

# Women Who Fight

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Although only recently legalized in many countries, women's boxing is gaining increasing worldwide popularity. However, participation of women in this hypermasculinized sport is inconsistent with long-standing cultural expectations of femininity. This survey catalogs the nicknames given to women boxers, obtained from two online data bases (Women's Boxing Archive Network; Boxing Encyclopedia) and contends that many of these nicknames are intended to reassure the boxing audience, and often the boxers themselves, that despite their aggressiveness, these women are still inherently female.

KEYWORDS Nicknames, Boxing, Women, Femininity, Masculinity, Gender

Boxing, the 'manly art of self defense,' is a quintessential male sport that rewards aggressiveness and competitiveness (Messner, 1992). Despite its hypermasculinized ideology, professional women's boxing has become increasingly popular<sup>1</sup> and was the subject of a 2004 Oscar-winning movie, *Million Dollar Baby*, the story of Maggie Fitzgerald, an aspiring female boxer who becomes a contender for the World Boxing Association women's welterweight championship. Nevertheless, the sight of two women flailing at one another remains incompatible with traditional expectations of docile femininity (Lafferty and McKay 2004; Matteo 1986). This attitude is epitomized in *Million Dollar Baby* when trainer Frankie Dunn tells the 31-year-old Maggie,

"I don't train girls." When he finally relents, he tells her "If I take you on, you don't say anything. You don't question me. You don't ask why. You don't say a thing except maybe, 'Yes Frankie.' And I'm going to try to forget the fact that you're a girl."

While nicknames are common in all sports (Pruyne, 2002), boxing is especially prone to nicknaming, and as such women boxers are more likely to have public nicknames than are female athletes in other sports.<sup>2</sup> The term "nickname" comes from the Old English *eke name*, from the verb *ecan*, meaning to add or augment (Morgan, O'Neill, and Harré, 1979). Unlike first names, nicknames tell something about a how a person is perceived by others (Abel, 2004; Holland, 1990; Lawson, 1973; Leslie and Skipper, 1990; Morgan *et al.*, 1980). "Public" nicknames are

documented names that appear in the media (Leslie and Skipper, 1990) and their semantic implications are widely understood, else they would be meaningless to the public (Abel, 2004).

In addition to documenting the nicknames of current professional women boxers, one of the aims of the present study is to determine the extent to which those nicknames contain direct or indirect female-gendered allusions. In general, when women participate in contact sports long considered male, some degree of gender-role conflict is experienced on the part of the public and by women athletes themselves (Festle, 1996; Lafferty and McKay, 2004). One way this conflict is partially resolved semantically through the words used to describe male and female athletes. For example, male athletes are typically referred to as “men” or “young men,” whereas female athletes are called “girls” or “young ladies” (Bernstein, 2002). Depending on the sport, female athletes are also more than four times as likely to be referred to by their first name in the media compared to male athletes (Bernstein, 2002). The female counterpart of “men” and “young men” is “women” and “young women.” By calling female athletes “girls” and “ladies” there is a subtle implication that these athletes are not only female, but also less grown up or less competitive. Referring to athletes by their first names also implies a familiarity that one attaches to children rather than adults.

In this article, I argue that a second way this gender-role conflict is resolved semantically is through the nicknames as well as the words used to describe female athletes. In the same way that gender-related rhetoric is used to emphasize an athlete is female, I hypothesize that a relatively high percentage of women boxers will have “public” nicknames that call attention to, if not emphasize the boxer’s femininity; at the very least, many of these names leave no doubt about the boxer’s gender.

## **Methods**

### ***Sample***

Nicknames were obtained from the Women’s Boxing Archive Network (WBAN) ([www.womenboxing.com](http://www.womenboxing.com); retrieved 11/7/2007) and the Boxing Encyclopedia retrieved 1/8/2007 from ([www.boxrec.com/namesearch.php](http://www.boxrec.com/namesearch.php)).

### ***Criterion for inclusion***

The criterion for inclusion/exclusion was based on the definition of a nickname as an “eke” name, that is, an additional name given to an individual that is not derived from a person’s given name; diminutives and derivatives are not included (Leslie and Skipper, 1990; Morgan *et al.*, 1979). For example, Sue used in place of Susan is a diminutive and Smitty used in place of Smith is a derivative; neither are considered nicknames. Bambi, Sunshine, and Wild Child, on the other hand, are examples of nicknames.

### ***Categories***

Nicknames were placed in one of five main categories: Biographical, Combativeness, Femininity, Miscellaneous, and Indeterminate. Nicknames in the first three main categories were further subdivided into more specific descriptive subcategories. The

Miscellaneous category contains nicknames that could not be placed in one of the other three main categories. The Indeterminate category contains nicknames for which a meaning could not be discovered.

Categorizing nicknames is somewhat arbitrary since many nicknames could be included in several categories (Abel, 2004). For example, Vonda Ward's nickname, "All American Girl," was placed in the Female category, whereas Jenifer Alcom's nickname, "All American" was placed in the Biographical category. The rationale for this assignment was that when "All American" is combined with and precedes "Girl," its main purpose would seem to be as a modifier. Consciously or unconsciously, in identifying Ward as an "All American Girl" instead of the gender neutral "All American" specifically conveys her gender identity and hence her inclusion in the genderized subcategory.

Since one of the main categories was Femininity, all Spanish nicknames that are feminized by virtue of their prefixes ("La") could have been placed in this category. However, despite their female determinate, these nicknames tend to be female only because of language constraints and are fundamentally gender neutral in meaning. For example, two female boxers, Paola Rojas and Mellissa Florentino, are nicknamed "The Fury." However, Rojas' nickname "La Furiosa" is Spanish, whereas Florentino's "The Fury" is English. While the feminized Spanish form of the name could imply Rojas is less furious, because the name is primarily a function of grammatical rules, no such inference regarding it and similar Spanish nicknames was made in the present study. On the other hand, Spanish nicknames ending in "-ita" such as La Cubanita were placed in the Feminine category because in Spanish this suffix denotes not only smaller stature, but is also used as a term of endearment.

The Biographical category, with exceptions such as the previously mentioned "All American Girl," contains Place nicknames that indicate a boxer's nationality or the city she comes from or where she currently lives, her Ethnicity/Race, and Past/Current professions. The number of names in this category would have been slightly higher if no attention had been given to other parts of the name that reflect gender as in the previously mentioned "All American Girl" or, as previously mentioned, Spanish suffixes such as "-ita." Nicknames like "La Japonesa" and "La Guera" were placed in the Ethnicity/Race subcategory because they do not indicate anything about the fighter beyond what is conveyed by her ethnicity/race nickname.

The Combativeness category contains names reflecting a boxer's prowess. These names were divided into subcategories that describe the boxer's general performance/demeanor, skill and hitting power. Nearly all the names in this category are gender neutral. Noteworthy exceptions include fighters whose names were prefixed "Lil" or "Little." These prefixes imply that these fighters are physically small. Since other fighters who are even shorter are not similarly called "Lil" (e.g. "Little Thunder" Maribel Zurita is 5 ft tall whereas "Nubian Tiger" Dawn Parker is 4 ft 11 in.), the subtext of that prefix implies childishness (Wierzbicka, 1992) and such nicknames were placed in the main Femininity category and in the Infantilizing subcategory.

The Femininity category contains nicknames that directly or indirectly call attention to the boxer as a woman. Based on Lafferty and McKay's (2004) study of female boxers, this category was divided into subcategories of General Appearance, Sexuality, Feline, Nobility (feminized nobility titles), Infantilize, Flowers, and Parentage.

The subcategory of Sexuality includes nicknames such as: “Gorgeous,” “Lovely,” and “Hottie.” These names need no explanation. A male boxer would never be nicknamed “lovely” (although several male wrestlers had the “gorgeous” moniker). The Female Nobility subcategory includes nicknames with “Lady” and “Queen” by themselves or combined with another descriptor, such as “Lady Tiger.” These nicknames reinforce the traditional image of women as refined and somewhat restrained: these “Lady Tigresses” are not as ferocious as boxers who are just “Tigresses.” The Feline subcategory was placed in the Femininity main category based on the association of these lithe and sinuous animals with women (Abel and Kruger, 2007) and their symbolic female sexuality (Dale-Green, 1963). Nicknames describing a female boxer as a “tigress” imply ferocity but they also imply an archetypal sensuality.

The Parentage/Family subcategory identifies boxers in terms of their more famous fathers or brothers. Such nicknames may raise their profile by allowing fans to relive fights involving those more famous boxers (Juipe, 2000), but identifying them in this way implies that these fighters are not skillful enough to be identified on their own. For example “Little Miss Hands of Stone,” is the daughter of boxer Roberto Duran whose nickname is “Hands of Stone.” Irichelle Duran’s nickname was bestowed because of her father and not her fighting ability, although she may in fact be a power hitter. Adding the qualifier “Little” also indicates she is not as formidable as her father.

## Results

The total number of boxers in this survey was 408. The percentage of names in each of the categories is shown in the Appendix. In calculating percentages, the Indeterminate category (N=19) was omitted since these names might warrant inclusion in any of the other categories if their meaning were known.

### *Biographical (11 percent)*

Nicknames in this category are referential. In many instances these are compound names and several that appear in other categories could have been placed in this category.

**Place Names.** Place names for boxers refer to the country, state, area of the country, or city/town where they live or come from. Some of these locales are not clearly evident from their nicknames. Jane Couch, “The Fleetwood Assassin,” got her name from her hometown Fleetwood in the United Kingdom. Sarah “The Thrilla from Manilla” Goodson was born in the Philippines. Anna Maria Torres, “The Warrior of Neza,” is from Neza, Mexico. Nicknames for several boxers that were placed in other categories could also have been included in this category. For example, Helga “Snowcat” Risoy, who is from snowy Norway, could have been placed in this subcategory but was instead placed in the Femininity category because of her feline referent. Sumya “Island Girl” Anani, who was given the “Island” part of her moniker because she lived in Jamaica before becoming a professional boxer, was also placed in the Femininity category because of her gender identification. Boxers whose place names ended in “ita” were also placed in the Femininity category because as previously noted, this Spanish suffix reflects endearment.

**Ethnicity/Race.** Racial and ethnic nicknames were once common in male boxing and were meant to create an identity with the fighter on the part of the audience, either positive or negative depending on whether the fighter and the audience member came from the same background. Although many male boxers used to have nicknames reflecting race (such as former champion Joe “The Brown Bomber” Louis) and many contemporary female boxers are African-American, relatively few have nicknames referring to skin color, e.g., Black Diamond, Brown Sugar. Rita Figueroa’s nickname “La Guera” with one “r,” reverses the general tendency not to identify a boxer’s minority background. Her name translates into “white girl.”

While there used to be many male boxers with readily identifiable ethnically Jewish nicknames, e.g. Abe “The Little Hebrew” Attell, there are few such male fighters today (a notable exception is Dmitry “The Star of David” Salita). The only female boxer with a nickname referring to religion is Jill Matthew’s nickname, The Zion Lion. Ijeoma Egbunine’s nickname, “The Praise” has a religious connection only in the sense that it reflects her belief that boxing is a religious calling for her. (Her name appears in the Miscellaneous category.)

**Past/Current Professions.** Very few female boxers are able to earn enough to be full-time boxers. In many instances, their nicknames refer to their past or current professions. Although Cristy Nickel’s nickname, “Code Red,” was placed in the Femininity category because the “Red” part of name refers to her hair color, the “Code” part originated from her background as a nurse (Nickel, pers. comm.). (“Code” in the medical field, signifies danger, or in the case of “no code” means do not resuscitate.) Kathy William’s nickname, “Shake ’em Down,” alludes to her being a police woman. The Fighting Marine and G.I. Judy nicknames refer to past military service.

**Internal Nicknames.** These nicknames are primarily based on word play, especially rhyme, involving the fighter’s name, e.g. Mean — Snodene Blakeney. The lengths to which this can be carried occurs in the rhyming of “Vil” in Melissa St. Vil and her nickname “Guard Your Grill.” Blair Robinson’s nickname, “Sugar,” derives from the similarity of her last name to Sugar Ray Robinson.

### ***Combativeness (45 percent)***

In the violent sport of boxing, nicknames that carry an implication of violence are a symbolic threat to opponents: they are oral intimidations. A boxing friend of Chantel Cardova’s said he was concerned that people hearing that her nickname was “Gorgeous Babe” rather than some threatening moniker would not take her seriously (Keegan, 2007).

Most of the nicknames for women boxers do in fact express some idea of combativeness and as such could and do apply equally to male boxers. These nicknames are listed in the Appendix and only a few are discussed here.

Among the various subcategories in this section, Attitude/Demeanor accounts for a relatively large percentage of names. Stephanie “All Action” Dobbs, also known as “Spitfire,” refers to her relentlessly aggressive action in the fight ring, as do the nicknames “All Biz” and “Fireball.” Lisa “Bad News” Brown earned her nickname by defeating boxers in their hometown, bringing them “bad news.” “The Fury” and “Fierce” also convey unrelenting rapid fire punching, as do “The Hammer,” and

“Locomotora” (Locomotive). Boxers described as “Bone Crusher,” “Crusher,” “La Demoladora” (“demolisher”), Destroyer, “Killer,” “The Predator,” “The Punisher,” and “The Terminator” convey lethality in the ring. Hitting Power is implied by nicknames describing the fighter and especially her hands as being made of stone or steel. Hitting power is also suggested by calling a boxer “The Hammer.” Jeanne LaMar’s nickname “The Countess” would seemingly qualify for inclusion in the Femininity Nobility category, except in her case, the “countess” refers to her knocking out her opponent (count of ten).

Nicknames like “Chapita” (“crazy”), “La Loca” (“crazy woman”), “The Rage,” and “Ragin” imply the fighter is out of control and therefore especially dangerous. Nicknames referring to explosives e.g. TNT, Dynamite, convey total destruction. The weather is a popular metaphor for nicknames. Hurricane implies mindless destruction. Lighting could refer to the weather or speed. A few boxers are “Amazons” or warriors. “Road warriors” are those that travel a lot to fight in various cities. Female boxers who are given or who adopt the nickname of a famous male boxer are expected to be as skilled or powerful. The most popular of these associations is with Ray Mancini’s “Boom Boom”. Corlette Ewell’s “The Truth” nickname is her adoption of Carl Williams’ nickname, her favorite male boxer. Feline nicknames are very common but have been included in the next category. Other animal-related nicknames are also common, reflecting the idea that a boxer has similar characteristics. The 220 lb heavyweight Michele Cooley is known as “Pitbull” because of her size, stalking style, and ability to take a punch on her chin. The “butterfly” in Trina Ortegón’s nickname, “Iron Butterfly,” does not refer to her fighting style but rather the name of her favorite 1960’s band by that name.

### ***Femininity (45 percent)***

Most of the nicknames given to sports personalities are created by men (Allen, 1983) and the overwhelming majority of spectators in boxing is also male (American Demographics, 2001). Male discomfort with seeing women acting like men may be one reason that such a relatively large percentage of the nicknames given to women boxers identifies them as women, especially heterosexual women (Klein, 1988). The extent to which this occurs is examined in this “Female” category. The subcategories in this section are derived from Lafferty and McKay’s (2004) study of women boxers.

1. **General Appearance.** A relatively large percentage of women boxers’ nicknames allude to their attractiveness. Mia St John’s nickname “The Knockout” is a double entendre. While “knockout” is an appropriate name for a boxer, St John is not known as a power hitter. Instead her name refers to the other meaning of the name as a woman who is physically attractive, as indicated by her appearance on the November 1999 cover of *Playboy* and in its centerfold.

MaryAnn Almager is “Gorgeous,” as is Chantel Cordova, but there is an additional sense of sexuality in calling Almager “Gorgeous Babe.” Linda Robinson is “Lovely.” These kinds of descriptive nicknames are not common among male boxers. One would be hard pressed to find a male athlete named “lovely,” although several professional wrestlers have been nicknamed “Gorgeous” (Lentz, 2003).

Pauline O’Hello and Elizabeth Vollarreal are both nicknamed “Pearl.” Pearl is a quintessentially female name (the male rock band “Pearl Jam” is named after the

band leader's great-grandmother Pearl). In women's boxing it derives its metaphoric allusion from its conversion, through an oyster's pain (the boxer's training) from a tiny grain of sand to a glistening gem. Hair color is a common source of nicknaming (Abel, 2004; Lewis, 1970). Eight of the boxers had nicknames based on their hair color.

**2. Sexuality.** "Hot," "Foxy," and "Sugar" are common descriptions with sexual connotations. Holly Holm is a "Hottie." Holly Dunaway is "Hot Stuff," and Amanda McMillan is "Hot Like Me." "The Vixen," Linda Guedalia, is a female fox. Blaire Robinson's "Sugar" moniker was placed in the "Internal" category because it pays homage to the more famous male boxer "Sugar" Ray Robinson.

**Female Nobility.** This category contains nicknames that are distinctly feminine. Most of the nicknames in this group combine honorifics like "Lady," "Princess," or "Queen."

**Feline Nicknames.** Although male boxers have been given nicknames identifying them as a "Tiger" (e.g. Jack Fox) or "Lion" (e.g. Lennox Lewis), the traditional association of cats with women (Abel and Kruger, 2007; Dale-Green, 1963) lends some extra sense of femininity to these nicknames. Most female boxers with cat nicknames are "Tigresses." Next in popularity is the panther. There is also one "Lioness." Combining a female nobility title with a feline signifier, e.g. "Lady Tiger," enforces the femininity of the nickname. I am unaware of any male boxers whose feline nicknames are modified by being called "Lord" or "Prince."

**Infantalizing.** Nicknames like "Girl," "Baby," "Doll," and "Little" are endearing, and imply that these boxers have not as yet attained the adulthood conveyed by a nickname like Daria Hill McGee's "D'Hit Woman" (see "Combativeness"). Like Maggie Fitzgerald in *Million Dollar Baby*, many women boxers are in their thirties, and, as in the movie, are called "girls", which is inappropriate. Wendy LaMotta's nickname, "La Coquita" ("The Chick") is a double entendre, reflecting both her membership in Newark, New Jersey's El Coqui Boxing Club, and also her femininity. Since only those from Newark would likely be aware of the first meaning, the second was used to categorize her nickname. While there are some boxers whose nicknames contain the "Baby" moniker, such as "Baby Face" Julio Cesar García, and Jacob "Baby" Matlata, these male boxers did not get their names because of their feminine appearance. García got his moniker from his turning pro five days after his fifteenth birthday, while South African flyweight (108–112 lb) Matlata, was the smallest champion (4 ft 10 in.) in boxing history. A male fighter can be called "Pretty Boy," but there is always the implication of homosexuality in names that allude to female attractiveness in a male (Klein, 1988).

**Parentage/Family.** This category identifies boxers in terms of their fathers or brothers. For example, Christy Martin's nickname, "Coal Miner's Daughter," refers to her father's coal mining profession in West Virginia. Included in this group are Maria "Daughter of Thor" Johansson, whose heavyweight champion father Ingemar Johansson was known as "The Hammer of Thor." Laila "She Bee Stingin'" Ali is the daughter of Mohammed Ali, who described his boxing style as "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee." Jackie "Sister Smoke" Frazier is the daughter of "Smoking" Joe Frazier. Irichelle Durán is the daughter of Roberto "Hands of Stone" Durán. "Big" Freeda Foreman is the daughter of former heavyweight champion "Big" George

Foreman. J'marie "Lady Mongoose" Moore is the daughter of Archie "Old Mongoose" Moore. Kalisha "Wild" West took her name from her boxing father's moniker, "Wild West." Melissa "Honey Girl" Del Valle is the sister of light heavyweight champion Lou Del Valle whose nickname is "Honey Boy." The "honey" component of his nickname was given to him because of his skill at slipping punches. Melissa has a double connection with "honey" since Melissa means "honey bee." A less well-known family tie is Ana Fernández's nickname "La Polla," a feminized tribute to her brother-in-law, Carlos Barreto, "El Gallo" (The Cockerel). Marnelle Verano is "Shark 2" because her brother Phillippe Verano is the original "Shark." These nicknames may raise the boxer's profile, but they have a subtext that says these women are not really competitive (Juipe, 2000).

### ***Miscellaneous (2 percent)***<sup>3</sup>

Nicknames in this section did not appear to fall into any of the main categories. Suszanana Warner's nickname "Destiny" was given to her because of her rapid success which seemed to indicate her boxing career was foreordained (Williams, 2007b). Nikki Eplion's nickname "No Slack" comes from the nickname of her deceased brother's Infantry regiment in Vietnam ([www.wban.org/biog/nepliion.html](http://www.wban.org/biog/nepliion.html)). Corinne Van Ryck de Groot's nickname "Goose" is derived from her fondness during childhood for Mother Goose stories. Valerie Mahfood's nickname "The Wolf" is also a carryover from childhood. In Mahfood's case, a boy living with her family thought she was mean and started calling her "the big bad wolf." When Mahfood started boxing she chose "wolf" as her fighting nickname. Jamie Johnson's nickname "Rocky" comes from her enjoyment of the "Rocky" movies.

### ***Indeterminate***

English translations for nicknames in this category could not be found or could not be interpreted.

## **Discussion**

Sports considered appropriately feminine tend to be noncontact, and conform to stereotypic expectations of non-violence and grace (e.g., figure skating, gymnastics, synchronized swimming, tennis) whereas contact sports like football, ice hockey, and soccer, which involve bodily contact, speed, power, and violence are preeminently masculine (Cahn, 1994; Koivula, 1999; Matteo, 1986). Women who participate in such contact sports are subject to different rules. In ice hockey, for instance, women are not permitted to intentionally body check, a common occurrence in men's hockey (Theberge, 1998).

Women's boxing, on the other hand, does not impose any gender-related restrictions, which means that in boxing women are able to cross cultural boundaries that would otherwise prohibit them from being physically aggressive. This may be one of the reasons educated women and women from affluent social backgrounds, e.g., doctors, nurses, writers, scientists, as well as women from working-class backgrounds, are appearing in the boxing ring (Hargreaves, 1997) and "boxerobics" has become increasingly popular (Hargreaves, 1997).



However, male audiences — which make up the majority of spectators in boxing (American Demographics, 2001) — may nevertheless feel uncomfortable watching women violating the chivalric code to “never hit a woman,” even if another woman is breaking this cultural sanction.

One way of dealing with such gender rule-breaking is to assume that these women are lesbian (Messner, 2002). Another is to assert the athlete’s femininity so as to dilute the violence. In other sports, female athletes faced with similar gender role conflict make a special effort to demonstrate their femininity through dress, demeanor, and non-sporting interests (Cahn, 1994). Tennis pro Chris Evert wore traditional feminine dresses, hair ribbons, nail polish, and make-up, while competing: “I carried it to the hilt. I made sure my earrings and make up were always perfect” (Bodo, 1985). Cathy Davis, former women’s lightweight boxing champion, was described by a *Washington Post* reporter as having “large dark eyes, long brown hair falling below her shoulders, and a slender figure,” which he added, “certainly [made her] more attractive than the average boxer — male or female” (Feinstein, 1978). When *Playboy Magazine* (1984) wrote an article on boxer Graciela Cassilas, it made special mention of her clothes-designing skills.

Women boxers are especially sensitive to being labeled lesbian (Festle, 1996) and during interviews are often outspoken about their femininity. “Just because I step into the ring,” Cassilas said, “doesn’t mean I lose my femininity.” Similarly, Shirley “Zebra Girl” Tucker<sup>4</sup> felt the need to defend her femininity adamantly to reporters. “Just because a woman becomes a boxer it doesn’t mean she’s a homosexual. I’m no more a homosexual than my mother and she had 13 children” (WBAN, 2007).

Not counting the “Indeterminate” nicknames, 45 percent of the nicknames in the Appendix identified the boxer as a woman. While there was an acknowledged arbitrariness in assigning names to categories, the fact that such a high percentage of these names contain direct or indirect gendered allusions supports the conjecture that many of these names were coined to diffuse the psychological discomfort associated with seeing women acting like men in this hypermasculinized context. By reassuring the public that these boxers are, in fact, women, these nicknames lessen the ambiguities associated with violating the traditional muscle gap (Kane, 1995).

Excluding Indeterminate nicknames, Combativeness nicknames such as “Assassin,” “Hurricane,” “Terminator,” etc. constituted 45 percent of the total nicknames, the same percentage as nicknames in the Female category. Most of these combative nicknames could be male as well as female. However, some like “Punchenella” are clearly feminine. Nicknames beginning with “La” are also clearly feminine, but, as mentioned above, were not included in the Femininity category so as not to overly inflate that category by a linguistic artifact. Had these names been included, the Femininity category would have been considerably greater.

Nicknames that otherwise indicate the boxer is a woman have a clear subtext. The nicknames “All American” and “All American Girl” are both biographical, but the second name clearly identifies the boxer’s gender. Any time a nickname is deliberately gendered, one might infer that that there was a special intent to do so, especially since most of the nicknames in sports are given to athletes by men (Phillips, 1990).

Nicknames that include the word girl, princess, or lady are unmistakably female. Those describing a boxer as “Baby” or “Doll” imply adolescent innocence. In

general, only women's nicknames allude to their physical attractiveness. Few male boxers are nicknamed "Pretty Boy," which carries the hint of homosexuality (Klein, 1988). A noteworthy exception is "Pretty Boy" Floyd Mayweather Jr, noteworthy as much for the singularity of his nickname, as to Mayweather's statement denying it had anything to do with his appearance. ("I got that name not because of my looks, but because when my [amateur] fights finished, I never came out cut or bruised. My amateur teammates gave me the name." HBO, 2007).

Nicknames like "Hot Stuff," "2Cute," "Gorgeous Babe," "Vixen," and "Foxy" are blatantly sexual even though the women are engaged in a traditional male activity. Nicknames that combine aggressiveness like "Raging" with female attributes like "Beauty" and "Belle" soften the rhetorical perception of the fighter's rage. A woman may be a tiger in the ring, but if she is a "Lady Tiger" one expects her to be less vicious.

Boxers themselves may accept their nicknames as indicative of the kind of fighters they should be (DeKlerk and Bosch, 1996). A boxer whose nickname is "Vicious" (Veronica Simmons) or "the Beast" (Magdalena Dahlen) is to be feared more than one whose nickname is "Friendly" (Denise Moraetes) or "Squeaky" (Lydia Bayardo). Because nicknames raise expectations (Buchanan and Brunning, 1971) they may pressure the bearer to live up to a nickname's implications (Holland, 1990). Daisy "The Lady" Lang, for instance, insists that her nickname is appropriate because "in my soul, I am a true lady" (Williams, 2007).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Boxing licenses were first awarded to women in the United States and England in the 1970s and 1990s respectively. However, there is still no female boxing competition in the Olympics. In New South Wales, Australia, boxing matches between women are punishable by a six-month prison sentence and fines up to \$20,000 (Lafferty and McKay, 2004).
- <sup>2</sup> In an article about women's boxing in Toronto, the author notes that "one of the first things you notice is that every woman has a boxing name." If a boxer does not already have a nickname when she joins a

boxing club, the club manager or its members will give her one within the first few days that reflects the boxer's style (Garro, 2006). Maggie's nickname is "Mo Cuishle," which Frankie tells her is Gaelic for "My Darling." Maggie's opponent in her title bout is "Billy the Bear."

- <sup>3</sup> The total percentage adds to more than 100 percent because of rounding errors.
- <sup>4</sup> The "Zebra" part of her nickname comes from her ambition to earn enough money to buy a cocktail lounge named Zebra.

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## Appendix

### 1. BIOGRAPHICAL (N=43)

#### 1a Place Names (N = 18)

All American	Jenifer Alcom
Bhatanyu (name of her gym)	Chirawadee Sisuk

Carolina	Carol Harris
Chicago Jewel	Amber Gideon
Hawaiian Mongoose	Eileen Olszewski
Irish	Erin Toughill
La Japonesa	Delia López
Pure country	Jennifer Mancil
Spokane Spike	Para Draine
The Fleetwood Assassin	Jane Couch
The Philly Stalker	Vienna Williams
The Sicilian Viper	Rita Turrisi
The Swedish Sensation	Asa Sandall
The Tasmanian Devil	Tammie Johnson
The Tennessee Destroyer	Lana Alexander
The Vegas Fox	Hannah Fox
Thrilla from Manilla	Sarah Goodson
The Warrior of Neza	Anna Maria Torres

**rb Ethnicity/Race (N = 12)**

Black Diamond	Cassandra Giger
The Black Russian	Tina Speakman
Brown Sugar (3)	Belinda Laracuenta; Lena Taylor; Ann Wolfe
La China	Ines González
La Japonesa	Delia López
La Guera (White Girl)	Rita Figueroa
La Negra	Soledad Macedo
The Nubian Tiger	Dawn Parker
La Pantera Negra	Cynthia Muñoz
The Zion Lion	Jill Mathews

**rd Past/Current Profession (N = 3)**

The Fighting Marine	Kasha Chamblin
Shake'em Down	Kathy Williams
G.I. Judy	Judy Mobley

**re Alliterative/Internal (N = 10)**

Downtown	Leona Brown
Guard Your Grill	Melissa St. Vil
Nightmare	Amanda Knight
Mean	Snodene Blakeney
Kickin'	Christina Butts
Killer	Kati Katz
KO	Kara Olivia Rheault
The Razor	Jennifer Barber
Rockin'	Melinda Robinson
Sugar	Blaire Robinson

## 2. COMBATIVENESS (N = 184)

### 2a General Performance/Demeanor (N = 108)

The Ace	Ada Vélez
La Aventurera (Aventuress)	Gabriela Zapata
The Assassin (2)	Angie Woolum; Anissa Zamarron
All Action	Stephanie Dobbs
All Biz	Liz Mooney
Amazing	Layla McCarter
Amazing Grace	Michelle Linden
Awesome (2)	Angela Simpson; Keisha Snow
Too Bad	Natalie Brown
Bad blood	Deshawanita Burton
Bad News	Lisa Brown
Battling (2)	Barbara Buttrick; Beverly Szymanski
The Beast	Magdalena Dahlen
Bonecrusher	Kim Quashie
Braveheart	Crystal Arcand
La Bronca Quareller	Ana Arrazala
Chapita (Crazy)(2)	Carolina Gaite; Carolina Gutiérrez
Checkmate	Cindy Serrano
The Chosen One	Franchesca Alcantar
The Countess	Jeanne LaMar
Crusher	Keri Scarr
Dangerous	Deirdre Gogarty
Deadly	Daniella Somers
La Demoladora (Demolisher)	Daysi Padilla
The Destroyer(2)	Guadalupe Cortés; Dora Webber
D'Hit Woman	Daria Hill McGee
Electric	Laquanda Conders
The Elegante	Nerys Rincón
La Fiera (Fierce)	Martha Rojas
Too Fierce	Lisa Foster
The Fighting Angel	Anri Nakagawa
Fireball	Kim Messer
La Flecha (Arrow)	Silvia Gervasi
Flash	Billy Jo Finley
Friendly	Denise Moraetes
La Furiosa (Fury)	Paola Rojas
The Fury	Mellissa Florentino
Good Bye	Natalie George
Good Night	Jessica Mohs
Hard 2 Handle	Demi Nguyen
Hard Hitting	Kirstie Davis
Haymaker	Melissa Schaffer
Heartless	Jeannine Garside
Hot Shot	Ashlin Hensley

Intimidator	Dana Dalton
Iron Butterfly	Trina Ortegón
Iron Heart	Patty Martínez
Killer	Ann Quinlan
KO (3)	Sue Carlson; Kara Ro; Mary Jo Sanders
Lethal	Lindsay Garbatt
La Loca (Crazy)	Robin Lerille
Locomotora(Locomotive)	Alejandra Oliveras
Long Play	Leslie Perella
The Machine	Dana Kendrick
Magic	Gisselle Salandy
Marvelous	Misa Morimoto
Merciless	Mary McGee
Mean	Margaret Sidoroff
Mighty	Denise Moses
The Natural	Rhonda Luna
Natural Born Thriller	Karen Martin
No Doubt	Phillisha Darby
No Fear	Tawnyah Freeman
No Mercy	Brooke Dierdorff
La Pincha (The Prong)	Graciela De Luca
The Predator	Olivia Gerula Pereira
Punchenella	Miriam Brakache
The Punisher	Kathy Long
The Rage	Kerri Hill
Ragin'	Jessica Rakoczy
The Real Deal Too	Brenda Vickers
The Scrapper	Patricia Silotta
Seek and Destroy	Joy Irvin
The Shadow	Martha Salazar
Silk	Yvonne Reis
Slammin	Sue Chase
Slick	Alicia Ashley
Smashin'	Sandra Ortiz
Smokin'	Mitzi Jeter
Sock it to ya	Sabrina Hall
Squeaky	Lydia Bayardo
Da Stinger	Nout Bradshaw
The Sure Thing	Linda Ludwig
Da Terra	Sierra Lindgren
The Terrible/La Terrible (2)	Mónica Acosta Siris; Iva Weston
Terminator(3)	Jolene Blackshear; Linda Tenberg; Yvonne Trevino
La Tremenda (Tremendous)	Heath Donahue
La Traiesa (Wanderer)	Trinity Guzmán
The Truth	Carlette Ewell
The Total Package(2)	Mikee Stafford; Lakeysa Williams

Tough	Toni Rodríguez
Too Tough	Terri Moss
Tough Enough	Kendra Lenhart
Vicious (3)	Natalie Brown; Veronica Simmons; Vaia Zaganas
Wild Thing	Sharon Añoyos
<b>2b Warriors (N = 5)</b>	
Road Warrior(2)	Terri Blair; Kelsey Jeffries
La Viking	Mana Ahumada
Zenia	Yauheniya Kavaliova
La Guerrera (Warrior)	Becky García
<b>2c Boxing Skill (N = 5)</b>	
La Balarina	Johanna Álvarez
La Matadora	Mirischa Sjauw en Wa
La Poeta del Ring	Laura Serrano-García
La Taxista (Taxi Driver)	Susana Morales
La Torera (Bullfighter)	Andrea Chamoza
<b>2d Hitting Power/Strength (N = 10)</b>	
Fists of Fury	Jeri Sitzes
Fists of Steel	Chevelle Hallback
The Hammer (2)	Doris Hackl; Carley Pesente
Hands of Stone	Conjestina Achieng
Hard Rock	Carla Wilcox
Stone Hands	Yolanda Swindell
The Rock	Lisma Da Silva
The Solution and the Hammer	LaMara Iverson
Stone	Sharon Ward
<b>2e Explosives/Weapons (N = 21)</b>	
La Bombardera(Bomber)	Graciela Becerra
Bomb	Ellsha Cleffman
Tha Bomb/The Bomb	Nina Ahlin; Rose Johnson
Jager Bomb	Ellsha Cleffman
Bomber	Edith Smith
The Bombshell	Jessica Flaharty
Dinamita/Dynamite (5)	Vianney Casas; Valanna McGree; Shondell Parks; Ana Pascal; Silvia Zúñiga
Double Barrel	Carol Wirth
Firecracker	Mary Duron
Grenade	Pamela London
Gyurza(High Powered Pistol)	Oksana Vasilyeva
Loose Canon	Jennifer McCartney
Two Guns	Marsha Budde
Stealth Bomber	Gwendoly O'Neil
TNT (2)	Trisha Hill; Melissa Shaffer

**2f Weather (N = 16)**

Calm Before the Storm  
The Heat  
Hurricane/Hurricane (5)

Lightning  
Lightning Bolt  
The Silent Storm  
Sunshine (2)  
The Storm  
Tsunami  
Unnatural Disaster

Akondaye Fountain  
Lisa Ested; Mary Ortega  
Para Draine; Mellissa Hernández;  
Jaime Clampitt; Olga Heron; Susan Nance  
Dianna Lewis  
Savanna Hill  
Gina Nicholas  
Deborah Fettkether; Julia Sahin  
Valerie Troike  
Manami Arima  
Veronica Sánchez

**2g Animals/Insects (N = 13)**

Avispa (Wasp)  
The Bull  
The Cobra  
Crazy Horse  
Dragon  
Mad Bird  
The Chameleon  
La Loba (Wolf)  
La Paloma  
Pitbull  
The Shark  
Sharky  
The Wild Dragon

Anabel Ortiz  
Stephanie Torres  
Bonnie Canino  
Sue Glassey  
Angel McKenzie  
Nicole Beard  
Duda Yankovich  
Zulina Muñoz  
Elizabeth Aguillón  
Michele Cooley  
Sandra Yard  
Michelle Taylor  
Ramona Kuehne

**2h Other Fighters (N = 6)**

La Jorcha Tyson  
Boom Boom (4)  
  
The Truth

Flor Maria Delgado  
Cecilia Barraza; Shelly Gibson; Gina Guidi;  
Jeanne Martínez  
Corlette Ewell

**3. FEMININITY (N = 183)****3a General Appearance/Characteristics (N = 32)**

2 Cute  
All American Girl  
La Amazona ("Amazon")(2)  
The Bahama Mama  
Blondie  
Blondee  
La Catira (Blondie)  
China Girl  
La Colorado (Red)  
Code Red

Melinda Woody  
Vonda Ward  
Guillermina Fernández; Oksana Romanova  
Treasure Saunders  
Lisa Pederson  
Dianne Syverson  
Maria Tatis  
Wang Ya Nam  
Candice Duer  
Cristy Nickel



China Girl	Wang Ya Nam
La Pelusa (Cuddly)	Gabriela González
Ginger	Debbie Kaufman
Gorgeous	MaryAnne Almager
Gorgeous Babe	Chantel Córdova
La Guapa (Gorgeous)	Maria del Carmen Montiel
Island Girl	Sumya Anani
The Knockout	Mia St. John
Lovely	Linda Robinson
Pearl	Pauline O'Hello
The Pearl	Elizabeth Vollarreal
La Pigu (Backside)	Sonia Paladino
La Polla de Petare(Hen of Petare)	Ana Fernández
Raging Beauty	Isra Girgrah
Raging Belle	Jen Childers
Red dog	Amy Burton
Red Neck Mama	Tanya Colvin
Scarlette	Escarlyn Fulgencio
Shy Girl	Jujeath Nagawa
Super Granny	Wilma Skeate
Ural She Wolf	Ekaterira Tsepelera

**3b Sexuality (N = 22)**

The Bitch (2)	Cathy Brown; Sherri Thompson
Fox	Sherry Furstenburg
Foxy	Roxanne Ward
Foxy Brown	Bethany Payne
Hot Like Me	Amanda McMillan
Hot Stuff	Hollie Dunaway
Hot Shot	Ashlin Hensley
Hottie	Holly Holm
Lupita (Hot, Sexy)	Guadalupe Mercado
Nature Girl	Donna Lee Biggers
La Super Baby	Katy Hernández
Sugar (3)	Lola Muñoz García; Nojima Miyuki; Julita Tkaczyk
Sweet and Sour	Alexandra Malloy
Sweet Magic	Eva Jones Young
Sweet Tea	Tanze Daniel
La Tana (Sexpot)	Verena Crespo
La Traviesa (Naughty)	Lucia Avalos
The Vixen	Linda Guedalia
La Zorrita (Little Fox)	Maria Altamirano

**3c Feline Metaphors (N = 24)**

The Cheetah(2)	Fredia Gibbs; Lorissa Rivas
Hell Cat	Holly Feindeley
La Leona de Caseros (Lioness of Caseros)	Patricia Quirco

La Panterita (Panther)	Maria Anchorena
La Pantera (2)	Maria Andrea Miranda; Marisela Morales
The Panther	Karen Bill
Pink Panther	Elizabeth Mongue
La Leopardo (Leopard)	Darys Pardo
La Puma	Juana Sánchez
Tiger	Margaret McGregor
La Tigresa, Tigress (5)	Marcela Acuna; Tammy Franks; Alesia Graf; Lourdes De Ocampo; Liliana Palmera
Lioness (2)	Everlyne Odero; Savannah Hill
Princess Town Tigress	Vici Boodram
Siberian Tigress	Olga Vlasova
Snowcat	Helga Risoy
Wild Cat (2)	Kathy Collins; Cathy Freeman
<b>3d Nobility (N = 32)</b>	
Aztec Princess	Jaqueline Nava
Box Princess	Betina Csabi
The Countess	Myriam Lamare
Dakota Princess	Vanessa Hnomichi
Dangerous Lady	Regina Halmich
The Goddess	Graciella Casillas
Killer Queen	Susiana Kentikian
La Reina da Guerra (War Queen)	Victoria Cisneros
Lady	Tiffany Logan,
Lady Dynamite	Kim Lord
The Lady (2)	Tracy Byrd; Daisy Lang
Lady D	Dawn Reynolds
Lady Ram	Laura Ramsay
Lady Tyger	Marian Trimiar
Lady Tyson (2)	Nancy Joseph; Agnieszka Rylik
Mystery Lady	Shondelle Alfred
Princess	Bettina Csabi
Princesita (Little Princess)	Elizabeth Zamarripa
Principessa	Stefania Bianchini
Princess of Pain	Sachiyo Shibata
Princess Red Star	Teresa Kibby
Queen Bee	Kanicia Eley
Queen of Lightning	Lucia Rijker
Queen of Thunder	Wendy Sprowl
The Queen	Jamilla Lawrence
Tiger Lady (2)	Brenda Burnside; Breda Drexel
Warrior Princess	Yvonne Chavez
La Dama del Ring	
(Lady of the Ring)(2)	Anays Carrillo; Damaris Ortega
La Reina	Carina Moreno

**Flowers (N=4)**

Rocky Mt Rose  
 Rose (2)  
 Tiger Lily

Kelly Whaley  
 Kristy Follmar; Shannon Gunville  
 Sue Fox

**3e Infantilizing (N=58)**

Baby  
 Baby Doll (2)  
 Baby Girl (3)  
 Baby Face Assassin  
 Bad Girl  
 Bad Kitty  
 Bambi  
 Chiquita (Little Girl) (3)  
 La Cachorrita (Puppy)  
 La Coquita (Chick)  
 La Chica (Girl)  
 La Cubanita  
 Chico (Small Child)  
 La Cobrita (Cobra)  
 Cowgirl  
 La Diablita (Little Devil) (3)  
  
 Dynamite Girl  
 Frisco Kid  
 La Gatita (Pussy Cat)  
 Golden Girl  
 La Guerrita/Guerrera  
 (Little Warrior) (2)  
 The Iron Maiden  
 Leoncita (Little Lioness)  
 Mulita (Little Mule)  
 La Norteña (Little Northerner)  
 La Panterita (Little Panther)  
 La Potranquita  
 Lil' Doc  
 Little Rock  
 Little T  
 Lil' Tyson (2)  
 Little Loca  
 La Tejanita (Little Texan)  
 Little Thunder  
 Lil Warrior  
 The Real Million Dollar Baby  
 Mega Battle Bad Girl  
 Motor City Bad Girl

Krisztina Belinszky  
 Elena Reid; Bridgett Riley  
 Valerie Rix; Leatitia Robinson; Angel Shipp  
 Holly Shores  
 Tonya Harding  
 Kathrin Pugh  
 Jenna Bertocello  
 Imelda Arias; Delia González; Elizabeth Sánchez  
 Marilyn Hernández  
 Wendy LaMotta  
 Claudia Andrea López  
 Elizabeth Ruiz  
 Margaret Walcott  
 Mayela Pérez  
 Jenna Shiver  
 Guadalupe Marroquin; Yolanda Marrugo;  
 Rita Serrano  
 Diana Szilagyi  
 Louise Loo  
 Bianca Ledezma  
 Stephanie Jaramillo  
  
 Carmela López; Irma Sánchez  
 Bonnie Prestwood  
 Francis Orrantia  
 Mary Lehman  
 Eva Silva  
 Maria Anchorena  
 Perla Hernández  
 Sheri Duncan  
 Nancy Thompson  
 Victoria Lara  
 Lisa Lewis; Sandy Tsagouris  
 Terri Lynn Cruz  
 Rocio Vázquez  
 Maribel Zurita  
 Lisa Lewis  
 Maureen Shea  
 Elecia Battle  
 Cheryl Muhammad

La Niña  
 Nena (Little girl)  
 La Niña Storm (Little Storm)  
 The Punchin' Munchkin  
 Shelby Girl  
 The Kitten  
 Thunder girl  
 Toluqita (From Toluca, Mex.)  
 Venadita (Small Doe)  
 Wild child  
 Zebra Girl

### 3f Parentage/Family (N = 11)

Big/George  
 The Coal Miner's Daughter  
 Daughter of Thor  
 Honey Girl  
 Little Miss Hands of Stone  
 Shee Bee Stingin'  
 Sister Smoke  
 Lady Mongoose  
 Wild  
 La Polla (Hen)  
 Shark 2

Bertha González  
 Andrea Benítez  
 Paulina Cardona  
 Loren Miller  
 Shelby Walker  
 Leah Mellinger  
 Cora Webber  
 Susana Vásquez  
 Blanca Pérez  
 Shannon Gunville  
 Shirley Tucker

Freda Foreman  
 Christy Martin  
 Maria Johansson  
 Melissa Del Valle  
 Irichelle Duran  
 Laila Ali  
 Jacqui Frazier-Lyde  
 J'Marie Moore  
 Kaliesha West  
 Ana Fernández  
 Marnelle Verano

## 4. MISCELLANEOUS (N = 7)

The Praise  
 Destiny  
 Doodle bug  
 Goose  
 Rocky  
 No Slack  
 The Wolf

Ijeoma Eghunine  
 Susannah Warner  
 Jamie Myers  
 Corinne Van Ryck De Groot  
 Jamie Johnson  
 Nikki Eplion  
 Valerie Mahfood

## 5. INDETERMINATE (N = 19)

G9  
 Bam Bam  
 Ca Cai  
 Cha Cha  
 Chen Chen  
 Cori Raw  
 Fauma  
 Goldsack  
 La Evangelica

Jeannine Garside  
 Ela Nuñez  
 Geremie Tabastabas  
 Debra Wright  
 Gretchen Abaniel  
 Chloritha Magee  
 Zarika Njeri  
 Rergan Pudwill  
 Diana García

Mayita	Ofelia Dominguez
Nelicidad	Del Pettis
Nicky	Zhang Mao Mao
Pugs	Shakurah Witherspoon
La Rusita	Jazmin Rivas
Saumnice	Angel McNamara
Stix	Cynthia Lozano
Veveruta	Daniela David
Yarara	Pamela Benavidez
Zif	Theresa Arnold

### Notes on Contributor

Ernest Abel is Professor of Obstetrics/Gynecology and Professor of Psychology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. In addition to nicknames, his onomastic interests include the role of names on career choices, the impact of folklore on place names, and how religion influences women's decisions about keeping their birth names after marriage.

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