

NICKNAMES AND THE LEXICON OF SPORTS

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the structure and usage of nicknames given to professional hockey and baseball players. Two general types are observed: a phrasal referring expression and a single-word hypocoristic. The phrasal nickname is descriptive but is only used referentially, usually in sports narrative. The hypocoristic is used for both reference and address and may be descriptive or shortened from a formal name. In addition, its inclusion of a hypocoristic suffix is sensitive to the segmental content of the shortened form. A model of nickname assignment is proposed in which the creation of any kind of nickname is treated as enriching the lexicon. This model relates nicknames to other types of specialized or elaborate referring expressions and encodes the social meaning of nicknames and other informal names in the lexicon.

THE TRADITION OF ASSIGNING NICKNAMES to athletes is typical of all sports and is notably vibrant in baseball and hockey. Indeed, nicknaming practices are prevalent in many cultures and subcultures, carrying a wide range of social and semantic functions, and are often derived with specialized phonological structures. In this article, we study the athlete nickname as both a cultural and a linguistic phenomenon, focusing both on its function as a potential form of address and reference and on its form as a descriptive or shortened label. Like nicknames discussed in the studies surveyed in section 1 below, athlete nicknames carry social meaning about their referents; in many cases, they are also constrained in their phonological structure.

Athlete nicknames form in various ways. There are phrasal nicknames such as *The Sultan of Swat*, *The Chicoutimi Cucumber*, and *The Finnish Flash*, which typically use vivid imagery and wordplay such as alliteration and rhyme to provide a near-literary description of the referent. But there are also shorter, vivid monikers, such as *Babe*, *Boomboom*, or *Rocket*, as well as short nicknames simply derived from the referent's forename or surname, such as *Alfie*, *Mac*, or *Smitty*.

The wealth of examples invites a number of serious questions. What purposes do nicknames serve? Why are some long and phrasal, while others are brief? What intuitions do users have about creating new nicknames? To begin answering these questions, we adopt a broad working definition

of *nickname* in (1), which covers everything from petnames to basic truncations like *Will* for *William* and *Jen* for *Jennifer* to extended noun phrases like *The Pocket Russian Rocket*.

1. Nickname: A referring expression that identifies an individual and that differs from the formal given names of the referent

A crucial theme repeated throughout this article is that athlete nicknames comprise two smaller-order categories; we present current and historical data to show that these categories have always been distinct in both their structure and their usage. Furthermore, we argue that the structure of a nickname is suited to the context of its usage, so that nicknames used as forms of address are comparatively short, while literary nicknames are comparatively longer.

One type of nickname is a phrasal description not usable under ordinary conditions of address; these phrasal nicknames have a literary function, adding flair and content to sports narratives such as newspaper summaries and live broadcasts. We refer to the phrasal nickname as the HOMERIC NICKNAME (2), because it shares some properties with Homeric epithets, which are phrasal structures used in ancient epic poetry to identify characters with their essential traits. For example, in Homer's *Iliad*, characters are often referred to with epithets rather than just their names: *swift-footed Achilles* occurs 21 times, *flashing eyed Athena* occurs 27 times, while *Agamemnon* either precedes or follows *king of men* 42 times.¹

A Homeric nickname portrays an athlete as a character in a dramatic story rather than simply a participant in a spectator sport. In addition, we will argue that the Homeric nickname is one of several types of phrasal structures used specifically to enhance the text or broadcast narratives of sporting events.

2. Homeric nickname: A semantically contentful nickname used in print and broadcast journalism, usually two or more words and/or containing more than one stressed syllable

In contrast, we use HYPOCORISTIC NICKNAME (3) to refer to any nickname usable for both reference and address; such names may be derived from an individual's forename or surname but may also have other sources. Unlike Homeric nicknames, hypocoristics are constrained in size, limited to a monosyllable or a disyllable, nearly always with initial stress. They are also used in different contexts: athletes refer and address each other with hypocoristic nicknames. Moreover, while Homeric nicknames have a characterizing or descriptive function, hypocoristic nicknames signal membership on a team and in a league.

3. Hypocoristic nickname: A nickname usable as a form of both reference and address, containing exactly one stressed syllable

The term *hypocoristic* may sometimes be used interchangeably with *truncation* or *diminutive*; we treat truncated forms as a subset of hypocoristics, since there are hypocoristics that are not truncations. Some hypocoristics may be longer than their formal source name, as in the hypocoristic *Yorkie* for *York*; others may be derived from some other source, as in *Boomboom*, a hypocoristic for Bernard Geoffrion. Likewise, though *diminutive* is easily associated with many (if not all) of the nickname suffixes we discuss, it is not obvious that diminutivity is the intended function of athlete nicknaming, as diminutives are often used to express small size of the referent, as with *doggy* for *dog*.

To illustrate the contrast between Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames, consider first a widely known Homeric nickname in baseball, Babe Ruth's nickname *The Sultan of Swat*. We provide other examples of Homeric baseball nicknames from Skipper (1992) in (4a). These nicknames are longer than a single word, and many incorporate toponyms or titles. In contrast, the hypocoristic baseball nicknames in (4b) are shorter, and the only multiword example, *Big Mac*, nonetheless incorporates a truncation.

4. a. HOMERIC BASEBALL NICKNAMES

Paul Blair	Motormouth
Roger Bresnahan	The Duke of Tralee
Lou Gehrig	The Iron Horse
Ed Heusser	The Wild Elk of the Wasatch
Reggie Jackson	Mr. October
Walter Johnson	The Big Train
Herb Pennock	The Knight of Kennett Square
Bill Lee	Spaceman
Harry Simpson	Suitcase
Earl Torgeson	The Earl of Snohomish
Lon Warneke	The Arkansas Hummingbird

b. HYPCORISTIC BASEBALL NICKNAMES

David Cone	Coney
Mark McGwire	Big Mac
David Ortiz	Papi
Alex Rodriguex	A-Rod
David Wells	Boomer
William Wilson	Mookie

A parallel set of examples for Homeric and Hypocoristic nicknames can be constructed for hockey nicknames. Note first the phrasal nature of the Homeric nicknames in (5a), in contrast with the one-word nature of the hypocoristics in (5b).

5. a. HOMERIC HOCKEY NICKNAMES

Serge Bernier	Le Gros Tou Tou
Wayne Gretzky	The Great One
Jari Kurri	The Finnish Flash
Frank Nighbor	The Flying Dutchman
Georges Vezina	The Chicoutimi Cucumber

b. HYPCORISTIC HOCKEY NICKNAMES

Rob Blake	Blakie
Bobby Clarke	Clarkie
Bernie Geoffrion	Boomboom
Brian Leetch	Leetchie

This article is organized as follows: in section 1 we discuss some of the academic and popular literature on nicknaming practices. In particular, we see that the social meaning of nicknaming is closely related to the culture that employs it and that nicknaming practices are adapted to their cultural context. We also present evidence of a particular evaluative bias in the popular media toward creative Homeric nicknames for professional athletes. Section 2 introduces and develops the notion of elaborate referring expressions, which we argue are phrasal structures that sports journalists use to enrich their narratives. We argue that the Homeric nickname is a particular type of elaborate referring expression.

Section 3 examines trends in Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames, including phonological effects, as well as extralinguistic factors that play a role in the assignment of nicknames. We report on a statistical tendency for the phonological content of truncated hypocoristics to influence the presence or absence of hypocoristic suffixes.

In section 4, we propose a lexical model of nickname creation, in which the sections of the lexicon contain Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames derived from other regions of the lexicon and from other traits of the referent. We conclude in section 5 with a discussion of the implications of our analysis and the model.

1. THE FORM AND FUNCTION OF NICKNAMES

There is a wide range of academic literature on nickname patterns, focusing on the cultural and sociological significance of nicknaming, on their linguistic properties, or both, but often with differing working definitions of nicknames. For example, some researchers (e.g., Alford 1988) consider only descriptive forms to be nicknames, while others (e.g., Slater and Feinman 1985) note sociological and structural commonalities among nicknames and

formal names. Although our own definition precludes overlap between the categories, we are not surprised at similarities between formal and informal names. In fact, as Pulgram (1954, 11–14) describes, many formal names have nicknames as their historical antecedent.

1.1. SOCIAL MEANING OF NICKNAMING. The social function of the nickname depends greatly on the society that uses it; in some cases, nicknames are disparaging, in others, they indicate social hierarchy, while still in others, they connote solidarity or kinship (Alford 1988, 82–85). Price and Price (1972) discuss a conflation of identity, reputation, and name, while Burton (1999) and Moyo (2002) describe communities that link names and nicknames with status and power. Morgan, O’Neill, and Harré (1979) and Kany (1999) show similar patterns with children’s nicknames. Nicknames may also identify the user with a group (Aceto 2002; de Klerk 2002), disambiguate among individuals in communities that have a small number of formal names (Collier and Bricker 1970; Dorian 1970), or indicate familiarity between the speaker and addressee (Dickey 1997; Chevalier 2004).

There is also a relationship between the form and function of a nickname and the gender of the referent (Busse 1983; Slater and Feinman 1985; Cutler, McQueen, and Robinson 1990; Phillips 1990; Wierzbicka 1992; de Klerk and Bosch 1996, 1997). For example, males are more likely than females to assign and use nicknames, and female nicknames tend to be affectionate rather than disparaging. Female nicknames are more likely to be longer than male nicknames, to end with a vowel, and to have noninitial stress. Cassidy, Kelly, and Sharoni (1999) find that adult and child English speakers consistently use phonological cues to detect the gender of a novel pseudonickname.

1.2. THE STRUCTURE OF NICKNAMES. English hypocoristics are created by truncating a word with two or more syllables into a single syllable, which may combine with suffixes such as [i] (spelled *-y*, *-ie*, *-ey*, or *-i*), [ɜ] (spelled *-er*), [o], [ə] (spelled *-a*), or [s] (Jespersen 1942, 538–50; Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 1634–36). Although each of these suffixes can be seen as diminutive, other functions are notable; for example, Huddleston and Pullum suggest that the *-y* suffix may sometimes have more of a “rhythmic or decorative” function. To avoid terminological confusion, we refer to all of these as hypocoristic suffixes.

Much research on the phonology of English hypocoristics focuses on the set of phonemes and consonant sequences that can occur in the truncated monosyllabic stem (Kahn 1976; Short 1983; McCarthy and Prince 1986; Dunlap 1990; Weeda 1992; Kager 1994; Benua 1995; Hale, Kissock, and

Reiss 1997, 1998; Lappe 2001, 2003). Nevertheless, some aspects of the phonology of English hypocorisms are unexplored. We show in section 3 that the creation of a novel hypocoristic requires a choice between using no hypocoristic suffix or using one of these in the set {-y, -o, -er, -a, -s}. Moreover, we will see that this choice depends partly on the nature of the final segments of the clipping. As such, this aspect of the phonology of hypocoristics is without precedent. In addition, discussions of athlete nicknames in the academic domain are not known to us other than our own previous work on the subject (Kennedy and Zamuner 2001).

1.3. NICKNAMES IN POPULAR MEDIA. Nicknames also receive attention in the popular media, especially with respect to professional athletes. These accounts are quite subjective, applauding Homeric nicknames while booing hypocoristic ones. Indeed, they often bemoan the loss of the epithetic art, suggesting that radio-era athletes enjoyed a rich but now-forgotten tradition of Homeric nicknames and that hypocoristic athlete nicknames are a modern phenomenon—a tempting example of a decline in nicknaming practices. Often it seems the players are blamed, an unfair result since journalists develop Homeric nicknames. Some examples of such complaint are provided below:

It is the art of nicknaming, once so prevalent in our national game, but now reduced to the rubble of unimaginative minds. Whereas once we reveled in colorful nicknames like “Blue Moon,” [“]The Sultan of Swat,” and “Death to Flying Things,” we are now subjected to such uncreative drivel as “Coney” (for David Cone), the effortless shortening of names (such as “Junior” for Ken Griffey, Jr. or “A-Rod for Alex Rodriguez), and silly commercialism (like calling Mark McGwire “Big Mac” or “McZilla”). Such nicknames really aren’t nicknames at all; most of them are puns, or plays on words, which tell us very little about the player. [Bruce Markusen, *Cooperstown Confidential*, Apr. 19, 2000 (<http://www.oaklandfans.com/coopconfg.html>)]

THERE IS SOMETHING MISSING from baseball these days and it’s easy to pin a name on it. Or rather, nobody bothers to come up with a name and that’s the problem. Whatever happened to baseball’s colorful nicknames? [¶] Despite the humorous efforts of ESPN’s Chris Berman, whose wordplay shtick has worn thin, nicknames just aren’t as popular anymore in baseball. [Fred McMane, *Baseball Digest*, June 2, 2002 (http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FCI/is_6_61/ai_85481738)]

This dreary shorthand form of labeling, filled with “A-Rods,” “Cujos” and “L.J.s” (and, in the entertainment field, with J-Los), has been the slow death of language and imagination in arenas all over our whimsy-challenged nation. [Filip Bondy, *New York Daily News*, May 7, 2001, 66]

Of all the dying arts in baseball, none is as lamentable as the passing of colorful nicknames. When Barry Bonds, Sammy Sosa, Curt Schilling, Pedro Martinez and Derek Jeter reach Cooperstown, there won't be funny subtitles under their names. Mark McGwire will probably get a "Big Mac," but that's not a nickname. It's a commercial. [Gwen Knapp, *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 6, 2004, 2 (LexisNexis)]

Baseball seems to lack something these days the colorful nickname. Sure, there are some: Ivan Rodriguez is "Pudge," Alex Rodriguez is "A-Rod," Randy Johnson is the "Big Unit," Frank Thomas is the "Big Hurt," Dontrelle Willis is "D-Train." But nicknames don't seem as common as they used to be, particularly for players who aren't stars. [Sam Jacobs, *Seattle Times*, July 28, 2004, D5 (LexisNexis)]

The state of nicknaming in hockey does not generate the same degree of invective, but when writing about hockey nicknames, sports journalists still focus on hypocoristic nicknames as unimaginative examples, as the following excerpts illustrate.

Some names are more clever names than others. Many just derive from a player's given name. [Ira Podell, AP, June 4, 2001 (LexisNexis)]

Here's the formula:—Cut the guy's last name in half.—Add an "s." [¶] That's it. That's all. [¶] Let's look at the Tampa Bay Lightning. Brian Bradley is "Brads." Chris Gratton is Grats." Brian Bellows is "Bells." Jason Wiemer is "Wiems." Daren Puppa is "Poops." [¶] Rocket science, it isn't. [¶] Now what if a player has a one-syllable last name? Easy, just add a "y" (and occasionally an "sy" if it makes it sound better). [Tom Jones, *Tampa Tribune*, Oct. 20, 1996, 3 (LexisNexis)]

Sometimes a nickname is contrived, such as "CuJo" for Curtis Joseph, who was originally known as "The Cat" but wanted to be distinguished from Felix "The Cat" Potvin. . . . Hockey nicknames can become cliché-like in their use. For instance, even the local media commonly refers to Blues goaltender Brent Johnson as "Johnnie." . . . Sometimes the two-syllable rule is followed to silly extremes. For instance, Mike Eastwood is "Eastie," Gilles Gilbert was "Gillie" and netminder Pat Jablonski was "Jabber." [Dan O'Neill, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sept. 14, 2003, D2 (LexisNexis)]

These discussions of baseball and hockey nicknames do make note of the structural differences between Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames, but they typically identify the contrast as a function of time rather than as a function of usage. Only Jones (*Tampa Tribune*, Oct. 20, 1996) notices the functional difference: "But in reality, all athletes have two nicknames. There's one given by the fans and media and another given by teammates. The former is always more creative than the latter."

As researchers we do not value one nickname structure over another. Nevertheless, we have shown here that examinations of nicknaming in the

popular media claim that contemporary athletes do not acquire as creative nicknames as their radio-era predecessors. We believe this evaluation is inaccurate, a result of conflating the Homeric and hypocoristic categories. It is our view that phrasal nicknaming is simply one of several available literary devices in the storytelling genre of sports reporting and broadcasting. We refer to these literary devices as *ELABORATE REFERRING EXPRESSIONS* and examine them in more detail in section 2. The simpler form of the hypocoristic nickname, in contrast, reflects its function as a form of address and informal reference rather than literary embellishment.

The potential linguistic questions are of a wide range: Who uses Homeric or hypocoristic nicknames and in what settings? How do the two nickname types differ structurally? What motivates the assignment and the particular structures of each nickname type? We propose several theorems regarding nickname usage:

- i. Homeric nicknames are used in text and broadcast narratives, but not as forms of address or reference by participants.
- ii. Hypocoristic nicknames include many forms, only one of which is derivational truncation.
- iii. Both types of nicknames have structural properties suited to their usage.

We return to these questions in section 3, where we take a closer look at the structure of both types of nicknames. Prior to doing so, though, we provide an overview of elaborate referring expressions.

2. ELABORATE REFERENCE IN SPORTS NARRATIVE

Sports narrative is marked in part by the use of several types of complex referential phrases we call *ELABORATE REFERRING EXPRESSIONS*. This category includes but is not limited to Homeric nicknames; other types of elaborate referring expressions include *HEAVY NOUN PHRASES* and *SUBSTITUTE NOUN PHRASES*. We discuss each in more detail in this section.

A heavy noun phrase (Ferguson 1983) is a structure marked by the co-occurrence of a participant's name with one or more modifying words or phrases. These phrases are associated with the head of the phrase through apposition rather than with a relativized or copular construction. Substitute noun phrases also make use of one or more modifying words or phrases, but lack the name of the participant. The participant's name instead appears as an antecedent in an earlier clause. These specialized linguistic structures are found in numerous media, notably in print journalism and live broadcasts.

2.1. HEAVY NOUN PHRASES. We illustrate some heavy noun phrases (HNPs) in (6), including broadcast examples from Ferguson (1983) in (6a), print media examples from Romaine (1994) in (6b), and additional examples we have found ourselves (6c). In each example, the appositive modifiers are set in small capitals.

6. a. HEAVY NOUN PHRASES IN BROADCASTS (Ferguson 1983)
 Warren Cromartie, THE LEFT HANDED HITTER, swings ...
 Eddie Yost, A CRACKERJACK, who was not a power hitter, ...
 David Winfield, THE 25-MILLION-DOLLAR MAN, who is hitting zero, five, six in this World Series, ...
 THE QUIET TEXAN Tommy John delivers ...
 FIRST-BASE UMPIRE Larry Barnett waited a while before ...
 LEFT-HANDED THROWING Steve Howe, who in the mini-playoffs or the playoffs just preceding this one, came out ...
- b. HEAVY NOUN PHRASES IN TEXT (Romaine 1994)
 KEPTEN BILONG ROYALS NA HUKA BILONG PNG NESENEL TIM, KUMUL, Michael Matmilo
 ENGLAND'S FLANKER Gary Rees
 FULLBACK AND RECORD POINTS SCORER John Liley
 MILWAUKEE BREWERS' DESIGNATED HITTER Dave Parker
- c. MORE HEAVY NOUN PHRASES IN TEXT
 Schneider, THE ALL-TIME LEADING JEWISH SCORER IN NHL HISTORY, is one of the top scoring defensemen in the NHL. [Jews in Sports, <http://www.jewsinsports.org/profile.asp?sport=hockey&ID=4>, accessed July 26, 2006]
 On Nov. 8, THE NHL'S ALL-TIME LEADING SCORER AMONG DEFENSEMEN, Raymond Bourque, was immortalized with the class of 2004 in Toronto, Ontario. His 410 goals, 1,169 assists, 1,579 points, and "never-say-die" attitude made the long-time Bruin a lock for the Hall in his very first year of eligibility. [*Stoneham Sun*, Nov. 23, 2004]
 The Capitals sent F Chris Bourque, SON OF FORMER BRUINS GREAT RAY BOURQUE, to Hershey of the AHL. F Jakub Klepis, A FORMER SENATORS FIRST-ROUND PICK, was also sent down. [*Ottawa Sun*, Sept. 28, 2005, 64 (LexisNexis)]
 Figgins, who led the major leagues in stolen bases, stole none in the series. He rarely got on base, with one walk and eight strikeouts in 21 at-bats. [¶] Gueirero, THE DEFENDING AMERICAN LEAGUE MOST VALUABLE PLAYER, had no home runs and no runs batted in. [Bill Shaikin, *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 11, 2005, D1 (ProQuest)]

Several convergent functions can be identified for the HNP. In one sense it acts as a type of Homeric epithet, helping to establish and maintain a character in a narrative. In another sense (and this may be true of Homeric

epithets in general) the HNP may be seen as one of a battery of phrases that journalists have at their disposal to enrich their narrative very readily—in other words, epithets can be employed to add flare to narrative at minimal cognitive expense. Moreover, HNPs in sports narrative, such as Ferguson's example *UMPIRE Larry Barnett* and Romaine's *FLANKER Gary Rees*, resemble a typically journalistic construction in which a noun signifying a profession or trade precedes a referent's full name. This construction has been called a PSEUDOTITLE (Meyer 2002; 2004, 342–47), an ANARTHROUS NOUN PHRASE (Pullum 2006, 340–41), and more to its journalistic usage, TIMESTYLE (Quirk et al. 1985, 276, n.).

2.2. SUBSTITUTE NOUN PHRASES. The substitute noun phrase (SNP) differs from the HNP only by the placement of the name of the referent; in this case the referent's name is an antecedent separated from the SNP by at least a clause boundary. Because of this separation, the SNP can acquire a pronominal usage, so long as the modifiers do not themselves identify a unique individual. Like HNPs, SNPs serve as Homeric epithet; moreover, in their pronominal function they can be disambiguating, so long as it is clear that the SNP can only corefer with one of several potential antecedents.

We provide examples of SNPs in (7) and (8). In these examples, the antecedent and SNP are set in small capitals. Note that these particular constructions, *the big Slovak(ian)* and *the enigmatic Russian*, occur with a number of different antecedents, suggesting each is a type of stock construction not unlike a Homeric epithet or HNP. Moreover, in each example, the actual referent's name appears in a separate clause.

7. BIG SLOVAKS

- a. CHARA's all-star season ended with a disappointing sub-par playoff, although THE BIG SLOVAKIAN did finally resemble his former self with a physical, energized performance in Game 7. [Don Brennan, *Ottawa Sun*, May 27, 2003, 32 (LexisNexis)]
- b. Because of where the B's are positioned for the '04 lottery, GRACIK could make the third time the charm for the little-known tourney that occurs every second December. However, THE BIG SLOVAK does not come without concerns, which could prevent him from ever developing as an NHL player, let alone a scoring winger there. [Kirk Luedeke, *hockeyjournal.com*, accessed Sept. 27, 2005]
- c. A native of Slovakia, JURCINA stands at 6'4, and is already filled out to the tune of 235 lbs. He knows how to utilize his physical tools, as he takes care of his own zone with both brains and brawn. . . . Although not a naturally gifted offensive blueliner, he has a very heavy shot that could translate into power play time at the next level. Like many of the Bruins top prospects, THE BIG SLOVAK could very easily be in the Boston lineup when the league's

- labor dispute is over. [*Hockey's Future*, <http://hockeysfuture.com/article.php?sid=7647>, Apr. 11, 2005]
- d. ANZE KOPITAR, C—The Jackets, talented up front, could use a defenseman. But THE BIG SLOVAK has all the tools and will be tough to pass up. [Randy Sportak, *Calgary Sun*, July 30 2005, S3 (LexisNexis)]
 - e. The Thrashers feel they stole IVAN MAJESKY from Florida (they gave up a second-round pick, 38th overall, in the June draft for THE BIG SLOVAK). He toiled almost 21 minutes a night for Mike Keenan and should fit in with Hartley's defensive scheme. [Scott Burnside, ESPN.com, accessed Sept. 27, 2005]
 - f. Fittingly, the GWG came off MESZAROS' stick during a wild scramble in front of the P.A. net. Courchaine had three whacks at it, defenseman Andy Schenn had another as did Grant, before the puck popped into the slot for THE BIG SLOVAKIAN. [Matt Barkoff, Vancouver Giants Official Web Site, <http://www.vancouvergiants.com>, Oct. 12, 2004]
 - g. BRANKO RADIVOJEVIC is a talented offensive performer, and a key ingredient in the Flyers coming within a period of reaching the Stanley Cup final last spring. THE BIG SLOVAKIAN WINGER is a clever puckhandler who is willing to do the dirty work to create chances in the offensive zone. [National Hockey League Players' Assoc., <http://www.nhlpa.com>, accessed Sept. 27, 2005]
 - h. Guerin's departure led to Glen Murray's promotion, and Murray's absence on JOZEF STUMPEL's line, along with Sergei Samsonov's wrist injury, sapped the life out of THE BIG SLOVAK's season. [Mick Colageo, *Standard-Times*, Feb. 25, 2003 (<http://www.southcoasttoday.com/daily/02-03/02-25-03/c05sp100.htm>)]
 - i. It says a lot about TROLIGA's character that he opted to leave the comforts of home for Calgary, where he knew absolutely no one and was basically a stranger in a strange land. But THE BIG SLOVAK doesn't intimidate easily. [Alan Adams, St. Louis Blues, http://www.stlblues.com/columnists/aa_040105.html, Jan. 5, 2004]
 - j. MAROS SERVATKA spent a good portion of his childhood with ice skates on his feet and a stick in his hand. So it was difficult when THE SLOVAK SPORTSMAN opted to move to Tucson four years ago to study economics at the University of Arizona. He realized he might have to do without the game he loved for a while. [Gerald M. Gay, *Arizona Daily Star*, <http://www.azstarnet.com/dailystar/allheadings/83110.php>, July 9, 2005]
8. ENIGMATIC RUSSIANS
- a. NIKITA ALEXEEV, who played in the OHL for Erie has seen his stock fall steadily since the beginning of the season. His size and skill package are unquestionably top-flight, but he has not made the big plays essential for elite status among prospects. He also seems to lack the ability to finish and so, expect to see him go later rather than sooner. Eventually, there will probably be a team willing to take a chance on THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN,

- but probably not in the top 10. [*Hockey's Future*, <http://hockeysfuture.com/article.php?sid=775>, June 13, 2000]
- b. Button must also negotiate deals with his restricted free agents including Craig Conroy, VAL BURE and Ron Petrovicky. If Bure's rumoured demands of four million per season are to be believed, there is a very slim chance THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN will be in camp. [D'Arcy McGrath, *CalgaryPuck.com*, http://www.calgarypuck.com/McGrath_060701.htm, June 7, 2001]
- c. In a lighter moment Tuesday, and there have been many in FEDOR FEDOROV's often comical four-year relationship with the Vancouver Canucks, THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN forward showed his sense of humour. [Ben Kuzma, *Vancouver Province*, Sept. 14, 2005, A58 (LexisNexis)]
- d. In SERGEI FEDOROV, Burke has a ticking time bomb. Not only does THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN hold the option on three more years at \$8 million per season—minus the expected 24 per-cent rollback in a new collective bargaining agreement—there could be a fence to mend. [Ben Kuzma, *Vancouver Province*, June 20, 2005, A50 (LexisNexis)]
- e. The real wildcard in the series could be ALEXEI KOVALEV. If THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN can somehow return to form, the Habs will walk away with the series. [Matthew Brady, *Hockey Informer*, <http://www.hockeyinformer.com/web/fantasy/editorials/>, Apr. 12, 2004]
- f. Already the trade speculation is heating up in Florida, and Iron Mike Keenan's only been there for a week. Thankfully, he doesn't make the trades or there would likely have already been one. That said, VIKTOR KOZLOV is said to be attainable as interim GM Fletcher wants to get some value back for THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN. [Puckjunkie.com, http://www.puckjunkie.com/archive/2001_02/regseason/stjo41201.htm, Dec. 10, 2001]
- g. He's no Chris Simon. Not, yet. [¶] OLEG SAPRYKIN is hardly a pillar of puck intimidation. He's certainly not a Simon-esque bruising battler with soft hands. [¶] Fact is, THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN is only threatening when he's skating circles around the enemy and stirring up a fuss with drive-to-the-net agitation. [Todd Saelhof, *Calgary Sun*, Apr. 15, 2004, 71 (LexisNexis)]
- h. In 2003–04 with the Sabres, the enigmatic Satan scored 29 goals and 28 assists for 57 points. In nine NHL seasons, the 29-year-old has 259 goals and 260 assists for 519 points in 704 games. Without question, Satan will be the most talented winger to line up alongside YASHIN since THE ENIGMATIC RUSSIAN arrived on Long Island back in 2001. [Kevin Greenstein, *Inside Hockey*, http://www.insidehockey.com/greenstein/2005_08_03d.php, Aug. 3, 2005]

Some of the examples illustrate the disambiguating function, in that the SNP identifies one of several possible antecedents. For example, in (7h), *the big Slovak* picks out *Stumpel* as an antecedent, where a more generic *his* could corefer with other referents in the passage. This disambiguating function

operates only if the reader knows that Stumpel is the only Slovakian named in the narrative.

2.3. ELABORATE REFERRING EXPRESSIONS AND SPORTS NARRATIVE. HNPs and SNPs are both referring expressions that are suited to the text or broadcast narratives that incorporate them. Textual sport narratives have a number of observable schematic structures, depending on whether they constitute a preview, summary, feature, or column. For example, Gelfand and Heath (1969, 21) and Fensch (1988, 23–25) advise that summaries of games should follow the “Inverted Pyramid” schema of journalistic writing. Under this structure, the lead paragraphs typically contain the most important information regarding the game, such as who played, who won, and how the game was decided. Other events in the game are then recounted chronologically, and the story may be enhanced with sound-bite quotations from players and coaches. Two aspects of the game summary’s organization are important: first, structural and stylistic pressures may precipitate the use of HNPs or SNPs, and second, if it includes player quotes, they may contain hypocoristics. The writer may include these in the quotes, but apparently only if the referent’s formal name has already appeared. Furthermore, other types of stories, like features and columns, also make use of each of the elaborate referring expressions.

Live broadcasts also have a schematic structure adapted to the sequence of events in a game, which alternate between action and downtime between plays. Events during a game are described as they occur with play-by-play commentary, while downtime is filled with color commentary that includes analysis of participants and events in the game as well as “human interest” stories. In each type of commentary, broadcasters may use both types of elaborate referring expressions to enrich the narrative.

Broadcasts also illustrate how sports narrative is shaped by cognitive constraints and by a goal of engaging the reader or viewer. Ferguson (1983) discusses a variety of properties of Sports Announcer Talk, the register of sports broadcasts. Among these is a type of predicate fronting that occurs during play-by-play sequences; some examples are provided in (9).

9. INVERTED STRUCTURES IN GAME-CALLING (Ferguson 1983)

Holding up at third is Murphy
Over at third is Murphy
Tagging at third is Nettles to score
And all set again is Pat Haden
And out right is Drew Hill
Coming left again is Diamond
On deck is big Dave Winfield

Pete goes to right field and back for it goes Jackson
 And here once again ready to go back to pass is Haden

Ferguson argues that this structure is partly cognitive in origin, as the announcer must locate events before identifying players—spectators (including announcers) process what is going on before they process who is in on it. The fact that this description must occur as quickly as it does is another constraint on the register: it is designed to make the content of the game accessible or interesting to a viewer, who might not be willing to watch the game without narration and the additional information provided in color and analytical commentary. As a result, the play-by-play announcer must be able to describe play, even before knowing which specific players are involved.

We speculate that the usage of elaborate referring expressions in broadcasts is similarly adapted to the needs of quick informative delivery. That is, the broadcaster may always refer to a particular player by the same appositive construction, filling airtime with descriptive content, just as the epic poet refers to a particular character with the same appositive epithet.

2.4. HOMERIC NICKNAMES AS ELABORATE REFERENCE. This leads us to the notion that the phrasal Homeric nickname is another type of elaborate referring expression, another literary device that writers and broadcasters use to add flair to their narrative. Homeric nicknames are similar to SNPs in that they lack the full name of the referent, but they are not pronominal, as they require no antecedent. They are also codified or standardized, in that they pick out a constant individual. Example (10) shows a Homeric nickname being used in text narrative where an SNP could have been used instead. We say this is not an SNP because “The Eagle” is a nickname associated specifically with the referent *Ed Belfour*, and not with his team or provenance. A plausible SNP in this context would be a general descriptor like “the veteran goalie” or “the enigmatic Manitoban.”

10. Ottawa’s Dany Heatley, meanwhile, beat Toronto goaltender ED BELFOUR again in the shootout. Going first for Ottawa, he whipped a shot by Belfour on the stick side, making him 2-for-2 against THE EAGLE. [Chris Stevenson, *Ottawa Sun*, Oct. 11, 2005, 54 (LexisNexis)]

We have thus far identified a number of nominal phrase structures used to refer to professional athletes. In addition to Ferguson’s HNP, we add the SNP and the Homeric nickname to the set of elaborate referring expressions. We have also alluded to some of the functional properties that Homeric nicknames share with other elaborate referring expressions, including use as a descriptive literary device. In contrast, hypocoristic nicknames do not

appear in sports narrative, except in playful headlines and, as we will see below, direct quotations from player interviews. In the following section, we expand on the functional and structural contrasts between Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames.

3. PROPERTIES OF NICKNAMES

In this section we provide a closer examination of the usage, structure, and social meaning of each kind of nickname. We survey some trends in Homeric nickname structure, but given the fluidity of their creation, we offer little in the way of a unifying logic behind their coinage. We then examine the structure of hypocoristic nicknames, showing that some of these are also creative and that, regardless of the source as a truncation or otherwise, their structure is linguistically constrained. We also discuss other properties of nickname assignment that seem to speak to the social role of hypocoristics.

3.1. USAGE OF HOMERIC AND HYPCORISTIC NICKNAMES. The most striking contrast in function between Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames is their role in reference and address. Homeric nicknames can only be referential and are not used as a form of address. In contrast, hypocoristics are often used by the participants not only in addressing each other, but in talking about each other. Our database of hockey nickname usage supports this distinction, as many of the names are drawn from interviews in which a player refers to teammate or opponent by a hypocoristic nickname. Player quotes from such interviews are used to enhance a game summary by describing specific events in a game from the player's perspective; such accounts often include references to teammates using the hypocoristic. Examples of narratives in which players are quoted using hypocoristics are provided in (11).

11. HYPCORISTICS QUOTED IN PLAYER INTERVIEWS

- a. Demitra cut the across ice, deked defenseman Nick Schultz and then was able to use CONROY and defenseman Brent Burns as a shield before whistling a shot past goaltender Manny Fernandez. [¶] "CONNIE made a great play," Demitra said. "I faked the defenseman and just got a little bit of open space." [Chris Foster, *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 10, 2005, D13 (ProQuest)]
- b. The flaws are few and far between in JASON SPEZZA's game. Off and on the ice. [¶] "You mean GIGGLES?" Mike Fisher says when asked about his fellow Senators centre. "He's always laughing, always having a good time. He's very easy to get along with."... "He always spits," Senators goalie Ray Emery says of his roommate. "He spits all over the place. He gets excited when he talks, he'll start laughing and he'll spit on you."... "SPEZZ

is pretty clean, like me, that's why we get along," says Emery, recalling a Dish Night story that paints McGrattan in an Oscar Madison light. [¶] "The dishes would get done on my night and they'd get done on SPEZZ's night and they'd sit there on GRATS' night," Emery says. "After about four weeks of that, we started eating out all the time. We tried to wait GRATS out. We learned you can't wait GRATS out. He doesn't mind the smell, I guess." [Don Brennan, *Ottawa Sun*, Oct. 5, 2005, N4 (LexisNexis)]

- c. Carter, whose ice time has been around four minutes a game lately, played 9 minutes, 29 seconds last night and scored his second goal of the season off a nifty give-and-go from linemate PATRICK SHARP. Sharp and Carter broke through neutral ice off a Senators turnover, but Carter split the defense to get ahead of Wade Redden as Sharp gave him the puck. Carter beat Hasek through the five-hole. "That puts a smile on my face," the rookie said. "We got a break, and I'm pretty comfortable playing with SHARPIE..." [Tim Panaccio, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct. 31, 2005, C1 (<http://www.phillyflyers.com/NewsandNotesDetail.asp?Record=1328>)]

The existence of radio-era hypocoristic nicknames supports the claim that the distinction between Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames is structural and functional, and not simply a function of era. For example, Babe Ruth's hypocoristic nickname is actually *Babe*; his given name was George Hermann Ruth. Similarly, McMane (*Baseball Digest*, June 2, 2002) hints at the usage distinction for Walter Johnson: though he lists *The Big Train* as Johnson's nickname, he notes that the referent's teammates called him by the hypocoristic *Barney*.

3.2. PROPERTIES OF HOMERIC NICKNAMES. Because of the function of Homeric nicknames in enhancing narrative, they are structurally underconstrained. Some emergent properties are still evident in their structure, such as loose wordplay on the referent's formal name (12a), metaphorical imagery (12b), references to personal traits or occupations (12c), and toponyms (12d). Many of these also incorporate an element of alliteration or rhyming.

12. HOMERIC HOCKEY NICKNAMES

a. *Wordplay*

Steve Buzinski	The Puck Goes Inski
Wayne Gretzky	The Great One
Dominic Hasek	The Dominator
Ted Lindsay	Terrible Ted

b. *Imagery*

Bobby Hull	Golden Jet
Eric Lindros	The E-train
Henri Richard	Pocket Rocket
Maurice Richard	Rocket

Patrick Roy	St. Patrick
Dave Schultz	The Hammer
c. <i>Personal Traits or Associations</i>	
Clint Albright	The Professor
Claire Alexander	The Milkman
Serge Bernier	Le Gros Tou Tou
Yvan Cournoyer	The Roadrunner
Gordie Howe	Mr. Hockey
Frank Nighbor	The Flying Dutchman
Lester Patrick	The Silver Fox
Larry Robinson	Big Bird
Mike Sillinger	Suitcase
Darcy Tucker	Sideshow Bob
d. <i>Toponyms</i>	
Andy Aitkenhead	The Glasgow Gobbler
Helmuts Balderis	The Riga Express
Pavel Bure	The Russian Rocket
Valeri Bure	Pocket Russian Rocket
Alex Connell	The Ottawa Fireman
Tie Domi	The Albanian Assassin
Frank Finnigan	The Shawville Express
Reggie Leach	The Riverton Rifle
Jari Kurri	The Finnish Flash
Frank Nighbor	The Pembroke Peach
John Roach	The Port Perry Woodpecker
Eddie Shore	The Edmonton Express
Ed Van Impe	The Belgian Basher
Georges Vezina	The Chicoutimi Cucumber

As in Pulgram (1954), Alford (1988), and Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré (1979), Homeric athlete nicknames are meant to be descriptive; for example, *The Puck Goes Inski* suggests that its referent, Steve Buzinski, was an inept goaltender, while *Suitcase* appears as a nickname for frequently traded players. In some cases, the content of the nickname may sometimes seem opaque or obscure, as is the case for the Homeric nickname *The Milkman* for Claire Alexander. In fact, Alexander had quit his job as a milkman to play hockey, which illustrates an emergence of the occupational type of nickname within the sports culture.

3.3. PROPERTIES OF HYPOCORISTIC NICKNAMES. Hypocoristic nicknames function as both reference and address in speech. They also index the user as a member of the sport's community, as a player-participant or as a fan; as such, they function like the group-orienting ethnic names discussed by Aceto (2002). The usage of hypocoristics is evident in contexts such as interviews

with players, as the examples in (11) show. Hypocoristics can also be overheard during games, but the accompanying crowd noise of a broadcast and the placement of microphones obscure many such usages.

In terms of structure, hypocoristics have a number of interesting properties betraying a conflict between phonological requirements and creative desire. We first describe the phonological properties, followed by an overview of the phenomena of STAGING and PRECEDENCE.

Phonological Properties. Without exception, hypocoristics are never more than two syllables; in other words, they are restricted in size to a phonological foot (which may be either one or two syllables). In nearly all cases, only the first syllable may contain a full vowel. Further, a lower-order distinction is necessary between the “derived” forms built from phonological components of the referent’s formal name and the “suppletive” forms drawn from other sources.

The creation of a derived hypocoristic nickname involves clipping either the forename or surname, and the resulting truncation is limited to a single syllable. Some hypocoristics consist solely of this truncation, as in (13a). Other derived hypocoristics are created by combining the truncated form with one of the hypocoristic suffixes mentioned in section 1.4. Most of these suffixes create an additional syllable; for example, the hypocoristics in (13b) are created with the [-i] suffix (spelled -y/-ie), while those in (13c) use the [-æ] suffix (spelled -er) and those in (13d) use the [-o] suffix. The hypocoristics in (13e) are all created with a consonantal -s suffix, which appears as [s] or [z] in agreement with the voicing of the previous consonant.

Some additional notes are warranted here. First, some hypocoristics have a complex syllabic suffix that combines the -s and -y suffixes, pronounced [-si] or [-zi]. Second, where the formal name is monosyllabic, the hypocoristic always includes one of the syllabic suffixes, as in *Ward* → *Wardo*, *Young* → *Younger*, and *York* → *Yorkie*. Third, a very small set of truncations include two syllables of the source, as in *Arvedson* → *Arved*, with no additional suffix.

13. DERIVED HYPCORISTICS

a. *Clipped, No Suffix*

Donald Brashear	Brash	Peter Popovic	Pop
Andrew Cassels	Cass	Bill Quackenbush	Quack
Paul Coffey	Coff	Andre Racicot	Rass
Mike Fisher	Fish	Mike Ricci	Reech
Jeff Friesen	Freeze	Jim Rutherford	Rut
Mikka Kiprusoff	Kip	Dave Scatchard	Scatch
Mark Messier	Mess	Esa Tikkanen	Tik
Larry Popein	Pope	Alexei Yashin	Yash

b. *Clipped + [-i] Hypocoristics*

Daniel Alfredsson	Alfie	Evgeni Nabokov	Nabby
Glen Anderson	Andy	Adam Oates	Oatsie
P. J. Axelsson	Axie	Lyle Odelein	Odie
Rob Blake	Blakie	Jeff Odgers	Oddie
Radek Bonk	Bonkie	Chris Osgood	Ozzie
Harry Cameron	Cammie	Chris Phillips	Philly
Craig Conroy	Connie	Geordie Robertson	Robbie
Ron Hextall	Hexy	Brendan Shanahan	Shanny
Bill Hogaboam	Hoagie	Glenn Sharpley	Sharpie
Jerome Iginla	Iggy	Josef Stumpel	Stumpy
Brad Isbister	Izzy	Steve Sullivan	Sully
Nikolai Khabibulin	Habby	Rick Tabaracci	Tabby
Vyacheslav Kozlov	Kozzie	Todd White	Whitey
Brian Leetch	Leetchie	Jason York	Yorkie
Kent Manderville	Mandy	Sergei Zubov	Zubie

c. *Clipped + [-æ] Hypocoristics*

Craig Billington	Biller	Chris Neil	Neiler
Chris Dingham	Dinger	Mike Sillinger	Silly
Shane Doan	Doaner	Cory Stillman	Stiller
Pat Jablonski	Jabber	Ron Tugnutt	Tugger
Andy Moog	Mooger	Tony Twist	Twister
John Muzzati	Muzzer	John Vanbiesbrouck	Beezer
Tyson Nash	Nasher	Scott Young	Younger

d. *Clipped + [-o] Hypocoristics*

Guy Carbonneau	Carbo	Ed Jovanovski	Jovo
Roman Cechmanek	Checko	Steve Konwalchuk	Kono
Pavel Demitra	Demo	Mike Modano	Modo
Greg Devries	Devo	Ville Niemenen	Nemo
Shean Donovan	Dono	Ronald Petrovicky	Petro
Phil Esposito	Espo	Aaron Ward	Wardo

e. *Clipped + /s/ Hypocoristics*

Andreas Dackell	Dacks	Shjon Podein	Podes
Kris Draper	Drapes	Daren Pappa	Poops
Mike Eagles	Eags	Wade Redden	Reds
Pat Flatley	Flats	Joe Sakic	Saks
Chris Gratton	Grats	Glenn Sharpley	Sharps
Larry Murphy	Murphs	Bryan Trottier	Trotts

f. *Clipped + /s+i/ Hypocoristics*

Kirk Muller	Mullsie	Marc Potvin	Potsie
Tom Poti	Potsie	Darcy Tucker	Tucksie

Examples of suppletive names are provided in (14). Notably, each of the derived hypocoristic nickname types has an equivalent structure in supple-

tive hypocoristics: some are monosyllables, such as *Punch*, some include one of the hypocoristic suffixes, such as *Izzy* and *Shooter*, and some are disyllabic trochees, such as *Bullet*. Like Homeric nicknames, some suppletives are clearly inspired by personal traits of the referent, while others are more obscure but surely have an associated story of their origin. For example, while Steve Thomas's nickname *Stumpy* clearly refers to his height (shorter than average for a hockey player), Andre Roy's nickname *Gilles* more obscurely alludes to his father's first name.

14. SUPPLETIVE HYPOCORISTICS

Perry Anderson	Wheels	Espen Knutsen	Shampoo
Bill Barilko	Dumb-Dumb	Claude Lemieux	Pepe
Allan Bester	Ernie	Al MacInnis	Shooter
Hector Blake	Toe	Ethan Moreau	Gator
Harry Broadbent	Punch	Janne Niinima	Spaz
Carson Cooper	Bullet	Chris Nilan	Knuckles
Francis Clancy	King	Andre Roy	Gilles
Dan Cloutier	Coco	Garth Snow	Norm
Lloyd Cook	Farmer	Steve Thomas	Stumpy
Larry Goodenough	Izzy	Dave Williams	Tiger
Val Hoffinger	Doc	Lorne Worsley	Gump
Jani Hurme	Moomoo	Alexei Zhamnov	Archie

In the following section, we look more closely at the phonological form of the hypocoristic nickname to test whether phonological factors predict the choice of suffix.

Variability and Statistical Trends. We performed a statistical analysis to test if the appearance of a suffix is related to the phonological form of the hypocoristic. For this analysis, we assembled our own database of known hockey nicknames, garnered from several sources. The Internet is a fruitful source: some professional teams have encouraged players to include their nicknames in "player-profile" links from their official Web sites. Other sites have been composed by dedicated fans who collect names of players for their favorite team (or defunct team; one such site exists for the former Hartford Whalers). We have also relied on published excerpts of postgame interviews, such as those in (11) above, in which interviewees refer to teammates with hypocoristic nicknames. Other nicknames have been discovered from telecasts, either of postgame interviews or from rink-level microphones that capture vocalizations of players and officials during the course of a game, including nicknames. Lastly, we also interviewed a professional hockey player about players' nicknames and nickname usage within the NHL.

There are 2,489 total names in the database, 1,791 of which are hypocoristic nicknames. Although we have tracked all types of nicknames when

collecting our database, we focus on hypocoristic forms for the statistical analysis. We do not analyze the distribution of Homeric versus hypocoristics because of the risk that some forms identified by others as Homeric nicknames were actually SNPs. We stripped the definite article and the modifier *Big* if they appeared, thus interpreting phrases such as *The Big Cees* (for *Hank Ciesla*) as a hypocoristic form *Cees*.

Hypocoristics were coded in two dimensions. First, nicknames were categorized for the syllable closure, which refers to the segment that follows the first vowel of the hypocoristic, whether followed by a hypocoristic suffix or not. To illustrate, in the case of *Redden* → *Reds*, the segment following the first vowel is [d], followed by the hypocoristic suffix -s. The syllable closure categories are consonant sequences, alveolar stops [t, d], other voiced obstruents [b, v, z, g, dʒ], other voiceless obstruents [p, f, θ, s, ʃ, tʃ, k], sonorant consonants [m, n, ŋ, l, r], and vowels, in cases where the truncation has no final consonant. These categories are based on cross-linguistic preferences for word-final consonants: languages prefer final sonorants over obstruents, coronal consonants over noncoronals, and voiceless obstruents over voiced obstruents (Zamuner 2003). Additional motivation for treating coronal alveolar stops separately from other obstruents came from a preliminary inspection of the data; we observed that the consonantal suffix -s seemed to be frequent with clippings that ended in alveolar stops. Note that because of this separation, the set of voiceless obstruents in the following discussion excludes [t], while the set of voiced obstruents excludes [d].

Nicknames were also categorized for their suffixing pattern: no suffix, suffixed with a vocalic hypocoristic suffix, suffixed with /s/, and unsuffixed but disyllabic. Disyllabic forms, like the derived *Arved* from *Arvedsson* and suppletives like *Bullet* or *Rocket*, are too infrequent to generalize a pattern, so we removed them from the analysis. The remaining database has 1,734 hypocoristic nicknames. Examples of the cross-categorization are provided in table 1; each cell contains a derived and suppletive example.

The observed distribution of nicknames by syllable closure and suffix type is provided in table 2. Overall, the distribution of nicknames differs significantly from chance on a chi-square analysis ($N = 1,734$, $df = 10$, $\chi^2 = 199.96$, $p < .001$). Binomial probabilities of the observations in individual cells also indicate that many types of syllable closure favor a particular suffixing pattern. For example, there is a trend for alveolar stops to combine with -s suffixes rather than with vocalic suffixes. There is also a trend for voiced obstruents, sonorants, and consonant sequences to combine with vocalic suffixes rather than with either of the other options. The forms with voiceless consonants or open first syllables favor having no suffix.

We then conducted separate analyses for derived and suppletive hypocoristics. Some of the overall generalizations are reflected in the specific

TABLE 1
Examples of Cross-Categorized Suppletive and Derived Nicknames

<i>Segment Closing 1st Syllable</i>	<i>No Suffix</i>	<i>Vocalic Suffix</i>	<i>s-Suffix</i>
Voiceless Obstruent, excluding [t]	Kiprusoff → Kip Scott Gordon → Flash	Aucoin → Oakie Don Simmons → Dippy	Dackell → Dacks Jim Campbell → Soups
Voiced Obstruent, excluding [d]	Friesen → Freeze Greg Carroll → Buzz	Nabokov → Nabby Ken McCauley → Tubby	Duguay → Doogs Brad Selwood → Rags
Sonorant	Moller → Moll Jim McVicar → Slim	Phillips → Philly Michel Laroque → Bunny	Healey → Heals Gary Bromley → Bones
Alveolar Stop	Newton → Newt Kevin Todd → Rat	Matvichuk → Mattie Kevin Devine → Spuddy	Gratton → Grats Alex Smith → Boots
Consonant Sequence	Driscoll → Drisk Brad McCrimmon → Beast	Stumpel → Stumpy Bob Davie → Pinky	Conklin → Conks Dave Babych → Gramps
Vowel	Eric Brewer → Brew Pat Egan → Joe	Stewart → Stewie Gerry Odrowski → Snowy	Ciesla → Cess Mark Laforest → Trees

TABLE 2
Overall Distribution of Nickname Types

<i>Segment Closing 1st Syllable</i>	<i>No Suffix</i>		<i>Vocalic Suffix</i>		<i>s-Suffix</i>		<i>Total</i>
Voiceless Obstruent, excluding [t]	275	56.58%	182	37.45%	29	5.97%	486
	185.26	<i>p</i> < .0001	255.05	<i>p</i> < .0001	45.69	<i>p</i> < .01	
	89.74	43.47	-73.05	20.92	-16.69	6.09	
Voiced Obstruent, excluding [d]	56	25.57%	145	66.21%	18	8.22%	219
	83.48	<i>p</i> < .0001	114.93	<i>p</i> < .0001	20.59	<i>p</i> = .32	
	-27.48	9.05	30.07	7.87	-2.59	0.32	
Sonorant	85	23.74%	237	66.20%	36	10.06%	358
	136.47	<i>p</i> < .0001	187.88	<i>p</i> < .0001	33.65	<i>p</i> = .36	
	-51.47	19.41	49.12	12.84	2.35	0.16	
Alveolar Stop	110	41.35%	109	40.98%	47	17.67%	266
	101.40	<i>p</i> = .15	139.60	<i>p</i> < .001	25.00	<i>p</i> < .0001	
	8.60	0.73	-30.60	6.71	22.00	19.35	
Consonant Sequence	78	24.61%	209	65.93%	30	9.46%	317
	120.84	<i>p</i> < .0001	166.36	<i>p</i> < .0001	29.80	<i>p</i> = .51	
	-42.84	15.19	42.64	10.93	0.20	0.00	
Vowel	57	64.77%	28	31.82%	3	3.41%	88
	33.55	<i>p</i> < .0001	46.18	<i>p</i> < .0001	8.27	<i>p</i> < .05	
	23.45	16.40	-18.19	7.16	-5.27	3.36	
TOTAL	661	38.12%	910	52.48%	163	9.40%	1,734

NOTE: The left column of each cell contains the observed frequency, the expected frequency, and the difference between the two. The right column of each cell contains the proportion of observation, the probability level, and the squared error. The reported probability is the cumulative binomial probability that the observed value is at least as far as it is from the expected value. Shading indicates that the results were not significant. Cells in bold indicate that results were significantly lower than expected. All other cells indicate that the results were significantly higher than expected.

distributions of suppletive nicknames in table 3 ($N = 914$, $df = 10$, $\chi^2 = 98.45$, $p < .001$) and derived nicknames in table 4 ($N = 820$, $df = 10$, $\chi^2 = 158.60$, $p < .001$).

Within each group, similar effects of the syllable-closing segment can be seen. In both types, voiced obstruents favor vocalic suffixation, while voiceless obstruents and open syllables do not. Among derived hypocoristics, since final voiced consonants and sonorants tend to receive vocalic suffixes, *Nabokov* → *Nabby* and *Phillips* → *Philly* are typical, but *Friesen* → *Freeze* is not. Likewise, since final voiceless consonants tend not to receive suffixes, *Cassels* → *Cass* and *Kiprusoff* → *Kip* are typical, while *Aucoin* → *Oakie* is not. Derived hypocoristics that retain more than one final consonant tend to receive vocalic suffixes, so *Alfredsson* → *Alfie* and *Manderville* → *Mandy* are typical, while *Driscoll* → *Drisk* is not.

Lastly, although we did not code for the number of syllables in the source of the derived hypocoristic, the consonantal suffix *-s* tends to appear mainly in hypocoristics derived from disyllabic formal names, as in *Hunter* → *Hunts*, *Walker* → *Walks*, and *Puppa* → *Poops*.

TABLE 3
Distribution of Suppletive Nickname Types

Segment Closing 1st Syllable	No Suffix		Vocalic Suffix		s-Suffix		Total
Voiceless Obstruent, excluding [t]	181	63.73%	88	30.99%	15	5.28%	284
	142.31	$p < .0001$	120.56	$p < .0001$	21.13	$p = .097$	
	38.69	10.52	-32.56	8.79	-6.13	1.78	
Voiced Obstruent, excluding [d]	36	34.62%	62	59.62%	6	5.77%	104
	52.11	$p < .01$	44.15	$p < .001$	7.74	$p = .34$	
	-16.11	4.98	17.85	7.22	-1.74	0.39	
Sonorant	61	39.10%	73	46.79%	22	14.10%	156
	78.17	$p < .01$	66.22	$p = .15$	11.61	$p < .01$	
	-17.17	3.77	6.78	0.69	10.39	9.31	
Alveolar Stop	94	62.25%	41	27.15%	16	10.60%	151
	75.67	$p < .01$	64.10	$p < .0001$	11.23	$p = .097$	
	18.33	4.44	-23.10	8.33	4.77	2.02	
Consonant Sequence	58	32.77%	112	63.28%	7	3.95%	177
	88.69	$p < .0001$	75.14	$p < .0001$	13.17	$p < .05$	
	-30.69	10.62	36.86	18.08	-6.17	2.89	
Vowel	28	66.67%	12	28.57%	2	4.76%	42
	21.05	$p < .05$	17.83	$p < .05$	3.12	$p = .39$	
	6.95	2.30	-5.83	1.91	-1.12	0.40	
TOTAL	458	50.11%	388	42.45%	68	7.44%	914

NOTE: Statistics are reported in the same way as table 2.

TABLE 4
Distribution of Derived Nickname Types

<i>Segment Closing 1st Syllable</i>	<i>No Suffix</i>		<i>Vocalic Suffix</i>		<i>s-Suffix</i>		<i>Total</i>
Voiceless Obstruent,	94	46.53%	94	46.53%	14	6.93%	202
excluding [t]	50.01	$p < .0001$	128.59	$p < .0001$	23.40	$p < .05$	
	43.99	38.70	-34.59	9.30	-9.40	3.78	
Voiced Obstruent,	20	17.39%	83	72.17%	12	10.43%	115
excluding [d]	28.47	$p < .05$	73.21	$p < .05$	13.32	$p = .42$	
	-8.47	2.52	9.79	1.31	-1.32	0.13	
Sonorant	24	11.88%	164	81.19%	14	6.93%	202
	50.01	$p < .0001$	128.59	$p < .0001$	23.40	$p < .05$	
	-26.01	13.53	35.41	9.75	-9.40	3.78	
Alveolar Stop	16	13.91%	68	59.13%	31	26.96%	115
	28.47	$p < .01$	73.21	$p = .18$	13.32	$p < .0001$	
	-12.47	5.46	-5.21	0.37	17.68	23.45	
Consonant Sequence	20	14.29%	97	69.29%	23	16.43%	140
	34.66	$p < .01$	89.12	$p = .096$	16.22	$p = .054$	
	-14.66	6.20	7.88	0.70	6.78	2.83	
Vowel	29	63.04%	16	34.78%	1	2.17%	46
	11.39	$p < .0001$	29.28	$p < .0001$	5.33	$p < .05$	
	17.61	27.24	-13.28	6.03	-4.33	3.52	
TOTAL	203	24.76%	522	63.66%	95	11.59%	820

NOTE: Statistics are reported in the same way as table 2.

Nevertheless, there are some differences in how suppletive and derived hypocoristic nicknames combine closing segments with suffix patterns. One such case is how they treat forms with final alveolar stops; derived forms gravitate toward the *-s* suffix more than expected, as in *Redden* → *Reds* and *Gratton* → *Grats*. We suspect the *-s* suffix in such cases helps avoid the application of intervocalic flapping. Additional support for this interpretation is seen among derived forms that do combine final alveolar stops and vocalic suffixes. Of these, 12 actually have a *-sy* suffix, which also precludes intervocalic flapping, and another 8 are tokens of *Patrick* → *Paddy* and 6 are tokens of *Smith* → *Smitty*. These latter cases offer a preview of the phenomenon of PRECEDENCE, introduced in the next section.

Meanwhile, for sonorant-closed forms, suppletive nicknames do not seem to favor vocalic suffixing as much as derived forms do. This may follow from a preponderance of *Sam*, *King*, *Bear*, and *Train* among suppletive forms, in contrast with numerous instances of *Rollie*, *Brownie*, and *Sully* in derived forms.

In fact, the overall frequency of unsuffixed forms is relatively smaller in derived forms (203/820, or 24.76%) than in suppletive forms (458/914, or 50.11%). As a result, the distribution of suffix types as a function of the

suppletive-derived distinction differs significantly from chance ($N = 1,734$, $df = 2$, $\chi^2 = 117.83$, $p < .001$). We presume this is because monosyllabic formal names require a vocalic suffix to derive distinct nicknames, while suppletive nicknames can be monosyllabic and still differ notably from the referent's formal name. Consequently, this effect may play a role in the tendency for derived forms with final sonorants or alveolar stops to favor vocalic suffixes.

In summary, our analysis shows that the segment or segments that close the first syllable of a hypocoristic can help predict whether it receives no suffix, a vocalic suffix, or a consonantal suffix. One result that stands out is the role of the voicing of the consonant; voiced consonants and sonorants tend to be followed by vocalic suffixes, while voiceless consonants tend not to be. This is somewhat similar to a tendency in Australian hypocoristics, where voiceless consonants are also avoided before vocalic suffixes. However, rather than occurring word-finally, they instead may be voiced before hypocoristic suffixes, as in *swim costume* → *cozzie*, *Australian* → *Auzzie*, and *afternoon* → *arvo* (Huddleston and Pullum 2002, 1636).

The influence of voicing and consonant sequences on the choice of suffix in athlete hypocoristics is striking and may be unique to the domain of professional sports nicknames. Recall that the literature surveyed in section 1.2 generally found gender of the referent to be a strong predictor of whether nicknames were monosyllabic; gender cannot be a factor here because all the referents in our database are male. We could also speculate about the effect of the relative ages of the nickname user and the referent or the degree of familiarity between the two. It is difficult for us to test the effect of relative age in our data, as we cannot determine the age at which a player received his nickname. It is also difficult to test for the role of familiarity, but we have been able to determine through interviews that players refer to others by their hypocoristic forms even if they have never met. For example, if players from different teams have never met before, it is still completely appropriate for them to use each other's nicknames.

Comparison with other studies on the phonology of English hypocoristics is difficult, because we examine a different set of independent and dependent variables. For example, Slater and Feinman (1985) examined the distribution of segments in absolute word-final position in hypocoristics; in contrast, we examined the distribution of segments that follow the first syllable. Thus, hypocoristics with the *-y* suffix, such as *Alfie* and *Sully*, would both be considered vowel-final in Slater and Feinman's analysis, but not in ours, because we base our categories on the segments that precede the hypocoristic suffix. One comparison we can make with Slater and Feinman's results is in light of consonant voicing. Slater and Feinman found that nicknames tended to have more word-final sonorant and voiced obstruents than

voiceless obstruents. In contrast, we found a different tendency: sonorants and voiced obstruents tended to be followed by hypocoristic suffixes rather than occur in absolute word-final position.

Finally, it is difficult for us to situate our results within the research on maximizing consonant sequences, as discussed by McCarthy and Prince (1986), Weeda (1992), and Lappe (2003). Those analyses focus on whether one or both consonants of a sequence in a formal name are retained in the hypocoristic; our focus for such sequences is whether a vocalic hypocoristic suffix is added in the event that both consonants of the sequence are retained. Still, one similar finding is the restrictive nature of nickname phonology. Lappe found that “marked” consonants are avoided in derived nicknames. We find a similar effect, where voiced obstruents are less likely to occur at the ends of words. This conforms to cross-linguistic patterns of markedness, where voiced obstruents are cross-linguistically marked in syllable or word-final position.

Staging and Precedence. In addition to the semantic, functional, and phonological properties of nicknames, other properties of nickname assignment include STAGING and PRECEDENCE. Staging is a process by which a nickname is fed back to the assignment procedure, undergoing additional steps of truncation and suffixation. The initial form in staged nicknames may be Homeric or hypocoristic, but the end result is typically hypocoristic. For example, the player Claude Lemieux had a Homeric nickname, *Pepe Lemieux*, an analogy to the Warner Brothers cartoon character Pepé Le Pew, the romantic French skunk. This was shortened to a hypocoristic nickname in two steps, first to *Pepé* and then to *Pep*. Similarly, Ken Morrow’s *Wolfman* became *Wolfie*, and Bill Barber, *The Swan*, eventually became *Swannie*. Wade Redden’s hypocoristic *Redsy* is an example of a staged hypocoristic with a derived form, *Reds*, as its origin.

Precedence is a phenomenon by which a player receives a nickname based on some perceived affinity to some other player. For example, the radio-era player Francis Clancy was named *King*, only because it had been his father’s nickname (McFarlane 1997). The elder Clancy was a football player dubbed *The King of the Heelers*, a Homeric form that staged to *King* before it was transferred to his son. Similarly, Ron Lalonde, who played in the 1970s, was called *Newsy* only because it was the nickname of the 1930s player Edouard Lalonde. For a more complex example, Glenn Resch, a goaltender in the 1970s, was called *Chico* because he resembled Freddie Prinze, the actor who played the title character in the television series *Chico and the Man*. The current player Robert Esche is now called *Chico* in allusion to this, because his sticks are stamped *R.Esche*. Precedence also applies to

derived forms; anyone with the first name *Martin* is likely to be called *Marty*, and any player named *Smith* is likely to be called *Smitty*.

The precedence and staging processes point to a more general strategy for assigning nonderived suppletive nicknames: find some other descriptive phrase that applies to the referent and shorten that rather than the referent's name.

4. THE LEXICON BUFFER MODEL

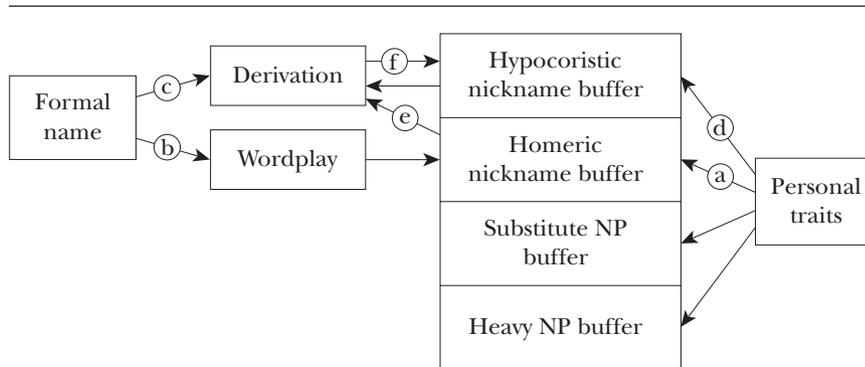
Modeling the assignment of hypocoristic nicknames is challenging, especially since the appearance of suppletive and precedent nicknames is somewhat unpredictable. We propose a model of nickname assignment that, in essence, portrays it as a process of enriching the mental lexicon. In fact, we claim further that other types of referring expressions, including Homeric nicknames, SNPs, and HNPs, also fit into this schema of naming.

Our model, the LEXICON BUFFER MODEL, construes the lexicon as having an internal organizational structure, with distinct regions which we call buffers, each dedicated to a specialized domain of language usage. The buffer metaphor is intended to suggest that in a specialized language setting, words and phrases are searched and retrieved from just a subset of the entire lexicon, which constitutes a more readily accessible search space. The nickname buffer is an instantiation of this model; when looking for a nickname to refer to another individual in the domain of sports, a speaker looks to the nickname buffer first. If there is no nickname for that individual, the speaker may easily add to the buffer. In short, creating any type of nickname is tantamount to adding a word to the lexicon. Moreover, this process is influenced and constrained by a number of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, which we incorporate into the model.

We illustrate the nickname buffer with the schema provided in figure 1. One notable aspect of the lexicon buffer model is that it includes buffers for each type of referring expression discussed in this paper: that is, it is not limited to hypocoristic nicknames; it also includes Homeric nicknames, Heavy NPs, and Substitute NPs. The model allows each of these structures to be created directly on the basis of personal traits of the referent, including appearance, personality, resemblance of the referent to others (a), and wordplay based on the form or understood meaning of the referent's formal name (b).

Hypocoristic nicknames may be entered into the nickname buffer through derivational steps of truncation and suffixation (c), in a manner constrained by phonological biases such as those discussed in section 3.3.

FIGURE 1
Nickname Assignment Schema



Suppletive hypocoristics are drawn from other sources, either directly from personal traits of the referent (d), through truncation of an associated Homeric nickname or other elaborate referring expression (e), or through nicknaming by precedence.

The model captures precedence by admitting shared traits as one type of influence on the choice of a nickname. That is, one type of personal trait that could spawn a nickname for a new referent along the paths labeled (a, d) is resemblance to another referent, which enables the older referent's nickname to be used for the new referent. In this respect, some shared traits may be linguistic.

The model also captures the phenomenon of nickname staging in two ways: first, the Homeric nickname component can feed the hypocoristic component through the derivational function (e), and second, the hypocoristic component can also feed a truncation back out to the derivational function (f). Furthermore, the fact that Homeric nicknames may undergo their own derivational process to create suppletive hypocoristics helps explain why suppletive names share some structural tendencies with derived hypocoristic nicknames.

4.1. EXAMPLE ASSIGNATIONS. A number of example nicknames help illustrate the mechanism of the model. First, we can see that personal traits can directly feed the Homeric nickname buffer (a). Thus, for example, the Finnish origin and technical skill of the player Jari Kurri precipitated the Homeric nickname *The Finnish Flash*. Likewise, formal names can feed the Homeric nickname buffer through the wordplay link (b), as was the case for the player Claude Lemieux. The fact that a common Anglicized pronunciation of the surname Lemieux rhymes with the name of the Warner Brothers cartoon character Pepé Le Pew led to the creation of *Pepé Lemieux* as a Homeric nickname.

The model also enables both traits and formal names to feed the hypocoristic nickname buffer. For example, the derived hypocoristic *Alfie* entered the buffer by feeding the formal surname *Alfredsson* to the derivational mechanism via (c). Meanwhile, suppletive hypocoristics are based on personal traits of the referent via (d); for example, the trait of red hair for the player Alexei Zhamnov led to the assignment of the hypocoristic *Archie* in allusion to the red-haired comic book character of the same name, and the resemblance of the 1970s goaltender Glenn Resch to the actor Freddie Prinze led to the assignment of the hypocoristic *Chico*.

The phenomenon of nickname-by-precedence is captured in the model by considering shared qualities among players as possible personal traits that can feed either the Homeric or hypocoristic buffer. As an example of Homeric precedence along (a), Teemu Selanne, a player who entered the league a dozen years after Kurri and who like Kurri is both skilled and Finnish, has acquired Kurri's Homeric nickname *The Finnish Flash*. For a hypocoristic example via (d), we may look to the transfer of Resch's nickname *Chico* to the goaltender Robert Esche, on the basis of the orthographic resemblance of *R. Esche* to *Resch*.

To exemplify the phenomenon of staging, we return to the Homeric example *Pepé Lemieux*. Since the model allows names in the Homeric buffer to feed the derivational mechanism, it captures the creation of suppletive hypocoristics through the shortening of Homeric nicknames. Thus, in this case, the feeding of *Pepé Lemieux* to this component resulted in the addition of the short hypocoristic *Pepé* to the hypocoristic buffer. In turn, the ability of the hypocoristic buffer to feed names back to the derivational mechanism leads to a second operation, resulting in the monosyllable *Pep*, which notably fits the phonological generalizations regarding consonant voicing and syllable structure in hypocoristic nicknames.

4.2. IMPLICATIONS. The schema as illustrated in figure 1 is really an amalgamated model, representing a lexicon shared by different members of the community; given the differences in usage between participants and journalists, we expect individual lexicons to differ. Specifically, we presume players and coaches to have nickname buffers comprising mainly hypocoristic nicknames, and journalists to have more substantial buffers for Homeric nicknames and other elaborate referring expressions. In fact, the notion of a separate buffer for HNPs and SNPs allows journalistic users to access preexisting constructions to easily enrich their narrative, rather than continually build new complex phrases to describe the participants in a sports-based narrative, and may help to explain the recurrent association of such referring expressions with specific individuals.

This model characterizes hypocoristic creation as more than a simple computational relationship between a lexical entry of the formal name and a spoken output of the nickname. Such an input-output relationship stumbles upon the facts of variability, predicting variation to occur within nickname referents rather than between them. It also requires an excessive list of stipulations to handle the complete set of suppletive nicknames.

The concept of lexical buffers is a starting point, and further empirical evidence to support it needs to come from language processing rather than from generalizations about the structure and content of nicknames. Nevertheless, a separate implication of our approach is that nicknames, even those that seem productively and predictably derived, are nonetheless learned structures. That is, to the extent that the lexicon contains unpredictable components of knowledge of language, this model portrays nicknames as unique sound-meaning pairs, for which the meaning is both referential and social. Furthermore, this generalization about nicknaming would remain intact even if evidence were to show that, in fact, the lexicon does not contain specialized buffers.

5. DISCUSSION

The range of data discussed here, and the lexical model we propose for organizing it, have a number of interesting implications regarding the form, function, and usage of athlete nicknames and for the relationship between social meaning and the lexicon.

As to the form and function, we have shown that the set of athlete nicknames is actually composed of two subtypes: the phrasal and descriptive Homeric nickname, used as reference in narrative, and the foot-sized hypocoristic nickname, used as both reference and address. The popular media's tendency to value only the former helps underscore the functional differences between the two. Although we have not been able to track trends in the relative distribution of hypocoristic and Homeric nicknames over time, we have been able to determine that both types have always been used and are still currently used.

We have also uncovered a set of gradient phonological generalizations within the set of hockey players' hypocoristics. This component of the analysis is quantitative but not variationist—it simply illustrates some robust statistical tendencies in the realization of a hypocoristic nickname, particularly with respect to the choice of using a hypocoristic suffix. Nevertheless, it is not clear whether these tendencies generalize to derived nicknames in the general population. Why these generalizations are robust within the set of hockey

player nicknames is something we can only speculate about, but it may be significant that the trends reflect some cross-linguistically known generalizations about the relationship between segments and syllable structure. In particular, the tolerance of word-final voiceless consonants and the avoidance of word-final voiced consonants and consonant sequences is similar to known typological generalizations of markedness. In this sense, hypocoristic nicknames adhere to a set of phonological generalizations that is more restrictive than those of the language in general, echoing Lappe's (2001) findings regarding the avoidance of marked consonants in truncations.

Our database is limited to nicknames for adult male professional athletes, and the quantitative component of our study is further restricted to hockey players. It remains to be seen whether similar generalizations regarding nicknames are found for players of other sports. Moreover, in light of previous research on the relationship between nicknaming and status among children (Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré 1979), it would be interesting to determine whether nicknaming patterns among children in the context of organized sports are more like the adult sports-oriented system or the general child nicknaming system. It would also be interesting to see whether the phonology of nicknaming among children patterns the same as with male professional athletes. Recall that we found that the nickname phonology of male adults mirrors cross-linguistic markedness and that nickname phonology is more restrictive than general English phonology. We predict similar restrictiveness in children's nickname phonology, based on the restrictive nature of child language phonology that has long been observed across a number of languages and researchers (Jakobson 1968).

Furthermore, considering previous findings that show differences in nicknaming patterns between men and women in a variety of cultures, it is an empirical question whether nicknaming among female athletes is any different from the system we describe. In fact, a controlled study is theoretically possible in which nicknames are compared for male and female athletes with the same surnames—such a design could test whether either gender is more likely to receive a suppletive nickname and could also test for an effect of gender on the choice of the nickname suffix. Such an experimental design could also elicit novel hypocoristics for an experimentally manipulated list of surnames for males and females.

Another general finding of our study is that differences in the structure of Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames reflect differences in their usage. Homeric nicknames need creativity and phrasality, because they are designed to enrich a narrative text or broadcast that otherwise might not engage the reader or viewer. As such, nicknames that incorporate descriptive modifiers and place-names are held in high esteem and are also functional in the sense

that they help the journalist create characters while constructing a narrative. Moreover, a journalist who has phrasal nicknames as well as other types of elaborate referring expressions available in the lexicon can readily enrich the narrative with minimal effort.

In contrast, the address function of hypocoristic nicknames strongly constrains their size. The size restriction is itself functional—during a game, a player would use a hypocoristic like *Gretz* rather than a full name like *Gretzky* or a Homeric structure like *Great One* to call to Gretzky to pass the puck. Suppletion in hypocoristics provides some room for creativity, but the creative range is limited by the restriction on their size to one foot. If there is any function in the use of suppletive nicknames among participants, we suspect it may fulfill an indexing role that simple derivatives cannot quite achieve. Anyone who knows the referent's formal name and the appropriate phonological steps could create a derived nickname, but an unpredictable hypocoristic nickname indicates more of a membership in a community, because it requires personal knowledge of the association between the referent and the hypocoristic.

To explain emergent patterns in nickname creation, we have proposed a model of lexical organization that incorporates buffers. The structure of the model characterizes variation in spoken data (in the presence or absence of nickname suffix) as a function of variation in the lexicon. This follows from the fact that the derivation step, which is where the variable application of nickname suffix resides, simply links “source” areas of the lexicon like formal names with the hypocoristic buffer. In other words, while the contents of the lexicon are technically unconstrained, there are trends in the distribution of lexical entries which are shaped by linguistic factors. As such, the Lexical Buffer Model resonates with models of linguistic variation proposed by Pierrehumbert (2001a, 2001b, 2003) and Bybee (1988, 2001, 2002) that localize variability as a function of the lexicon rather than as a function of the variable application of input-output mechanisms. Pierrehumbert's view is that patterns of variation in surface forms reflect patterns of variation in the lexicon, which result from the gradually increasing influence of phonetic effects. Bybee holds a similar view of the lexicon, especially with respect to sound change and its effect on distributions of patterns within the lexicon.

Furthermore, by listing elaborate referring expressions such as HNPs and SNPs as structures listed in their own lexical buffers, the model characterizes the set of such expressions as an arsenal of constructions available for the speaker to use for a range of functions. The journalist can readily adorn spoken or written narrative with preexisting phrasal constructions like the HNP and SNP, as well as Homeric nicknames. The fact that these construc-

tions reside in a buffer accounts for their typical recurrence as they become associated with individuals much as nicknames do. Likewise, the participant can readily access existing hypocoristic nicknames, as well as create new ones, through a variety of paths.

Our model allows us to ascribe to a common mechanism the creation of derived and suppletive nicknames—structures that share a function and some phonological properties but differ only in the extent to which they resemble the formal name of the referent. Indeed, the Nickname Buffer Model incorporates linguistic and nonlinguistic factors in its mechanism. By including a path of nickname-by-precedent, we can use the model to assign nicknames like *Chico* based on affinities between players, as well as semiderived forms like *Bob* from *Robert*. Meanwhile, the path of nickname-by-derivation allows for truly novel truncations to be created, like *Kip* for *Kiprusoff*, in the same model.

Insofar as the lexicon comprises knowledge of the association between the form and function of words and phrases, the buffer model allows the lexicon to include social meaning in addition to reference and sense. Not only are both Homeric and hypocoristic nicknames listed in the lexicon, but they are differentiated in part by the appropriateness of their social context. In this respect, the model we present actually characterizes the social meaning of linguistic structures as an explicitly encoded aspect of the lexicon. Finally, we do not presume that professional sports is the only domain for which one could propose a nickname buffer or any lexical buffer at all. Instead, we find it plausible that any individual's lexicon could be replete with buffers that group words and phrases by the social context and social appropriateness of their usage.

NOTES

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1. To investigate the use of epithets in Homer's *Iliad*, I searched the electronic version of A. T. Murray's 1924 translation (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press), at the Perseus Digital Library (<http://perseus.uchicago.edu/hopper/text.jsp?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0134>).

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