Nicknames of English Adolescents in South Africa

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This study reports on the nicknames of English-speaking adolescents in South Africa. It documents the nicknames and their origins and analyzes them in terms of the conditions under which they were coined and used. English adolescents have a very sensitive understanding of the complex and shifting set of social relationships underlying the choice and use of nicknames. Because of their optional nature and their transience as terms of address, nicknames offer up-to-date insights into social relationships which are not so evident in the more static, permanent aspects of language.

Introduction

Nicknames afford insight into processes of social change because they are frequently based on the contextual properties of the social situation, and often give clues as to the relationships and roles of participants. These names are "a sort of human mirror in which we see reflected the intersection of individual lives and community experience" (Holland 1990, 268) and they are thus an important and deeply embedded element in most societies, with a powerful influence on behavior. Because they are optional and transient as terms of address, they offer up-to-date insights into social relationships, culture and language, which are particularly relevant in a rapidly changing society such as South Africa's.

Here we document nicknames and their origins, analyze them in terms of a posited classification system and the conditions under which the names are used in order to outline their characteristic properties, explicate the normative rules controlling their use and aid our understanding of the social construction of the naming process.

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Defining Nicknames

English people in South Africa are traditionally assigned an "official" first name whose meaning is generally opaque, since the name is usually selected on the basis of tradition or aesthetics (de Klerk and Bosch 1996). In addition to this first name (e.g., *Nicola*), one or more alternative names or nicknames[1] may evolve at different stages of life (e.g., *Nicky, Nick, Crunch*), allowing some choice as regards how one is addressed. The choice of nickname (*Jon, Jonno, J* or *Stunted*) depends heavily on social relationships and context, and the pragmatic effect of that choice depends on the range of available choices. Many of these nicknames have a high degree of semantic transparency, giving clues about the bearer's appearance (e.g., *Bones*), social role (e.g., *Headgirl*) or a contextual event (e.g., *Slow-mo* [slow motion]).[2]

Unlike the first name which serves a formal identificatory function, nicknames are informal and transitory and may change or die away through disuse or active discouragement; as Phillips (1990, 281) puts it: "Some nicknames may last a lifetime; others may disappear after only one occurrence." This fluidity allows nicknames to reflect a much closer relationship between language, society and culture than personal names can. Also, as Wierzbicka (1992, 374) points out, linguistic categories which are optional are more likely to reveal trends within the ongoing culture than obligatory ones.

The use of nicknames is sociolinguistically complex, as they serve a range of functions over and above the merely referential function fulfilled by the first name. For example, nicknames may reveal insights into social attitudes toward the bearer, either positive and affectionate (*Schnooky, Pookie, Numschkin*) or negative and critical (*Stunted, Bat-breath*), and into the subculture which devises and uses them (Leslie and Skipper 1990; Bosch 1994).

One of the most commonly recognized functions of nicknames is to signal affection or friendship (Landman 1986, 171; Bosch and de Klerk 1994) and these types of nicknames are often coined during childhood within the family context (e.g., *Michelle > Mo*: "when we were younger the three of us used to have fun 'boxing matches'; we had names for ourselves and I was Mighty Mo"). Such nicknames are often expressive derivations of their bearer's first names, formed by adding a diminutive suffix (Wierzbicka 1992, 225). Confirmation of the role played by friendship in nicknaming comes from the restriction on the use of

affectionate diminutives in negative contexts; a comment such as "I really dislike *Dettie*" would be unusual and highly marked. Brown and Ford (1964, 238) report similar intimate usages among American English speakers and Van Buren (1974, 112) identifies the affectionate nickname (e.g., *Jacqueline>Jacks*) as a major category. Wierzbicka (1992, 230-31) argues against Van Buren's (1974, 112) use of a nickname classification system based on full first name (for formal situations), nickname (for informal situations) and affectionate nickname, showing that the choice of using a full first name, an abbreviation or a nickname can be very revealing of the subtle distinctions between indicating mere social acquaintanceship (i.e., less distant than the use of a surname or title), behaving in a neutral way, expressing positive warmth, avoiding childishness or femininity and implying an affectionate in-group closeness or camaraderie.

The use of a nickname in the presence of the bearer is also a powerfully emotive signal of social solidarity, because the license to use a nickname signals a close or intimate relationship with the bearer, positive warmth and easy familiarity. Such names generally emerge in small and intimate subcultures such as families, teams and peer groups, and their usage underlines the strength of friendships and relationships and thereby integrates the members of a community.

Although most uses of nicknames serve a positive emotive function and emphasize ties of solidarity, the use of derogatory nicknames can, ironically, serve the same function. Such pejorative or derogatory nicknames are atypical in that they are not used in the vocative, as terms of address, but rather as terms of reference, (e.g., *Batbreath, Porky Pig*) which, because of their hurtful, scathing nature, are often kept secret from their bearers. These nicknames are restricted to small groups outside the earshot of the namebearer, and their use is also a unifying device showing group membership, indicative of the strong social message conveyed in their use (e.g., "Did you see old Batbreath this morning?").[3]

Nicknames are also indicative of the power relations within a group: in coining a nickname for someone, one is asserting the right to make some sort of "comment" about the other. According to Holland (1990, 262), "nicknames provide a form of ridicule and repressed antagonism which allows one to gain dominance over others in the competition for reputation." Thus nicknames arise as agents of ego-identity and oral

aggression. In accepting (or being unable to prevent) such a label, one is affirming the right of others to bestow the name.

Another subtle function served by nicknames is their role in influencing the perceptions of users: because of the semantic value evident in some nicknames (e.g., *Jewboy, Trash*), certain preconceptions and stereotypes may be (unfairly) reinforced, and expectations may be established which affect our perceptions. Nicknames may also influence the bearer's own self-perceptions and act as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. As Morgan, O'Neill and Harré put it, "a person's name and the various appellations which he (sic) acquires through life are likely to have a considerable influence on the kind of person he takes himself to be" (1979, 7).

The Study

Informants in this study were all scholars in grades 11 and 12 who attended the annual National Schools English Festival held in Grahamstown, South Africa and who chose to attend a lecture on naming practices. At the end of the lecture (which included a discussion of nicknames) the pupils were asked to complete a questionnaire on nicknames and their use. In the first section they provided details about their own first name, the name they were called at home and nicknames (if any), and about who had coined the nicknames, who used them, possible reasons for their existence, and their attitudes towards nicknames. In the second section they gave information about the nicknames of close acquaintances, who used these names, who had coined them, why they had evolved, whether the bearers were aware of their existence and what the intentions were in using such names.

Results

Altogether, 118 mother-tongue English pupils (39 males and 79 females) gave information about their own nicknames. These responses are called here the primary data. Only three males and eight females did not have nicknames. Reports on the nicknames of friends and acquaintances provided the secondary data, in which 105 male and 96 female nicknames were reported. These are all listed in the appendix. Since the majority of these names were reported by females themselves, some of them in single sex schools, there appears to be a significant bias in favor of males having nicknames. Indeed, of all the informants in single-sex

schools, 19 females wrote down the nicknames of males (despite not being at school with any) while only one male wrote down a female nickname. Overall, males offered 50 male examples and eight female examples, while females offered 55 male and 88 female examples, which again suggested that males were more likely than females to have nicknames.

In the primary data, male and female nicknames tended to be used equally frequently (table 1) and used most of the time or often.

Table 1. Frequency of Nickname Usage

	Male		Female	
Frequency	N	%	N	%
Mostly	12	35	25	36
Often	17	50	32	46
Occasionally	04	12	13	19
Rarely	01	03	00	00

Those nicknames which were seldom or almost never used tended to be names which were either strongly disliked by their bearers or about which they had mixed feelings (e.g., *Cheryl, CJ, Gofer* and *Skapie* 'little sheep' for males; *Gigi, Furry, Katrinatjie-Leigh, Lulu, N/A* 'not applicable', *Skipper* and *Slash* [a slang term for urinate] for females).

Far more female nicknames were coined in a family context, while most male names emerged at school among peers, especially team members, who knew the bearer well (table 2).

Male names given by friends frequently showed a humorous topicality and inventiveness (*Bateman* > *Batman; Goldhawk* (surname) > *Platinum Duck*; *Grant* > *Gruntal* ("once I had a cold when we were on camp and every time I laughed I sounded like a little piglet"); *Jonofat* ("when pronounced it sounds like Jona*thin* but when he was younger he was rather chubby and we changed the *thin* to *fat*"). Nicknames given to females by their friends were slightly less daring, though there were some imaginative names (e.g., *Headgirl, Pookie, Bubbles, Rabbit, Specs, Slash, Crunch, Twinkle*). Female names given by friends tended rather to be derivatives of the first name (e.g., *Bron, Nicky, Lulu, Loo, Gill, Nats, Jax, Kay, Jill*) and were frequently affectionate (e.g., *Tinks,*

Gill, Nats, Jax, Kay, Jill) and were frequently affectionate (e.g., *Tinks, Ingipoo, Precious Peach*). The number of two-word names which occurred among the nicknames coined by friends deserves mention, since it shows the essentially playful nature of nickname coinage (e.g., *Killer Kennedy, Big Ears, Big John* for males; *Red Lizard, Buffalo Bev, Miss Lipstick, Milda Molly, Auntie Ashleigh* for females).

Table 2. Nickname Coinage

		Primary				Secondary			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Peers	Friend	28	71	44	56	69	66	64	67
	Team member	01	03	02	03	26	25	14	15
	Opposite sex	00	00	03	04	00	00	00	00
	Antagonist	02	06	00	00	02	02	00	00
Family	Parent	05	13	14	18	02	02	10	11
	Sibling	02	06	05	07	03	03	03	03
	Other	00	00	07	09	01	01	02	02
Elders		00	00	02	03	01	01	02	02

Names coined by parents and family generally were terms of endearment, usually (but not always) derived from the first name (e.g., *CJ, Pete, Tortie* 'tortoise' for males; *Belinda > Bins, Candy Cuddles, Noons, Rehanqa > Ree, Roo, Michy, Choo, Muffy, Mooz* for females). Several of these names are based on childlike experimentations with the first names (*Caroline > Callieliley, Lizzy > Wizzy*). Notable was the fact that some of the names given by siblings were distinctly unflattering (e.g., *Maggot, Skollie* [a low-class layabout]), suggestive of a slight antagonism.

Team-derived names have obvious links to sporting or school activity (e.g., *Go-ball, Slow-mo, Queen, Skipper*), while those given by teachers were typically critical (e.g., *Klaasvakie* 'the Sandman' and *Skapie* 'little sheep').[4] The names given by "enemies" were naturally

unflattering (*Jewboy, Hacksley-Pig*) and heartily disliked by their bearers. (It is, of course, possible, if not probable, that primary informants did not report any of their own disliked nicknames, out of embarrassment or a desire to repress them, although they were assured of anonymity.)

Far more male nicknames were based upon school names which were common knowledge (78% male compared with 60% female in primary data, 44% male compared with 22% female in secondary data), and fewer male names were restricted to small groups (two in the primary data, *Skapie* and *Pots*, and 10 in the secondary data (e.g., *Queenie, Slow-mo, Notre Dame*) (table 3); several of these were reportedly unknown by their bearers. On several occasions names were not liked by their bearers, who indicated that they had little choice; their nicknames were foisted upon them: *Spiorn* (a phonetic distortion of the Afrikaans word for 'spy') admitted to having accepted his nickname through "constant harassment," and *Skitter* 'sparkle' (who hated his name) said he had learned of it by being sent a letter in class, and had been powerless to prevent its use.

There was a slightly greater tendency for female names to remain restricted to selected users (e.g., *Queen, Ingipoo, Gigi, Numschkin, Penny, Katrinatjie-Leigh, Lavinia, Flossie, Tash, Thane of Glamis, Auntie Ashleigh*). In the primary data, only females indicated that their nicknames (all affectionate) had originated in a family context (e.g., *Candy Cuddles, Noons, Pong, Poppa, Mo, Nicky, Ree*), while no males submitted such names. In the secondary data, a few male examples emerged in this category (e.g., *Andy, Mr. Rich Boy, Scrappy, Tortie*).

Of particular note is the high number of female names reported as self-created and propagated by their bearers, revealed in comments such as "my friend and I were looking at the meaning of names and *Jane* means God's gracious gift, so we came up with *Gigi* because of the alliteration;" "she belongs to a group where everyone has a nickname." This underlines the generally positive view that the girls had regarding their nicknames as something rather desirable socially, indicative of belonging, acceptance and warmth, despite the fact that the names themselves may not sound appealing (*Alley-cat, Dragon, Pod*). One pair of close friends reported that they had felt the need for nicknames, and had therefore invented each other's nicknames consciously (*Precious Peach* and *Precious Petunia*), and used them affectionately; two male informants revealed a similar approval of having a nickname; one

informant said that a bearer "talks about his nickname loudly" in order to propagate it.

Table 3. Knowledge of Nicknames

	Primary				Secondary			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Common Knowledge	14	44	27	44	32	34	10	14
School Peers	11	34	10	16	10	11	06	08
Small Group Only	02	06	06	11	10	11	13	18
Family Invention	02	06	10	16	04	04	06	08
Self Propagation	03	10	08	13	37	40	37	51

In general, nicknames are not invented by their bearers, but because they are typically used as direct terms of address, their bearers are aware of their existence. However, in some cases (revealed in the secondary data) the nicknames were kept secret. In table 4 the figures reflecting levels of awareness of nicknames in the secondary data have been placed alongside the analysis of the intended effect in using the nickname, as determined by the questionnaire. By correlating the names reported by informants as unknown by bearers with their views as to the function or purpose of using these nicknames, it became clear that (with only three exceptions out of 65 instances), the names that were secret were sarcastic, critical or unkind in some way, either because they related to physical defects (e.g., *Big Ears, Porky Pig, Sexy Ankles, Wange* 'cheeks' and *Pitsere* 'boils' for males; *Gappy* [referring to teeth], *Rambolina* and *Buffalo Bev* for females) or to other socially undesirable traits (e.g., *Mr. Womble, Pseudo* and *Fat Cat* for males; *Mosquito, Red Lizard, Turncow* and *Butcher* for females).

Gender differences are noteworthy. There are greater efforts among males to be funny (e.g., *Platinum Duck* [surname: *Goldhawk*]; *Agriculture, Daffy Duck, Ginga-Ninja, Zitty* 'pimples' and *Spiorn* for males; *Slapchip* ["she has long skinny arms and legs and looks and acts just like a slap 'floppy' chip"], *Miss Lipstick, Callieliley* and *Auntie Ashleigh* for females) rather than friendly or affectionate. Males also revealed a

proportionately higher incidence of nicknames with negative or hurtful intent (e.g., *Big Ears, Ego, Fatboy, Pitsere* 'boils', *Wange* 'cheeks', *Porky Pig, Pseudo* and *Casper* for males; *Rambolina, Dweeb, Smurf, Gappy, Poopall, Butcher* and *The Butt* for females).

Table 4. Awareness of Nickname/Intended Effect

	Awareness					Intention			
	Male		Female			Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%		N	%	N	%
Yes	84	79	81	84	Fun	19	36	40	25
Maybe	09	10	04	04	Friendly	19	36	99	63
No	11	11	11	12	Sarcastic	11	21	10	06
					Critical	04	07	09	06

Confirmation of the validity of the data came from those instances in which different informants, obviously coming from the same school class, offered the same nicknames as examples, and made the same selections when it came to explaining why they had been coined and why they were used. In this respect, *Red Lizard* appeared four times (all viewed as probably not known to its bearer, and highly critical of her); *Mr. Womble* and *Crab* (male) were offered twice and *Hacksley Pig* and *Buffalo Bev* ("she is rude, mean, strong and big and her hair looks like the horns of a buffalo;" "she's a big rough woman who charges around") three times. This leaves one with little doubt that nickname users are sensitive to the subtle (or not so subtle) effects of their use.

Table 5 shows the bearers' attitudes to their own nicknames in the primary data. Nicknames were generally more positively regarded by female rather than male bearers. Those who expressed positive feelings about their nicknames had a range of reasons. Many approved of the lighthearted friendliness inherent in their use (5%), others said that their nicknames made them feel special or unique (15%) (e.g., *Doring* 'thorn' said his name was "a break from the old routine") and others approved of the affectionate warmth they recognized in their use (31%). It is worth noting that 32% of the females mentioned affection as the reason for the existence of their nicknames and 19% felt special (probably loved and appreciated) because of their nicknames. Males were generally more disapproving, and only 30% of males selected these emotional factors as reasons for approval.

Table 5. Attitude Towards Nickname

	Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%
Liked	15	45	44	63
Not Liked	03	10	05	07
Unsure	15	45	21	30

Those informants who disliked their nicknames gave as reasons the fact that the name was derogatory (4%) (e.g., *Gofer*: "it makes me sound like his slave," *Skitter* 'sparkle', *Mouse, Chops, Shorty, N/A* [not applicable]: "it is rude and embarrassing") or that such names were inappropriate (14%), either because of their age or because of the embarrassment the name caused because it was oversentimental or effeminate (e.g., *Gruntal, Jack, Arachnid* and *Pots* for males; *Noons, Poppa, Headgirl, Numschkin, Lulu* and *Muffy* for females). Others simply expressed a marked preference for their first names (10%) (e.g., *Bjorn* > *Spiorn, Peter* > *Skiet-Piet, Sasha* > *Slash, Samantha* > *Oompa-loompa, Karen* > *Katrienatjie-Leigh*).

Those who were uncertain about whether they liked their names or not either said that they were neutral (13%) (e.g., *Jewboy, Fish, Bongani 1* and *Quincy* for males; *Brittney, Fish, Skipper* and *Shaz* for females), or that it depended on who used the name, and in what context (10%) (e.g., *Stunted, J* [*Justin*], *Goose* and *Kiram* for males; *Queen, Choo, Pong, Furry* and *Michy* for females). Males who were uncertain whether they liked their nickname frequently had derogatory or critical names (e.g., *Jewboy, Goose, Stunted, Dildo* and *Cheryl* [sic]). The same was the case with female names in this category (e.g., *Mouse, Chops, Oompa-Loompa* and *Headgirl*). There were only a few females who did not like the overt affectionate connotations of their nicknames (e.g., *Moo, Gigi, Katrinatjie-Lee, Michy* < Michelle), *Nats* < Natalie), but on the whole the majority of female informants approved of this aspect of their names.

Table 6 shows that nicknames are indeed reserved for use by those who know the bearer well. Teachers use them only occasionally, probably more as a signal of social control or criticism than affection.

Notable is the higher frequency of family use for female nicknames, while male nicknames are more strongly linked to the school context.

Phillips (1990) established two broad categories of nicknames: those derived from internal motivation (linguistic derivations of the first name based on contraction, rhyme or phonetic patterns) and those derived from external motivation (physical, intellectual or behavioral attributes, biographical events or cultural stereotypes linked to the bearer). We divided nicknames into six categories (table 7), the first three relating loosely to external motivation, and the last three to internal motivation.

Table 6. Nickname Users

	Male		Female	
User	N	%	N	%
Family	12	23	44	40
Friends	30	57	57	52
Teacher	09	17	08	07
Other	02	03	01	01

Names based on the physical appearance of the bearer included examples such as *Ghost, Wange* 'cheeks' ("he looks like one of those dogs with long cheeks"), *Zitty, Peewee, Fatboy, Casper* ("he is very pale") and *Monkey* for males; *Mouse, Shorty, Chops, Specs, Bones, Gappy* and *Rosycheeks* for females. Names relating to non-physical personal or cultural characteristics of the bearer were classified together (e.g., *Skapie* 'small sheep', *Arachnid, Pota* [part of the action], *Zinzan* [loves rugby, named after a New Zealander], *Ego, Agriculture* and *Crab* for males; *Tinks, Rabbit, Headgirl, Butcher, Dragon, Piggy, Poopall* and *Chicken* for females).

Some nicknames (e.g., *Quincy, Notre Dame, Andy Pandy, Pookie, Liewe Heksie, Mary Poppins, Klaasvakie, Thane of Glamis*) evoked well-known literary or South African TV characters resembled by the bearer (e.g., *Oompa Loompa*: "I am short and like chocolate like Oompa Loompa in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"), or were linked to a specific contextual event (e.g., *Kiram* ("I toured Turkey and Kiram is a common Turkish name so my friends called me this on my return"), *Bongani 1* ("I have an identical twin brother"), *Yogi* ("at the breakfast table with friends I pronounced the word *yoghurt* weirdly and they teased me").

Table 7. Reasons for Nickname Coinage

	Primary				Secondary			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
Reason	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical	01	03	07	10	36	29	14	13
Personal	07	19	07	10	37	30	34	31
Contextual	11	31	18	24	17	14	08	07
Abbreviation	04	11	12	16	01	01	08	07
Linguistic	13	36	24	32	26	21	33	30
Affection	00	00	06	08	06	05	14	13

Names which were obvious abbreviations of the first name (e.g., *Dave, Pete, Gill, Lee* < *Lisa*, *Nic* < *Nicola*, *Mich* < *Michelle*) or surname (*Penny Bull* < *Bullmore*) were grouped together, while those which involved a more extensive phonological shift either of the first name (e.g., *Bjorn* > *Spiorn, Justin* > *Juzz, Richard* > *Mr. Rich Boy, Finad* > *Adi, Kenric* > *Keno-B, Caroline* > *Callieliley, Ingrid* > *Pingrid, Belinda* > *Bins, Amanda* > *Moo, Fiona* > *Fish, Laura* > *Loo, Melinda* > *Mills*) or the surname (e.g., *Bateman* > *Batman, Goussard* > *Goose*) were grouped into a category of their own. Names whose bearers said were affectionate[5] formed another group (e.g., *Dean-my-boy, Pookie, Toets* and Tortie for males; *Peepa, Pookie, Shnooky, Noons, Numschkin, Chicken* and *Precious Peach* for females).[6]

Conclusions

Nicknames can be regarded as indicators of social organization and one aspect which emerged from this research is the number of Afrikaans nicknames for these English adolescents: nine names in the primary data and 12 in the secondary data were Afrikaans-based.[7] In view of its status until recently as one of the only two official languages (English and Afrikaans) in South Africa,[8] and the fact that all these informants had to study Afrikaans throughout their schooling, some use of Afrikaans is to be expected, but what is more interesting is that many of these names are reported as being slightly derogatory or having a negative rather than a positive intent (e.g., *Skitter* [given by an enemy], *Pitsere* 'boils'

and *Wange* 'cheeks' for males; *Klaasvakie, Katrinatjieleigh, Liewe Heksie* and *Half-a-Eeu* (sic) 'half a century' for females).[9] One male informant made a particularly interesting comment in this regard, when commenting on why he did *not* like the shortening of his name from *Peter* to *Pete*: "I hate *Piet* and *Peet* (both Afrikaans names) and *Pete* sounds too similar." Interlinguistic contact was also evident in the nickname of *Sikhulele*, whose nickname was *Kenny Schoeman*. As he explained, "my schoolfriends couldn't pronounce my first name properly, so they called me *Skhu*, which sounded like the beginning of Schoeman, and there was a guy at school before called Kenny Schoeman."

These English adolescents have a very sensitive understanding and acute comprehension of the complex social relationships underlying the choice and use of nicknames. "We recognize the naming actions of others and know what we see to be actions and not behaviors in every calculable sense" (Leslie and Skipper 1990, 276). In much the same way as the use of slang confirms that one belongs to a group, having and using nicknames also serve as badges of membership to subcultures. Many of the informants in this study approve of their own nicknames and the fact that several of these adolescents actually invented and propagated their own nicknames, driven by an unspoken need to have one, is particularly relevant in this regard.

Nicknames signal high levels of social interaction, and proliferation of nicknames appears to be directly correlated with level of social interest: the more interest generated in a particular individual (either positive and affectionate or negative and hostile) the greater the likelihood of proliferation of terms of address: "beyond the single proper name, however, where interest is still greater the individual is fragmented into a variety of names. Perhaps this differentiation beyond individuality expresses various manifestations of ways of regarding someone who is close" (Brown and Ford 1964, 238, cited in Wierzbicka 1992, 306). Thus it is not surprising that this study has revealed a high incidence of nicknames among these adolescents in a school context with its high levels of interaction.

It is clear that the value of a name depends closely on what other forms the name competes with (e.g., *Samantha, Sam, Sammy, Squirrel*), and fairly well defined categories have emerged from the analysis of the reasons for nicknames; those with an affectionate function have

markedly recognizable characteristics, in conformity with the categories mentioned by Wierzbicka (1992).

The study also reveals clear conventions with regard to the users of nicknames: certain nicknames are very clearly restricted to selected people—affectionate nicknames being reserved only for intimate family and/or friends, and critical and derogatory nicknames only used in small groups, who confirm their own bonds by using the nickname in the absence of the bearer.

"Those parts of the language...which are related to the relationship between the speakers and the addressees are...among those most likely to reflect the living, ongoing culture" (Wierzbicka 1992, 375), and this report has provided a glimpse into the dynamics of one particular subculture of English-speaking adolescents. As schools become more integrated racially, and multilingualism is entrenched in South Africa, it will be necessary to use nicknaming data as a sort of human mirror reflecting the intersection of individual lives and community experience (Holland 1990, 268).

Appendix

Primary Data: Males

Nickname	Given Name	Nickname	Given Name
Adi	Faud	Jack	Jacque
Aids	Adrian	Jewboy	Jared
Arachnid	Sean	Jo	Jonathan
Batman	Edward	Keno B	Kenric
Bongani 1	Michael	Kiram	Sven
CJ	Murray	Mitch	Nicholas
Cheryl	Bevan	Pete	Peter
Dave	David	Pots	Sean
Dildo	Dylan	Quincy	Quinton
Doring	Dale	Skapie	Pierre
Fish	Marcus	Skiet-Piet	Peter
Ghost	George	Skitter	Andrew
Go Ball	Neville	Spion	Bjorn
Gofer	Harry	Stunted	Dylan
Goose	Richard	Xixo	Mvuyisi
Gruntal	Grant	Zinzan	Stephen
J	Justin		

Primary Data: Females

Nickname	Given Name	Nickname	Given Name
Bins	Belinda	Mills	Melinda
Bobby	Claire	Mo	Michelle
Britney	Bronwen	Moo	Amanda
Bron	Bronia	Mouse	Karen
Bubbles	Sheri	Mouse	Katherine
Candy Cuddles	Candice	Muffy	Tamsyn
Cat	Catherine	N/A	Natalie
Chicken	Melanie	Nats	Nathalie
Choo	Sarah	Nic	Nicola
Chops	Raquel	Nicky	Nicole
Col	Colleen	Nikki	Carmen
Crunch	Nicolette	Ningy	Nicola
Diens	Katherine	Noons	Dee-Ann
Fish	Fiona	Numschkin	Karina
Furry	Jennifer	Oompa Loompa	Samantha
Gigi	Jane	Penny	Tamara
Gill	Gillian	Pong	Ingrid
Gill	Gillian	Pookie	Aldene
Headgirl	Juliet	Poppa	Janice
Ingipoo	Ingrid	Precious Peach	Taryn
Jan	Janet	Precious Petunia	Yvonne
Jane	Janet	Queen	Adele
Jax	Jacquelin	Rabbit	Jolene
Jill	Jillian	Ree	Rehanqa
Julie	Juliet	Roo	Mairead
Katrinatjie-Leigh	Katherine	Rosy Cheeks	Vicki
Kay	Karen	Shaz	Sharon
Miss Muffet	Karen	Shortie	Monique
Klassvakie	Melissa	Skapie	Ceiwen
Lee	Lisa	Skipper	Ruth
Lou-Lou	Louise	Specs	Rebecca
Lulu	Leeat	Tinks	Claire
Maggot	Caroline	Trini	Caitriona
Mary-Lou	Tracy	Twinkle	Wendy
Michy	Michelle	Yogi	Emma

Secondary Data: Male

Agriculture	Dot	Krusty	Scrappy
Andy	Dude	Marasmus	Sexy Ankles
Andy Pandy	Dweeb	Monkey	Shave
Ant	Ego	Mr. Rich Boy	Shorebreak

Archie	Fat Boy	Mr. Womble	Shukkles
Baby	Fat Cat	Mutt	Slow Mo
Baldy	Fatman	Nerd	Smurf
Barries	Go	Notre Dame	Snort
Beany	Gogo	Oupoot 'old foot'	Speed
Been 'leg'	Greg Fockers	Pee Wee	Spiorn
Berksie	Grenade	Pitsere 'boils'	Sprakken
Big Ears	Groody Cheese	Plakkie 'sticker'	Stevie
Big John	Gungungun	Platinum Duck	Stewpot
Bill	H2S	Pookie	Swayn
Bump	Hacksley Pig	Porky Pig	The Ackies
Casper	Handbrake	Pota	Tim
CC	Howie	Pseudo	Toets
Craft	Hunnybunch	Queenie	Tortie
Cheese	Illsbat	Red Lizard	Wallaby
Crusty	Jonofat	Roach	Wange
Crusty the Clown	Jussie Boy	Roo	Zitty
Daffy Duck	Juzz	Rusty	Zoro
Deam-My-Boy	Kenno	Schmoey	Zorro
Doc	Killer Kennedy	Schoeman	

Secondary Data: Females

Alf	G	Mooz	Roche
Alley Cat	Gappy	Mosquito	Rokes
Auntie Ashleigh	Ger	Mrs. V	Shaz
Basti	Ginga Ninja	Mushroom	Shnooky
Batbreath	Half-a-Eeu	Nade	Shorty
Bobby	Helly	Nerd	Skollie
Bokkie	Ingepoo	Nicki	Smelly
Bones	Jax	Nisipoo	Smurf
Brittney	Jec	Noel	Snoekies
Bron	Kal	Nooh	Sput
Buffalo Bev	Katman	Olat	Sues
Bugs	Kellogs	Peepa	Ta
Bull	Kimbies	Piggy	Tash
Butcher	Lavinia	Pingrid	Thane of Glamis
Callieliley	Liewe Heksie	Pod	The Butt
Chock	Liz	Pookie	Tiger
Crab	Mandz	Poopall	Trash
Dels	Mary Poppins	Precious	Turncow
Dragon	Mich	Precious Peach	Tweety
Ears	Milda Molly	Precious Petunia	Twist

Em	Miss	Rambolina	Willy
Fem	Miss Lipstick	Razi	Wizzy
Fishpaste	Missy	Rhodi	Yako
Flossie			

Notes

1. The English term "nickname" is derived from Old English *eacan*, meaning 'also' (Middle English *eken* > *ekename* > *nekename*), relating to its role as an additional name evolving subsequent to the assigning of the first name.

2. All examples are taken from the data collected in this study.

3. Some apparently derogatory names are not used with any negative intent and are indeed interpreted as terms of endearment and friendship by both bearer and user, e.g., *Fatman* and *Alley-cat*, showing how important it is for researchers to look beyond the superficial meaning to the attitudes of the bearer and users.

4. It is interesting to note that these names are all Afrikaans; the use of another language to tease or to criticize recurs in these data.

5. No males' names were reported in this category in the primary data; the examples given are drawn from the secondary data only.

6. In some cases names were classified into more than one category; for example, an abbreviated name could also be affectionate.

7. Only two male names had an African flavor: *Bongani 1* and *Xixo*.

8. In 1995 the new constitution declared eleven official languages for South Africa.

9. *Klaasvakie* 'the Sandman', in its more negative interpretation, implies sleepiness and slowness. It may be cute for a small child, but not so cute for a male teenager. *Katrinatjieleigh* contains a double diminutive (*tjie* and *leigh*), which has a slightly ridiculous effect, especially in adolescence. *Liewe Heksie* is a character on a television program; *heks* is 'witch'; thus the negative connotations. *Half-a-Eeu* 'half a century' implies that the person is exceedingly slow.

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