frontier regions in North America. As the century progressed,
railroads were constructed and the families that succeeded in building out U.S. industrial infrastructure became pillars of business over the course of the next century. The Cornings, Fargos, Vanderbilts, and Forbeses were behind the railroads. Other families like the DuPonts in textiles, the Rockefellers in mining and oil, and the Carnegies in steel manufacturing functioned as entrepreneurial land and business barons during the time of U.S. industrial growth and expansion.

As the century progressed, new names began to emerge as individual business and technology innovators came up with new ways to use the industrial infrastructure. Consider the following milestones:

1850: Issac Singer produces his first sewing machine
1853: Samuel Colt starts making machine-made guns
1853: Henry Steinway starts his piano manufacturing business
1853: Levi-Strauss starts selling denim trousers to miners in California
1857: Elisha Otis installs his first elevator

While Singer, Colt, Steinway, Levi-Strauss, and Otis were not barons of industry in the same manner as the Carnegies and the Rockefellers, the fact that all of these inventors named their corporations eponymously reflects the continuation of a practice that was well established and understood.

The telegraph was invented outside the United States, but Samuel Morse served as America’s most tireless innovator and promoter. In 1844, Morse sent the first inter-city telegraphic message and lobbied congress so that by 1854 over 23,000
miles of telegraph cable were in place\textsuperscript{1}. Early seeds of globalization were put in place in 1866, when the first trans-Atlantic cable was established. The telegraph was a critical technology that allowed instantaneous communication across a large geographic landscape.

In 1875, Alexander Graham Bell invented a device that became the telephone. In 1877, Bell and two other men started the \textit{Bell Telephone Company} to promote and sell the invention. The telephone and the telegraph, together with steamboats and railroads served to speed communications and shorten the time between distant locales. These factors led to rapid growth in trade and commerce.

Through the latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the power and energy industries expanded and grew as more and more businesses and homes required oil, gas, and other forms of power in order to provide heating and lighting. This would lead to faster machines and more streamlined production methods. Companies like \textit{Western Electric}, which would ultimately be acquired by the \textit{Bell Telephone Company}, and \textit{Westinghouse Electric}, named for founder George Westinghouse, would provide electronic energy resources as well as devices that would run on electricity. Notably, in 1878 Henry Villard with support from the Vanderbilts and J.P. Morgan founded \textit{Edison Electric Light Company} as a licensing agent for Thomas Edison’s patents. This company, through a series of mergers and acquisitions would become \textit{Edison General Electric} in 1888 and finally \textit{General Electric} in 1892.

\\textsuperscript{1}It is important to note that in 1851, \textit{The New York and Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company} was founded to capitalize on the new telegraphic infrastructure. This company, which changed its name to \textit{Western Union} in 1856, was the first and longest-lasting provider of telegraphic services.
At the very end of the century, B.F. Goodrich started a rubber research laboratory in 1895. In 1897, the Studebaker Corporation, named after the two brothers who founded the company, started making electric cars. Two years later, in 1899, two car manufacturers, Packard Motor Car Company and Olds Motor Vehicle Company, named for James Packard and Ransom E. Olds respectively, started making automobiles. As the 19th century drew to a close, innovative means of transporting people and goods continued to develop rapidly. Corporations that capitalized on technological advances grew in number and stature during this time.

4.2.2. Nineteenth Century Technology Corporation Names

Based on the criteria established for determining companies that fall into the technology category, a great number of early U.S. corporations can be categorized as such. Leaving aside the earliest mercantilism and agriculture businesses, once textile manufacturing and iron industries emerge strongly by the early 1800s, arguments can be made that just about any new industry makes use of ‘recent innovations’ that increase efficiency; in many respects, that is what industrialization itself is all about.

From the middle part of the century, when roads and railroad tracks began being laid, to the end of the century, when trains rolled across track from coast to coast and crude automobiles were being introduced to roadways, corporations were built up around emerging technologies of the day. Besides trains and autos, steam engines were introduced allowing distances to be more rapidly traversed and machinery to more rapidly produced manufactured goods. Elevators took people up
and down buildings with ease, comfort, and speed. Telegraphs and telephones made communication faster than ever before.

It is nearly impossible to exclude 19th century companies from the technology category because it could be argued that so many of these new companies provided technological products and services to end-users. The fact is that early U.S. industry could be broken down into fewer categories since the market at that time was much less diverse and since it involved much fewer companies than it does today. The bulk of pre-1900 corporations could be categorized into the following categories (c.f., Bryant and Dethloff 1990):

Agriculture
Textiles
Mining
Mercantilism
Transportation
Energy

While other industries were in existence at the time, the greatest number of resources went into the ones mentioned above. Through the 20th and into the 21st century, many of the smaller industries have emerged into full-fledged industries in their own right and a number of new categories and sub-categories have developed. For starters, the technology industry is generally identified as an industry in its own right, having emerged in the post-war economy of the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, new
industries such as aerospace have emerged. The telecommunications industry was in a nascent stage by 1900, but would emerge to be one of the most powerful industries of the 20th century.

In any case, the categorization of industries at this early stage in American business history is almost irrelevant from a naming perspective since nearly all companies received either descriptive names or eponyms that consisted of names of people or places. Prior to 1900 it is very difficult to find many corporate names that fall into any other category, except for a few names that I have found that can be labeled as suggestive. A nineteenth century U.S. technology corporation name taxonomy would look a bit different from the contemporary one presented in Chapter Three. This simplified taxonomy can be seen in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1. 19th Century Technology Corporation Naming Taxonomy. Categorization of different types of technology corporation names that were used in the 1800s.
Using these three categories, I will provide examples for the three types of names that were used by firms providing technology to end-users in the nineteenth century. I will follow this format in the corresponding sections in 4.3 and 4.4 below.

4.2.2.1. Eponyms

As I've noted at some length in the sections above, many of the earliest U.S. corporations used eponyms for their corporate names. Naming practices of technology companies during this period were consistent with the naming practices across all industries. Notable early technology corporation names, that is, companies that were founded with goals that are reflective of the TECHNOLOGY definition provided in Chapter Two, include the following companies, listed by their formal name:

- Remington and Sons {1816}
- Singer Sewing Company {1850}
- Studebaker Corporation {1852}
- Edison Electric Light Company {1878}
- B.F. Goodrich Company {1880}
- Rand Ledger Company {1880}
- Westinghouse Electric {1886}

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Note that most of these names include descriptive elements as part of their formal name. The exceptions are *Remington and Sons*, *B.F. Goodrich*, *Studebaker*, and *Maytag*, which only use the generic descriptor ‘company’ or ‘corporation’. Perhaps these three companies, along with others that employed the same naming strategy, did not wish to limit their businesses by adding more specific descriptors.

In these cases, and hundreds of others like them, companies that provided technology to end-users employed eponymous naming practices that were consistent with naming practices across all industries during this period. Eponymous naming practices were common outside of business, especially with regard to the naming of geographical sites. Consider cities named Charleston, Williamsburg, and Johnstown, which were named for British royalty; Jasper\(^2\) and Gettysburg\(^3\), which were named for heroes of the American Revolutionary War; and Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln, which were named for U.S. presidents. Consider, as well, the fact that the name America itself is believed to be named after the Italian cartographer and explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Eponymous naming practices serve to provide a sense of honor, dignity, and authority. When early U.S. businessmen named companies after themselves, these practices linked with these extant practices and provided a sense of individuality and ownership to the entities being named.

\(^2\) Twelve U.S. cities and five U.S. counties are named after William Jasper, a South Carolina soldier who fought in the Revolutionary War.

\(^3\) Gettysburg, Pennsylvania was named for General James Gettys in the 1780s.
Finally, it is important to note that the 1800s were a time of great expansion in the U.S.; during this period 29 states would join the union between 1803 and 1896 with the final five joining between 1907 and 1959. Through the act of naming corporations eponymously, the individuals and families behind the names were carving out a stake in the national expansion. Early corporations were part of the fabric of which the United States was made during this period. By associating a personal name with a business, especially one that had a chance to grow and expand along with the U.S. during that time, individuals were staking their claim to a share of an imagined economic territory. In addition to providing a sense of honor and dignity through their association with extant naming practices mentioned above, eponymous naming practices provided opportunities for families to establish a new kind of American royalty in this growing and expanding land.

4.2.2.2. Descriptive Names

A great number of companies used descriptive words to name their corporations. Descriptive names provide end-users with the benefit of knowing something about what kind of goods and/or services that a company provides. In early days of industrial expansion, a company can greatly benefit from being the first to provide something to end-users that no one else has provided before. Giving a company a descriptive name is one way that these companies were able to carve out niches for themselves in specific categories. Consider the list of names below, which exemplify descriptive names of the nineteenth century:
In the previous section I noted the fact that most companies included some descriptive information about the type of business that they were involved in. The difference between those names and these are the fact that those corporations had chosen eponyms as the onomastic focus. In those cases, the eponym served (and in cases where the companies are still in existence, continues to serve as) the simple name. *B.F. Goodrich Company* has long been commonly referred to as *Goodrich*, *Singer Sewing Company* has been known as *Singer*, and *Westinghouse Electric* has been known as *Westinghouse* in colloquial situations. Therefore, while descriptive information was included in a formalistic manner, the single eponym has served as the primary common form of address and reference.

In the case of companies with descriptive names, the names are either fully pronounced, sometimes including the most generic noun in the final position (‘company’, ‘corporation’, or ‘incorporated’), and sometimes not. Most often, these names tend to be abbreviated into initialisms. For example, *American Telegraph and Telephone* became *AT&T*, while *General Electric* became *GE*. I have been unable to
determine who are the primary instigators of this sort of initialization (the company, end-users, or media), but I have found consistent early references to corporate initialism.

In addition to terminology that describes specific products, services or benefits to end-users, additional adjectives consisting of words that describe specificity or generality (i.e., 'general') or geographic regions (i.e., 'western' and 'national') were often used to delineate one company from another. In other words, General Electric and Western Electric were both in the electricity business, but their names conveyed that there was a distinction between the two companies. Both of these companies could not have been called Electric Company because end-users would have been unable to distinguish one company from another, so the use of additional descriptors provides end-users with one way to distinguish one company from another, and these descriptors provide the companies themselves with a way to distinguish themselves from one another. General Electric could promote itself as offering a wide range of electric products and services, while Western Electric could promote its specialization in a particular geographic region. Of course, 'western' in the sense that Western Electric was using it had a different meaning than it does today, probably signifying the notions of 'growth', 'newness', and possibly even 'innovation' since the West was an area of growth and expansion in the United States at that time.
4.2.2.3. Suggestive and Arbitrary Names

In extremely rare cases in the latter part of the nineteenth century, corporations chose names that were neither eponymous nor descriptive. I have only turned up two U.S. technology companies, in fact, that chose names that flouted the norms of naming practices of the time. Right on the cusp of the twentieth century, Kodak {1891} and Exide {1900} emerged with the types of names that would become increasingly common during the 1900s, especially towards the end of the century.

The fact is that both of these companies started out with very typical names for the times. Kodak had been founded as the Eastman Dry Plate and Film Company in 1882. The Kodak name was originally developed as a product name. George Eastman had developed a new kind of film and an entirely new kind of camera for that film. He was determined to give the camera a name that had never been used before, and one that he coined himself. Eastman explained (Campbell 1964: 190) that he

chose that name because [he] knew a trade name must be short, vigorous, incapable of being misspelled to an extent that will destroy its identity, and in order to satisfy trademark laws, it must mean nothing.

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The name had advantages over eponyms and descriptive names because it was easily trademarkable and protectable; it was truly unique, and in the minds of end-users therefore memorable and tied to only one company; it was easily pronounceable and difficult to mispronounce; and it didn’t have to be translated into any other language.

As noted, this name, an exception in the early part of the century is an example of the type of name that becomes prominent in the latter part of the 20th century: an ‘empty vessel’: since it has no inherent meaning, it can be made to mean anything the owner wishes.

From a linguistic perspective, Eastman was very careful to choose a name that had a consonant-vowel construction. He was a visionary who understood that U.S. business had the potential not only to expand within North America, but overseas as well. His consideration of foreign pronunciation concerns and translation issues was ahead of its time and much more reflective of considerations that affected naming practices a hundred years later (as we’ll examine more closely in the sections that follow).

Like Kodak, Exide was also the result of a corporate renaming exercise. The Electric Storage Battery Company was founded in 1888, and with the introduction of a revolutionary new type of storage battery that weighed less and stored more than its predecessors, the company changed its name to match the name of this product. Exide was a sort of acronym that took letters from ‘EXcellent oxIDE’. The term ‘Excellent Oxide’ was not used as a proper name for the battery; only the shortened version was used. This type of naming practice became more common throughout
the 20th century, but at this early point in U.S. corporate history, it was exceptionally rare.

4.3. Early to Middle Twentieth Century U.S. Corporate History

4.3.1. Overview

Components of the post-industrial infrastructure (i.e., energy, electricity, and transportation) that were established in the nineteenth century enabled the growth of early twentieth century technology industries. Aviation, automobiles, and radio technologies would expand and grow into full-fledged industries by the 1930s. The Wright Brothers successful flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903 spawned the aviation industry that led to the establishment of aircraft manufacturers such as Boeing {1910}, Lockheed {1916 as Loughead}, and Douglas {1920}; and airlines such as Western Air Express {1925, later became TWA}, United Airlines {1926, as a subsidiary of Boeing}, Pan American {1927}, and Braniff {1928}. The innovative use of assembly lines in 1913 by the Ford Motor Company laid the foundation for an automobile industry that would continue to grow through the early part of the century. Around the turn of the century, Guglielmo Marconi and Nikola Tesla were working in parallel on the development of radio transmission technologies that led to the development of radio manufacturers and broadcasters such as de Forest Radio Telephone Company {1907}, Magnavox {1917}, Radio Corporation of America {1919}, and Zenith {1923}.
In the early part of the twentieth century, there was movement away from barons of industry, towards individual inventors, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Since the infrastructure had already been established, smaller steps could be taken to come up with new products and services to provide to end-users. For example, the invention and ultimate adoption of petroleum-based internal combustion engines in automobiles required the existence of a large gas industry and the success of radio depended on an existent electric industry. Additionally, the successes of these and other industries were dependent on the interest and perceived usefulness by end-users, and as the country continued its geographic expansion these technologies served useful functions of bridging long distances along with railroads and telephones.

In addition to aviation, automobile, and radio industries, the motion picture and television industries emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. The motion picture industry took hold relatively quickly while the television industry did not attain much success before the 1950s. The first motion picture cinema had opened in 1905, and within a few years thousands of these nickelodeons were built. By 1917 Charlie Chaplin was making one million dollars per year, and the industry was attracting great numbers of people to cinemas.

With railroads and automobiles, people could begin to traverse the continent more quickly and easily. With telegraphs, telephones, and radios, immediate cross- and inter-continental communications were possible. With moving pictures, people in the United States could see visual representations of people and places that they would never otherwise see. Films depicted a broad range of characters, cultures, and

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4 These small theaters were called 'nickelodeons' because they charged five cents, or one nickel, per showing.
events, while newsreels conveyed current events with powerful and engaging moving images. Through the advent of technologies in the early part of the twentieth century, the world was becoming a smaller, more accessible place to many people.

4.3.2. Early to Middle Twentieth Century Technology Corporation Names

Naming practices did not change much during the first part of the twentieth century; however, there were some small changes that would emerge more dramatically in the latter half of the century.

The use of eponyms and descriptive names was still prevalent in the early part of the century, although the use of institutional-sounding descriptive names became more common. The inclusion of terms like ‘national’, ‘America’, and ‘American’ became more prominent, as did the inclusion of terms like ‘international’ that conveyed an awareness of the world outside of the United States.

Early film studios followed the trend established in other industries in adopting names such as *Metro Pictures* {1915}, *Samuel Goldwyn Pictures* {1917}, *Louis B. Mayer Pictures Company*{5} {1918}, and *RKO Pictures*{6} {1928}. Simultaneously, other motion picture studios were adopting names like *Paramount Pictures* {1916} and *Columbia Pictures* {1924}.

While eponymous and descriptive naming practices remained common, there was an increase in the use of suggestive and non-eponymous arbitrary types of names

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5 These three studios would merge in 1924 and become *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures* or *MGM*.
6 The *RKO* name comes from the merger of *Radio Corporation of America*, the *Keith-Albee-Orpheum* theater chain, and the *American Pathé* production firm; hence *Radio-Keith-Orpheum* becomes *RKO*.
in the early part of the century. Whereas I can only find a very small number of these types of names before 1900, there are several examples that can be found as the century progresses. Names like *Bakelite*, *Raytheon*, and the aforementioned *Paramount* are examples of names that were beginning to be used more frequently. There are explanations for the emergence of these types of names that will be covered in greater depth in Chapter Five. For now, I can suggest that these names are extensions of accepted eponymous and even descriptive names of the time. An abbreviated explanation will be provided in section 4.3.2.2 below.

4.3.2.1. Eponyms and Descriptive Names

In the early part of the century corporate naming practices remained consistent with earlier practices. Eponyms and descriptive names were still dominant. As the country and its industries were still relatively young, corporate naming practices involved naming a company after the person who founded it, the place where it conducted its business, or the things that it sold. Consider the list of names below, which exemplifies the most common eponymous and descriptive names of the early twentieth century:

*Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company* {1902}

*Ford Motor Company* {1903}

*American Arithmometer Company* {1905}

*The Haloid Company* {1906}
For the most part, corporate names of this era relied largely on naming practices established in pre-industrial times when proprietors hung signs on storefronts with their names and/or descriptions of their wares. These naming practices relied on the principle that the best way to ensure the quality of goods was to have someone put their name behind it. In small micro-economies, the only way for end-users to distinguish one product from another was by the name that went behind it. If someone needed strong leather for belts back in 1702, they might have turned to J.E. Rhoads & Sons rather than one of their competitors because they knew the Rhoads family or had a good experience with products that bore the J.E. Rhoads & Sons name. Over time, the name becomes synonymous in end-users’ minds with an expected level of quality on certain types of products. J.E. Rhoads & Sons started as a tannery in Marple, Pennsylvania, then made belts and other leather goods before making buggy whips and finally industrial belting for conveyer belts, which they still manufacture today. In the case of J.E. Rhoads and Sons, the longest continuous business operating in the United States, the name that was first used by the Rhoads family in 1702 in reference to their small tannery. The name functioned as a signature on the goods that were manufactured for a small community in which the
family name had a reference point. The Rhoads family lived in a Quaker community; their neighbors knew who they were and where they lived. The name itself referenced real people who could be held accountable for the quality of their goods. This practice continued through the twentieth century, particularly among service agencies such as law, advertising, and accounting firms, where the notion that there are real people behind rendered services is intended to provide end-users with a sense of trust and accountability in the same sense as J.E. Rhoads & Sons, or any other early eponymous corporate name.

The names used by technology corporations in the early part of the century drew from earlier naming practices, and often served to highlight innovators that were behind specific new technologies. For end-users, the Henry Ford name, for example, represented ingenuity with regard to delivering automobiles quickly and inexpensively to the market. End-users would learn that the Hewlett and Packard names represented the guile and ingenuity of two men who came up with great inventions in their garage. One of the ways that Ford, Hewlett and Packard, Hoover, and other technologically savvy entrepreneurs conveyed a sense of innovation with their names was through the means of advertising, which grew quickly in the early years of the twentieth century. W.H. Hoover, for example, placed advertisements in the *Saturday Evening Post* offering ten-day trials of his ‘suction sweeper’. Advertising succeeded in selling products and promoting names of companies and the individuals behind the companies. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, advertising is a critical means of communications that would end up changing fundamental corporate naming practices over time.
Names like *American Arithmometer Company* and *The Haloid Company* were increasingly common in the sense that the corporate names themselves were technically descriptive, although they involved the use of recently coined terms in their names\(^7\). An *arithmometer* was a calculating machine and *haloid* was a chemical compound that was used in the photographic process. As innovations increased and became more specialized, corporations would name themselves based on these highly technical specializations.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the use of terms such as ‘America’ and ‘American’ in corporate names grew increasingly common in the early part of the century. The *American Arithmometer Company* and *Radio Corporation of America* are examples of this type of naming practice, which served at once to weave these corporations into the thread of an expanding geographical space and to institutionalize these corporations. The nation was changing quickly from an era when early U.S. companies such as the insurance company *Philadelphia Contributionship* {1752} or the financial institution *Bank of Boston* {1784} included specific cities in their corporate names. As the country was expanding geographically, and the transportation and communication infrastructures were enabling corporations to conduct business over broad geographic areas, it was becoming more common to use corporate names that conveyed a sense of broad geographic depth. This is not to say that place names were not still found in the names of new technology corporations; for example, *Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing* was founded in 1902.

\(^7\) According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term *arithmometer* was first used in 1876 and *haloid* was first used in 1841.

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Finally, the name *International Business Machines* is worth noting for a few different reasons. Firstly, the name represents a common practice in technology corporation naming; corporate name change. *International Business Machines* was founded in 1896 as the *Tabulating Machine Company*. This pattern of corporate renaming over time due to changing business scope\(^8\), a need to express broader depth of products or geographical scope\(^9\), an effort to re-focus a company’s offerings or to capitalize on the success of a single strong product brand as in the cases of *Kodak* and *Exide*, would become increasingly common over the course of the century. Secondly, the use of the term ‘international’ in a U.S. corporate name represents the fact that there was an increasing awareness of the world beyond U.S. borders. With the growth of transportation and communications infrastructures, and following the end of World War I in 1919, the United States had become a member of a growing international trade community. While the categories of eponyms and descriptive names remained the same, the quality of names during this period was altered slightly by changes in industrial and social contexts.

4.3.2.2. Suggestive and Arbitrary Names

As the century progressed, naming practices began to change. Rather than using eponyms, descriptive names, or combinations thereof, corporations began to

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\(^8\) In the case of *International Business Machines*, the fact that they made more than just tabulating machines by 1924 necessitated the change.

\(^9\) The use of the term ‘international’ in this case indicates an awareness on the company’s part of the capacity for an international market due to increased international industrial growth, communications, and shipping capabilities.
use suggestive and arbitrary words within formal corporate names, and as primary references for simple names. Some of these names were developed using the same principles of existing naming practices; for example, slightly altered forms of eponyms were used. In many cases, product names were developed and simply used as both a product and corporation name; however, more often than not companies would begin doing business with one name (either descriptive or eponymous) and change their corporate name after the success and recognition of one of its products.

I have compiled several examples of arbitrary and suggestive names from this era below. This list is not exhaustive, although it does account for many, if not most, of this name variety found among technology corporation corporations during this period.

*Bakelite Company* {1910}
*Formica Company* {1913}
*Paramount Pictures* {1914}
*Magnavox* {1917}
*Clorox Company* {1921}
*Raytheon* {1925}
*Sylvania* {1924}
*Columbia Pictures* {1924}

As I mentioned above, some of these names were created through a variation of existing naming practices. The *Sylvania* name, for example, is a variation on
eponymous naming as it is a truncated form of the corporation’s home state, Pennsylvania. Likewise, the Bakelite name is eponymous in the sense that it was named after its inventor, Leo Baekeland. The first portion of the name Bakel- is a phonetic representation of the first part of Baekeland’s name while the second part of the name -ite was a common suffix for synthetic materials and polymers (i.e., xylonite and nestorite) coming from chemical terminology for ‘compound form of an acid’ (e.g., nitrous is an acid that is called nitrite when converted to a compound). Although Bakelite is not an eponym, it draws from this corporate naming practice as well as non-corporate scientific naming practices involving the combination of root words with Greek or Latin suffixes.

Another example of a scientific naming practice being applied to the development of a corporate name is Clorox. The Clorox name was originally developed as a name for a cleaning product sold by the Electro-Alkaline Company, which had been established in 1912. The proprietors of this small Oakland, California based company came up with the name Clorox based entirely on the chemicals that made up its active ingredients: chlorine and sodium hydroxide. By orthographically simplifying the first part of the word, the chlor- from ‘chlorine’ became clor- while the -ox from ‘sodium hydroxide’ was used as the end of the word. The product became extremely successful as an industrial cleaner, and later as a clothes whitener, so much so that in 1921 the Electro-Alkaline Company changed its name to Clorox in order to become more clearly identified with its flagship product. Whereas the Bakelite Company was named concurrently with its flagship product, the Clorox Company followed a more common practice, first demonstrated with Kodak.
and later practiced by *International Business Machines* as discussed above and *Magnavox* and *Raytheon*.

As I’ve already mentioned, the use of Latin and Greek word parts in the naming of scientific discoveries was a common practice. Because the technology industry is and was the corporate application of scientific principles, these naming practices would enter into technology naming over time. Starting with individual technologies and products, companies would draw from classical languages to invent names. Latin for ‘great/loud voice’, *Magnavox* was the name given to an amplifying speaker developed by Peter Laurits Jensen that brought high-fidelity to radio in 1915. Based on this invention, Jensen was able to obtain funding to start the *Magnavox Company* in 1917.

Founded in 1922 with a prototypical name for the era, the *American Appliance Company* manufactured radio and appliance parts. In 1925, the company released a groundbreaking product called the *Raytheon*, a gaseous rectifier tube that helped make radios more affordable and acceptable by replacing bulky and short-lived batteries. At the same time, they were required to change the company name because an Indiana company called the *American Appliance Company* had already established rights to that name. Based on the success of its revolutionary product, the company changed its name to *Raytheon*.

Over the course of the century, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, when high-tech computer and Internet technologies would emerge at unprecedented speeds, Latin, Greek, and eventually other classical and modern languages would be drawn upon for the purposes of developing new corporate names. While product names
would always be less linguistically conservative, corporate names would become less
descriptive and eponymous over time.

Another sector that I am including within the broader technology industry of
the early 1900s is the film industry. Recall that technology as defined here allows
end-users to be more efficient and entertained. For this reason, I’ve included Metro-
Goldwyn-Mayer and others in the discussion above, and I’ve included Paramount
Pictures and Columbia Pictures here. The naming practices adopted by these
companies may very well have established a precedent for the types of names that
would follow in the film industry and other technology industries as well.

Paramount Pictures started out as the Progressive Company in 1912, a west
coast company that distributed films for small film production companies. The
Progressive Company expanded nationally in 1914 and ran into another company
with the same name. The company founder, W.W. Hodkinson looked through the ‘P’
section in a dictionary and chose paramount, the first ‘P’ word that he liked, for his
new company name. The word was chosen because it had a positive meaning and a
powerful connotation. Paramount Pictures would emerge as a leader in the early film
industry, making some of the most popular and respected films of the era\(^\text{10}\).

In 1920, Harry and Jack Cohn together with Jackie Brandt formed the CBC
Sales Film Corporation using their initials to form the name of the company. The
studio was known for making low-budget films such as westerns and serials. Over
time, the studio started making better quality and higher profile films. This helped

\(^{10}\) I gathered much of this historical information from the Paramount Studios Web site
(www.paramount.com) as well as the Society for Independent Motion Picture Producers Web site
(www.cobbles.com/simpp_archive/hodkinson_system.htm).
build their reputation, but the Cohns and Brandt felt that the corporate name limited them so ‘in 1924 in an effort to strengthen its brand, the studio renamed itself to Columbia Pictures, which was considered to be a more upscale brand’ (Wikipedia 2004b). The word Columbia does not have a concise definition, but it connotes power (possibly because it is part of the name of the nation’s capitol) and discovery (since it is derived from Columbus). Columbia Pictures combined the words with a majestic figure of a woman draped in an American flag, holding a flaming and sparkling torch up with her left arm. Surely the words and the image were intended to be combined to provide a connotation of high-class and respectability. Although others would use suggestive terminology like Paramount and Universal, Columbia was the first to use an arbitrary term in an attempt to achieve a positive tonality. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the increased use of suggestive and arbitrary terms in order to convey positive tonality to end-users would become increasingly common as the century progressed.

4.4. Middle to Late Twentieth Century U.S. Corporate History

4.4.1. Overview

Following the end of World War II through the Cold War, technological advancements in many areas – especially aerospace and communications – resulted in the availability of new products and services to U.S. individuals and businesses. Due in part to the military industrial complex that grew up after World War II and also to
the rapid economic growth of that period, businesses and end-users were introduced to a wide range of new technologies. Table 4.1 shows some of the well known technologies introduced between the end of World War II and the end of the Cold War that ended up benefitting end-users.

The introduction of these new technologies resulted in the emergence of the high-tech industry, which grew rapidly through the 1960s, '70s and '80s before exploding in the 1990s when the Internet and its related technologies fueled the stock market and economic growth. Many of the new technologies that were introduced in this part of the century were related to computing and communications. Microchips, advanced computer languages and ultimately small personal computers were developed in parallel with transistors, fiber optics and satellites; these technologies together would lead to the emergence of the Internet and its popular form, the World Wide Web.

In the fifty years after the end of World War II, the United States changed in many ways. New waves of immigrants from non-European countries entered the country in large numbers. The Hispanic population grew tremendously, bringing multilingual communities to many U.S. cities and rural communities as well. A great number of people from parts of Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia and Vietnam immigrated to the U.S. to escape war in their countries. Thousands of people from several other nations entered the U.S. legally and illegally in hopes of escaping war or political oppression in their countries or to improve the economic conditions of themselves and their families back home.
Figure 4.2. Landmark Technologies: Between the end of WW II and the Cold War the emergence of these technologies had a profound effect on corporate naming practices (About.com 2004)\textsuperscript{11}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology/Product</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946 Microwave Oven</td>
<td>A Raytheon scientist working on magnetron technology for radars discovered that food could be cooked with microwaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947 Transistors</td>
<td>Bell Laboratory scientists came up with this device that allowed transmission of electrical waves while controlling electrical current.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951 Video Tape Recorder</td>
<td>A researcher at Ampex developed the first machine to record sound and images on a magnetic tape that did not require processing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 Transistor Radio</td>
<td>Texas Instruments introduced a small portable radio to end-users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955 Optic Fiber</td>
<td>Developed by the U.S. Army Signal Corps Laboratory as an improved way to transmit signals over long distances using glass-based fibers instead of copper wires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957 FORTRAN</td>
<td>Computer scientists at IBM developed the first high-level programming language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58 Satellite</td>
<td>Soviet Union launches Sputnik and United States launches Explorer I within three months of each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958 Laser</td>
<td>Columbia University graduate student invented the technology that led to several military, medical and other applications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959 Microchip</td>
<td>Scientists at Texas Instruments and Fairchild Semiconductor simultaneously developed technology that would allow super-computing to emerge over the following decade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967 Handheld Calculator</td>
<td>Sharp released the first handheld calculator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969 ARPAnet</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Defense had established the Advanced Research Projects Agency, which in 1969 created the precursor to the Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 Ethernet</td>
<td>Researchers at Xerox introduced this technology that allowed computers to communicate with one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 Personal Computer</td>
<td>Although microcomputers had been available since the mid-1970s, it wasn’t until IBM’s PC was released that computers started to be adopted on a large scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-85 Macintosh/Windows</td>
<td>Apple and Microsoft introduced the graphical user interface (GUI) to end-users, spawning the beginning of the home computer market.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{11} The compilation of this information was inspired by content on the National Inventors Hall of Fame Web site (www.invent.org).
These waves of immigrants had a great cultural and linguistic impact on American life. Despite the fact that the diversity of people in the U.S. were not necessarily interacting with one another regularly, living in the same neighborhoods, going to the same churches and schools, and working in the same jobs, popular forms of communication like radio, television, newspapers, magazines and advertising that appeared in all media would slowly expose people to different cultures and in some cases different languages and scripts than those that they had previously been accustomed to.

Televisions, which started becoming more commonplace in people's homes, would serve as a conduit of trans-ethnic exposure for people in the United States. In the latter half of the century, it would become more difficult for Americans to ignore the fact that their culture was undergoing a major cultural shift and that the U.S. was not alone in the world. Televisions and newspapers delivered sounds and images to people's homes every day, providing a window into people and cultures from around the globe. From a business perspective, this would have an important impact. Demographic patterns were shifting, and corporations needed to understand the diverse needs of their customers in order to survive and prosper. In many cases this resulted in the creation of specific products and services for specific groups of people, in other cases this might lead to forms of advertising that were focused on specific groups. For new corporations, this led to new challenges and opportunities on all fronts, including the way in which the companies themselves were named.

As the twentieth century was winding down, the U.S. economy was winding up. Corporations had embraced globalization, and opportunities to capitalize on the
expanded and diversified customer base were seized. The technology industry was perched in an enviable position because it offered the products and services that could most rapidly transform economies, and because high-tech relied on the most cutting-edge advanced innovations, it was able to transform itself rapidly to respond to end-user needs and expectations. As I will discuss in more depth in Chapter Five technology corporations were extremely aware of cultural shifts and new trends, they helped shape them in some ways, and they would respond to them through product offerings, marketing, advertising, and naming practices.

4.4.2. Middle to Late Twentieth Century Technology Corporation Names

Naming practices remained relatively consistent from the early part of the century until the 1960s when the high tech industry began to take off. This development, and the subsequent naming event that followed, marks a critical moment in technology corporation naming practices. Several events mentioned in section 4.4.1 led to the emergence of a commercially viable technology industry, but one particular event had a profound effect on naming practices that followed in its wake.

In 1937 Chester Carlson invented a process called electrophotography whereby images on documents were quickly reproduced using photographic processing. In 1938 the process was renamed xerography from the Greek xeros for 'dry' and graphos for 'writing'. The Haloid Company had acquired Carlson's
patented technology and subsequently trademarked the word XEROX\textsuperscript{12} in 1949 to use in association with the technology and related products. After the introduction of the Xerox 914, the first automatic office photocopier in 1959, photocopiers started to become more widely adopted office technology. The company’s annual revenues went from two million to 22 million dollars in three years after the introduction of the Xerox 914. This phenomenal success led the company to change its name to the \textit{Xerox Corporation} in 1961 in order to more closely associate the company with their most successful product. This naming event is a turning point\textsuperscript{13}, the beginning of a slow change that continued through the 1960s, ‘70s and ‘80s to the use of more fanciful suggestive and arbitrary corporate names that were less transparently descriptive or traditionally eponymous than before.

The change in naming practices is exemplified in the emerging software industry. From the 1950s through the early part of the 1960s companies had names like: \textit{Computer Usage Corporation} \{1955\}, \textit{Applied Data Research} and \textit{Computer Sciences Corporation} \{1959\}, \textit{Advanced Computer Techniques, Electronic Data Systems, and finally Informatics} \{1962\}. With Informatics we see the threads that were originally sewn with Xerox starting to appear more prominently.

Continuing down the path, or following the \textit{Xerox} thread, software company names in the mid-1960s through the 1970s started to look like this: \textit{Tymshare} \{1965\}, \textit{Comshare} \{1966\}, \textit{Dylakor, Pansophic, Syncsort} \{1969\}, \textit{Fortex Data Corporation} \{1970\}, \textit{Argonaut Information Systems} \{1972\}, \textit{Compuware} \{1973\},

\textsuperscript{12} International trademark offices have adopted the practice of using uppercase letters for trademarks. This precludes applicants from making exclusivity claims based on orthographic idiosyncracies.

\textsuperscript{13} Other types of names were undergoing change in the 1960s (i.e., band names, baby names). Further study might indicate that corporate names were influenced by other naming practices.
Cyborg Systems {1974}, Microsoft {1975}, Oracle and Softool {1977}. The tokens of more fanciful corporate names steadily increase through the 60s and 70s. The threads of change that began with Xerox have woven themselves into the fabric of technology corporation naming by the end of the 1970s. Long before crowded trademark classes and pre-dating the need for World Wide Web addresses by nearly ten years, technology corporations had begun to redefine corporate naming practices.

In the early 1980s, when the U.S. government broke up the telecommunications monopoly that was AT&T into seven ‘Baby Bells’, we witness the continuation and spread of the Xerox effect across the technology industry. Corporate names begin to sound less like stolid monolithic institutions and more like localized individualistic – sometimes friendly – characters that insert themselves into our lives. This notion of creating corporate names that make companies seem friendlier and more approachable will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five.

In 1984 AT&T spawned Ameritech, Bell Atlantic, Bell South, NYNEX, Pacific Telesis (known colloquially as Pacific Bell), Southwestern Bell and U.S. West. Today those seven Baby Bells have condensed down to Verizon (consisting of Bell Atlantic and NYNEX [+GTE]), SBC (consisting of Pacific Telesis, Ameritech and Southwestern Bell), Bell South, and Qwest (consisting of U.S. West and a newly formed nameless telecommunications company). Other competitive telecommunications companies (CLECs) that emerged after the AT&T breakup used names like Sprint {1986}, Global Crossing {1997}, XO Communications {1994} and Rhythms NetConnections {1997}. These names exemplify the types of names that
emerge and become the most prominent type of technology corporation name in the last years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

As the 1990s progressed, and the Internet became more widely used by businesses and consumers, corporate naming patterns were dramatically altered. With the rise of the Internet came the assumption that anyone could launch a Web site, start selling their products or snazzy technology, and buyers would come along to consume these offerings. If these new products and technologies did not get sold to end-users, they might attract the attention of a bigger company that would buy the smaller company outright and make Internet millionaires out of the founders and employees. As a result of these factors, hundreds of new companies were starting up their businesses each day, and each one needed a unique name, the problem was that most new technology companies fell into one trademark class.

The \textit{United States Patent and Trademark Office} (USPTO) categorizes trademarks into 45 individual trademark classes\textsuperscript{13} organized into goods and service sub-classes (see Appendix). Corporate names have to be cleared in classes that cover any products and/or services that are sold in association with the name. In order for a name to be cleared for use, no other entity can be using the name, a phonetic equivalent of the name, a name that differs by one (or sometimes two) letters, or a name that bears graphic resemblance. Additionally, a name cannot be cleared for

\textsuperscript{13} Trademark classes are relatively standardized across a number of jurisdictions in most countries. Class 11 in the U.S. is the same as class 11 in France, Germany, England, Japan, Brazil, South Africa, etc. The purpose and goal of the trademark class system, and other activities of trademark offices around the world, is to ensure that consumers are not confused or misled by competing offerings using similar trademarks.
exclusive use by one entity if the name is deemed descriptive\textsuperscript{14} or generic; this is to say that a company that calls itself the \textit{Internet Service Company} would not be able to prevent another company from using the same name because it describes what the company does – it provides Internet service to end users\textsuperscript{15}. Class 9 is an extremely broad goods class that includes electrical and scientific apparatus and covers everything from staplers to mainframe computers; class 42 is a service class that includes scientific, technological, and computer related services. Internet-related companies always fall into at least one of these two classes, therefore, in a very short period of time companies had to come up with new ways to distinguish their corporate monikers from others in the same market.

During this period of economic and trademark explosion, entirely new types of corporate names were created. A slew of names that included asterisks, @ symbols, and exclamation points began to appear (i.e., \textit{E*Trade}, \textit{@Home}, \textit{MakeMusic!}); names that were made of untraditional non-English words were unleashed (i.e., \textit{Inktomi}, \textit{Akamai}) and names that consisted of multiple incongruous or irreverant words found their way into the consciousness of technology end-users (i.e., \textit{FatBrain}, \textit{Loudeye}). Between 1983 and 2000, the number of new trademark applications increased almost eight times from 50,000 to 375,000 applications (see Table 4.1 and Figure 4.3). New applications had been increasing at a rate of a little

\textsuperscript{14} Note that companies can obtain trademarks for descriptive names if the names acquire 'secondary meaning' over time. \textit{General Motors}, for example, is descriptive but it has acquired secondary meaning over time so that when the name is used there is little possibility of confusion in the marketplace.

\textsuperscript{15} Of course, a company that specializes in the installation of ceiling fans or something other than Internet services would probably be able to trademark the name since it would be considered unique non-descriptive use of the terms in association with that business.
over 10% a year until 1999 when applications increased by 27% and over 60,000 in number. In 2000, the pace remained the same as applications increased by 27% again, and over 80,000 in number. Although these figures cover all trademark applications, not just trademarks that would be used for corporate names, it is evident that congestion in relevant trademark classes caused an influx of new kinds of corporate names.

Table 4.1. Trademark Applications. This chart lists year-by-year number of trademark applicants between 1983 and 2003. Note that these numbers account for all applications, not just applications that would be used for corporate names.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Applications</th>
<th>Change in Number of Applications</th>
<th>Change in Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>51,014</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>61,480</td>
<td>+ 10,466</td>
<td>+ 20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>64,677</td>
<td>+ 3,197</td>
<td>+ 5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>69,253</td>
<td>+ 4,576</td>
<td>+ 7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>70,002</td>
<td>+ 749</td>
<td>+ 1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>76,813</td>
<td>+ 6,811</td>
<td>+ 9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>83,169</td>
<td>+ 6,356</td>
<td>+ 8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>127,294</td>
<td>+ 44,125</td>
<td>+ 53.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>120,365</td>
<td>- 6,929</td>
<td>- 5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>125,237</td>
<td>+ 4,872</td>
<td>+ 4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>139,735</td>
<td>+14,498</td>
<td>+ 11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>155,376</td>
<td>+ 15,641</td>
<td>+ 11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>175,307</td>
<td>+ 19,931</td>
<td>+ 12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>200,640</td>
<td>+ 25,333</td>
<td>+ 14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>224,355</td>
<td>+ 23,715</td>
<td>+ 11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>232,384</td>
<td>+ 8,029</td>
<td>+ 3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>295,165</td>
<td>+62,781</td>
<td>+ 27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>375,428</td>
<td>+ 80,263</td>
<td>+ 27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>296,388</td>
<td>- 79,040</td>
<td>- 26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>258,873</td>
<td>- 37,515</td>
<td>- 14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>267,218</td>
<td>+ 8,345</td>
<td>+ 3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why did corporations change naming practices in the manner that they did? When trademark classes filled up, why didn’t they go the traditional route of choosing a founder’s name, or the name of the lead technology innovator to name the company after? The constraints of international trademark offices only tell part of the story. While these constraints may have been key factors that have motivated change, there were other linguistic and social factors that had a major impact on naming practices. I will discuss these factors, and explain the reasons that naming practices evolved in the manner that they did, in the next chapter.

**Figure 4.3. Trademark Applications Graph.** This graph shows the increase in new trademark applications between 1983 and 2000. Note that after 2000, the number of applications began to drop.
4.4.2.1. Corporate Names From Mid-Century to the Internet

Although corporate naming practices did not change dramatically after the Haloid Company changed its name to Xerox, this event does appear to mark a turning point. Prior to 1961, most technology corporation names followed descriptive and eponymous naming norms. Names that were made up of three words like Computer Usage Corporation, Applied Data Research and Computer Sciences Corporation were common and were frequently referred to as initialisms (i.e., CUC, ADR, and CSC). After 1961, we still observe scores of names that follow this pattern (i.e., Advanced Computer Techniques and Electronic Data Systems, Advanced Micro Devices), but more and more suggestive and arbitrary names start to emerge. The list below exemplifies technology corporation names that appeared from the 1950s until the World Wide Web was launched in 1992.

- Computer Usage Corporation {1955}
- Applied Data Research {1959}
- Computer Sciences Corporation {1959}
- Xerox Corporation {1961}
- Advanced Computer Techniques {1962}
- Electronic Data Systems {1962}
- Informatics Corporation {1962}
- Tymshare Corporation {1965}
- Comshare {1966}
Intel Corporation {1968}

Advanced Micro Devices {1969}

Dylakor {1969}

Pansophic Corporation {1969}

Syncsort {1969}

Argonaut Information Systems {1972}

Atari Corporation {1972}

Compuware Corporation {1973}

Cyborg Systems {1974}

Microsoft Corporation {1975}

Apple Computer {1977}

Softool Corporation {1977}

Oracle Corporation {1977}

Adobe Systems {1982}

Advent Corporation {1983}

Cisco Systems {1984}

Veritas Software {1989}

A great number of these new kinds of names come from computer hardware and software manufacturers. The Informatics moniker was used by the company that developed and sold Mark IV, a file management software program that was the first software product to have cumulative sales of $1,000,000. The name is a coined suggestive word that combines information and the suffix -atics, which is a parallel
form of the ending on the words ‘automatic’ and ‘mathematic’. The practice of coining names by pulling real or perceived morphemes from other words and combining them into new forms would become increasingly common in ensuing years. The Tymshare name bridges eras in the sense that it combines a real word and an eponym to form a coined suggestive word that is actually very close to being descriptive. The corporation sold hardware and software that allowed multiple users to work simultaneously or ‘timeshare’ using one computer processor. The lead software developer’s name was LaRoy Tymes, hence the alteration in the first part of the name. The use of the letter ‘y’ in this manner positioned Tymshare as a forerunner in the practice of creative spelling that would become a more common practice as the century progressed.

By the early 1970s, names like Pansophic, Syncsort, Compuware, Microsoft, Softool, and Ameritech were becoming the norm for technology names. Naming practices had evolved by this time, so that new company names tended not to use real descriptive words or eponyms; rather, names that combined word parts in unique ways were becoming more common. The transition from names that were made up of descriptive words to names that were made up of suggestive word parts served the ironic function of having the new variety of words perform more descriptively for end-users on first sight. This is because most of the longer descriptive names were abbreviated as acronyms. In order to know solely from the name that AMD was a

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16 One example is Agilent, the 1999 Hewlett-Packard spin-off that combined agile with the -ent suffix that provides little semantic information but gave the name a contemporary tonality by connecting with another successful name, Lucent.

17 Examples include Compaq {1982}, Qwest {1995}, and Mynd {1998}.
company that sold powerful microchips, an end-user would have to know that the
initialism stood for *Advanced Micro Devices* whereas end-users exposed to the
*Microsoft* name might be able to infer that the company made software for
microcomputers\(^\text{18}\).

Names such as *Argonaut, Oracle, and Advent* are examples of real words that
are used metaphorically by corporations. *Argonaut Information Systems*, for
example, was not really made up of heroic Greek sailors; the name was used
metaphorically to convey the notion that the payroll and accounts payable software
would perform heroically for end-users. Likewise, founder Larry Ellison’s use of
*Oracle* for his database company was intended to convey the idea that the company’s
databases would function in an oracle-like manner, providing information upon
request. The practice of using real words in a suggestive manner became more
common between the 1970s and 1990s, but increasingly crowded trademark classes
made the use of most real word names impossible by the late 1990s.

The use of real words in an entirely arbitrary manner is quite uncommon, but
the coinage of *Apple* for a computer company in 1977 demonstrates just how much
naming practices had changed since the early part of the century, or even a decade
before. Another example of this type of name is *Adobe*, a software company, which
got its name from the Adobe Creek that ran outside of its original offices in Mountain
View, California. This type of name has never become very common, perhaps

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\(^{18}\) This scenario presumes that the context in which an end-user would have been first exposed to the
terms *AMD* and *Microsoft* in the mid-1970s would have provided information that would have helped
determine the meaning behind the names. In a conversation about a broad range of information
technology, the initialism would be an empty set of letters while the *Microsoft* name contained familiar
word parts that would help an interlocutor make an intelligent guess as to the meaning behind the
name.
because empty vessel names require a great deal of money and commitment in order
to build meaning and awareness for the company, but it is a unique and useful naming
practice that gained steam during the Internet boom of the 1990s.

Another type of arbitrary name started to appear around the same time. Exemplified by Atari and Cisco, coined arbitrary names usually have some kind of story behind them but the names themselves tell end-users nothing about the company. The word atari means the equivalent of ‘checkmate’ in the Japanese game go; even if end-users happened to know that, this provides no information about the company’s video game business. Likewise, Cisco is a truncation of San Francisco, the city that is near the company’s headquarters in Silicon Valley.

Finally, a name like Veritas functions as a suggestive name, although it is a real Latin word meaning ‘truth’. This company is in the business of providing data protection and storage server computer networking hardware. The use of classical roots would emerge more prominently in the 1990s.

In this section, I’ve covered the various types of names that emerged prominently in the latter half of the 20th century. I’ll discuss the continuing evolution of technology corporation naming practices further in section 4.4.2.2, but first I want to briefly describe a significant event in the history of the U.S. technology industry and show how this event served as a microcosm of the world of corporate naming practices in this era.
4.4.2.1.1. Naming the Baby Bells

Stretching all the way back to 1885 when AT&T was incorporated, the company, founded by Alexander Graham Bell and two others, was really a 'history of the telephone in the United States' according to the AT&T Web site (AT&T 2004). The company functioned as a legal monopoly with no competitors in the marketplace until a lawsuit filed in 1974 and settled in 1982 brought about the divestiture of AT&T's interests in local telephone service providers.

In 1984, AT&T was broken up into seven 'Baby Bells'. The corporate names that came out of this break-up are summarized as follows:

- Ameritech
- Bell Atlantic
- Bell South
- NYNEX
- Pacific Telesis (known colloquially as Pacific Bell)
- Southwestern Bell
- U.S. West

The names consisted of a suggestive name (Ameritech) made up of two familiar word parts America and technical, an acronym (NYNEX stood for New York, New England, and 'X' for unknown), and five place name eponyms based on specific regions where the companies provided service.
Today those seven companies have condensed down to four:

Verizon\textsuperscript{19}  
Qwest\textsuperscript{20}  
SBC\textsuperscript{21}  
Bell South

Although there are fewer Baby Bells today, there is greater variation in their style of names than there had been. There is a coined suggestive name, a coined arbitrary name, an initialism, and the sole eponym that remains from the ashes of the AT&T breakup.

The Verizon name is probably intended to convey verity or truth with the first part of the name, and ‘horizon’ with the second. This may be a bit of a stretch, and perhaps the name could just as well be classified as a coined arbitrary name; in either case the point that this name has come a long way from American Telegraph and Telephone, and even NYNEX or Bell Atlantic, should be well taken.

Equally as problematic as Verizon, Qwest (pronounced [kwɛst]) is probably better classified as an arbitrary name, although it may be suggestive to some

\textsuperscript{19} Verizon was created in 2000 from a merger of Bell Atlantic, NYNEX, and another independent telephone company, GTE, which had emerged independently of the Bell system.  
\textsuperscript{20} Qwest was the name given to the company formed when U.S. West was acquired and merged with a new company.  
\textsuperscript{21} SBC was created as the result of a merger among Pacific Telesis, Ameritech, and Southwestern Bell. In an interesting development, on 1/31/2005 SBC announced its intention to acquire AT&T. The big question being asked from a naming perspective is whether SBC will keep the AT&T name, or kill it off. My guess is that SBC realizes the historical and emotional value in the AT&T name and they will retain it as the corporate name, dropping SBC.
customers if only for the association with *U.S. West*. Assuming that end-users know that the name is pronounced the same way as the word ‘quest’, then it might have some metaphorical resonance for some people, but even then it is still an arbitrary term in reference to the products and services provided by the company.

The SBC initialism doesn’t really stand for anything according to the company\(^{22}\) but surely comes from *Southwestern Bell Company*, which in any case would be a meaningless arbitrary term to most former *Pacific Telesis* and *Ameritech* customers.

Hundreds, possibly thousands, of independent telecommunications companies came into being after the U.S. government broke up the *AT&T* monopoly. The growth of the Internet and the Telecommunications Reform Act\(^{23}\) accounted for a large surge of telecommunications companies in the late 1990s that offered Internet services (some of these will be covered in the next section). Examples of the kinds of names that proliferated among independent companies in the telecommunications industry during this period are listed below:

*Sprint Communications* \{1986\}

*Fleet Call* \{1987\}

*Teligent* \{1990\}

*Nextel Communications* \{1993\}

*Global Crossing* \{1997\}

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\(^{22}\) This is based on a phone conversation that I had with a member of their P.R. department.

\(^{23}\) The Telecommunications Reform Act removed cross-market entry barriers, allowed a new class of local telephone service providers to enter the market, and eases many other regulations that were established in the 1934 Communications Act.
The names that emerged in a relatively short span between 1984 and 2000 ended up filling out the naming taxonomy presented in Chapter Three (see Figure 4.4).

**Figure 4.4. Telecommunications Name Taxonomy.** Based on the taxonomy proposed in Chapter Three, naming practices in the telecommunications industry provide examples for each of the taxonomic categories. Note that the examples here consist of companies that came into existence as a result of, or after the breakup of the AT&T monopoly; some of these companies have since gone out of business, have been absorbed into, or acquired by other companies.
The telecommunications industry is only one sector within the larger technology category. During a short and tumultuous period, naming practices in telecommunications changed dramatically. The changes are reflective of what was going on in the entire technology industry during this period. In the next section I will describe naming practices during the most dynamic period of the 20th century.

4.4.2.2. Corporate Names After the World Wide Web

The Internet came into existence with the launch of the ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) in 1969. In 1983, the ARPANET changed networking protocols to TCP/IP, introducing the Internet as we know it today. The World Wide Web was introduced in the early 1990s as a way to use the vast network of networks that made up the Internet as a means to share documents and other information. Between 1992 and 1993 the Web started being used with some frequency, mostly by schools and government agencies. In 1993, Web search engine Lycos had indexed 800,000 Web pages; by 2001, Google had indexed over 1.3 billion Web pages. The World Wide Web had grown tremendously, becoming an economic force, bringing about the creation of thousands of new companies with a great variety of naming styles.

Continuing the pattern of using names that varied from earlier types of corporate names in the sense that they were neither descriptive nor eponymous,
Internet technology corporations introduced names that tended to be suggestive and arbitrary. The list below exemplifies names that were introduced during this period:

- *Red Hat* {1993}
- *FatBrain* {1993}
- *Netscape* {1994}
- *Red Pepper* {1994}
- *InfoSeek* {1995}
- *Inktomi* {1996}
- *Loudeye* {1997}
- *Ariba* {1998}
- *Lucent* {1998}
- *Blue Martini* {1998}
- *Avaya* {2000}

Names like *Netscape* and *Infoseek* would hardly be out of place if they were introduced in the mid-1970s when names like *Compuware* and *Microsoft* were using familiar word parts to make up their names. These types of names have continued to be popular in the technology industry since the 1970s, however, a host of new types of names also found their way into technology onomastic patterns after the Internet boom.

While suggestive and arbitrary names had been around for awhile, these names were starting to be created in novel ways. Names like *Fatbrain, Loudeye*, and
Blue Martini consisted of unexpected word combinations that some customers and critics interpreted as flip and irreverent. Fatbrain sold technology books online, so the name is suggestive in the sense that it conveys the idea that end-users can ‘fatten their brains’ by consuming the products offered by the company. Loudeye and Blue Martini, companies that offer Internet content delivery services and sales optimization software respectively, used arbitrary names that did not help end-users understand what their offerings were; however, these names serve to convey a ‘hip’ and ‘contemporary’ tonality to end-users. In the next chapter I will discuss the ways in which these types of names are an attempt to create an interactive emotional connection with end-users. In a similar vein, the Red Pepper name functions to communicate a mood or a feeling rather than referential information about the company’s offerings.

In addition to unique lexical combinations, corporations began to introduce symbols and forms of punctuation to their names in order to further distinguish themselves. Exclamation points were used in the following suggestive and arbitrary names:

\[
\text{Yahoo! \{1994\}} \\
\text{WAM!NET \{1995\}} \\
\text{MakeMusic! \{1997\}}
\]

I have not found examples of this type in other industries. The use of symbols can also be found in the names below:
@Home {1995}
@Road {1996}

The increase in the number of Internet users and the growing ubiquity of e-mail surely made the @ symbol an approachable symbol that came to represent end-users things that were related to the Internet in some manner.

In addition to exclamation points and @ symbols, asterisks were replacing hyphens in some cases as shown below:

\[ E^{*}Trade \{1992\} \]
\[ E^{*}Offering \{1999\} \]

Both \( E^{*}Trade \) and \( E^{*}Offering \) were in the Finance industry with the former providing online stock trading services and the latter providing online investment banking services. The asterisk’s use as a symbol for multiplication has likely contributed to it being used in this manner.

Another new form that was introduced on a large scale during the Internet period was the use of numbers in corporate names. Consider the names below:

\[ 3dfx \{1994\} \]
\[ 4Front \{1996\} \]
\[ 2Wire \{1998\} \]
These numbers were sometimes used in a playful manner where the numbers stood for letters as in the case of software company 4Front. The names were often combined with letters to form words like XLR8, which was used by a software company that probably wished to communicate that its products brought about ‘exhilaration’ among its customers. The 3dfx name could be considered a coined descriptive name since the company developed software that created three-dimensional special effects. Orthographically, the name carries no meaning, but when uttered its meaning could be understood. Similarly, 8e6 sold Internet filtering software that eliminated, or ‘eighty-sixed’ unwanted files; for some end-users, this probably functioned descriptively.

Finally, the Internet era was probably most notable for the introduction of a glut of companies that made use of an initial ‘e’ in their corporate names. The list below provides a handful of examples:

- eBay {1995}
- eSpeed {1995}
- eLoyalty {1995}
- eToys {1996}
- e.piphany {1996}
- eRoom {1996}
In the same way that the @ symbol came to be strongly associated with the Internet, so did the initial ‘e’. Companies discovered that they could begin their names with ‘e’ and add a descriptive or strongly suggestive terms to communicate the fact that their companies offered familiar products and services online. eToys sold toys; ePhone supplied Internet telephone service; eRoom provided online ‘rooms’ that people where people could chat and share files; and ePairs provided online repair services.

The adoption of the Internet by people and businesses has had a strong effect on the way in which people communicate (c.f., Crystal 2001; Cherny 1999). Technology corporations that started doing business, or decided to change their name, during this era produced a wide range of new types of corporate names that signified a shift in naming practices. In the next chapter I will explain the linguistic significance of these changes and I will provide the socio-cultural contexts that allowed these changes to occur.
5.1. Introduction

As I’ve discussed in depth in previous chapters, early U.S. corporate names consisted primarily of concrete descriptive terms (descriptive names) or eponyms, while more contemporary corporate names have become less prosaic and more fanciful. Many early U.S. business names, especially the descriptive variety, were monolithic and institutional in their tone. They made the companies themselves sound official, governmental, more part of a great institutional system rather than part of a socio-cultural system. This makes a certain amount of sense for two reasons: (1) there were no existing corporate naming models, so models provided by governmental, religious, and social institutions were the closest thing; and (2) the U.S. government was still growing and establishing itself in the vast North American territory that it would eventually govern, corporations could benefit from apparent governmental associations. These referential names did not provide emotional appeal, nor did they lend themselves to cultural interaction; there was no room for social interaction since the companies' offerings were perfectly reflected by the names themselves, either in the form of the offerings or the people behind the offerings. In many respects, early U.S. corporate names served the same purpose for end-users as a

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1 For example, AT&T was granted government-like rights to telecommunications services and RCA was involved in the sale and distribution of radio frequencies after World War I.
signpost would, pointing people in the right direction and letting them know what or who the company represented.

While there were a few exceptions to these types of names – Kodak, as discussed earlier – it is striking to see how differently so many companies are named today. We still find companies that were founded in the latter part of the 20th century with descriptive and eponymous names, but there has been a major shift toward the use of names that are more suggestive or arbitrary in nature. Among other reasons that I have already discussed, these types of names have emotional appeal making the companies seem friendlier and more approachable than traditional referential names did. Typically lighter in tone, these types of names lend themselves well to social interaction in the form of dialogue with end-users, investors and other participants such as the press. By using a name that is less officious in nature, the company can take on more of a friendly persona and in turn sound as if it can build more of an interactive relationship with constituents, recognizing needs and providing products and services to meet those needs.

The preeminent example is Yahoo! {1994}. The name is an acronym for ‘Yet Another Hierarchical Officious Oracle,’ but founders David Filo and Jerry Yang insist that they selected the name because they liked the general definition of yahoo ‘rude, unsophisticated, uncouth’ (Yahoo! 2004). The name is arbitrary; there is no obvious association with the company's business, features, or benefits; nevertheless, today the brand is a success and the Yahoo! name is admired. Based on my experience in the professional naming business, clients often cite it as a name they admire and want to emulate. A typical request is: ‘we want a name like Yahoo! only
better.' Although these clients are likely referring to the brand rather than the name itself, there is something in the name that Jonathan Swift could never have anticipated. It sounds friendly; it sounds fun – an exclamation of joy; it sounds approachable; light-years away from a classic technology corporate name like IBM or even a younger company like InfoSeek (1995), which was a competitor at the time in the Web portal and Internet search market space.

In this chapter I will discuss some of the reasons that corporate names have changed so much over the last hundred years or so. I will rely on cross-disciplinary work that has been done in Sociology, Anthropology, Business, and Linguistics to make a case for what the primary motivating factors are that have caused these changes.

First I will discuss social factors that have motivated the changes in corporate naming practices. The changing nature of COMMUNITY in the U.S. after World War II has had a major impact on many aspects of American life. From the 1950's and 1960's up to the present day, geographical communities have splintered and new communities have emerged based on shared interests and ideologies. These new forms of community had always existed in some form following the introduction of print media, but the growth in diversity and refinement among these communities has accelerated due to newer means of communications like the Internet. Corporations have also contributed to this growth through targeted aggressive marketing and sales campaigns.

New forms of community have developed around the social need to gain connection and identity with groups of people who share interests and ideologies. As
communities have evolved and grown more geographically expansive and culturally diverse, the need for people to gain a sense of identity with others has increased. A quick perusal of Internet user groups will provide evidence of the degree of specificity that has arisen. One of the most popular Web sites is Yahoo! Groups (groups.yahoo.com) where, just to take one example, a religious-minded person can find 46 different user groups from Agnosticism to Zoroastrianism and if so inclined can become a member of a group for Catholic women who dress modestly within the larger Christianity group or a member of a Brahmin teens group within the larger Hinduism group\(^2\).

In section 5.3.1 I will discuss the concept of poetics in language, and make a claim that this is the key linguistic factor involved in corporate name change. While poetic language has been studied within literary studies as a component of poetry, drama, and other forms of literature, linguists have paid very little attention to the study of the poetic component of non-literary language. When corporate names are created, there is a poetic element to the linguistic choices that are made. To varying degrees, those who are responsible for coming up with corporate names access the poetic function of language because it may appeal to an end-user, and establish an emotional connection between an end-user and a corporation.

The social and linguistic factors mentioned above have gained the attention of, and been exploited by marketing professionals who target corporate communications to specific niche groups. Over the course of the last ten to fifteen years, a form of marketing communications called branding has emerged. Branding experts promote

\(^2\) These facts and figures are based on a visit to the Yahoo! Groups page that I made on January 14th, 2005. The types and numbers of groups are subject to change hour-by-hour, and day-by-day.
the idea of communicating a consistent set of concrete characteristics (i.e., logos, colors, package and industrial design) and characteristics intended to appeal to end-user's emotions (i.e., individuality, strength, leadership, happiness) in order to attain coherence and memorability and to stir up passion among end-users who will (hopefully) bond to a particular corporate or product brand. In section 5.4.1 I will discuss marketing theories and practices that have impacted changes in corporate name change, particularly in the last fifteen years.

These factors have led to changes in corporate naming practices as corporations today are more likely to reach out to consumers in a way that makes each consumer feel personally bonded with the company and with other individuals that affiliate themselves with that company. Besides the practical considerations of trademarkability, the availability of World Wide Web addresses, and the effects of globalization, which will be discussed in Chapter Six, contemporary corporate naming practices, and the evolution of U.S. corporate technology names, are a clear reflection of changes in social and linguistic practice over the past 100 years.

5.2. Social Factors

5.2.1. Community

The notion of the community as a relatively static, geographically bound space consisting of a group of people who share a set of cultural values, morals,
rituals, and language has been understood and taken for granted for a long time. Over the past twenty-five years, the concept of community has evolved in many ways such that geographic constraints are no longer a prerequisite (c.f., Bender 1978; Granovetter 1973; Wellman 1979; Gellner 1983; Wellman & Wortner 1990). Constricted definitions of community based on geographic, institutional, or religious affiliations (e.g., Durkheim 1915) have expanded as post-industrial forms of communication have increased via rail, automobile, telegraph, telephone, newspapers, magazines, television, and the Internet (c.f., Ong 1982; Anderson 1983).

Changes in corporate naming practices in the technology industry are part of a larger social trend in the U.S. This trend, discussed by Putnam (1995 & 2001), has to do with the notion that civic engagement and social connectedness, what Putnam calls SOCIAL CAPITAL, diminished over the course of the past forty years or so, most noticeably since the end of World War II, but starting even before that. Putnam cites various factors including the movement of women into the workforce, increased mobility (or decreased residential stability), the decline of church-centered communities, and the technological transformation of leisure as reasons for this decline.

In parallel with the loss of civic engagement has been a rise in what Putnam calls TERTIARY ASSOCIATIONS – involvement in mass-membership organizations like the *Sierra Club* and *AARP*, along with membership in support groups, ranging from *Alcoholics Anonymous* to book discussion groups to myriad *Yahoo!* mailing lists and user groups. These trends point to an even further extension of INDIVIDUALISM, an

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3 The concept of the SPEECH COMMUNITY has already been covered in Chapter Two, so I will not elaborate on the complexities of the term 'language' in this context.
ironic condition that combines an individual’s sense of uniqueness with a desire to associate only with those who have identical likes and dislikes; I will refer to this scenario as the CULT OF CLIQUES. While social interaction may be achieved through cliques, businesses have refined the art of marketing to pinpoint accuracy, to the point where an ad campaign may be so minutely targeted to a particular demographic that exposure to the advertising and buying the products seems like a mere formality.

In the latter part of the 20th century, new forms of community defined by the individual’s identification with particular consumer communities increasingly displaced traditional forms of community. Forms of community such as close-knit neighborhood communities or geographically-dispersed church communities came to be augmented by forms of community in which people identified with others through the products they own; BRAND COMMUNITIES (Muniz & O’Guinn 2000) have emerged around specific companies’ products and services. In its most extreme form, a brand community develops into a cult of cliques that consists of a core set of brand devotees who not only purchase a company’s products, but also know all details of a company’s product set, company history, and lore. These ‘brand cultists’ are greatly valued by companies because they are strong allies among end-users, and can wield a great deal of influence to get others to purchase products.

In the sphere of corporate technology, the cult of cliques is accessed by a software company with the name Blue Martini (1998), a superb example of a clique name. It combines a random color, blue, with a drink that was popular in the 1950s and made a comeback during the Internet boom of the 1990s among the newly hip

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4 The concept of brand communities will be covered in greater depth in section 5.4.1.
and newly rich in the technology industry. The martini connotes a 1990’s notion of fun, sophistication, a relaxed view of the world. The Blue Martini name presents a vivid visual image. It is self-consciously arbitrary, clearly chosen to signal that the founders have a sense of humor and are not afraid to take risks. The audaciousness of the name signals that it is in some way associated with the Internet and the ‘new economy’. For individuals in the clique, it is a sly joke about the founder, Monte Zweben, whose previous company was called Red Pepper {1994}5. Blue Martini is designed to appeal to exactly the same type of customer: Internet-savvy, forward-thinking, hip, and open to risk.

It is evident that the role of a brand – both for corporations and products – has changed significantly over the course of the 20th century. People have closer, more personal relationships with brands today than they did in the past and the name is, naturally, an integral part of the brand. As consumer culture took off in the post-war prosperity of the 1950s, the importance of brands, and how consumers responded to them, became crucial. Prosperity meant choice, and choice meant competition in the marketplace. As Naomi Klein (1999: 7) puts it, ‘Corporations may manufacture products, but what consumers buy are brands.’ For end-users, a friendly brand – a friendly name – is better than an unfriendly one. The components of a brand – the name, logo, design and advertising – achieve that friendliness by establishing emotional connections and relating to consumers as individuals, rather than as anonymous sources of revenue.

5 It is worth noting that during the 1990s, it was not uncommon to use colors, particularly ‘red’ and ‘blue’ in corporate names. Examples include RedDot {1993}, RedHat {1995}, Blue Coat {1996}, Blue Pumpkin {1996}, BlueArc {1998} and RedSiren {1999}.
In addition to appealing to an end-user's sense of community, when corporations create a unique name they are asserting a distinctive identity in the marketplace and in the broader social sphere as well. Yurchak (2000) explains that after the collapse of the Soviet state, new business names in Russia were privatizing social space in a way that was not previously possible, and in addition they were introducing 'their particular, new version of social reality as positive and meaningful and [constructing] themselves, in their own eyes and the eyes of the general public, as the authors, owners, and masters of this reality' (Yurchak 2000: 430). In this sense, U.S. corporations have been doing the same thing. In the early days of U.S. business, the act of establishing a unique identity involved coming up with a name that either told end-users the name of the people behind the company or a name that denoted the distinctive offerings that a company provided to end-users. Over the course of time, new types of names, names that tend to be more suggestive than descriptive and more emotive than purely referential have become common. Within newer classes of names, companies have chosen to introduce new forms of social reality to end-users. Most obviously, names like *eBay and *eTrade announce an affiliation with the host of 'e' names that coincided with the emergence of the World Wide Web as a navigable social (and consumer) space. Other names incorporating -ant and -ent suffixes that connote 'action' and 'performance' in names like Agilent, Alliant, Cendant, Conexant, Lucent, and Reliant have become popular among technology corporations in the past several years as well.

Corporate names have developed into linguistic symbols that function in multiple ways. Whereas early U.S. corporate names served in purely referential
capacities, contemporary corporate names define social realities, and serve as markers of community identity. Today corporations use more name types and subtypes (for evidence of this, compare figures 4.1 and 3.2), providing one way that companies can either differentiate or associate themselves with other companies and/or types of end-users. Coined suggestive names make up the greatest increase in name types among technology corporations; this category allows corporations to come up with creative names that have a good chance to appeal emotionally to end-users. Referential names that denote family name or product offerings can only communicate affect through repeated use and association with a company; however, suggestive names can communicate affect immediately to end-users through the use of non-referential poetic language. The use of poetic language to establish emotional connections with end-users will be discussed in the next section.

5.3. Linguistic Factors

5.3.1. Poetics

The process of creating a new name, whether it is for personal, literary, geographic, or corporate purposes, is a performative linguistic act that draws on the POETIC FUNCTION of language. When names are created, the people who are responsible for the naming action are relying on their own understanding of the aesthetics of the language that will bear the name.
In a previous work, I discussed the poetic function of language in some depth (Cowan 2001), mentioning the importance of poetic, or aesthetic elements of everyday speech that are not usually accounted for by linguists. Jakobson explains that the poetic function of language:

cannot be productively studied out of touch with the general problems of language, and on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of its poetic function. Any attempt to reduce the sphere of poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to poetic function would be a delusive oversimplification. Poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent. (Jakobson 1960: 356)

This is to say that there is a poetic function in all verbal activities (c.f., Bauman & Sherzer 1989; Hymes 1981; Tedlock 1983; Sherzer 1987; Bauman & Briggs 1990; Kadarisman 1999). In poetry, patterned lyrical meter is foregrounded as a primary function. In political slogans (i.e., Eisenhower’s ‘I Like Ike’ or William Henry Harrison’s ‘Tippecanoe and Tyler Too!’) and advertisements (i.e., ‘Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is’ or ‘My goodness, my Guiness!’), the poetic function is frequently used in order to attract attention and achieve memorability.

I hold the view that the poetic function is a key component of language that has been woefully neglected within mainstream linguistic study over the past several
decades. I will use the term POETICS here in a broad sense to refer to non-referential functions of language, subsuming other categories that include connotative functions, affect and emotion (c.f., Besnier 1990). A linguistic model that accounts for both referential and non-referential functions of language will be most successful in accounting for the way that people actually use language.

In Jakobson's (1960: 353) argument for the inclusion of poetics in the study of language he dismisses an exclusively reductionist approach in linguistics arguing that ‘language must be investigated in all the variety of its functions.’ The rationale for including poetics in a study of language is explained as follows:

Poetics deals with problems of verbal structure, just as the analysis of painting is concerned with pictorial structure. Since linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics (ibid.).

This approach supports the concept of poetics as a non-referential dimension of language. Jakobson is not alone in calling attention to this linguistic concept; Lyons (1977), for example breaks linguistic semantics down into descriptive, social, and expressive components. Besnier (1990: 419) points out that ‘variants of this model have been proposed by [several] authors’ including Jesperson (1923), Sapir (1927),

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6 In addition to the poetic function, Jakobson discusses other aspects of language that do not serve a transparent referential function, but rather the aspects that concern what Bühler (1933, from Jakobson 1960) calls the EMOTIVE or expressive and CONATIVE functions of language and what Malinowski (1923) calls the PHATIC or formulaic function.
Bally (1952), Firth (1957), and Ulman (1964) in addition to Malinowski (1923) and Bühler (1933).

If one can accept the poetic function as a legitimate dimension of language, then one should be able to accept the notion that poetics of particular languages change over time. Just as phonemes and syntactic structures shift over time, poetics of particular languages evolve as well. While literary theorists have discussed stylistic changes in poetry, literature, as well as non-literary language, linguists have not devoted much time to explaining stylistic or poetic shifts in non-literary language.

I argue that the poetics of English, and the role that the poetic function plays in particular forms of linguistic practice, have changed over time. These changes have to do with stress, meter, and rhyming patterns in speech as well as conceptions of ‘the aesthetic’ in speech. I will not be tackling the specifics of change in stress, meter, and rhyme in this study, but I will talk about corporate naming practices, and how the ways that they have changed demonstrate a change in the aesthetics in at least one form of linguistic practice. I believe that the quality of change that we’ve observed in corporate naming patterns has much to do with the poetic function of language that has been manifested in common notions of aesthetic language by English speaker/hearers.

The concept of poetics has been discussed, researched, and debated for over 2,400 years at least since Aristotle wrote his treatise on the topic. Most of the studies that have dealt with poetics have concerned literary arts such as drama, fiction, and poetry; however, there has been some discussion of the topic in a broader linguistic sense, particularly in the linguistic anthropology subject area of ethnopoetics, which
deals with non-Western – often Native American – linguistic performance in which ‘speaking, chanting, or singing voice gives shape to proverbs, riddles, curses, laments, praises, prayers, prophecies, public announcements, and narratives’ (Tedlock 2005). The notion of a name as a poetic linguistic artifact has been studied to some extent, mostly in literary studies (c.f., Roberts 2003) and philosophy (c.f., Melnyk 2003), but only very sparingly in linguistics (c.f., Edgerton 1967).

As I’ve discussed previously, the vast majority of early U.S. corporate names were purely referential in nature, denoting the people who started the company (i.e., Westinghouse), the place where the company was established (i.e., Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing), or some noteworthy and relevant characteristic of the company (i.e., American Telegraph and Telephone). There were exceptions such as Kodak and Exide, but these types of names began as product names. It is safe to assume that product names were much less referential; since products come and go over time, companies can take more chances with product names than they can with corporate names, which are intended to last for the life of a company. The Kodak name, and George Eastman’s personal explanations for choosing the name, provide a great deal of insight into one man’s overt awareness of the poetics of the English language:

The letter K had been a favorite with me – it seemed a strong incisive sort of letter. Therefore, the word I wanted had to start with K. Then it became a question of trying out a great number of combinations of letters that made words starting and ending with K. The word Kodak is the result (Campbell 1964: 190).
Eastman was ahead of his time with this type of thinking. In a diachronic approach to corporate naming practices, perhaps Eastman and others like him provided the catalyst for the changes that would take root much later in the 20th century.

In mid-1950s, *Ford* hired Marianne Moore, a *National Book Award* winner and *Pulitzer Prize* winning poet, to name a much-hyped new automobile that the company was going to start selling in 1957. Although other companies had probably hired poets to develop names before *Ford*, and there have certainly been poets that have been hired to develop names since then7, the situation with Ford and Moore is particularly well documented, and the resulting product name that was chosen has become quite infamous.

Although *Ford* was wise, or at least forward-thinking to hire a poet to come up with names for the new car, company executives let familial affiliations and emotions get the better of them, and chose the name *Edsel*, which was the name of founder Henry Ford’s son. One of the most notorious automobile failures of all time8, the *Edsel* name was chosen despite the fact that Moore came up with the following list of names, among others, which were based on a directive to find a name that would signify ‘a visceral feeling of elegance, fleetness, advanced features, and design’ (Haig 2003: 20):

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7 Most naming companies that I am aware of either have poets on staff, or hire poets as freelancers to come up with lists of names on corporate naming projects.

8 The *Edsel’s* failures had much to do with the car’s price and design, but the name was subject of a great deal of derision as well.
The reason that *Ford* hired Moore, and the reason that so many naming companies have poets on staff today, has to do with the fact that good poets are attuned to the poetic function of language and they are likely to know the types of letter, sound, morpheme, and word combinations that are likely to arouse end-users and appeal to them emotionally.

Corporations use multiple forms of media to communicate to end-users. Marketing communications is the business function that specializes in communicating focused messages to end-users, and this marketing discipline has become highly specialized over the years. Contemporary marketers understand the role that fine-tuned, intensely focused communications can play with end-users. In appealing to end-users' emotions, marketers attempt to communicate how the consumption of their company's products will help them attain greater satisfaction in life. Corporate marketing communications, and the effects of these communications on corporate naming practices will be discussed in the next section.
5.4. Corporate Factors

5.4.1. Marketing Communications

Free market economic systems consist of sellers and buyers of goods and services. The competitive nature of these systems requires that seller X provide buyers with more good reasons to purchase from them rather than from seller Y. Seller X’s ‘good reasons’ can include offering a lower price, higher quality of goods, friendlier service, or greater durability than seller Y; however, if seller X does not communicate these good reasons to buyers effectively, then the buyer may go to seller Y. Marketing is a business process that is concerned with the pricing, promotion, and distribution of a company’s goods and services. The discipline of MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS is part of the ‘promotion’ function, and involves a seller’s communication of end-user benefits to potential buyers. These benefits can be tangible and rational as exemplified by the ‘good reasons’ above, or they can be intangible and emotional.

In the past the function of corporate branding, to the extent that it was practiced at all, involved inserting a name and logo on company letterhead and making sure that these elements were consistently represented in advertising and other forms of communication. In other words, establishing the referential value of names and logos was the greatest concern. Over the course of the last twenty years or so, as corporate competition has increased within the U.S. and with companies abroad, marketing communication and branding strategies have changed such that the
promotion of intangible emotional benefits has moved to the forefront in marketing communications to end-users. This is especially true in the technology industry where the rapid rate of innovation can quickly convert a company from ‘trend-setting leader’ to ‘out-of-touch commodity’. When corporate marketers communicate end-user benefits these days, they are likely to key into intangible emotional benefits, whereas company and product slogans have traditionally communicated explicit functional benefits about companies and products. The following slogans exemplify these more traditional forms of corporate communication:

1. When it absolutely, positively has to be there overnight (FedEx)
2. We make things that make communications work (Lucent)
3. Tastes great, less filling (Miller Lite)

All of these examples let end-users know, in very specific terms, that these companies provide products and services with tangible functional benefits. In #1, FedEx is letting people know that their company will make sure that their packages will arrive at their destination within a day; in #2, Lucent is telling end-users that the company is responsible for making products that allow people to use telephones, fax machines, and the like, to communicate with one another – this is particularly challenging in their case because the company makes large technically complicated machines that most end-users never see or use directly, yet these machines are in fact responsible for a wide range of telecommunications and Internet communications; in #3, The Miller Brewing Company tried to persuade people to believe that their Miller Lite
beer brand tasted better and filled them up less than other companies' beer. In each of these cases, there are explicit tangible benefits to be gained through the use of these companies’ products and services.

Over the last twenty to thirty years, there has been an increase in the use of marketing slogans that focus on intangible emotional benefits that an end-user can gain through the use of companies’ products and services. Consider the following product and company slogans, which exemplify this newer, more personalized style of communication:

4. Define yourself (Lycra)
5. Just do it (Nike)
6. Where do you want to go today? (Microsoft)

None of these taglines communicate concepts like ‘speed’, ‘value’ or ‘endurance’, but rather focus on broad emotional benefits that appeal to end-users. Examples #1 and #2 use the imperative voice to communicate a sense of empowerment to end-users; these slogans engage in explicit dialogue with end-users. The same can be said about #3 in which Microsoft actually poses a question to end-users; rather than telling end-users that Microsoft products allow end-users to go wherever they want to go, the posing of the question requires a conscious response. In addition to this increased tendency to appeal to end-users through the promotion of intangible benefits is the use of communicative styles that are intended to engage end-users in a form of dialogue with the company.
Traditional company slogans that extolled concrete benefits tended to take the form of pronouncements. For example, ‘tastes great, less filling’ is a statement that one can either agree with, or disagree with and find evidence to support it, or to refute it; and the FedEx slogan is something that can be backed up with the actual rapid delivery of packages. The more contemporary types of slogans are difficult to agree or disagree with and they are not supportable or refutable in the traditional sense. The Lycra slogan that suggests that end-users define themselves is an invitation to either do it, or not; an end-user could respond by saying ‘o.k., that sounds like a great idea’ or ‘no thanks, I’ve already defined myself’. The Microsoft slogan functions in a similar manner, even more explicitly functioning as the first portion of dialogue in a conversation with an end-user, who could respond to their ‘where do you want to go today’ with a myriad of responses (i.e., ‘I want to go to the moon’; ‘I want to go to France’; ‘I want to go to the deepest part of the ocean’) that would in turn be responded to with Microsoft saying something like ‘well, Microsoft can take you there with our products’. Of course, I’m simplifying the dialogue to make a point that contemporary slogans tend to reach out to end-users, making them feel more like individuals engaged in a form of dialogue with these companies.

Marketers, these days, understand that it is a lot easier to keep a customer that they already have than to start from scratch and get a new one. The new forms of marketing communications that attempt to (1) establish emotional benefits of a company and its offerings; and (2) engage end-users in a form of dialogue are the means by which long-term relationships are built. If companies build strong relationships with their customers, then these customers can end up serving as ‘brand
evangelists’ who will promote the virtues of the company, their products, and their services to friends and acquaintances. Companies that build strong emotional bonds with end-users can withstand market downturns and gain greater momentum when markets are climbing. A great example of this is Apple, the computer company that established powerful relationships with a core group of customers. Apple, many people believe, made a much higher quality, more user-friendly personal computer than any other company, yet their proprietary operating system and hardware prevented mass adoption of their products and this almost led to their demise in the 1990's; however, a small but vigilant group of Apple users kept the company afloat long enough to withstand the onslaught of ‘IBM clone’ PCs with their Windows operating systems. Apple survived several bad business decisions and corporate missteps because of this core group of end-users, and today rides a strong market based on the emotional connection that has been established with an even greater group of core users through a diversified set of product offerings that include iPod music players and software in addition to desktop and laptop computers.

A contradictory story involves Sony whose Betamax video tape recorders were considered to be much higher quality and better performing than VHS video that has become standard. In the 1970's, Sony was known and respected in the U.S., especially among technophiles, but positive attributes associated with the company were not strong enough, and the company had not made strong enough emotional bonds with end-users to prevent the Betamax from being snuffed out by late mid-1980s. Despite the virtual universal agreement that Betamax quality was superior to VHS, Sony was unable to save it.
Contemporary marketing communication strategies revolve around trying to establish connections with end-users and build relationships with them (Aaker 1996; Travis 2000; Schmitt 1999; Gobe 2001; Ragas & Bueno 2002; Atkin 2004; Roberts 2004). Tangible benefits are important, but intangible emotional connections are seen as being more important for a company, and better for a company’s sales in the long-term. A pinnacle of successful marketing communications is achieved when a company attains a cult-like status, whereby a core devoted group of end-users cum followers are so emotionally attached to a brand that an almost spiritual devotion is the result (c.f., Ragas & Bueno 2002; Atkin 2004). Examples of this type of devotion can be found among Apple end-users, as discussed above, and among Harley-Davidson motorcycle riders (Schouten & McAlexander 1995). The Harley-Davidson motorcycle riders gain an understanding of the brand from the connection that they share from one another, and visa versa. Harley-Davidson is said to have become ‘in effect, a religious icon, around which an entire ideology of consumption is articulated’ (Schouten & McAlexander 1995: 50). As discussed in the previous section, as Americans have moved away from traditional religious, institutional, and geographical centers of community, new institutions have arisen to take their place; most notable for the purposes at hand are BRAND COMMUNITIES, which are defined as ‘specialized, non-geographically bound’ and ‘based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand’ (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001: 412). Note that these brand communities are informed via all forms of mass media (c.f., McLuhan 1964; Ong 1982), while particular modes such as advertising have served to ‘spread the word’ faster and with pinpoint precision (Reichert 2003).
Perhaps the most immediate, frequently encountered, and therefore powerful communicative artifact for corporations is their name. Linguistically speaking, corporate names are the first thing that end-users are exposed to when being introduced to a company. Corporate names serve as the linguistic form of reference, and therefore can play a large role in establishing the identity of a company. Of course, identity can be established through the most simplistic referential means. For example, descriptive names such as *Link-Belt Machinery Company* or *Tabulating Machine Company* provide basic referential terms so that an end-user knows what a company sells; by the same token eponymous names can tell end users where a company is located as with *Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing* or who founded the company as with *Remington and Sons*, but no deeper, extra-referential meaning is established. The chore of establishing an emotional connection or bond with end-users is going to be left for other forms of communication.

As times have progressed, and marketing professionals have attempted to understand consumer culture and behavior, the name has become increasingly viewed as the most important conveyer of corporate personality. As companies try to establish strong, long-lasting, emotional connections with end-users, corporate naming practices have changed to accommodate those goals.

As U.S. society has become more decentralized, fragmented, and cliquish, corporations have altered their marketing strategies to address this new type of customer base. Linguistically speaking, one of the key changes has been on the types of corporate names that have emerged over the last fifty years.
Chapter 6

Conclusions: Explaining Corporate Name Change

6.1. Explaining Corporate Name Change

In this dissertation I have described the ways in which corporate naming practices changed, and I discussed several factors that influenced these changes. In the first two chapters I established the foundation for this study by providing an overview of the field of Onomastics and the cross-disciplinary perspective that a study of names brings to the understanding of language. In Chapter Three I proposed a taxonomy of corporate names that helped me to explain the ways in which corporate naming practices have changed. In Chapter Four I described the ways in which corporate names have changed, focusing specifically on technology corporations. Finally, in Chapter Five I proposed that there have been three factors impacting changes in technology corporation names: (1) changing structures of community in the post-World War II U.S.; (2) the inherent poetic function in language; and (3) increasingly personalized tactics of business professionals who are responsible for the creation of corporate marketing communications. In this chapter I will provide final conclusions, citing specific examples of how the linguistic and social factors caused technology corporation names to change.

The fact that technology corporation names have changed in dramatic ways has not gone unnoticed in the popular media. In addition to numerous articles that
have been published over the last ten years on this subject, there have been three books of note published in the last year (c.f., Frankel 2004a; Morrison 2004; Rivkin and Sutherland 2004). These books describe changing naming styles, the increased involvement of marketing and naming agencies in the development of corporate and product names, and they provide tips on how to come up with good names, thus defining what it means to be a 'good' or 'proper' name in today's corporate world. In most cases, the judgment that a name is 'good' has little to do with its referential qualities, but rather its ability to be appealing. *Joy* is given as an example of a good name since it is 'an emotionally positive word' (Rivkin and Sutherland 2004: 67) and *BlackBerry* is said to be a good name because it 'appealing to a broad range of customers' and has a 'quick personality' (Frankel 2004a: 75). The notion that good names should have 'personality' or be 'emotionally appealing' has taken hold among marketing professionals, and this has had a profound impact on corporate naming practices.

Changes in corporate naming practices, and the implications for the field of linguistics, and the study of language in general have not been explored in much depth within Linguistics. I view this study as the opening of a new domain within the study of language. It is a call for attention to the study of names within the pursuit of a broader study of language, and a specific consideration of the value of the study of corporate language practices within a study of the sociology of language.

The social, linguistic, and corporate phenomena that I described in Chapter Five have been well-researched and discussed in great depth by a wide range of scholars. My argument for the collection of these specific phenomena as factors
involved in linguistic change is a novel contribution to onomastic studies. Although trademark and Internet domain constrictions have been argued as the primary force in the evolution of corporate naming practices (e.g., Stone 1998; Mamis 2000), there has been little discussion as to why names have changed in the manner that they have. Frankel (2004b) provides a crude stylistic segmentation\(^1\) for corporate names and argues that "simple and straightforward names are back in style" (53), and several others in the popular media and trade publications have pointed out changing corporate naming patterns and practices (i.e., Barboza 1995; Flynn 1996; Shalit 1999; Rendon 2002), but these brief journalistic accounts do not explain these changes in much depth. A rigorous academic study, discussion, and explanation of change has implications for further linguistic study, as well as potential for immediate practical application in business.

In Chapter Two I maintained that crowded marketplaces, trademarkability, and an increased corporate intimacy with consumers are causes affecting the changes in corporate naming practices, and I have covered these in turn. I also mentioned globalization, but have not discussed this in much detail up to this point, and as a critical element in this discussion it deserves further explication since it touches upon all other causes and factors for change in some way. Globalization, the diffusion of national borders through the increase in transnational movement and integrated global markets, has had a great effect on language in general, and corporate names more specifically.

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\(^1\) 1860-1915 'Face of the Founder' (i.e., Heinz, Ford, and Kellogg's); 1915-1950 'Ascent of the Acronym' (i.e., RCA, TWA, and IBM); 1950-1990 'Triumph of Tech' (i.e., Xerox, Exxon, and Microsoft); 1990-2000 'Age of Absurdity' (i.e., Yahoo!, Google, and Vivendi).
There are some obvious examples of the effects of globalization among technology corporation names. The *Ariba* name is an intentional misspelling of the Spanish word *arriba* meaning 'up', which is also used as an exclamation of approval or pleasure. The fact that this name was chosen by a company in the late 1990s indicates that both an awareness and an acceptance of Spanish as part of U.S. language and life by that time. Over the last twenty years several U.S.-founded corporations have used names with non-English, indeed non-Indo-European, language origins. Examples of non-English words that have been used as corporate names include the following:

*Ronin* {1986}: Japanese ‘warrior’
*Kadiri* {1992}: Swahili ‘capable’
*En Pointe* {1993}: French ‘at a peak’
*Inktomi* {1996}: Lakota ‘spider’
*Journée* {1997}: French ‘day’
*Saba* {1997}: Farsi ‘knowing’; Hebrew ‘wise person’
*Akamai* {1998}: Hawaiian ‘intelligent; clever’
*Ikano* {1999}: Greek ‘to enable’
*Kachina* {1999}: Hopi ‘fertility’
*Concerto* {2002}: Italian ‘concert’

The acceptance of non-English names, and their increase among technology corporations may be related to the fact that companies based outside of the U.S.,
especially those based in Japan and Korea, have become more common and competitive in the industry. Since the 1950s, Japanese camera manufacturers Canon, Nikon, and Minolta have been building brand awareness and end-user trust among U.S. buyers. For the last thirty years, Japanese consumer electronics giant Sony has been considered the premier brand, supplanting brands such as Zenith, Sylvania, and RCA among U.S. home electronics users. In recent years, Korea’s Samsung has become well known and respected in the U.S. technology market. European companies like Nokia (Finland) and Siemens (Germany) have successfully entered the U.S. mobile telephone market successfully, and European retailers such as Ikea (Sweden) and Zara (Spain) are building successful brands in the United States. The influx of foreign corporate names has altered the onomastic landscape in such a way that U.S. companies like Ronin, En Pointe, and Concerto are less likely to sound out of place to end-users over time.

Outside of technology and retail industries, non-U.S. companies have been successful, and have succeeded in building their brands with names that are clearly not English-based. In the automobile industry, Italian sports cars like Alfa Romeo and Ferrari, well-crafted German cars like Mercedes and Volkswagen, and reliable fuel-efficient Japanese cars like Honda and Toyota have established strong U.S. brands over the years. France has given us the L’Oreal, Luis Vuitton, and Cartier brand names, while Italy has contributed Armani, Gucci, and Prada to fashion-minded consumers. The Swiss food conglomerate Nestlé, Dutch brewer Heineken, and Swedish vodka maker Absolut have created names and brands that have penetrated
the English language, and rest comfortably on the shelf next to products by U.S. companies like Coca-Cola, Budweiser, and Jack Daniels.

Globalization, and the coinciding growth in popularity and acceptance of non-U.S. brands with non-English names, have impacted the ways in which U.S. corporations name themselves and their products. U.S. consumers are exposed to a more diverse multinational marketplace today than they were forty years ago and at the same time being exposed to increasing varieties of ethnicities, nationalities, and languages than they were in the past. In 1962, foreign investment in the U.S. was below $10 billion, but by 1996 it approached $450 billion (Meade 1997: 1). By the same token, U.S. corporations have been reaching out to a more international population of end-users and employees; Reich (1990) argues that while the multinational identity of U.S. corporations is not a new development since they have been doing business abroad for years, employment of foreign nationals in the U.S. has changed the nature of the way that U.S. corporations are perceived, and the way that they perceive U.S. citizenry and consumers.

As the impact of global business has grown, consumption of products and services sold by non-U.S. corporations has increased, and there has been greater exposure to global languages through these consumption patterns. At the same time, traditional forms of community have been altered and the culture of cliques has grown. Business professionals who are responsible for the creation of corporate marketing communications have exploited these phenomena by tapping into the poetic function of language to establish emotional connections with end-users. The effect of ‘emotional marketing’ has been realized in all forms of corporate
communications from advertising and public relations activities to corporate naming practices.

Through the use of semantically potent words and morphemes, corporate names have been created with the intention of promoting an emotional response from end-users. The now-defunct Web portal company *Excite* used a particularly affective word for their corporate name. As a verb, *excite* instigates action in the context of a sentence. As a stand-alone word used as a corporate name, *excite* is packed with emotional strength. *Yahoo!*, another Web portal company that I've already discussed, uses a word that can either be an interjection expressing fun and excitement or a noun that denotes a crude and simple person; in either case, there can be little argument that the name is loaded with affect and as such it initiates an emotional response from many people who hear it for the first time; other companies like *Boo.com*, an online retailer that went out of business in 2000, used a similar corporate naming style. While there are countless other examples of corporate names that have used names packed with emotional potency, these are among the most transparent cases.

Some naming experts subscribe to the notion that particular phonemes connote moods, feelings, and emotions. *Lexicon*, a California-based naming consultancy that claims to have coined the names *Pentium, Swiffer*, and *Zima* relies heavily on principles of sound symbolism. According to their Web site,

*Lexicon* has completed extensive research into how sound symbolism affects the way brand names are perceived. If a product would be perceived as faster, bigger, or even more reliable depending on how it
sounds, it follows that there would be an entirely new set of tools to add to the creative process. The results prove that there is\(^2\). Further, Will Leben, who is the Director of Linguistics at *Lexicon* and Professor Emeritus in the department of linguistics at *Stanford University*, states that ‘there is a relationship between speech sounds and emotions’ that has been demonstrated in the research conducted by *Lexicon* (Begley 2002).

*Lexicon*’s research indicated that plosives connote slowness while fricatives denote speed with [z] connoting the most speed; this is given as the reason that the names *Prozac* and *Amazon* were chosen since they connote ‘rapid recovery’ in the former and ‘instant gratification’ in the latter. Voiced phonemes were said to sound both ‘larger’ and ‘more luxurious’ than voiceless phonemes. Additionally, phonemes are said to connote emotional qualities with [l], [s], and [v] being associated with pleasant feelings and [r], [p], [t], [d] and [k] with unpleasant ones. These proposed principles of sound symbolism appear to be contradicted in practice, at least when it comes to initial sounds of brand names as indicted in Table 6.1 that shows [l] being used moderately and [v] being used infrequently as initial sounds.

\(^2\) *Lexicon* devotes a significant section of their Web site to explaining their ‘process’. Under the ‘Tools’ section, in addition to ‘Linguistics’, they have a section on ‘Sound Symbolism’. This information is found at http://www.lexicon-branding.com/process2aSound.html.
Table 6.1. Letter Frequencies. This table lists, in order of frequency, initial letters of brand names (adapted from Rivkin and Associated 2004).

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<td>J, Z, Q, U, X, Y</td>
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Despite claims made by Leben and Lexicon, sound symbolism remains 'a highly controversial subject that continues to provoke empirical study and debate among linguists, anthropologists, and philosophers' (Nuckolls 1999: 226). While there have been many studies that have supported the existence of sound symbolism within specific languages (c.f., Kim 1977; Wescott 1977; Aoki 1994; Childs 1994), there is still resistance to the notion of sound symbolism as a necessary linguistic principle. Whether or not certain sounds actually carry symbolic meaning may be open for debate, but the fact that naming consultants and corporations have chosen names that contain phonemes that are intended to convey emotional meaning is not disputable.

Another naming consultancy called Igor, which lists Intel and Cisco among its clients, publishes an online naming guide. The guide is intended to teach potential
clients, and others interested in naming practices, how to come up with great names for products and companies. The guide leads off with a statement about the importance of choosing a great name, letting potential clients know that names 'make an emotional connection with your audience, and help to build a brand that ignites the passions of your customers' (Igor 2004: 2). Throughout the 56 page guide, the importance of creating an 'emotional connection' or being 'emotionally engaging' is mentioned nine more times.

The notion of connecting corporations to end-users through the use of product and corporate names is mentioned in myriad books and articles on marketing communication strategies and practices. Gobe (2001: 36) suggests that names 'should reflect an emotional model that has humanity at its core and allows for a free flow of ideas between corporations and people.' In this scenario, a corporate name is intended to serve not as the referential device of earlier days, but rather as a catalyst that communicates affect and stimulates a form of social discourse between corporations and end-users.

Corporate names are viewed more and more by those who are responsible for their creation as opportunities to create discourse and action. As technology corporation names have become much less referential over time, they have become seen more as a tool to initiate engagement. Sounds, morphemes, and words are constructed with the goal of appealing to the emotions of end-users. Corporate naming practices have evolved in this manner as a result of the changing nature of community and identity among end-users, combined with a move away from
referential language towards names that use the poetic function of language in a more sophisticated manner.

In this dissertation, I have established that corporate names have changed, I have provided factors that influenced these changes, and I have discussed some of the ways in which these factors have brought about specific types of change in corporate naming practices.

6.2. Final Thoughts

I view this dissertation as the opening of a field of study that views names and naming practices as significant socio-historical linguistic phenomena. Through a close examination of naming practices, we can gain a more complete perspective on the nature of language and the way in which it is situated in everyday life. I have examined names within a narrow institutionalized construct – the U.S. technology corporation – but this research can, and should be continued within other industries as well as non-corporate institutions and communities.
APPENDIX

International Trademark Classes

GOODS

1. Chemicals used in industry, science and photography, as well as in agriculture, horticulture and forestry; unprocessed artificial resins; unprocessed plastics; manures; fire extinguishing compositions; tempering and soldering preparations; chemical substances for preserving foodstuffs; tanning substances; adhesives used in industry.

2. Paints, varnishes, lacquers; preservatives against rust and against deterioration of wood; colorants; mordents; raw natural resins; metals in foil and powder form for painters, decorators, printers and artists.

3. Bleaching preparations and other substances for laundry use; cleaning, polishing, scouring and abrasive preparations; soaps; perfumery, essential oils, cosmetics, hair lotions; dentifrices.

4. Industrial oils and greases; lubricants; dust absorbing, wetting and binding compositions; fuels (including motor spirit) and illuminants; candles, wicks.

5. Pharmaceutical, veterinary, and sanitary preparations; dietetic substances adapted for medical use, food for babies; plasters, materials for dressings; material for stopping teeth, dental wax; disinfectants; preparations for destroying vermin; fungicides, herbicides.

6. Common metals and their alloys; metal building materials; transportable buildings of metal; materials of metal for railway tracks; non-electric cables and wires of common metal; ironmongery, small items of metal hardware; pipes and tubes of metal; safes; goods of common metal not included in other classes; ores.

7. Machines and machine tools; motors and engines (except for land vehicles); machine coupling and transmission components (except for land vehicles); agricultural implements other than hand-operated; incubators for eggs.

8. Hand tools and implements (hand-operated); cutlery; side arms; razors.

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1 This table is adopted from the United States Patent and Trademark Office publication titled International Schedule of Classes, Goods, and Services, which is found on their Web site at the following address: http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/tac/doc/basic/international.htm
9. Scientific, nautical, surveying, electric, photographic, cinematographic, optical, weighing, measuring, signaling, checking (supervision), life-saving and teaching apparatus and instruments; apparatus for recording, transmission or reproduction of sound or images; magnetic data carriers, recording discs; automatic vending machines and mechanisms for coin operated apparatus; cash registers, calculating machines, data processing equipment and computers; fire extinguishing apparatus.

10. Surgical, medical, dental, and veterinary apparatus and instruments, artificial limbs, eyes, and teeth; orthopedic articles; suture materials.

11. Apparatus for lighting, heating, steam generating, cooking, refrigerating, drying, ventilating, water supply, and sanitary purposes.

12. Vehicles; apparatus for locomotion by land, air, or water.

13. Firearms; ammunition and projectiles; explosives; fireworks.

14. Precious metals and their alloys and goods in precious metals or coated therewith, not included in other classes; jewelry, precious stones; horological and chronometric instruments.

15. Musical instruments.

16. Paper, cardboard and goods made from these materials, not included in other classes; printed matter; bookbinding material; photographs; stationery; adhesives for stationery or household purposes; artists' materials; paint brushes; typewriters and office requisites (except furniture); instructional and teaching material (except apparatus); plastic materials for packaging (not included in other classes); playing cards; printers' type; printing blocks.

17. Rubber, gutta-percha, gum, asbestos, mica and goods made from these materials and not included in other classes; plastics in extruded form for use in manufacture; packing, stopping and insulating materials; flexible pipes, not of metal.

18. Leather and imitations of leather, and goods made of these materials and not included in other classes; animal skins, hides; trunks and traveling bags; umbrellas, parasols and walking sticks; whips, harness and saddlery.

19. Building materials (non-metallic); nonmetallic rigid pipes for building; asphalt, pitch and bitumen; nonmetallic transportable buildings; monuments, not of metal.

20. Furniture, mirrors, picture frames; goods (not included in other classes) of wood, cork, reed, cane, wicker, horn, bone, ivory, whalebone, shell, amber, mother-of-pearl, meerschaum and substitutes for all these materials, or of plastics.
21. Household or kitchen utensils and containers (not of precious metal or coated therewith); combs and sponges; brushes (except paint brushes); brush-making materials; articles for cleaning purposes; steel-wool; un-worked or semi-worked glass (except glass used in building); glassware, porcelain and earthenware not included in other classes.

22. Ropes, string, nets, tents, awnings, tarpaulins, sails, sacks and bags (not included in other classes); padding and stuffing materials (except of rubber or plastics); raw fibrous textile materials.

23. Yarns and threads, for textile use.

24. Textiles and textile goods, not included in other classes; beds and table covers.

25. Clothing, footwear, headgear.

26. Lace and embroidery, ribbons and braid; buttons, hooks and eyes, pins and needles; artificial flowers.

27. Carpets, rugs, mats and matting, linoleum and other materials for covering existing floors; wall hangings (non-textile).

28. Games and playthings; gymnastic and sporting articles not included in other classes; decorations for Christmas trees.

29. Meat, fish, poultry and game; meat extracts; preserved, dried and cooked fruits and vegetables; jellies, jams, fruit sauces; eggs, milk and milk products; edible oils and fats.

30. Coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, rice, tapioca, sago, artificial coffee; flour and preparations made from cereals, bread, pastry and confectionery, ices; honey, treacle; yeast, baking powder; salt, mustard; vinegar, sauces (condiments); spices; ice.

31. Agricultural, horticultural and forestry products and grains not included in other classes; live animals; fresh fruits and vegetables; seeds, natural plants and flowers; foodstuffs for animals; malt.

32. Beers; mineral and aerated waters and other nonalcoholic drinks; fruit drinks and fruit juices; syrups and other preparations for making beverages.

33. Alcoholic beverages (except beers).

34. Tobacco; smokers' articles; matches.
SERVICES

35. Advertising; business management; business administration; office functions.

36. Insurance; financial affairs; monetary affairs; real estate affairs.

37. Building construction; repair; installation services.

38. Telecommunications.

39. Transport; packaging and storage of goods; travel arrangement.

40. Treatment of materials.

41. Education; providing of training; entertainment; sporting and cultural activities.

42. Scientific and technological services and research and design relating thereto; industrial analysis and research services; design and development of computer hardware and software; legal services.

43. Services for providing food and drink; temporary accommodations.

44. Medical services; veterinary services; hygienic and beauty care for human beings or animals; agriculture, horticulture and forestry services.

45. Personal and social services rendered by others to meet the needs of individuals; security services for the protection of property and individuals.
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